

# PARISH NEWS

JULY 2020

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## From the Vicarage

It's remarkable how many people are now into 'Zoom' - often folk who seldom touch their computer apart from the odd email. In one sense it arrived just at the right time, alongside other burgeoning social media. Think how much more we would have been cut off in self-isolation even a few years ago.

Earlier today we took part in a Zoom meeting - Wednesday morning prayer led by Peter, our Rector. And it suddenly struck me during the prayers how the feeling of 'togetherness' was hardly different from being in church together doing the same thing. A spiritual unity was certainly there, and on reflection, it's not so surprising; the Spirit of God knows no boundaries of distance, or of time. I was also thinking what an incredible force for good it is whenever people unite in a common cause to pray for others, to ask for strength and guidance, and indeed for forgiveness of the way we have treated the incredible world we have been given.

Of course this is not confined to the Christian Faith. There are countless Jews, Moslems, Hindus, Sikhs, even secular meditation groups who come together to focus on the God-given inner forces for good shared by humanity.

Now in normal times, if someone in the street asked you where the church is, would your answer direct them to the nearest church building? Or would you say, quite truthfully, 'at the moment the church is spread all over the place - in homes, offices, factories, hospitals - wherever Christians live and work'. The biblical word for 'Church' is 'ecclesia' - the body of people who try to follow the teaching of Jesus, and open themselves to his Spirit of peace and inner strength. Don't get me wrong! I love church buildings; they bring joys of many kinds to people. But *in extremis* (as we are at the moment) the essential work of the Church continues without them.

And imagine (*contra* John Lennon) if everyone took the trouble, on a regular basis, to reflect together - using Zoom if necessary - consciously opening up to the deep and powerful spiritual forces for good, being thankful, acknowledging together our feeble attempts to be human. It would quite literally transform society, uniting folk from every background, and at least begin to restore our fragile relationship with the natural world.

Hoping you, and those close to you, are keeping well.

Frank Fox-Wilson

## Good News: Benefice Churches Are Now Open For Private Prayer

We are delighted that Government regulations now permit us to open our churches for individual\* prayer and contemplation. We hope that anyone wishing to do so will feel safe to enter. All churches in the Benefice (with the exception of Berwick which remains closed whilst the building works are completed) reopened on the 15<sup>th</sup> June. Churches are open every day and opening patterns are the same as they were previously in each parish. Sadly, we are unable to resume normal services at present but hope to do so soon.

\*The term *individual* is defined as follows: "A person or household entering the venue to pray on their own and not part of a group, led prayer or communal act." (Robert Jenrick announcement.)

If you do wish to use the church for private prayer, please be mindful of the importance of following government advice in respect of handwashing and social distancing. Notices have been put up on church noticeboards, on the church doors and at the entry and exit points for each church, to provide specific guidance about the safety and hygiene arrangements in each church, as details may differ slightly due to the differences in the church buildings. For example: in some churches pews may be roped off to limit the amount of routine cleaning required and in some churches, there is access to running water. Please read these notices carefully before entering the church.

- ◆ Hand sanitiser has been placed in the porch area of each church and inside the church near the door. Please use this before entering and when exiting the church. N.B. It is still wise to wash and dry your hands thoroughly with soap and water as soon as you get home, as an extra precaution.
- ◆ Please observe the social distancing rules and maintain a distance of 2 metres between yourself and others not in your household whilst in the church. Individual churches may have additional guidance about this so please observe any specific measures which have been put in place.

- ◆ If the church appears too crowded to facilitate social distancing, please wait outside until it is safe to enter.

Please do not enter the church if you or anyone in your household has symptoms of Covid-19 or if you have been advised to self-isolate because you have been in contact with someone who has tested positive.

Cleaning schedules have been revised to ensure door handles, light switches and other areas likely to have been touched by others are cleaned daily when the church is opened, but please be mindful of the fact that surfaces might have been contaminated later in the day and avoid touching surfaces unnecessarily.

Please note we now have permission to resume funeral services. Please contact the Revd Peter Blee or Revd Frank Fox-Wilson for further guidance on this. Their contact details are at the end of this newsheet.

*Stephanie Lewis-Grey*

## **Supporting Farmers**

Farmers are the ultimate protectors of our countryside. We have seen locally that when they can no longer make farming work for them financially, they sell up and housing developments emerge concreting over our green spaces. It is therefore crucial that we support our farmers in succeeding and I am passionate that in Government this is a top priority for us.

Recently there have been a lot of rumours in the media with regards to the new Agriculture Bill, which sets out the future for British farming, and our food standards. I wanted to reassure you that much of the rumour and speculation is untrue. The UK will not be lowering its high food standards at the cost of cheap imports of lower quality.

As the Agriculture Bill progressed, we had a robust debate in Parliament and particularly on one of the amendments on international trade and food security that has been a concern for many people in the agriculture sector. The amendment put forward was well intentioned in ensuring that no food comes into the UK which undercuts British farming standards but unfortunately it was aimed at the standards of production rather than standards of product. This amendment would not be allowed under World Trade Organisation or European Union rules and would have made any trade deal impossible with any country or trading bloc including the EU, US, Japan, etc. It would also have scuppered current trade deals and restricted exports of British Farm produce as a result.

Instead we are using the Trade Bill to enshrine animal welfare standards into law and as it is coming to Parliament now, we are laying down the restrictions on the standard of products so things like chlorinated chicken and cheap beef products cannot be imported to the UK. This means that for any future trade deals our British produced food will not be undercut by cheap imports, but it also gives British farmers more extensive exporting opportunities. As each new trade deal comes forward, we will be able to set this out more clearly and with new rules to more easily identify country of origin and better labelling to help consumers we hope this will enable more British products to be consumed domestically. I hope this provides some reassurance, but do feel free to contact me if you have any concerns you would like to raise at [maria.caulfield.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:maria.caulfield.mp@parliament.uk).

*Maria Caulfield - Member of Parliament for Lewes*

## **Family Support Work (FSW) – Update**

In June we got used to our new way of working with families, but we are also thinking ahead to what might change as and when the lockdown rules are changed. Our practitioners have been keeping up with all their families via phone and Zoom. We've been making deliveries of food and other items and keeping motivated as a team with regular Zoom meetings for practitioners and the whole staff team. As some children have been able to return to school there has been some anxiety about what is best to do and our practitioners have been particularly focussed on making sure that each family is supported to make the right decision for them.

Many of you will be aware that we have recently been supported by the Mothers' Union who have taken on the task of collecting donations for our foodbank now that our support from the building company has finished. We have been overwhelmed by the generosity of MU members and are receiving a van load of donations every week. Thank you to everybody who has supported us in this way and is continuing to do so.

We remain hugely grateful to everybody for your ongoing contact, words of encouragement and financial support.

May's work in numbers

- ◆ 192 (socially distanced) visits to families and 192 phone calls supporting 49 grandparents, 336 parents and 392 children
- ◆ 16 supported meetings (virtually via Zoom/Skype etc.) with other agencies
- ◆ 352 deliveries of food and other items such as children's activities made

Prayer points

- ◆ For a family in Bognor where both parents have cancer – the mother is particularly unwell but will not leave her children and go to a hospice

- ◆ Give thanks for recent successful funding bids that have helped to replace some lost income in the short term
- ◆ Strength and support for staff members still working who are taking on the work of furloughed colleagues

*Nikki Kerr, FSW Director of Fundraising and Marketing*

### **July Gardener's Diary**

The vegetable plot should be really starting to stir in July. Now is the time to be nurturing the results of all your hard work from the last few months. Watering, weeding, staking and supporting should be on the agenda. Climbing beans will be growing skyward along their frames and will need some regular, gentle intervention to keep them there. Continue to fill temporary gaps that appear between crop cycles with quick growing varieties such as radishes or lettuce, so there's no wasted space in the garden!

*Keith Winter*

### **News from King's Academy, Ringmer**

Governors and staff have been working hard to get the school ready to offer face to face teaching to some of our Year 10 students. Due to lack of facilities, space or resources, home learning has not been easy and for some students we are pleased that we can now offer learning at Ringmer, all be it in individual learning spaces.

Our staff have now increased online "live" teaching to include our younger students and the response to this has been fantastic. Our students have risen to the challenge and have even produced some amazing examples of original work in Design Technology using food tins and paper. Mrs White our D.T. teacher will soon be head hunted by Blue Peter!

Like the rest of our world, school is going to be a hugely different place as we incorporate the social distancing criteria and hygiene practices. Our Principal, Mrs Williams, is determined that we should benefit from the experiences of the past months and incorporate the best of our new learning practices into future teaching. Using these skills for homework and at times of school closure will add a range of options for both staff and students. We have all had to adapt during lockdown and some of the changes have provided a positive opportunity. For our new Year 7s we are truly sorry that you haven't been able to visit us personally but you should have all received postcards from your "Buddy" and will ensure that you are made very welcome when you arrive.

Finally, we would like to thank all our parents and carers who have provided support and guidance to our students through what has been an exceedingly difficult time. We can't wait to see and hear the school full of your children again. It is a very empty place without them. We wish you a very enjoyable summer and we will of course be providing updates on how the school will operate as things progress.

*Stephen W. Green, Environmental Coordinator, King's Academy Ringmer*

### **My Front Lawn - Plant It and They Will Come**

Do you remember that Kevin Costner movie, Field Of Dreams? Kev plays an Iowa farmer who, after hearing strange voices, transforms his land into a baseball pitch and summons the ghosts of a long-dead baseball team. Ridiculous. Yet, when I bought my first home eight years ago and stood on my new, perfectly manicured 15ft by 20ft suburban front lawn, all I could hear were voices in my head telling me to destroy it.

Rumours spread of my debauched gardening plans. My new neighbours eyed me with suspicion – especially when they overheard that I was planning to hire a stripper for the weekend. The clattering of the petrol-powered turf stripper was only drowned out by my maniacal laughter as I razed the 300 square feet of lawn to mud. You could hear the house prices dropping all along the cul-de-sac. The neighbourhood watched from behind twitching curtains as I carefully broadcast native wildflower seeds over the bare soil. Through the wet winter my front lawn looked ready to host a re-enactment of The Battle of Agincourt. And then Spring came.

Meadow Buttercup, Oxeye Daisy, Cowslip, Yellow Rattle, Lady's Bedstraw, Crested Dogstail, Red Clover, Ragged Robin. The ground erupted into a riot of colour. And then the wildlife arrived. Bees, bee-flies, beetles, burnets and butterflies. Unusual species appeared too: Wall Brown and Brown Hairstreak butterflies, Ghost Moths, Wasp Spiders and a lone Common Spotted Orchid. On summer days my mini-meadow sang to me; a choir of buzzing bumblebees and chirruping grasshoppers. My own nature reserve; beautiful, wild, endlessly fascinating and filled with life. I am genuinely bemused as I watch my neighbours struggle with their lawnmowers each week. Why go out of your way to kill something when you can just sit back and let it live? I simply swing my scythe and mow my meadow once at the end of the summer. I imagine I look like that shirtless bloke from Poldark (although I actually resemble a chunky but cheerful Grim Reaper).

Wildflower meadows were once a widespread feature of the English countryside but since the 1930's we have tragically lost 97% of our flower-rich fields. Many have been improved with fertilisers, re-seeded with faster growing grasses or ploughed for arable crops. This in turn has caused a massive decline in many species of wildlife that depend on them. By creating my own humble field of dreams it feels as if I am summoning the ghosts of the English countryside and giving them life. And then, last month, I turned

the corner to see a deer, an actual wild Roe Deer, lost in suburbia but stood seemingly at home in my meadow. Ridiculous. If you're interested in creating your own wildflower meadow search 'Sussex Wildlife Trust' and 'garden wildflower meadow' online.

*Michael Blencowe of the Sussex Wildlife Trust*

## **Saving Water**

Together we can make a big difference. When it is hot and with more people at home water use has increased. We're pumping millions of litres more through our pipes to keep up – but there may be low pressure at times for some people. You can help us make sure everyone has the water they need to drink, cook, wash and clean with, when they need it. Small changes, like leaving your lawn to go brown and not washing the car, can make a huge difference. Water is precious, whatever the weather. Thank you for being a water saving hero. More water saving tips are at [www.southeastwater.co.uk](http://www.southeastwater.co.uk)

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## **Benefice Clergy**

Revd Peter Blee  
Rector of Berwick and Vicar of Selmeston with Alciston  
The Parsonage, Berwick, Polegate, BN26 6SR  
Tel: 01323 870512 Email: [peter.blee@berwickchurch.org.uk](mailto:peter.blee@berwickchurch.org.uk)  
Peter's day off is Saturday.

Revd Frank Fox-Wilson - Assistant Priest  
The Vicarage, Wilmington, Polegate, BN26 5SL  
Tel: 01323 871148 Email: [frank.fox-wilson@berwickchurch.org.uk](mailto:frank.fox-wilson@berwickchurch.org.uk)  
Frank's 'on duty' days are Saturday, Sunday and Monday.

## **Churchwardens**

Alciston - Michèle Boys Tel: 01323 870623  
Berwick – Vacant  
Selmeston - Jan Matthews Tel: 01323 811380

## **Benefice Administrator**

Stephanie Lewis-Grey Tel: 01323 811136 Email: [benefice.administrator@berwickchurch.org.uk](mailto:benefice.administrator@berwickchurch.org.uk)

## **Parish News Advertising and Distribution**

This is coordinated by Jeremy and Valerie Shaw. Tel: 01323 811567.

## **Parish News**

This "digital issue" is also available on the benefice church's website [www.sussexdownlandchurches.org.uk](http://www.sussexdownlandchurches.org.uk) and Berwick Parish Council's website [www.berwickparishcouncil.org.uk](http://www.berwickparishcouncil.org.uk). We are anticipating that future issues will be distributed in this way until things return to normal.

As the "digital issues" do not include advertising, we intend to include the advertisements in the printed issues until they have appeared in a full 12 month's issues.

The production team is Jane Anderson and Martin Chilvers.  
Contributions (other than advertising requests) should be sent to Martin Chilvers by the 12<sup>th</sup> of the month.  
Email: [empty.sea@outlook.com](mailto:empty.sea@outlook.com); Post: 66 Parkfield Avenue, Eastbourne, BN22 9SF.  
You should receive confirmation of receipt by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month, but if not, please call him on 01323 507655.

Contributions can also be passed on to one of the coordinators:  
Jane Anderson at Old Postman's Cottage, Alciston Tel: 01323 870075.  
Valerie Shaw at Selmeston House, Selmeston Tel: 01323 811567.  
Laurie Tinsley, Wynsford, Berwick Tel: 01323 870895.

## **Donations**

Financial donations to the Parish News are gratefully received. Cheques payable to "Parish News" can be passed to the Treasurer, Valerie Shaw, Selmeston House, Selmeston, Polegate, BN26 6UD. Alternatively, electronic donations can be made to Barclays Bank - Account No. 70650625; Sort code 20-49-76.

We are very grateful for donations last month from Mr and Mrs Gordon and Berwick Produce Show.