

Ashwater with Black Torrington Benefice Bulletin

Ashwater	Beaworthy	Black Torrington	Clawton	Halwill	Highampton	Tetcott
St. Peter Ad Vincula	St. Alban	St. Mary	St. Leonard	St. Peter & St. James	Holy Cross	Holy Cross

March 2021



Photo by Aaron Burden on Unsplash

“HOW DO WE GRADUALLY EMERGE FROM ‘LOCKDOWN’?”

Everybody is asking the Government to tell us their ‘Grand Plan’ for how our nation can emerge out of our unprecedented ‘lockdown’ – which has felt as though it has lasted a small lifetime. By the time you read this article we might have a clearer idea of when schools will fully reopen, non-essential shops can open their doors, pubs and restaurants offer ‘sit down’ service, and we can at last go on holiday! All contingent upon the new strains of the virus not causing new problems.

The churches must also begin to seriously plan how they will reopen for communal worship. Public Services are already allowed to happen by the Government, but the majority of churches have not felt it safe to do so, and so have obtained the necessary ‘Dispensation’ by the diocesan Bishop until the end of March (if needed). Most churches should still be open for private prayer, and small Funerals are being held (although surprisingly few and far between). Mothering Sunday, Palm Sunday, Holy Week and Easter beckon – so what shall we do at these important occasions?

Our Benefice Group, of churchwardens and parish reps will be meeting in the last week of

February to discuss these matters, and PCCs will also be making decisions about these matters before too long. We need to achieve a delicate balance between ensuring people remain safe from the virus and giving people the hugely important spiritual opportunity of experiencing fellowship with each other and our Lord 'in person'. It would be interesting to know where you think the balance should be struck, as people get their vaccination and the virus recedes (please God!). One possible, safe, route is through a series of open-air Services held in our churchyards on Sunday afternoons (as we did with fair success last Summer). I favour this idea, as a way for us to gradually get used to meeting again for worship amidst the beauties of Springtime. What do you think of this suggestion?

There is, however, a deeper challenge for our churches, and people we care about, who have been self-isolating for so long that it might prove difficult to re-emerge into the world of social interaction. Some might find it psychologically difficult to emerge out of a state of reclusiveness in order to reconnect with others – and some might not even particularly care to do so. We have been urged by the Government to keep our distance from others for so long that some might be fearful of others at quite a deep level. On the other hand there are many who can't wait to hug their friends and family!

So, what can we do to help ourselves and others in our communities to gradually emerge from 'lockdown'? Here are some suggestions, according to when the Government permits these things to happen. These would need to be prayed about with care – so that you make suggestions sensitively and appropriately for the people you care for:

- ~ invite a neighbour to join you for a short walk in the area. In due course we might arrange group walks, perhaps even ending with tea and cake in a safe venue, or a picnic.
- ~ An Open Air Coffee Morning in one of our churchyards, with everyone bringing a flask and biscuits
- ~ Arrange to go round to a person known to you who has self-isolated or is rather immobile, for a cup of tea in their garden, home, or local 'open space'.
- ~ Suggest accompanying a friend or neighbour on a shopping trip, or for a cup of coffee at a café, to build their sense of confidence as they return to the 'wider world'.

And if you feel anxious about re-emerging into the wider world then why not chat to a friend, neighbour, or indeed myself about how you feel? Take courage and make a phone call – people will be pleased to offer you support to help you emerge with renewed hope and faith for the future. Look in prayer to the God of 'new beginnings' who will help you make a fresh new start in 2021!

Revd Stephen Skinner (written: 12 / 2 / 21)

Readings for March 2021

For you to read or study for yourself or to prepare for one of
our services



<p>Sunday 7th March Lent 3</p> <p>Exodus 20: 1 – 17 Psalm 19 1 Corinthians 1: 18 – 25 John 2: 13 – 22</p>	<p>Sunday 14th March Mothering Sunday</p> <p>1 Samuel a: 20 – end Psalm 34 Colossians 3: 12 – 17 John 19: 25 – 27</p>	<p>Sunday 21st March Passiontide begins</p> <p>Jeremiah 31: 31 – 34 Psalm 51 Hebrews 5: 5 – 10 John 12: 20 – 23</p>
<p>Sunday 28th March Palm Sunday</p> <p>Isaiah 50: 4 – 9 Psalm 31: 9 – 16 Philippians 2: 5 – 11 Mark 11: 1 – 11</p>	<p><u>Holy Week Gospel Readings</u></p> <p>Monday 29th John 12: 1 – 11 Tuesday 30th John 12: 20 – 36 Wednesday 31st Jon 13: 21 – 32 Maundy Thursday - April 2nd John 13: 1 – 17, 31 – 35 Good Friday - April 2nd John 18: 1 – 19: end Easter Eve - Saturday April 3rd Matthew 27: 57 - end</p>	

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Packed full of resources for churches, news stories, messages from Senior Clergy, future events and much more!

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DIOCESE OF EXETER
THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND IN DEVON

pray
 grow
 serve with joy



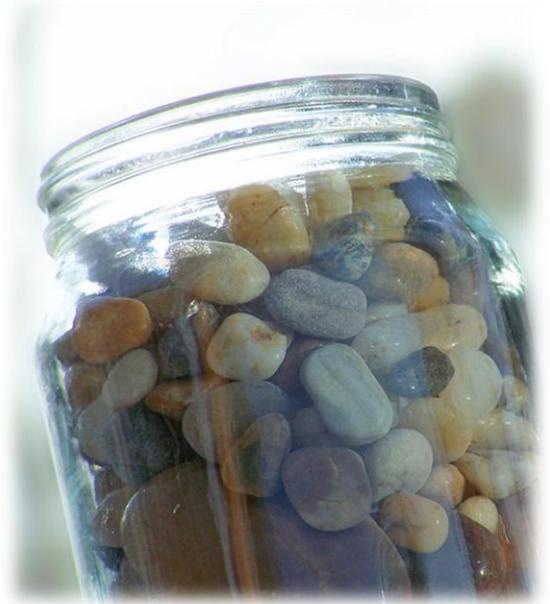
"TWENTY YEARS AGO - A DIFFERENT DEADLY DISEASE"

Over the past year we have been understandably fixated upon the dreadful coronavirus pandemic. We are told that about 120,000 people have died from it, to date, in the United Kingdom. Devon has come out of this fairly lightly, with just 85 deaths recorded as at now in Torridge and West Devon areas combined. People have been extremely cautious in our areas, and this has obviously helped keep hospital admissions and deaths from covid19 amongst the lowest in the country. Long may this continue, I hear from Radio 4's "Farming Today" that many farmers are affected adversely in terms of physical and mental health, along with the economic consequences of the pandemic.

Twenty years ago Devon was one of the epicentres of the terrible Foot and Mouth disease. Careful as our Devon farmers were in that situation too, the consequences for livestock and farmers was terrible. I lived in Cumbria at that time - a county similarly dreadfully affected by this disease. I remember vividly the stench of the pyres of burning animals near Carlisle, just as many were affected by the pyres near Holsworthy. The emotional and financial consequences were devastating, and it took many farmers years to recover.

So, let's spare a thought for farmers as they encounter a different but still deadly disease, and also pray especially for them at this tough time. More background on all this, practical support groups, and some suitable prayers, can be found on the Churches "Arthur Rank Agricultural Centre" website.

Stephen Skinner



March 2021

A vicar stood before his congregation, he picked up a large empty jar and proceeded to fill it with rocks. He then asked the congregation if the jar was full. They agreed that it was. Therefore, the vicar then picked up a box of pebbles and poured them into the jar. He shook the jar lightly. The pebbles, of course, rolled into the open areas between the rocks. He then asked the congregation again if the jar was full. They agreed it was.

The vicar picked up a box of sand and poured it into the jar. Of course, the sand filled up everything else. "Now," said the vicar, "I want you to recognize that this is your life. The rocks are the important things - your faith, your hopes, your dreams, your family, health, educations, and the things that bring joy - anything that is so important to you that if it were lost, you would be nearly destroyed. "The pebbles are the other things that matter like your job, your, house, your car. "The sand is everything else. The small stuff.

"If you put the sand into the jar first, there is no room for the pebbles or the rocks. The same goes for your life. If you spend all your energy and time on the small stuff, you will never have room for the things that are important to you. "Take care of the rocks first - the things that really matter."

Lent is a time to reconsider our jar, and how we fill it...the Pandemic too has forced many of us to think about our priorities. As we pray that we are coming to the end of this stage of the virus, let's get our priorities right as a country, society, communities and as individuals. Priorities I would like to suggest based on kindness, hospitality, welcome, equality and faith. Priorities not about self but about serving others with joy.

Praying for a holy & reflective Lent...

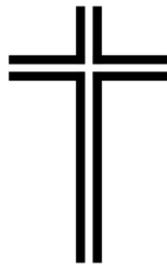
Andrew

Andrew Beane, Archdeacon of Exeter

In light of the Government's impending changes to our lockdown measures and the success of the countrywide vaccination programme, we are being cautiously hopeful that we will be able to bring you some 'in person' services in March for Holy Week.

Watch out for details on future Pew Sheets!

In the meantime, services are continuing on Zoom. All are welcome to 'attend', all you need to do is ask Revd. Stephen for the meeting code and password. Revd. Stephen's details can be found on the back page.



We have been informed by Sandra Ward that Carolyn Tanner's funeral will be held at 12 noon on Wednesday 17th March 2021.

Revd. Stephen Skinner will be leading the service with Jim Williams supporting. If anyone from Halwill Church remembers her would like to attend, they are invited to, but please do maintain social distancing at all times.

Please note that government guidance specifies that a total of only 30 people can currently attend a funeral.

When we first entered Lockdown, many people took on new hobbies – as you may have been able to tell from last year’s shortages of flour and yeast, many people took up a spot of baking!

There are many good bakers among us, but if you fancy doing a little bit of baking in the run-up to Easter (and the thought of Hot Cross Buns or Simnel Cake seem a little bit too daunting!) below is an old 1937 recipe, adapted for modern usage.

Recipe for Traditional Easter Biscuits

Ingredients:

225g Self-Raising Flour

115g Butter

115g Sugar

55g currants

1 Egg

Method:

- **Set the oven to 170°C**
- **Rub the butter into the flour**
- **Add the sugar and currants**
- **Stir in the beaten egg and form into a ball**
- **Roll out on a floured surface and use a fluted cutter to cut out the biscuits.**
- **Place on a floured baking tray and bake for around 15-15 minutes until golden brown.**

! Be careful not to overbake as they burn very easily !

Please note: If you have any messages or notices that you wish to feature in April’s bulletin, please provide details to Kay Napier by emailing zena.napier@gmail.com or calling (01409) 221 321 **no later than 15th March** otherwise it may not be included.

Please do feel free to submit any comments, prayers, stories, meditations, images – anything at all will be considered. This Bulletin is for all in our Benefice, and is not simply for events.

HOLY HABITS

ZOOM LENT COURSE 2021

Guided by scripture

Tuesday 23rd February

Until Tuesday 30th March

11.00 am—12.00 noon

serving with gladness

*All material taken from
Luke's gospel.*

Sharing bread

Please contact Revd Stephen Skinner
If you would like to join us.

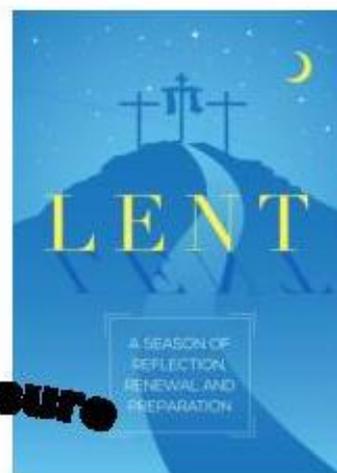
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Praying

Making disciples

Generous under pressure



“HOLY HABITS” FOR LENT COURSE

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Introduction

Welcome to this Lenten and Holy Week course, which takes participants on a journey looking at Holy Habits in the life and passion of Jesus. The prayer of those who have produced this material is that it will draw those who engage with it into a deeper experience of following Jesus in today’s needy world and living the way of life both he and the early church modelled.

The material in this book is designed for use with small groups or small congregations.

All of the biblical material is taken from Luke’s gospel. The Holy Week material draws on texts from Luke’s account of that week.

Holy Habits is an adventure in whole-life Christian discipleship that draws on Luke’s cameo of the early church in Acts 2:42–47. It encourages the development and renewal of ten key practices, or holy habits, that were modelled by Jesus and were formative for the earliest Christian communities. They remain foundational for healthy growth in discipleship today in both the gathered church context and the dispersed discipleship of day-by-day life at work, at home and in the community. The ten habits are: **biblical teaching, fellowship, breaking bread, prayer, sharing resources, serving, eating together, gladness and generosity, worship and making more disciples**. In each session, particular focus is given to one or more of the habits, and these are highlighted at the beginning of the material for the session.

This material is suitable for both those who are new to Holy Habits and those who have journeyed with this way of forming disciples for some time. For those who are new to this approach to discipleship, more information about Holy Habits and details of other resources can be found at **holyhabits.org.uk**. The vision for the website is that it will grow as a community of learning, so if you have any stories to share from your journey through Lent and Holy Week, please make contact via the website.



Don't forget, for those of you with facebook, we do have a Benefice page. It can be found at facebook.com/Ashwater-with-Black-Torrington-Highampton-Benefice-102701584683849 or by searching for "Ashwater with Black Torrington & Highampton Benefice"



And for those of you in the Halwill Area, Halwill Churches Together have recently set up a page. Halwill Church often works alongside the Methodists and Baptists in the area to create services and forms of sharing our faith in the local community. Please do feel free to visit and follow the page.



Halwill Churches Together

@HalwillChurchesTogether · Religious organisation

Send Message

“ONE MORE SPRING”

If the good Lord were to come to me this night
and say that I was about to draw my last breath of this earth’s air,
I would ask him if I could see yet one more Spring;
if one more time I could see the earth green and flower,
watch again the bare outline of trees colour with soft, young, green.

I would ask to witness delicate snowdrops,
breaking through the last winter snow,
vibrant daffodils heralding the rising of the sun higher in our sky,
and the solitary flowering of the blackthorn,
pioneering the return of life to the hedgerow.

I would ask to feel again the sun growing warmer on my face,
to see the retreat of winter’s night,
and wake again to a brighter, earlier dawn.

I would ask for another morning to hear the blackbird burst into song,
another night to listen for the cry of the tawny owl seeking her mate,
another Spring to welcome the swallow’s return.

For I will measure my life not by the winters I have endured,
but by the Springs I have enjoyed;
though I mourn for all that I have watched pass from this life,
I celebrate all the good and beauty that I have seen brought to birth.

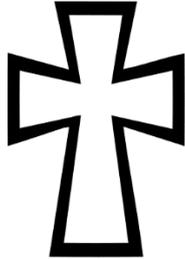
For springtime is the renewal of beauty and hope;
it is the power of life overcoming the hold of death;
it is nature’s expression of resurrection,
the sign that God brings the renewing of all things.

So, Lord, may I see yet another Spring,
that my heart will be filled with joy at its beauty,
and my faith renewed through the wonder of the season,
before I enter into that eternal springtime where,
You are making all things new.

(Simon Taylor in “Spring” sourcebook published by Iona.)

I chose this powerful poem of ‘longing’ for Spring, again, shortly before my operation for a double hernia at Barnstaple Hospital. It expresses to me so powerfully a God-given longing for life now, and yet an even more beautiful eternal springtime in future. I hope it inspires you too, as we gradually emerge from the Winter of ‘lockdown’ into Spring.

Stephen Skinner



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St. Alban, Beaworthy EX21 5AB

St. Mary, Black Torrington EX21 5PU

St Leonard, Clawton EX22 6PS

St. Peter & St. James, Halwill EX21 5UH

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Holy Cross, Tetcott EX22 6QZ

The Priest in Charge of our churches Revd. Stephen Skinner can be contacted by telephoning 07554 142 264 or emailing sjmskinners@btinternet.com