

The Parish of Christchurch



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

for Sunday 25 July, 2021

Dear Friends,

The city of Campostela, on the Atlantic coast of North-West Spain, is the destination of one of the greatest of all Christian pilgrimage routes. From the ninth century, the Cathedral of Campostela has claimed that it held the body of St James – Santiago in Spanish – one of the first apostles.

This Sunday is the feast day of James the Apostle (called 'the Great', to distinguish him from the other apostle James, son of Alphaeus). James, with his brother John, was one of the first disciples called by Jesus to follow him. Like Simon Peter and Andrew, James and John were fishermen who plied their craft on the Sea of Galilee. With Peter, the brothers were with Jesus at his Transfiguration and also in the Garden of Gethsemane; as the Passion narratives relate, the three disciples could not keep awake while Jesus wrestled in prayer over his coming death.

The Acts of the Apostles records that James was put to death by the sword on orders from King Herod Agrippa, probably in the year 44.

'About this time King Herod laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the church. He had James, the brother of John, killed with the sword. After he saw that it please the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also.' (Acts 12.1-3)

Herod Agrippa had thought that by killing some of the leaders of the Jerusalem Christians, he could prevent the apostles from preaching the good news of the risen Jesus, and so reduce the numbers of new converts to 'the Way'. He was wrong. The first Christians continued to witness to Jesus' death and resurrection, "in Jerusalem, in all Judaea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1.8): from tiny beginnings, the light of Christ spread throughout the known world.

This involved movement: Paul taking the Gospel to the Gentile world, going to modern-day Turkey, Greece, and Rome; Thomas to India; and many later saints, apostles and evangelists, including Birinus, who is credited with bring the Gospel to this part of England. The Feast of James the Apostle is an opportunity to thank God for all those who responded to Christ's call to preach the Gospel to all nations.

* * * * *

One week on, and the cautious, considerate approach we have been taking to the transition out of lockdown seems to be effective and vindicated. In particular, the Church of England's revised guidance suggests a system such as we have implemented in the Priory, with continuing provision of 'pods' in the South side of the Nave, and more open seating on the North.

After careful consideration, and bearing in mind the significant increase in Covid-19 infections locally, we shall not be taking up two aspects which this latest CofE guidance says would now be permitted. The first is to return to giving the wine from the common cup in the Eucharist; the second is to share the peace with one another through physical contact. Both these decisions will be reviewed later in the summer.

The latest CofE guidance also states: "Although it will no longer be a legal requirement [from July 19] to wear a face covering, the government has stated that it "expects and recommends" that people wear face coverings in crowded and enclosed settings to protect themselves and others."

* * * * *

Confirmation 2021 A reminder that there will be a Confirmation Service in the Priory on Sunday 17 October, at 2.00pm. If you are interested in joining the Confirmation Course, or want a 'refresher', please write to me on vicar@christchurchpriory.org, or talk either to me or to Fr Richard.

* * * * *

How do we give to God's work? One of the reasons our parish income has fallen during the pandemic relates to the way some of us have traditionally given in the past. When lockdown has stopped us meeting for worship, or (as now) when taking up a plate collection is not recommended because of the risk of virus transmission, our giving has fallen: using any form of giving that means we have to be in the building to be able to give will have this effect. There is, however, a tried and tested way of solving this problem, which many of us in the parish – myself included – already use.

This is the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS), which is the method of regular giving advocated and supported by the parish, the diocese and the Church of England nationally. The scheme is administered from Gloucester Diocese and is paid for by participating dioceses, including ours. This means that all your donation is passed on to the parish.

Joining the scheme is very easy: it can be done by telephone (the PGS team is very helpful on the phone!), by mail or on-line. The latter is straightforward. First, go to <https://www.paritygiving.org.uk> ; next, you can use the 'Find your parish' search tool and type in 'Christchurch Priory'. Click on Christchurch Priory (normally at the top of the list) and you'll be able to cross-check that it's the right place from the details and description. When you arrive on the page for Christchurch Priory, you simply click on the Donate button and follow the instructions on screen to set up your regular gift. It only takes a few minutes to complete the various steps online. Then, you'll be able to log-in at any time to review your giving and personal details. The scheme sends us a monthly statement of all donations received.

If you prefer to register by telephone or by mail, the contact details are: Parish Giving Scheme:, 76 Kingsholm Road, Gloucester, GL1 3BD; Tel: 0333 002 1260; email: info@paritygiving.org.uk.

If, till now, you have been used to giving through the plate collection or by the envelope scheme, I hope you will consider setting up a regular donation through the Parish Giving Scheme.

* * * * *

Choral Evensong with the Revd Jonathan Evans

Among the many, in all conscience lesser, disappointments of the past sixteen months was that lockdown no.3 prevented us from saying a proper farewell and thank-you to Jonathan Evans back in January. At the time we discussed the possibility of welcoming him back to Christchurch when circumstances changed, to put right the omission. I am pleased to announce that this will happen at Choral Evensong on Sunday 12 September at 6.30pm, at which Jonathan will preach. Everyone is warmly invited to this service and the post-service reception.

* * * * *

The Camino to Santiago de Compostela is a different kind of journey from those undertaken by the missionary apostles – it is a pilgrimage. The pilgrimage to Compostela flourished first in the 11th century, around the time the Priory Church was consecrated. There are, of course, many other pilgrimage routes and destinations, some of which I hope we may take together, when travel is once again freely available.

The purpose of pilgrimage is to draw closer to God, though this is often misunderstood. What really happens on pilgrimage, as we discard, for a while, familiar settings, routines and comforts, is that God is able to draw closer to us, as we let him. Which, of course, can also happen in our own home. Indeed, it can happen whenever and wherever we truly put ourselves with God. In the words of Theophan the Recluse (heard in the current midweek reflection):

“This is something so natural that there should have been no need to mention it specially, for by its very nature the soul should strive always towards God. And the Lord is always near. There is no need to arrange an introduction between them, for they are old acquaintances.”

May it be so for us all. With every blessing,

