



ST CHRISTOPHER'S 'CATCH UP CHURCH' NEWSLETTER

Sunday 30th May 2021

NEWS UPDATE



Christian Aid Collection



As you may know each year in May Christian Aid promote a collection week. In the past we have run coffee mornings to raise funds, and featured the work of Christian Aid in our magazine.

This year we were not so well organised, and we missed the official Christian Aid week (10th – 16th May). If anyone would still like to donate to Christian Aid, I have obtained a few envelopes which are on the table in church. We will receive any donations up to Sunday 13th June.

No Newsletter next Sunday 6th June

Not only are we winding down the newsletters at the end of month, we will also miss next Sunday as I am taking time away next week (only as far as Wales). The new sermon series begins next Sunday in church, and I would encourage people to attend in person if possible.



Roles within Church

When the PCC met last week we identified a number of roles for which we are seeking volunteers. Our intention is to break things down into smaller tasks so that we have a lot of people doing a little, rather than a few people feeling over-burdened. Vacant roles include:

- **Gift Aid Recorder.** This is a role for a trusted person who can keep confidentiality. The gift aid recorder records on a list donations that are gift aided, noting down amounts within envelopes, and monitoring standing orders where the donor has signed a gift aid declaration. The gift aid recorder is not expected to submit the gift aid claim, but will supply the person submitting the claim with the information (this is currently one of Hilary's roles).
- **Utilities Manager.** We are looking for someone who will keep on top of the church utilities, arranging new deals/contracts when appropriate, and monitoring expenditure. This would include gas, electric, water, and the phone/internet.
- **Health & Safety officer.** This individual would arrange the annual electrical inspection (PAT testing), gas safety test, annual burglar alarm service, and such like. The work involved with this role is not arduous, bearing in mind that individual users complete their own risk assessments for their own activities. The health and safety officer would have a



general concern for the safe running of activities, and would ensure that health and safety matters are not neglected.

- **Fire Safety Officer.** This role could be merged with the above, or be a separate person. This person would arrange for the annual inspection of the fire extinguishers, and the regular testing of the fire alarm.
- **Church Magazine and website.** We are seeking individuals who are able to edit the church magazine and/or the church website. This is a role that requires some computer skills, being able to present images and text in a way that is attractive.



BIBLE READING – John 3: 1-17

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.” Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” Jesus answered him, “Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

“Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.



THIS WEEK’S MESSAGE – “Night Time,” by Mike Clayton

In today’s account from John’s Gospel, all the action takes place at night. Nicodemus steals in for a meeting with Jesus very much on the down-low. You see, Nicodemus is a senior figure in the government and yet he has clearly been troubled by what Jesus has been doing and saying. Clearly this young Rabbi from Nazareth has the hand of God upon him because of the outright miracles that he has been doing, and so Nicodemus has come at the dead of night to try and figure Jesus out.

It is generally thought that he came at night because he wanted this to be a secret meeting and that it would not have gone down well in public if it became known that Nicodemus had sought a private audience with this rebel troublemaker Jesus from Nazareth.



Night time we usually associate with fears and being afraid of the dark but at times the quietness and stillness of the night can be somehow reassuring; if you have ever been on a sponsored midnight walk or hike you may have sensed that at times. It can also be a time of confusion. I remember a very long night spent on guard duty as an Air Cadet at RAF Coningsby when we were on full alert for intruders breaking into the base, peering into the shadows as the half-light of dawn was slowly breaking - is that someone hiding in the shadow of that wall, or am I just imaging it? Such solitary thoughts ended

abruptly when the thunder flashes started going off all over the base!

Nicodemus is confused, he knows that God is with this young man, but he doesn't know what to make of it all, so here he is talking to Jesus at night. Even then he struggles to keep up with all that Jesus is saying, and yet each and every one of us have good reason to be eternally grateful for Nicodemus having gone to see Jesus that night.

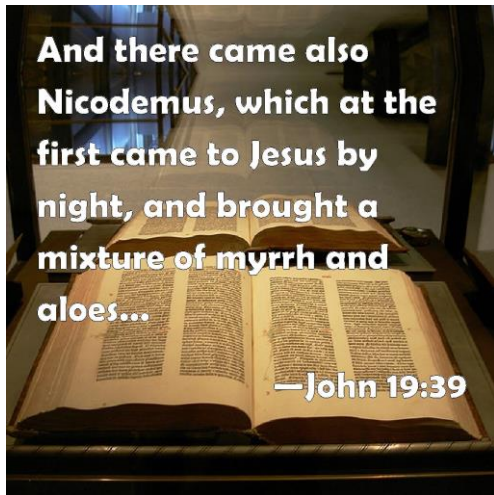
If you ask most people to quote or name just one single verse from the whole of the bible, then likely as not it will be this one sentence that Jesus said by way of explanation to Nicodemus of what he was about, what Jesus' mission was, and the kind of response God is still seeking today from each of us.



'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. (v16).

It has been said that the Gospel message, the good news about Jesus Christ, is so simple that even a child can believe and yet so profound that a Professor of Theology can spend a whole lifetime studying it and still not fully understand it all. Just how deep and wide is the love of God for us in his dear Son our Lord Jesus Christ – as the hymn that became the theme tune for the welsh revival put it so well, “Here is love vast as the ocean; Loving kindness as the flood...”.

And what becomes of Nicodemus? Well, we don't hear anything about him for a few years but then he pops up again when he meets Jesus again but this time it is in very different circumstances. It is broad daylight and there is no conversation. Nicodemus is not alone as Joseph of Arimathea is with him. They are at a little hillside, the place where all the criminals were executed, the place of crucifixion, Golgotha, where Jesus has been crucified. Nicodemus and Joseph take Jesus' dead body down from the cross, wrap the body with the



spices and linen cloth as was the custom, and then carry Jesus' body all the way over to the tomb, where they lay his body.

Nicodemus is not hiding in the dead of night any longer, and here he is rendering an act of kindness to a man he once knew. A man like no other. It is even more touching when you consider that all Jesus' closest followers had by this time gone into hiding - yet here is Nicodemus, out in the open, in broad daylight, caring for our Lord even when it seems that all hope is gone. Even death hasn't separated or put an end to that.

Did Nicodemus know what was to come just three days later on that first Easter Sunday? We just don't know. But what we do know is that no longer was Nicodemus a man hiding in the dark so far as following Christ was concerned. This is someone who loves Jesus and even death isn't going to break that or put an end to that – happy to nail his colours to the mast, here I stand, a follower of Jesus Christ.

I'm sure that Nicodemus would have been happy to put his signature to that, to sign off on that - and the simple question that I close with is, would you? Could you "sign off" on that too? Here I stand, a follower of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayers

Lord Jesus, we thank you that you made time to speak with Nicodemus, who first came to you in secret.

We pray for people today who are interested in exploring questions of faith,
but they are embarrassed about it, or afraid.

Make us ready to connect with these people wherever they are starting from;
that we may listen, and point them towards the God who so loved the world that he gave his only Son.

We pray especially for those who encounter the church through our baptism ministry,
that they may come to know the living Christ who died for them, rose again, and now reigns in glory.
Lord in your mercy; **hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who are still suffering as a result of the pandemic.

May those with long covid symptoms, find healing wholeness.

May those who feel increased anxiety, find calmness and peace.

May those who make decisions about how we go forward, be guided by the wisdom of your Holy Spirit.
Lord in your mercy; **hear our prayer.**

Dear Lord, may we be found among those who are proud to say that we love Jesus
and follow him with all our hearts.

Merciful Father; **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.**