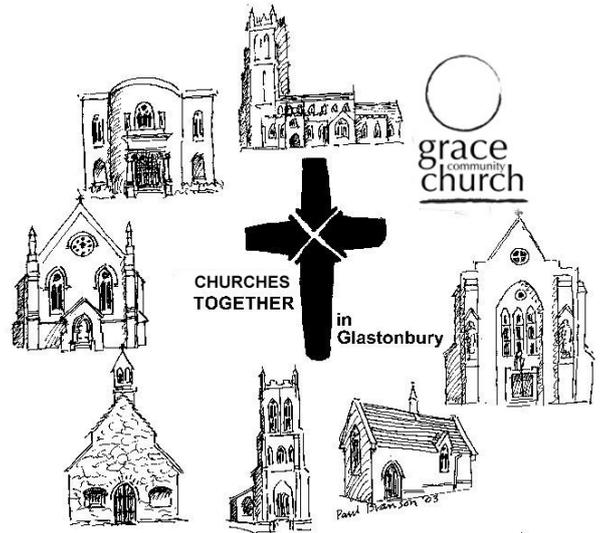


Glastonbury Together in prayer

A news sheet for members of Glastonbury churches during the crisis caused by Covid 19



Assess the risks

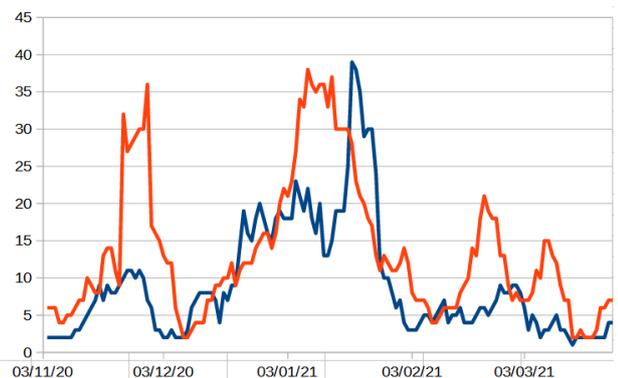
You may have seen or heard news reports of police raiding a Good Friday service at a Polish Catholic Church and stopping it for breaching regulations. What are the restrictions on church attendance at the moment? The first thing to note is that the rules for church attendance and gatherings elsewhere are not the same. The guidelines online are updated regularly and are long covering many issues. For communal worship the guidance says *“Limits for communal worship should be decided on the basis of the capacity of the place of worship following an assessment of risk.”* With some small exceptions face coverings are required in church by law. People, except household bubbles, should also be socially distanced which is normally 2 metres but can be reduced to 1 metre if *extra steps are taken to stay safe*. This will determine how many can safely attend services on a building by building basis. As an example Fr Bede, in his blog, notes that for St Mary’s the assessed capacity is 50 *“individuals or support bubbles”*. The regulations give good news for music in church from 28th March: *a single small group of singers will be allowed to perform, or rehearse for performance, only where essential to an act of communal worship. This should be limited to as few singers as possible, with social distancing being maintained at all times. Communal singing should not take place.* The opportunity for all to sing is likely to be much delayed as care will continue to be needed for some time.

A bumpy ride

After making comments in earlier newsletters about the level of infection in our area I have been asked about the data. At this time last year we were all wondering when Somerset would be hit as infection levels were low. But the infection did reach us and although levels have been lower than in some parts of the country there have been significant cases locally. The data is published online by area with data for infections diagnosed in the previous 7 days. This data can be recorded and used to see how levels vary over time. Alongside is a graph showing the infection levels for Glastonbury Town (blue line) and Street Village (orange line) areas compared for the period from early November to mid March. This data show a bumpy road with a strong peak after the Christmas holiday slightly earlier in Street than in Glastonbury. The levels have fallen since then but with new peaks suggesting care is still needed. Hopefully people have been careful over Easter and we will not see a new peak as a result of celebrations.

In Church - online is this the future?

As the situation eases and more of our congregations have the opportunity to attend worship in church should we continue online? For Easter Sunday the Anglicans at both St Benedict’s and St John’s held services in church for the first time in months. Both were livestreamed, via Facebook or via Zoom. Both are now available as recordings on their websites. Limits on the numbers who can attend in person will remain for some time to come, both because of government guidelines and personal views of risk. Lack of access to services in churches may seem new but in fact there have been housebound people unable to attend church for most of time. Access to the internet is not universal but is increasing. Even when restrictions on personal attendance are eased keeping online services going will allow those who cannot attend for any reason to access the services. Has God, via the pandemic, shown us a way forward!



The Acts of the Apostles

Following on from the life of Jesus

For the Easter season the lectionary gives readings from the Acts of the Apostles to replace the more usual readings from the Old Testament giving the Jewish background to our faith. This book follows on from the Gospel of Luke and its opening (in my first book Theophilus...) says it was written by the same author. Acts, as it is often abbreviated, gives the early history of the Church of Jesus Christ from the Ascension. At the beginning the message was taken to the Jews but when they started to reject it the Church is taken to the gentiles under the guidance of Peter. This shows how a Church based on the Jewish Messiah became a mainly gentile Church after the message was rejected by the Jews. The title "Acts of the Apostles" first appears in the late second century and is not the text itself. Whilst it is believed that the book was written towards the end of the first century the earliest surviving manuscripts date from the 4th and 6th centuries.



The writing of the book can in modern terms be seen as a sequel to the Gospel that precedes it. Without the Gospel, and in particular the resurrection, Acts would have no meaning. Tom Wright writing in his "Acts for Everyone" describes it as "*The deeds and teaching of King Jesus II*", not a second Jesus but the continuation of His story. This is a message about the work of God through the Holy Spirit as the risen Lord tells his followers that they will be baptised by the Spirit. It is also a message for the whole world as after receiving the Spirit the apostles are told they will be witnesses to the work of Jesus to the ends of the earth. It can be read as a history and as all histories it only contains part of the story. If you write, or have written, a diary you will know that you have to be selective as there is not time or space to say everything that happened - but what you do write should be the important highlights. That the book and the other writings that form our New Testament have survived is a testament to their importance to the people to whom they were originally addressed, who first read them and then copied and passed them on to their friends.

Thine is/be the Glory

A popular hymn for the Easter season "À toi la gloire" was written by Edmond Budry and translated to English by Richard Hoyle. Budry was a Swiss hymn writer and pastor who wrote a few hymns and translated others from German, English and Latin into French. The English translation of his hymn has alternative words in different hymnals. Whilst the words scan similarly they are subtly different so that it becomes important to know the translation in use if you are to sing the hymn in church. Very suitable for this time of year the first verse tells of the stone rolled away and the folded grave clothes. The second verse then tells how Jesus greets us lovingly to scatter fear. With only small differences in the first two verses the third verse is very different. Which version of those shown below do you know?

Thine was the suff'ring, mine the endless life. Sin holds no dominion; love wins over strife. What then shall I offer? Songs that never cease! Thou hast won the vict'ry, glorious Prince of Peace!	No more we doubt thee, glorious Prince of Life; life is naught without thee: aid us in our strife; make us more than conquerors through thy deathless love; bring us safe through Jordan to thy home above:
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A look at the Lectionary - Easter 2 / 3

On the 2nd Sunday of Easter there is a short reading from Acts saying that the believers shared everything in common. The reading stops short of the verse giving an example where Barnabas sold a field he owned. The Gospel reading comes from John 20 following the resurrection. It gives the story of Thomas who had not been present earlier when Jesus appeared to His followers and has led to him being known as "doubting Thomas". Perhaps a better description might be believing Thomas as the story is about how he comes to believe and is a message for us at a time remote from the happenings. Indeed the passage ends by telling us that the Gospel only records some of the miraculous works that Jesus performed. Those recorded it says are so we may continue to believe in Jesus as the Son of God. On the 3rd Sunday

of Easter we hear from Acts about Peter preaching to the "People of Israel". He takes the opportunity from crowds who recognise that a previously lame beggar has been healed and can now walk, a similar lesson to that preached by Jesus earlier in the Gospel story. The Gospel reading for the 3rd Sunday follows on from the story of the road to Emmaus which was the set reading for evening services on Easter Sunday. Whilst being told by the walkers about their experience, Jesus appears to the assembled group and reassures them that he is not a ghost by showing his wounds and by sharing food with them. He then opened their minds to understand the scriptures he had previously told them about. The message of forgiveness of sins for those who repent is to be proclaimed in Jesus name to all nations beginning in Jerusalem.