

This Week at St Mary's

22 November 2020

WHY THE CONGREGATION MATTERS

Leading a Service in St Mary's at the moment feels strange. The government's guidelines seem to assume that because modern technology allows us to 'livestream' words (spoken and sung) and images, in effect, 'what's the difference from you all being there'? There is a very significant difference: the absence of a congregation.

There is a popular misconception that a church service is a sort of show, with an audience present. Some church services can come close to this, mimicking education, culture or entertainment. If that's all we're doing, it may not make much difference whether we're together in one place or at home tuning in.

The word 'congregation' (it may sound a bit churchy) has latin roots. Literally: with (con) a flock (grex.) It draws on the biblical pastoral metaphor. It is saying that coming together for worship is intentionally relational, all about our being together. There can be no higher privilege than being where God is gathering the likes of you and me - the invitation includes us all - to worship and adore Him. As we share the same time and space moment, the Holy Spirit makes God known, and EACH of us, even just being present has a part in so doing.

Covid is helping us see a number of things with new clarity. Of course it's better that we can do something rather than not meet at all. However, it's impossible to have too high a view of 'the congregation' - not there for a good show, but an integral part of God's dynamic new life and community.

Tom Gillman

STONE SOUP ACADEMY WINS TES AWARD

Our most heartfelt congratulations go to our neighbour in High Pavement for winning the TES **Alternative Provision School of the Year** award. SSA's work with pupils excluded from mainstream education was rightly recognised at one of the biggest nights in the UK education calendar on Friday 13th November. The judges applauded its work providing job experience and placements for their 80 students.

SSA, of which the late Daniel Hanson was a governor (Joanna Gillum is one now) in submission had said, "We wanted to give our students a future so they might care more about the present - they might not get involved in crime and violence if they had something to lose - so we set about creating this future for our students." The key to the success of creating futures was to involve businesses and the local community, so they set up partnerships with 12 local businesses, which offered job experience and placements. Two students were permanently employed and two were offered apprenticeships as a result.

SSA is performing well in other areas: attendance has reached above 80 per cent (while the average is 62 per cent for Alternative Provision settings nationwide), 100 per cent of all students achieved qualifications and 82 per cent achieved GCSE English and Maths.

Lead judge Vijita Patel, principal at Swiss Cottage School Development and Research Centre, added: "*What's fantastic is that, in some of the responses, the families articulate 'getting their child back'. So the impact they are having for families is quite profound.*"

Kerrie Henton, Principal of Stone Soup Academy said on winning the award "*We are delighted at winning this award. This award is for all the staff and pupils here and is testament to the family environment that we have at the academy. Creating Unimagined Futures every day*"

GIVING MONEY - Best done online via **Donate** button on the website. Preferable from St Mary's viewpoint is a **Standing Order** (NatWest St Mary's PCC Nottm 560061 00834602) For **one-off donations**, cheque, cash yellow envelope, in chest by South Porch Door.

ADVENT SUNDAY 29th November there will be the Advent Procession Service at 6.30pm, suitably adapted for a livestreamed congregation.

ADVENT RESOURCES. Advent is a time of change, with prayer and reflection central. The CofE has produced resources. <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/preparing-advent-christmas-2020-comfort-and-joy>
See also *Finding Light in the Deepest Dark: Journeying through Lament to Gratitude* which combines biblical reflection with activities and music, and features work by artist Scott Erickson. Designed to be used in one sitting, either by an individual or in a group www.sanctuarymentalhealth.org/uk

CHRISTMAS CARDS - instead of these being left at St Mary's for collection by members of the congregation, as this is not possible in 2020, please consider donating the money instead to Emmanuel House. We have the DONKEY and DOVE Christmas cards left over from last year - if you'd like some, let us know, no charge, but please make a donation to Emmanuel House. <https://www.emmanuelhouse.org.uk/category/donations/>

EMMANUEL HOUSE SUPPORT CENTRE premiered their film 'Lone' recently and it is now available to watch on their website emmanuelhouse.org.uk. Launching their Winter Appeal in an alternative way, 'Lone' is a short film highlighting actual experiences of homeless people in Nottingham. Do watch & give.

SERVICES DURING LOCKDOWN. Very disappointingly we are unable to have a congregation at a service until the lockdown ends. The only people allowed in the church are those participating in the service, ie leader, preacher, intercessor, readers and choir.

THE MEADOWS FOODBANK - this week they welcome toiletries; washing up items; sugar; packet jelly; pasta sauce; tinned veg, fruit & meat. Contact Beth Mitchell 07775707855 0115 947 6736 tony.m1941@icloud.com

Wherever you are, we extend a very warm greeting to you, especially if you've recently discovered St Mary's

*St Mary's is usually open for private prayer and reflection
11.30-2.30pm each weekday - please call to confirm if visiting*

WORSHIP SERVICES THIS WEEK

11.00am SUNDAY SERVICE Preacher Tom Gillum

(Livestreamed - see our website and follow the link, including Order of Service)

6.15PM WEDNESDAY EVENSONG

(Livestreamed - see our website and follow the link, including Order of Service)

6pm THURSDAY EVENING PRAYER (skype) Contact Grant

PLEASE CONTINUE TO PRAY FOR Estelle Barks, John Bowers,
Rosemary Clark, Barbara Davis, Harry Palmer, Mike Ridley

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