

St James Parish Newsletter

10th January 2021



Our Mission Statement

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind...and your neighbour as yourself. Matthew 22:37-38

Sunday Podcasts of each Sunday Morning Service are available after the service on YouTube.

A time to speak

Parish Podcast on the YouTube channel. The address for both is at the bottom of the page.

Thank you

My thanks and appreciation for all those who have contacted me via phone, text and email in support of the difficult decision we had to make to close St James again. Although it was not easy, it was encouraging to note on Monday that nearly every other Anglican Church has taken the same step in solidarity and support, not only with those who are struggling with the virus, but with one another.

Mark

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ

At the start of all this present crisis I asked if there was anything that could be learnt, and was/is God trying to say or show something that he needed us to hear or see?

Here are some of the things I have learned:

First, the current crisis is showing us the true state of our character as Christians. And what should that character be like? Like Christ who showed in his life what we know as the fruit of the Spirit:

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23)

Using these then as the basis of our self-examination let’s ask ourselves some questions:

- ◆ In all of what we are going through am I loving like Christ? Or am I being spiteful and resentful?
- ◆ Have I a joy that is able to rise above my outward circumstances? Or do I allow the absence of worldly things to affect how I feel?
- ◆ Do I, despite the hardships and deprivations, still have a deep sense of peace as I trust in God? Or am I in constant anxiety and fear?
- ◆ Am I being patient in the difficulties I face? Or am I short-tempered and quick to blame others?
- ◆ Am I kind towards others? Or am I unforgiving and dismissive?
- ◆ Am I striving, with the Holy Spirit’s help, to live like Christ? Or am I being dragged down to the world’s standards?
- ◆ Am I staying faithful to God through daily prayer and reading the Scriptures? Or have I let things drift because I have no weekly routine of Sunday worship?
- ◆ Am I gentle and understanding of the perceived failures of others? Or am I carping and critical?
- ◆ Am I growing in self control? Or am I self-indulgent and self-pitying?

And **second**, the current crisis also helps reveal the health of the body of Christ, the Church. Much of the New Testament letters are given over to this subject and if we read through the letters of Paul we will see that it was something that really bothered him. One thing in particular was the disunity in the Church. That instead of pulling together under one leader there was infighting, factions, and people vying for position and power in the church.

Jesus knew all about this too. He once warned: “...no city or house divided against itself will stand” and “Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me, scatters” (Matthew 12:25, 30).

Both of these provide us with uncomfortable questions about ourselves and our church. We need to carefully listen to what God is saying to us or our mission will fail and Christ died for nothing.

God bless,

Mark

THIS NEWSLETTER IS AVAILABLE ON THE PARISH WEBSITE:

www.stjamesswansea.org.uk

St. James Sunday Services on YouTube are available here:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCoNvea6r8mEr_KnOkSv6qQA/

The Vicar’s New blog can be found here: sonofzebedee.blogspot.com



Five Questions

- 1 What is your name? - Elizabeth Joy Coles (formerly Hughes, nee Willett)
- 2 Where were you born? - Bearstead Maternity Hospital near Teddington
- 3 What is your earliest memory of Church? - Going to Sunbeams (Sunday School for under 5s) in Teddington Baptist Church. I remember singing choruses with actions and listening to Bible stories, then afterwards playing with toys (my favourite was the bricks).
- 4&5 What is your favourite Bible verse and why? - This is difficult as there are so many.
 - (a). Psalm 23 - the first Psalm I learned by heart; it is so well remembered, I cannot forget it.
 - (b). Psalm 139 - not discovered until middle age, it reminds me how well God knows me (and still he loves me!).
 - (c). Numbers 6: 24-26 - Aaron's blessing, in particular the version that includes the phrase "the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you". This reminds me of a very close friend who died about 15 years ago. When I visited him in hospital, he was so pleased to see me his face lit up and he almost jumped in the air. This expression of sheer delight is how I envisage the Lord greeting me when I finally meet him.
 - (d). Hebrews 11 - verses 24-27 were the Memory Passage in one of the Scripture Union exams that I took as a child; a faith to aim for.



Don't let your unwanted fruit go to waste

I'm sure you've seen unwanted apples, and other fruit, rotting on the ground in Swansea during the summer and early autumn. This is a sad waste of potential food in a city where many people go hungry. Towards the end of 2020 a small group of us got together, calling ourselves

Sweet Pickings, to organize the picking of unwanted fruit to redistribute it to places like Matt's Cafe and local food banks. We plan to start harvesting this year.

At the moment we're beginning the process of identifying fruit trees, both on public and private land, and we're asking for your help in locating them. These trees could be in parks, in open areas like the front in Mumbles, or in gardens. We will use this information to make a map of unharvested fruit trees in the greater Swansea area and will contact the landowner for permission to pick.

This may seem like a strange time of year to be asking about fruit trees, particularly with all the upheaval caused by the coronavirus. The reason we need to locate unpicked fruit trees as soon as possible is because we're writing grants to raise money for this project. Part of the grant proposal requires that we

demonstrate that the project is viable which includes showing that fruit that would otherwise go to waste will be available to pick.

We would be most grateful for any information you could give us on fruit trees that typically go unpicked, including, for private land, any information about the landowner to help us contact him or her. Please contact us too if you'd like to be involved in other ways, we'll definitely be looking for volunteers to help pick and redistribute the fruit later in the year.

You can reach us at info@sweetpickings.org or you can phone Anna at 07403 674516.

Contact information

For all contributions to the newsletter please email the Vicar, Mark, at:

stjamesuplands1@googlemail.com

Home phone number: (01792) 470532

The Parish Website can be found at: www.stjamesswansea.org.uk

Epiphany 1

Collect

Eternal Father, who at the baptism of Jesus revealed him to be your Son, anointing him with the Holy Spirit:
grant to us, who are born again by water and the Spirit, that we may be faithful to our calling as your adopted children;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen

Readings

Genesis 1: 1 - 5

Psalm 29

Acts 19: 1 - 7

Mark 1:1 - 11

Quick quotes

The Future

"Don't worry about the future - worry quenches the work of God within you. The future belongs to God. He is in charge of all things. Never second-guess Him".

Francois Fenelon

Worry

J Arthur Rank, an English executive, decided to do all his worrying on one day each week. He chose Wednesdays. When anything happened that gave him anxiety and annoyed his ulcer, he would write it down and put it in his worry box and forget about it until next Wednesday. The interesting thing was that on the following Wednesday when he opened his worry box, he found that most of the things that had disturbed him during the past six days were already settled. It would have been useless to have worried about them.

Leadership

"The trouble with being a leader today is that you can't be sure whether people are following you or chasing you"