

St Mary the Virgin—North Shoebury

AUGUST 2021



FRIDAY 6TH AUGUST—TRANSFIGURATION OF JESUS

SUNDAY 15TH AUGUST—ST MARY ASSUMPTION

MONDAY 30TH AUGUST—BANK HOLIDAY



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on
Saturday
14TH AUGUST
from 2-4pm



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August

Lead Minister's Monthly Inspirational Letter

August 2021

"Changing and rising expectations on clergy, lay ministers, and officers such as churchwardens and treasurers, mean that many people are exhausted and struggling to go on."

This is the view of one diocese in the Church of England. I do know why it was felt necessary to make this statement, but makes interesting reading and can be interpreted in a great many ways.

In my life, I have had at least three “careers”. In that time, one thing I have learned is that “other people” will always have greater expectations of me than I can fulfil. “Other people” will always claim to know how to do it better, quicker, simpler, so I say, “Let them”. That is not always an easy way to live, so it is necessary to manage expectations.

From the position of Lead Minister, I know that it is crucial to support and encourage everyone I meet. I do this because I believe that it is God’s will.

It does no good to judge what others are doing. In my imagination, I can do everything better than everyone else, and I am sure I am not the only one to think this of themselves. But to share this would be demotivating, pile pressure on other people, and it does nothing to help me, the current situation, or to improve or motivate others. It just brings everyone down and we all get fed up and depressed.

The reality is that we are all doing our very best, and I give thanks for that. But not everything will get done, things will be forgotten and there will be glitches from time to time; such is life.

I say this because we are beginning to try to look into the future in the context of the pandemic. It is not over yet and it seems to me that there are many people “out there” who appear selfish, and uncaring.

Saying “Let them” in this context is not helpful. But all we can hope to be is the best we can be. I will try to set an example that others can follow. I will not try to



But most of all, my life experience has taught me I do not have to. If others are not satisfied, that is their problem, not mine.

I hope that those who know me understand that I do the best I can in the time I have available. I know I want to do better, indeed more, but I cannot. So the high expectations I have to manage most are my own.

I spoke recently about the growth in our church. By the grace of God, new people are being brought into St. Mary's. Each new person brings talents and energy, each in their own way. For those of us who have been around a bit, we welcome new thoughts and ideas, but we cannot be precious about the role we have played and need to provide space for everyone to become involved in the life of our church. In this way we grow.

During August, the Gospel readings are about the need to keep nourished, and we are reminded that Jesus is "The Bread of Life". It is he who feeds us, but we must let ourselves be fed.

Also, August is a time for rest and refreshment, so let us take this time to build ourselves up for the rest of the year.

We are doing well at St. Mary's. We demonstrate in what we do that we care, that we are open, that we are welcoming.

All that is asked of us is that we love God, and love our neighbour. I pray that we will continue to do this in our parish for many, many years.

God bless.

David Pierce
Lead Minister



...er Vicar, it's about that flower Mrs Brindle's brought back from her foreign holiday...

Climbing Ben Nevis

The first recorded ascent of Ben Nevis was made 250 years ago, on 7th August 1771, by Scottish botanist and artist James Robertson. At 1345 metres (4411 ft), it is the highest mountain in the British Isles. Some 100,000 people now make the climb each year.

Robertson wrote: "A third part of the hill from the summit towards the top is entirely naked, resembling a heap of stones thrown together confusedly. The summit far overtops the surrounding hills."

Hill climbing was not popular in those days, but the poet John Keats made the ascent in 1818. Scots were not convinced for many years that Ben Nevis was higher than Ben Macdui, in the Cairngorms, but it is in fact more than a hundred feet higher.

The meaning of the mountain's name is uncertain. Some associate it with the Gaelic word for "venomous", but it seems at least equally likely that "Nevis" relates to snow or clouds.

HAVE YOU ANYTHING FOR THIS MAGAZINE?

Thank you to Sue & Tony Arnold for their sponsorship of this month.

Thank you to David and Francine for their contributions. If you have anything which would be of interest, please contact the editor, Craig Hunter early in the month, so that your space can be reserved.

Please send any material for the Magazine by the 17th of the month



Press one for vicar, two for curate....12 for prayer....

The Rectory
St James the Least of All

My dear Nephew Darren



Now you have got your new telephone system in the parish, I shall not be calling you again. I refuse to wait for ten minutes every time I ring to have to listen to the cycle of 'press 1 for the vicar, 2 for the curate, 3 for the secretary', until we end with '12 for requests for prayer.' I was tempted to leave a message on 12 to ask that the wretched machine would break down, but then realised I would have to call a second time to leave a message on 13 for making a confession.

And if I have to listen one more time to someone playing 'Thine be the glory' on one finger on an electric organ while I am 'on hold' I will have him excommunicated. At least you have the grace not to ask me not to hang up, as my call is important to you. I would even warm to your system if a voice occasionally said that they couldn't care less whether I hung up or not, as my call was utterly irrelevant to them.

Those poor people who have to wait to reach 7 for leaving messages regarding marriages might as well leave a second message on 8 for baptisms, and save on a large phone bill in months to come. As for 9 for funerals, entire families could be born, marry and die before they reach that one. And may I suggest that your car parking attendant who stuck a note on my windscreen telling me not to park there again is given the number 666.

My own answerphone tells people firmly that the machine does not accept incoming messages, and that I only answer personally on Thursdays between 10am and 12 noon, provided nothing better has turned up. Alternatively, they could write me a letter which may (or may not) be answered, at my convenience.

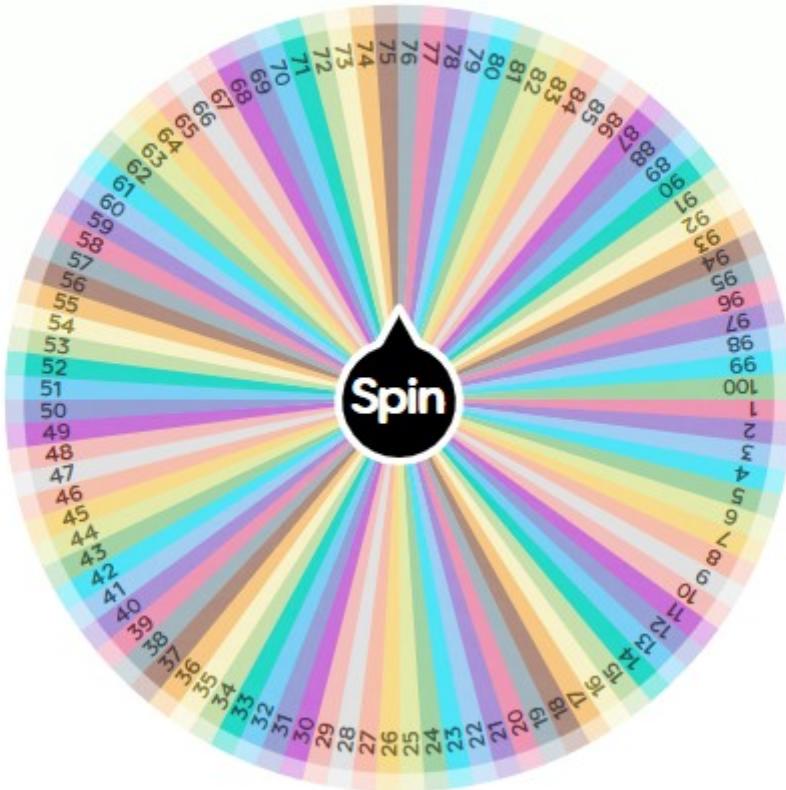
August

As for the few who have got hold of my mobile number, my response is to say that I am just about to enter a tunnel and then to switch it off. Callers from other parts of the country now believe that the parish of St James the Least is honeycombed by mile-long tunnels, making communication all but impossible.

You can now be assured that your new system means you will be contactable at any moment, wherever you happen to be. But don't call me to complain and expect to receive sympathy; I shall be just about to enter a tunnel.

Your loving uncle,
Eustace

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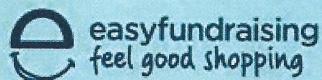
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August

Reflecting on the Bible (or ‘Meditating on scripture’)

Many children enjoy boiled sweets – especially trying to see how long they can make them last. The pleasure of holding the flavoured sweet in your mouth is far better than crunching it up in a few seconds!

There is a way of doing much the same with a Bible passage, and it is called *Lectio Divina* or ‘holy reading’. Centuries ago, before Bibles were widely available, the abbot of a monastery would gather his monks together and read to them the Bible passage that was set for the day. He would read it three times and the brothers were encouraged to listen attentively and choose a phrase to remember. They would then go about their daily work in the garden, in the kitchen, in the infirmary or wherever. Through the day they would meditate on the phrase they had chosen and, rather like sucking a boiled sweet, would draw out the meaning for themselves.

You might like to try something similar: choose a passage from the Bible and begin to read it very slowly as if it were addressed to you. A few verses from Psalm 103 would be a good place to start.

Stop when a phrase captures your attention. Maybe it touches you in some way, attracts or even disturbs you. Repeat the phrase slowly over and over again, taking its meaning into yourself. Let it sink in slowly. What does it have to say to you? Why do you think it caught your attention? Where is the connection for you? What memories does it evoke? Is there a word, a phrase, a sentiment, or an image that you can hold on to?

Move into prayer, expressing to God the thoughts and feelings that have spontaneously arisen in you. Let your mind be at rest and your heart open to the love and peace of God. When you are ready, carry on with reading the next bit of the passage or just leave it there for the day.

Follow the example of the monks and return to your phrase or phrases during the day.

Ann Persson’s ‘Time for Reflection: Meditations to use through the year’, BRF £8.99



Psalm 103 The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

1 Bless the Lord, O my soul,

and all that is within me bless his holy name.

2 Bless the Lord, O my soul,

and forget not all his benefits;

3 Who forgives all your sins

and heals all your infirmities;

4 Who redeems your life from the Pit

and crowns you with faithful love and compassion;

5 Who satisfies you with good things,

so that your youth is renewed like an eagle's.

6 The Lord executes righteousness

and judgement for all who are oppressed.

7 He made his ways known to Moses

and his works to the children of Israel.

8 The Lord is full of compassion and mercy,

slow to anger and of great kindness.

21 Bless the Lord, all you his hosts,

you ministers of his who do his will.

22 Bless the Lord, all you works of his,

in all places of his dominion;

bless the Lord, O my soul.

Refrain:

The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

Merciful Lord,

as we come from dust and return to dust,

show us the face of our Redeemer,

that in our frailty we may

bless your name

and praise you all our days;

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Common Worship: Daily Prayer,

material from which is included here,

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15th August:

'Shall we not love thee, Mother dear?'

The Church responds with a resounding 'Yes' to that question, as we celebrate the Blessed Virgin Mary on 15th August. (Usually her feast day is on the 16th.) An ancient name for this day is the transition of Mary – her crossing over to eternal life – or the assumption of Mary. But her story begins in the Gospels, in Nazareth and Bethlehem.

At the Annunciation, Gabriel announces the good news to Mary. She becomes a mother and embarks on a journey that takes her to the temple in Jerusalem, a wedding feast at Cana, the Cross of Calvary, and the upper room of Pentecost. Through Christian history her story has spoken to people in every age and culture and land.

As we look at her life now, there are two qualities that stand out. The first is thanksgiving. Mary came from a people that realised the importance of thanking God, and her response to the good news is to raise her heart in the words of the Magnificat. 'My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit exults in God my saviour.'

The second quality is trust. Rowan Williams has written that despite the years of controversy about the place of our Lady, we still need to hold out our hands to her for guidance and succour. "For at the very least she is the first person to put her trust in God who is shown in Jesus." Through all that happened to her – the amazing news of Gabriel, no room at the inn, the worry over wine at the wedding – Mary ponders and trusts. To the servants at Cana, she says, "Do whatever Jesus tells you. It will be all right. You will see."

Thanksgiving and trust: easy enough to see in our Lady, but perhaps more difficult to own for ourselves. Yet Mary assures us that with God all things are possible. Holding on to that faith, we can journey with her Son through life and death to eternal life.



CONTACT DETAILS

For all enquiries, including weddings, baptisms, blessings etc.
please, in the first instance, contact Pat Fitch.

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Phone numbers are all area code 01702 unless stated

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Churchyard Safeguarding Officer	Pat Fitch	585289

THE CHURCH WEB SITE

www.stmarynorthshoebury.org.uk

Special Summer Evensong Services

During August five churches in the area are going to hold a service of Evensong.
Here is a list of which church and when:

1st South Shoebury 6.00 pm
8th St Augustine's 6.30 pm
15th Holy Trinity 6.30 pm
22nd North Shoebury 6.00 pm
29th St. Lukes time to be advised.

Please try and support these services.

Services at St Mary's

The church PCC have begun to debate the structure, format and content of our services. As we continue to grow as a church and attract new regular members we will need more capacity and different provision -(especially if as expected there continues to be the threat of COVID-19).

One suggested format was to move forward by making the **Family service** our main service on a Sunday and introducing an earlier **Parish Eucharist** each Sunday. However, although we believe the PCC is fairly representative of the congregation we would welcome **your contribution** to the debate! If you have any views/ideas/preferences please let them be known!

We continue to seek an organist who could support our choir in leading our sung worship in church (surely we can sing soon?) but have continued to fail in finding a suitable candidate. We are keen to form a “music group” to play and accompany sung worship at services—**would anyone care to volunteer to organise this** (involving co-ordination, communication, recruitment and all the admin—if not the musical direction of the group) ?

For now, we will continue with the current format of Parish Eucharist 1st and 3rd Sunday; Family Service 2nd & 4th Sunday.



Editor: By the Revd Peter Crumpler, a Church of England priest in St Albans, Herts, and a former communications director for the C of E.

Five things we've learnt about Truth in the pandemic

I'm involved in a project rooted in the Church of England's St Albans diocese, north of London. We bring together people from a range of backgrounds and faiths to address the question 'Where is Truth now?'

A vital issue for us from recent months has been 'How has truth fared during the pandemic? Here are five key points.

Truth can save your life.

Knowing the truth about the Covid-19 virus and vaccines gave vital protection during the pandemic. The advice of scientists, health professionals and researchers has been widely sought out and debated.

But we've also seen a rise in conspiracy theories, anti-vaccination campaigns and growing confusion as people challenge the extent of the pandemic, and whether Covid-19 is really a threat. Social media algorithms stand accused of spreading misinformation faster than reliable facts and corrections.

Truth comes from trust.

Knowing who to trust is one of the fastest growing challenges facing anyone wanting to know more about the pandemic and its causes.

While faith in doctors and scientists is generally good, trust in politicians has remained low, and scepticism and confusion are growing.



Truth can be found on your doorstep – but not always.

Local information has become more important, especially during lock-downs. But with local newspapers and radio in decline, neighbourhood social media networks have been taking their place, spreading information – not all of it verifiable and sometimes incorrect.

Often, it's fear that drives our response to the stories we read. We eagerly consume stories highlighting a new 'threat' from Covid or scapegoating people not keeping to the lockdown rules. We respond emotionally, 'with our gut' – rather than our brain or intellect.

Truth has to be valued and protected.

Reliable, trusted journalism has been at a premium. ITV News journalist Julie Etchingham defended the role of the media during Covid-19. The news presenter, a practising Roman Catholic, explained: "Many in our front-line services and the wider public are demanding answers. We are there on their behalf."

In December 2020, Yorkshire Post editor James Mitchinson, published his response to a reader who believed social media posts over his newspaper's reports. The open letter, headlined 'Do not believe a stranger on social media who disappears into the night' sets out the contrast between verified public interest journalism and disinformation posted online.

Truth can be complicated – and that's ok.

Throughout the pandemic, politicians have spoken about 'following the science.' This, they have said, has guided their decision making. Yet scientists can have a range of views, based on similar research findings. It's in the discussion and debate that scientific truth arises.

People accept that the 'scientific evidence' is not always straightforward. We know that truth can be complicated, from our own daily lives. So politicians who level with their electors about the complexity of the decisions are often received with more credibility.

In continuing to ask the question "Where is Truth Now?" our modest project is helping to keep the conversation going – and encouraging others to do the same.





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30th August

John Bunyan – the man who wrote Pilgrim’s Progress

After the Bible, John Bunyan’s wonderful Christian allegory, the Pilgrim’s Progress, is one of the most celebrated and widely-read books in the English language. It has been translated into more than one hundred languages around the world and keeps its place as a Christian classic.

Bunyan became a popular preacher, but because of his opposition to the Established Church and because he did not have a Church of England preaching licence, he was imprisoned in 1661. It was in prison that he wrote Pilgrim’s Progress. It was not only Bunyan’s greatest book but was destined to become one of the most popular Christian books in the world.

Pilgrim’s Progress is an allegory, using the names of people and places from the Bible to teach spiritual lessons. The vivid and unforgettable imagery in the Pilgrim’s Progress covers the whole Christian gospel from sin and condemnation all the way through faith, repentance, grace, justification, sanctification, and perseverance to heaven itself.

Bunyan died on 31 August 1688.

Renters are struggling. 1.7 million renting households are worried about paying their rent over the next three months, and nearly one million are worried about being evicted during the same period.

Such are the findings of recent research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF). The JRF says that black, Asian and minority-ethnic renters, renters with children, renters on low incomes and renters who have lost income during the pandemic are struggling disproportionately. The JRF’s recommendations include building more social housing for rent.





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