

Bridges Group News

Date: 12th May 2023

Sunday: Easter 7



News from Napton

A few weeks ago, I attended, along with others from the Deanery and beyond, a Divine Nature Workshop Day at the beautiful home of Rev Nikki Moon who was once a curate at Harbury church. She has opened her home and grounds up to Christian retreats and this day was led by David Cole from Waymark Ministries.

It was a Forest Church initiative and if you haven't heard of Forest Church, it started around the time of lockdown as a way of engaging with our Creator God, outside. Forest Church is a contemporary movement, with roots in the long Christian tradition of engagement in nature, such as the Celtic and Franciscan approaches.

Jesus spent a great deal of His time teaching, praying and ministering to people outdoors and He often referred to the natural things around Him to point to a truth about God's Kingdom: "Look at the birds of the air.." (Matthew 6:26) "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed planted in a field" (Matthew 13:31)

Being outdoors adds a new dimension to worship, taking away the walls of the church building can be really helpful for many people.

We have our own Group in the Southam Deanery, and we meet 8 times a year, outside in St Lawrence Churchyard. People come who would not come to mainstream church and it is thought provoking way to see God through and in creation. Our next date is 20th June – Summer Solstice at 7pm. You would be very welcome to come along and see.

Sue Andrew - Napton

Rectory reflection from Rev Andy

Most Sundays in our churches everyone who is willing and able stand together to say what is known as "The Apostles' Creed". It is almost as old as the Church itself, with its origins in the second century, if not before. *Standing* to say the words is an act of symbolism- that these are the truths on which we stand as foundational to our lives. But not just our lives. We also stand with all those who, down through the last 2,000 years and across the world today affirm exactly the same things in their own language and culture. For far too many over two millennia doing that meant enduring severe suffering, even martyrdom. And, sadly in the 21st Century little has changed- worldwide one in seven Christians - 365 million people - suffer high levels of persecution and discrimination merely for standing on and by the basic truths of "The Apostle's Creed". So, it is a privilege Sunday by Sunday to do our small bit to affirm that they do not stand alone. Ayaan Hirsi Ali grew-up a moderate Muslim but then after experiencing fundamentalist Islam became one of the "New Atheists"- alongside the likes of Professor Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris and the late Peter Hitchens. She, however, like some of the other "New Theists" has been on a gradual faith journey towards Christianity. A couple of weeks ago Hirsi Ali joined in public debate with Professor Dawkins and very publicly stated her new faith, "*I choose to believe that Jesus rose from the dead*" she said, and in saying that she joined the ranks of those of whom St Paul said, '*if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved*'. Recently we have seen Russell Brand and Jordan Peterson discover that same saving faith, which we all affirm each week. So lets not be downhearted about the current state of the CofE – God can and does work where we least expect it!

Prayer

Help us, with simple words, to explain the warmth within our hearts that we experienced in that first encounter with your love and grace - the Spirit's flame, still burning bright within - that others, in their own journeys of discovery might reach out and touch the hand that's always there, and be embraced by love.

Looking ahead...

- Wormleighton PCC 16th May at 7.30pm
- Craft and Flower Festival, Stockton Church, 11th & 12th May
- SATURDAY 18TH MAY 7.30PM PRIORS MARSTON OXFORD WELSH MALE VOICE CHOIR
- SUNDAY 19TH MAY – PENTECOST – once more a major Festival which tends to be overlooked. Without it the Christian church wouldn't exist!!! Please look out for news of a change in the list of services published in the Partish Magazines as we try to celebrate this important festival. (No Carol Service available.....yet!!)
- Priors Hardwick PCC 20th May at 7pm
- Priors Marston APCM will be held in St. Leonard's at 2 pm on Friday 24th May

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETINGS – REMINDER!

- Electoral roll and notice of revision to be displayed 6 weeks before the APCM (displaying names only please – not any contact details)
Electoral roll to be amended 4 weeks before the APCM
Revisions to electoral roll to be displayed 2 weeks before the APCM
- Draft reports to be circulated to PCC for approval 4 weeks before the APCM
- Notice of meeting to be displayed 2 weeks before the APCM
- Accounts to be displayed 1 week before the APCM
- Agenda & reports to be distributed 1 week before the APCM
- Nominations for CWs and PCC members to be received 2 weeks before the APCM

**Services this Sunday:
12th May, Easter 7**

10.30am CW Holy Communion at Priors Marston
10.30am Morning Worship at Napton
10.30am Holy Communion in the Methodist Tradition at Stockton
5.00pm Sung Evensong at Priors Hardwick

Bible reading for the week are: Acts 1:15-17, 21-end, John 17:6-19

**Services next Sunday:
19th May, Pentecost**

9.00am BCP Holy Communion at Priors Hardwick
10.30am Morning Worship at Priors Marston
10.30am CW Holy Communion at Napton

Bible readings for the week are: Acts 2:1-21, John 15:26-27, 16:4b-15

(For more details of events and diary dates, see our website: www.thebridgesgroup.org.uk or the parish magazines)

Next Week's Bridges Group News will be hosted by Priors Marston.