



# The Parish of Christchurch

*The Priory Church of the Holy Trinity, Christchurch*  
*St George, Jumpers • St John at Purewell*

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for 18<sup>th</sup> October 2020

Dear Friends,

I suspect we have all been keeping an eye on the news reports this week and waiting to learn what the government's response to the rising number of people contracting the Covid-19 virus will be. Perhaps, like me, you have occasionally checked to see how many cases have been reported in our local area and therefore what the likelihood is of this area being placed under more severe restrictions on our daily lives. These are anxious days for us all as we wait to see what might lie ahead this Winter and try to plan and prepare, as best we can.

As well as being concerned about the government's response to this pandemic, I believe that we should also be thinking about our own response, both as a Christian community and as individuals. In his first letter, St Peter writes about the hope we have as Christians: 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials...' (1 Peter 1: 3-6). Later, he describes this simply as 'the hope that is in us' (see 1 Peter 3:15).

How, then, do we express that hope in these difficult and worrying times? Part of it, I think, is consciously choosing to speak of and celebrate that which is good, as a much-needed counterweight to the messages of fear and death which seem to dominate our national conversation. Of course, this is not to deny or seek to minimise the reality or seriousness of the pandemic, nor to fail to take seriously the depth of people's pain and loss. But we do have 'hope in us'; we believe in the truth of the light that overcomes all darkness (John 1: 5); we believe that this light is life and that it is life-giving (John 1: 3-4). As a Church, and as individuals, we need to find ways of speaking more about this hope, light and life in these days, when the dominant narrative seems to be of fear, isolation, darkness and death.

And there are good things which we can speak about and celebrate: the acts of kindness being shown by neighbour to neighbour all around the country; the huge upswing in voluntary groups getting involved in community projects; the inventiveness, resilience and cheerfulness that so many are exhibiting in very trying times; and a niche news item: the good news about the increase in the population of sea turtles in Costa Rica due to the clever invention of a decoy egg with a tracking device inside it – buy a copy of this week's edition of the Big Issue and read the full story.

Another way we might act in hope is to take steps actively to counter isolation and loneliness where we see it. We are looking at ways that we can safely operate a network for people who would like to have a conversation with someone by telephone. We can encourage those who are lonely or isolated to join in our

online services, if they are able to do so, and suggest they ask to be added to the circulation list for this letter. We would also like to set up a prayer chain, where people offer to pray regularly for a number of other people, and to phone them now and then, and those people in turn offer to pray for and speak with others (please contact one of the clergy if you are interested in this). We can also try to find the time to speak with or send a letter or card to those whom we already know as friends but with whom we may have fallen out of contact.

All this speaks of the hope we have in us.

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ALL SOULS REQUIEM – on Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> October at 10.00 am, we will be holding a special service at the Priory to commemorate the departed. This is an especially important occasion this year, when so many people have not been able to hold funerals for loved ones in the way they would have liked. The Priory Chamber Choir will sing at this service.

VIVALDI CONCERT – On Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> November at 7.30 pm at the Priory, we plan to stage a concert of music by Vivaldi. Tickets are available online via the website or from the box-office (see below).

BOX OFFICE – The Box office will now be open on Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays between 12.00 noon and 4.00 pm, or you can phone 01202 485804 (option 4) anytime and leave a message.

RIDE AND STRIDE RESULT - Barry Beesley and John Robinson (DHCT Deanery Reps) write:

When we agreed to take part in the Dorset Historic Churches Trust Ride and Stride Event this year, our expectations of raising a respectable amount were not high, owing to the conditions imposed by the pandemic. We need not have worried. Les Hiley is the most amazing recruiter and encourager of participants, something he has done for many years now and thanks to his enthusiasm the amount raised has been astonishing. Those who took part were - Les Hiley, John Priest, Barbara Gardener, Charlie Merrivale, Brenda Pearmain, Tim Butler, Diane Wright and Jill Barr (All Saints, Mudeford).

Without sponsors, or course, there would be no result. The sponsorship has been on a generous scale and the response overwhelming. As a result, the total amount raised amounted to £1780. A magnificent effort by all involved and certainly a sign that goodwill cannot be stifled by the virus. With very many thanks to all who have supported and helped keep this event alive at a difficult time. Half the amount raised will go to Dorset Historic Churches Trust and half will come back to our own church funds.

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With my love and prayers for the week ahead,



Reverend Jonathan Evans