

Ambassador

August 2020



Parish magazine of the Roughton Benefice - comprising Roughton, Bessingham, Felbrigg, Sustead, Metton and Hanworth with Gunton

www.roughtonbenefice.uk

45p

Who's Who in our Benefice

Rector: Vacant

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August letter, Roughton Benefice 2020

Dear Friend,

What a difference a month of days can make. When I wrote to you in the June magazine we were still deep in "lock-down" but now as July approaches August, it is rather like Spring coming after a severe winter. The first shoots and leaves of change have started and we are feeling a little better for it.

Sadly, Coronavirus, or more correctly Covid-19, is not necessarily quite so obliging as my seasonal illustration. As I write some virus spikes, by which I mean an increase in Covid-19 outbreaks, in either people getting the disease or those who have sadly died due to catching it, are emerging around our country. Cities such as Leicester and Blackburn have had to face another period of "lock-down" and parents of school aged children are facing the dilemma of whether or not to send their children back to school in September even though they, and we, cannot yet be sure it is entirely safe to do so.

Another side of the coin it seems to me is the way in which these difficult past months have effected our view of life and living. We remain so caught up in what is happening to family, friends and colleagues that other news and events in the world pass us by like silent ships in the night. We notice a glimmer of this or that but fail to take most of it on board because we have just heard more news of what the virus is doing to people we know, like or love.

On a happier note there has apparently been a surge in people studying their family history. I was going through old family papers just as life changed in March and realized that my late father was born during the Spanish flu pandemic which began at the end of the First World War. He and his mother survived this last pregnancy of hers, and his first few months of life, even though the mortality rate of infants and young children in their region of southern England dramatically increased. This was caused by rationing and food shortages, and then the flu, which took the lives of even more people than those killed in the fighting between 1914 and 1918. I would like to have more facts about my family during this period but I will need time to build a better picture of how life was for them in that momentous year of 1918.

The same is true for us now. We cannot always see the whole picture though day by day and week by week, we hear the statistics and read accounts of people who have come out of hospital and survived the virus, or else, those who mourn and grieve for family and friends whom they have lost. I hope that in time we shall be able to look back on this extraordinary year of 2020 and understand what it has taught us, lessons learnt and what to give thanks for. Talking to people

who, like me, have recently been queuing outside shops it is apparent that we are starting to reflect on life as we now know it. We are re-arranging our priorities and the things which matter to us. I have heard a number of times people say to me that what once seemed vital or important to them in their lives is now of far less consequence. Material things, especially, have taken a tumble and I rather think that is no bad thing. After the seventy-five years following the second World War we are learning again that is human relationships which matter most. We humans are social creatures and our ability to understand, empathize, support and listen to others has re-asserted its importance. It has taken us time to learn that whilst material things can contribute to the comfort of life and living, it is the inter-action with other people in things like compassion, care, consideration and gratitude that makes human feelings so essential. I am sure by now you can see where I am going!

Over many years in Christian ministry I have noticed time and time again that people can find comfort, solace, understanding and guidance in God's Word, the Bible. An especial favourite is the book of Psalms in the Old Testament. Of course, the words of the Psalms comes largely from words expressed by one extraordinary man, the Israelite King David, who wrote about his emotions and relationship with Almighty God. It is a measure of the wonder of this book that David can, so universally, express his hopes, fears, feelings and faith in a way that even though his words have been through translation, they also speak for you and me in our lives with their ups and downs. Christians believe that through such words as these, our Creator and Redeemer speaks through His own Holy Spirit, of grace, forgiveness and love of humankind. As I daily enjoy the scenery and open skies of Norfolk I also find that the Psalms use words which help me to understand my own concerns and relationship to the Sovereign Lord God. I guess you will recognise these familiar words from psalm 19; **"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands."** and again just earlier in Psalm 16; **"You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand."** Invariably, I have found that though I may sometimes doubt God's Word in difficult times such as these, whether the circumstances are public or private, such words challenge me to recall my relationship with God and my acceptance by faith of His forgiveness and grace to me through personally knowing and trusting His Son Jesus Christ since the time when I first committed my life to Him many years ago. I am not always faithful but He always is whether or not I have recognised it.

We are not "out of the woods yet". The virus continues its savage stalk, claiming the lives of loved ones, or of other people known to us. Nevertheless, it is my experience that such words, and others elsewhere in the Bible, can put our thoughts and fears into words and expressions which we can comprehend and seek comfort from amidst all of this uncommon season of distress.

What we are going through has forced many people to reconsider or change the PACE of their lives; we simply cannot cram what we used to do in our day's routine because regulations and guidance will no longer permit it! So, each morning I try to find a short time of quiet to open my Bible and in a systematic way to prayerfully reflect on what I am reading. You may find the Psalms a real help in easing the "lock-down"; not necessarily the public one all around us, but the private and personal one that continues to rage about in our heart and mind.

Give it a try. Keep it simple. Start, for example, with Psalm 1 and chug away with maybe just one Psalm a day, or, if it seems occasionally too lengthy then try 10 verses or so, whatever is right for you. As you read, pray in your own words a simple prayer that God's Holy Spirit will be your guide to open your mind to words and thoughts which resonate for you; it is staggering how often one sentence or verse seems just right for the day ahead of us. Time after time such words can point us to how to ask God for His guidance in what the day will bring, the people we meet and the words and thoughts we shall speak and think.

Just for a moment I am tempted to wonder what will September bring! Well, I will leave that thought in God's hands, do my best to serve Him in August and trust Him for the future.

In prayer and thought

Stephen

Rev Robert Brown Trust

(Charity No. 234865)

Through the generosity of the Rev. Robert Brown Trust Fund set up in 1694

The Trustees are able to offer limited funds to help residents of Roughton over difficult periods. Applications can be made at any time of the year and will be treated in strictest confidence.

For more information or to make an application, please contact the Clerk of the Trust – Jane Blackburn on 01263-833512

Weekly Readings

As a church we follow the lectionary of the Church of England. For the coming month the readings are:

2 August Eighth Sunday after Trinity

Reading 1 Genesis 32:22-31

Psalm 17:1-7

Reading 2 Romans 9:1-5

Gospel Matthew 14:13-21

9 August Ninth Sunday after Trinity

Reading 1 Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28

Psalm 105:1-6, 16-22, 45b

Reading 2 Romans 10:5-15

Gospel Matthew 14:22-33

16 August Tenth Sunday after Trinity

Reading 1 Genesis 45:1-15

Psalm 133:

Reading 2 Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32

Gospel Matthew 15:[10-20],21-28

23 August Eleventh Sunday after Trinity

Reading 1 Exodus 1:8 to2:10

Psalm 124:

Reading 2 Romans 12:1-8

Gospel Matthew 16:21-28

30 August Twelfth Sunday after Trinity

Reading 1 Exodus 3:1-15

Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26, 45b

Reading 2 Romans 12:9-21

Gospel Matthew 16:13-20

If you want to follow the readings as we use them you can find them in the NRSV (The New Revised Standard version) of the Bible. If you do not have this translation to hand you can find it online at <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/> or <https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/explore-the-bible/>.

Craft Workshop, Mother's Union, Village halls and WI

These organisations have all suspended their activities because of the coronavirus, they will resume as soon as possible. They can be contacted via the usual contacts.

If you want someone to pray with (by phone) please feel free to ring a churchwarden, numbers on page 2.

Takeaways from Thessalonians

Writing letters today is sometimes thought to be a dying art. We ping our words, thoughts and concerns off by email and possibly, like many other people, receive our emails with only a cursory look unless we sense something is wrong or it contains vital information. One acquaintance of mine told a mutual friend that he had been surprised to receive a letter from me but I knew that the information

I wanted to share would receive more attention if I sent a letter rather than an email! Some years back a business friend of mine, operating in an office in another continent told me completely sincerely that on average he receive about 2,000 emails a week. When I asked how he handled such a volume of correspondence he shrugged his shoulders and said that he managed the most urgent or vital and the rest were lost or had to wait.

What would Apostle Paul have thought of writing by email? Well, what we do know is his genuine concern and care for his new friends in the Greek city of Thessalonica. When he writes Paul is sincere, caring, thoughtful but also forthright and it all comes clearly across. If you or me were a new and young Christian believer I imagine we would feel understood and supported if someone wrote as did Paul, these words at the start of their letter to us:

“We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.”

On the Sundays when we meet once again in Felbrigg church building [and a few others besides] we will ponder those opening words, and more, by Paul. His thankfulness for those new believers at Thessalonika, his memory or remembrance of them, probably most by name and one by one in many cases; his gratitude for their hard work and efforts [labour] as also their perseverance and persistence [endurance].

Friends with qualities like that are worth having, wouldn't you agree?

When Paul had first arrived in the city of Thessalonika with some other Christian colleagues, including Silas [Acts 17:4] he did what he always tried to do which was to go and preach in the local synagogue. He did so for three Sundays but his time in the city ended badly with people rejecting what he said, rioting and causing mayhem so that for the sake of the new believers there it was best that he left Thessalonika rather than stay on and cause more dispute and upset [Acts 17:10]. Hard to be parted from good new friends because other people think they know best or assume you are wrong and they are right.

I am sure we have both met people like that over the years.

So when Paul writes to his friends, who he met in Thessalonika, he commends them for their faith and courage, their hard work and their generosity. He offered some

practical advice about living and working as Christians and answered some questions that he knew concerned them. He so wanted to see them again but that was not going to prove an easy option. Sometimes misunderstood, Paul ended his first letter to them with such words as these:

" Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Jesus Christ. May God himself, the God of Peace, sanctify you through and through." [1Th 5: 16-17;23a]

All this seems quite topical when we remember that a recent British investigation into the persecution of Christians worldwide concluded that such angst and violence is at its highest level for many a year.

Takeaways from Thessalonians

4. July 2020

To The United Benefice of Roughton.

Really to all of you lovely people - a very great big "Thank you" for your very kind gift. We have a blank canvas in the garden so there is plenty of scope to be creative. Which nicely brings me to the wonderful rose plant, it arrived yesterday, "Absolutely fabulous."

Our exit from the Benefice was a little different from normal, so our "goodbye" was also not usual. However, we keep you all in our prayers & thoughts for the future.
Our love in Christ Janet & Peter

Zephaniah

There are several people in the Old Testament called Zephaniah. One of them was a holy man who was included in the list of the ancestors of Jesus and also descended from the great King David – see Matthew 1.10. The implication is that he was the same person as the prophet who lived during the reign of Josiah, 16th King of Judah in the 7th century BC. The text says he was the son of Cushi which suggests he was partly descended from a Cushite of Ethiopia.

In early life, Zephaniah was brought up during the reigns of Josiah's grandfather, King Manasseh and his son Amon (who ruled between 641-610 BC). These kings made peace with the mighty Assyrians and Judah became their vassal state. They were induced to let astral cults, the worship of Baal, child sacrifices, and moral corruption enter the land of Judah. They even penetrated into the holy precinct of Jerusalem's Temple. King Amon allowed pagan idols to be erected in the towns of Judah and that led to a break-down of civil order which deeply disturbed Zephaniah. In promoting all this, Assyria probably had in mind a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural society for the Israelites instead of one that was isolated and constantly at odds with its neighbours as well as its non-Jewish tribal population. Given the geo-political reality of the region dominated by big contending empires, Zephaniah realised their plan was clearly not going to work.

King Josiah was born in 648 BC and soon after, his father was assassinated so he ruled from a very young age between 640-609 BC. Judah was still a vassal state subject to the mighty Assyrian Empire. Josiah was determined to turn things round by introducing religious reforms – it seems at the prompting of Zephaniah. These began in the middle of his reign but they did not take full effect until about **622 BC**. This was a time when the Assyrian Empire in the east was declining and their rivals, the Babylonians had not yet asserted themselves. In the west the Egyptians saw an opportunity for exerting their power so they began a new military campaign in the region. It was as though the state of Judah was up for grabs. Zephaniah galvanised his nation to prepare for the imminent onslaught which was to be a 'day of divine judgement' for his people.

The Book of Zephaniah is short (only four pages). Its message is as follows:

(a) 1:2-2:3; warnings about the 'Day of the Lord', when He will descend on Judah in punishment for the degeneration of its religious life;

I will sweep away everything from the face of the earth, declared the Lord.

I will sweep away both humans and beasts;

I will sweep away the birds in the sky and the fish in the sea and the idols that cause the wicked to stumble.

When I destroy all of humanity on the face of the earth declared the Lord, I will even stretch out my fist against Judah and all who live in Jerusalem.

I will destroy every remnant of Baal worship and the very names of the idolatrous priests who bow down on the roof terraces to worship the starry host.

The number three often signifies finality in the Bible so the threefold repetition of 'I will sweep away', emphasizes the totality of the destruction, as the order of creatures in 1:2 ('humans and animals ... the birds ... the fish') is the opposite of the creation order in Genesis signifying an undoing of creation.

(b) 1:4-7a; it will extend judgement to everyone in the community

(c) 1:7b-13; it will be attended with all the horrors of a great catastrophe

(d) 2:1-3; he urged his readers to repent and seek the Lord's forgiveness.

(e) 2:4-15; not only Jerusalem, but the entire world is subject to His judgment

(f) 3:1-8; returning to Jerusalem: 'Woe to this rebellious and tyrannical city ...

She has not listened to the call: neither has she learned the lesson'. The severest reckoning will be delivered upon the leaders of the community.

(g) 3:9-20; Zephaniah's writings were not just full of doom. With a prophetic glance at the future Kingdom of God, he wrote that when all the world unites and turns to Him, the prosperity of the Messianic Kingdom will be enjoyed.

(h) 3:9-20. His message ends with promises of hope for a more faithful future.

Typical in prophetic literature, Zephaniah said that a 'human remnant' would survive Yahweh's judgement by seeking refuge in Him. Then Yahweh will 'burst forth in joyful divine celebration 'His people who have returned to Him. .

Zephaniah 3.14 to the end; 'shout for joy daughter of Zion, Israel shout aloud!

Rejoice, exult with all your heart daughter of Jerusalem

Yahweh has repealed your sentence; He has driven your enemy away Yahweh the ruler of Israel is in your midst, you have no more evil to fear

When that day comes, word will come to Jerusalem saying Zion, have no fear

Don't let your hands go limp, Yahweh your God is in your midst

A victorious warrior, He will exult with joy over you. He will renew you with His love, He will dance with shouts of joy for you like on the day of a festival'. Godliness both personally and in public worship had been restored.

Richard in Gunton.

Roughton Benefice, Diocese of Norwich

[comprising the parishes of Bessingham, Felbrigg, Gunton and Hanworth, Metton, Roughton and Sustead]

A resolution of all the Churchwardens of the Benefice taken on the behalf of the Parochial Church Councils:

The Rural Dean, the Reverend Canon Christian Heycocks, and the parochial church councils of the Roughton benefice, acting jointly during the present vacancy of the living, authorize dispensing with the reading of Morning and Evening Prayer as required by Canon B 11 and the celebration of the Holy Communion as required by Canon B 14 on the following occasions: Sunday, July 5th, 2020 and Sunday, July 12th 2020.

The reason for the dispensation is that in the light of the Government's guidance on preventing the spread of Coronavirus, there is no church building in the benefice which can be used safely for public worship on those occasions.

However, mindful of their responsibility to publicly gather together as God's people in these places and "to preach the Word of God and to minister the holy Sacraments in the Congregation"[BCP] , the councils, through the churchwardens, have requested that their honorary assistant minister and any other necessary clergy, following the guidelines of the Church of England on the re-opening of church buildings after the recent outbreak of Covid-19, should once again organize public worship in the parishes as much as time and manpower allow the re-opening of some or all of the churches in the Benefice.

The following pattern will begin from Sunday, July 19th until further notice:

**There will be ONE Service held every Sunday in ONE of the church buildings in the Benefice:
Please see notices.**

All morning services will now begin at 10.30AM.

One church building will be re-opened for worship at a time, after a careful Risk Assessment and suitable preparation for the safe use of the church.

Roughton Church was re-opened again on July 19th.

Felbrigg Church will be re-opened for use on Saturday August 15th for a wedding and thereafter for Sunday worship as and when possible.

Hanworth Church will be re-opened on September 6th and Sustead Church on October 4th .

Gunton and Metton church buildings will remain closed for the time being. For Bessingham please see local details.

Further details will be published on the website, in the benefice magazine and on all appropriate church notice-boards.

Everyone attending public worship is asked to give very careful attention to public instructions to follow social distancing and other regulations for the health and safety of all worshippers.

The telephone numbers of all churchwardens are displayed inside the church buildings.

July 2020. This notice to be displayed on all church notice boards in the Roughton Benefice.

The Ambassador

This is just a reminder that we have a dedicated e-mail address just for

The Ambassador, namely

roughton.ambassador@gmail.com.

Deadline for the September issue is Friday 21st August.

General Enquires 01263 511132

Disclaimer:

The views expressed by individuals in this Magazine are not necessarily the views of the group of Churches in this Benefice. Advertising in this magazine does not imply an endorsement or promotion of the advertisement, nor its content, products or services. Errors and omissions, whilst regrettable, may occur.

Please advise the Editor and appropriate action will be taken

The Ambassador needs a new Advertising manager

This is an important position in the production of the Ambassador newsletter as our advertising needs to expand. Some benefice magazines have 6 or 8 pages of advertisements which draws in a considerable income.

If you are interested please contact Ron Mortimer on 01263 511132 or email at roughton.ambassador@gmail.com

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National Trust

Felbrigg Hall



regrets that owing to the dangers of the Coronavirus the facilities of the house and gardens are closed until further notice.

The park and the car park are open.

Please pre-book your car space online at
<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/felbrigg-hall-gardens-and-estate>
or phone 0344 2491895

Entry fee applies, free to National Trust Members

General Enquiries Tel. 01263 837444

Registered Charity No 205846

AUGUST 2020

Services

2 August Eighth Sunday after Trinity

10.30 am Morning Service CW Roughton

9 August Ninth Sunday after Trinity

10.30 am Morning Service CW Roughton

16 August Tenth Sunday after Trinity

10.30 am Morning Service CW Roughton

23 August Eleventh Sunday after Trinity

10.30 am Communion Service CW **Felbrigg**

30 August Twelfth Sunday after Trinity

10.30 am Morning Service CW Roughton

[A Church name in Bold marks the first Sunday when a building is re-opened for public worship in the Benefice after cleaning and risk assessment. Hanworth will re-open on September 6th and Susted will re-open on October 4th.

More details will be available in the September magazine]