

LAUNDE LEAVES



THE FRIENDS OF LAUNDE

DECEMBER 2020

HOPE

Supporting Launde Abbey
The Retreat House of the Dioceses of
Leicester and Peterborough

From the Chair

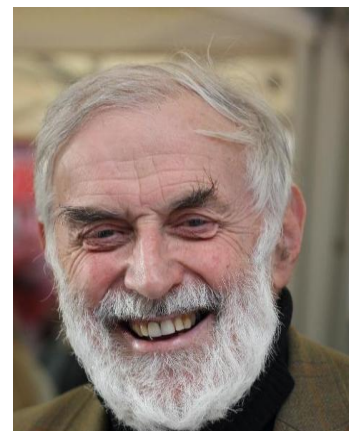
GETTING BACK TO 'NORMAL'?

Don't Even Think About It is the title of a book by George Marshall about climate change, and why so many people are still in denial. Or even if they admit that global warming is happening, they don't want to talk about it, or do anything about it. Marshall describes how he visited Texas where there had been a disastrous wildfire in 2011 destroying fifty-four square miles of forest. It also destroyed 1,600 houses; ten times more than any previous wildfire in Texan history. A year later Hurricane Sandy, the largest Atlantic hurricane on record, damaged or destroyed nearly 350,000 homes as it hit the New Jersey seashore. Scientists were clear that the severity of these two disasters was partly caused by climate change. And yet again and again when Marshall talked to people who had been at the centre of these events, and seen their homes destroyed, they didn't want to talk about climate change. They just wanted their lives to get back to 'normal'. To rebuild their homes and forget what had happened.

My worry is that after the experience of the Coronavirus pandemic, many of us will just want to get back to 'normal', and, quite understandably, forget the horrors of the last year. And yet, as well as the many deaths, and much suffering, in living through the pandemic, we have been learning some important lessons about the way we ought to be living, and caring for one another and caring for the environment.

What are those lessons?

- a) We have all been in this together, though not everyone has been affected equally. Inevitably, poorer people have suffered more.
- b) We have all had to play our part to enable us to pull through.
- c) Many of us have been discovering that life is better, and richer, when we work together as loving, caring communities. Good neighbourliness, in many



communities, is still what makes life worth living.

- d) Our lifestyle has had to change radically. For instance, we have had to cancel our holidays abroad, and do far less travelling. The result, at least during the first lockdown, is that carbon emissions (which are the main cause of global warming) plummeted, and pollution drastically reduced.

And yet, in the middle of the pandemic, as I've said, I suspect many of us just wanted to get back to 'normal'. But what is normal? 'Normal' for many people in the world today is inequality, injustice and suffering the effects of climate breakdown. And even in our own country there are wide- spread inequalities. 'Normal' is fossil fuel companies mining more and more coal, oil and gas when it should be left in the ground. 'Normal' is people flying off several times a year for a holiday in the sun, so increasing their carbon emissions, and contributing their bit to global warming.

Shall we go back to our old ways, or have we learned a better way of living, where we are more caring of one another, and the environment? And discovering that it is possible to live more simply – that others may simply live?

Canon Brian Davis

QUESTIONS ABOUT LOCKDOWN

During the first lockdown which began on 23rd March, the Editor emailed members of the Friends' Committee with the following questions:

- How have you kept in touch with those beyond your home, including your church or faith community?
- What have you valued?
- Have your priorities changed and how?
- Have you had caring responsibilities?
- Have you received care and kindness from others?
- How have you been able to continue to worship?
- Have you discovered new sources of spiritual support? If so, please tell us about them.
- What has been your experience of technology?
- Have you been closely affected by the pandemic?
- If a vaccine were to be available tomorrow, would you go back to how life was or would things change?
- What are your prayers, hopes and concerns for the future?

It seemed important to continue to keep in touch - that's what friends do – to find out how others were coping, to see if support was needed and to chronicle in this small way this experience of a unique situation on the part of a diverse group of people, bound together by our commitment to Launde Abbey.

Comparisons have been made between the experience of the Covid-10 pandemic in 2020 with living through times of war, epidemics of plague, Spanish 'flu or other diseases. We have become accustomed to a new lexicon, the vocabulary of coronavirus, itself a new word for most of us: lockdown, shielding, self-isolation, social distancing, hand-sanitizing, Track and Trace, Zoom, PPE, elbow bump, key workers, daily briefings, second wave – new or previously unfamiliar terms which have become essential in “staying safe” and navigating our way through the successive stages of this immense global challenge.

As the months have gone by, many of us have been personally touched by the virus; all of us have been affected in the way we live our lives. We have been affected in practical ways – how we source our food and other essential supplies, whether and where we may go out, whom we may or may not see – these things have caused pain in many cases and opened up new ways of thinking in others. You may wish to spend some time considering your responses to the questions above. Your feedback is always valued so do email any responses you would like to share to the Editor at b.lott1509@gmail.com Thank you.

For those living in, or close to, the city of Leicester, lockdown has been almost continuous since March. This is the account of one member of the Launde Friends' Committee.

I live in a small hamlet in the outskirts of Oadby, alone, shielding, no local facilities and no family near enough to visit. The neighbours are lovely and willing to help where necessary. Apart from keeping the car battery alive I've been no further than the post box across the road since March. I have found the isolation easier to cope with than I thought, but recently have found it harder to persuade myself to do jobs round the home – finding excuses to sit and read too much. I am now missing social contact more and more.

The church, which is in Leicester, has been really supportive. Services have been online and as similar to normal as is possible from the clergy's studies. They have worked so hard to keep everyone

informed and involved, including Zoom chat sessions after each service, prayer sessions during the week and even a parish quiz evening.

Like many of us, I have become much more used to Zoom and You Tube, including with family members, none of whom I've seen since March, and it helps a lot to keep contact in groups.

My faith has strengthened as I feel God is behind us all. Time to pray and meditate are much appreciated and used of course. At the end of this time, I hope we are all able to take life at a slightly less hectic pace.

I was surprised how depressed the extension to the local lockdown in Leicester has made me feel. We are on the borderline of the 'red line' but feel we might as well have been included.

Another committee member who lives in Rutland sent this response.

I've spent lockdown in Oakham with my husband. I have kept in touch by phone with local church friends and others; by Zoom, telephone and text with family and friends further away. I have valued slowing down and not feeling under pressure to do things; the peace and quiet and time to read, think, pray and particularly to have time to enjoy the garden and its wildlife. It's too soon to say whether my priorities have changed.

I have had caring responsibilities for twelve in the church - ringing them weekly and being a listening ear. Several had problems at different times and particularly at the beginning of lockdown others needed reassurance. One person said the phone calls had been her highlight of the week. I felt glad to have been of help. Being in the vulnerable category I did not go shopping early on in lockdown and three kind neighbours always asked if we wanted shopping when they were going.

Our church has maintained a Sunday service on Facebook and the church website as well as Morning Prayer every weekday morning. I have hugely appreciated various other on line events - Laude Holy Week talks and sermons from clergy friends and family in their own churches.

My main technological breakthrough has been learning to Zoom! There has been some amazing streaming from some churches.

When this is finally over, I would hope to remain less busy and live more a day at a time. My prayer and hope for the future would be a longing for people to become more aware of the God of creation and the impact their lives are having environmentally. My concern would be that folk will forget what they have learnt through lockdown and revert to often selfish ways.

This response arrived from another committee member.

I spent the first lockdown in Rutland, with my daughter and grandson, aged 9, from London. I have kept in touch with others by email, phone, FaceTime and Zoom. I have valued feeling less stressed and rush less, having time for gardening and appreciating nature. I have become less focused on plans, entertaining and shopping. I have visited an elderly lonely friend, keeping my distance, of course, and rung single friends. I have not needed to be on the receiving end of help from others as I have been with my family but there is much care and kindness in the village where I live. Sunday services have been sent by priests and friends. Radio and TV have also provided worship opportunities. Bishop Martyn's Lockdown Dialogue has been a new source of spiritual support, as has the Cathedral's excellent weekly newsletter. I prayed with others at the time of the burial of two close friends, in one case following the actual service. Zoom and FaceTime have been a boon. The pandemic has not affected me closely. Looking ahead, I shall have different priorities: a fairer society, concern for the needy, eco-awareness, and action.



Leicester Cathedral
A beating heart for City and County

Cathedral in Touch

A Newsletter for our Community

Thank you to one of the members of Roots & Wings for the following contribution. Roots and Wings is a group for 11 – 18 year olds who meet monthly at Launde Abbey on Sunday evenings.

During lockdown, it has been important to communicate with my friends, mainly using technology, but I was able to meet up with a few closer to home on a socially-distanced walk or bike ride. With my family we would organise the odd Zoom meeting or just call them. I've valued my education as I couldn't get everything out of the same lesson if I did it at school. However, I've also valued contact as at times I felt quite down and bored without meeting up with anyone.

My priorities have DEFINITELY changed! I've come to terms with personal as well as extended hygiene, washing my hands more often, etc. I've also began thinking about the elderly and less able, trying to see how I can help.

I haven't received any particular care or kindness but I haven't needed or wanted that kind of support so I don't mind at all!

I say my prayers each night, as I normally would and I do Roots & Wings.

Technology has been very useful! I've used it a lot during lockdown for school work, contact and clubs.

Nobody close in my family has been affected by the actual virus and we all seem to have adjusted well.

For me things will definitely change in the future. I think we can definitely learn from what we've seen coming from this pandemic: the kindness and thinking of others more often; taking your hygiene more seriously; respecting and giving more credit to the NHS and other services; and the environmental benefits.

I pray that people WILL learn from this time and use it to make a positive impact on the life we will soon continue. I'm concerned about the negative impact this pandemic has also had on the environment - all the plastic and non-reusable items it's called for, much of which is being dumped into the sea and other places, damaging it greatly.

BISHOP OF LOUGHBOROUGH'S "THOUGHT FOR THE DAY"

The Right Reverend Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani is Chair of the Trustees of Launde Abbey.

A recent announcement from Downing Street informed us that she will be the next Bishop of Chelmsford. She will begin work in Chelmsford in 2021.



On 27th August Bishop Guli gave BBC Radio 4's "Thought for the Day". This is part of what she said.

"All the evidence suggests that Covid-19 isn't going away any time soon. As a society we're going to have to find a way, sensibly, to live alongside it. Most faith traditions recognise that each life is precious and valued.

The Judeo-Christian vision is of every individual cherished by God in whose image we are made. It's right and proper that we take health warnings seriously, striving to protect lives as far as possible. At the same time if society remains so gripped by fear of illness and death that we think of nothing but physical safety we risk losing sight of other virtues that make us human in the fullest sense: virtues like compassion, kindness, sociability, community, to name but a few. We are more than physical shells, we are soul and spirit too. This is what Jesus recognised when he spoke of coming "that we may have life in all its fullness".

And there's an added dimension too for Christians for whom the value placed on human life in this world is held alongside the promise of life after death. This gives a sense of something bigger and beyond our mortal lives, providing meaning and context for all that we value and hold dear here and now."

Friends of Launde on Facebook

A message from Trustee Madeleine Wang:

Friends of Launde Abbey have opened a Facebook page, the aim of which is to attract new members, providing information and news via a social media platform. This will be in addition to information provided on the Launde Abbey website. You can find it by typing 'Friends of Launde' into your search engine or using this link [Friends of Launde](#)

Action for Insects at Launde Park Wood

At Launde Park Wood we have been creating a mosaic of habitats which benefits a wide range of insects. In this video, Conservation Officer Andy Lear takes us on a journey through the reserve and shares some of the amazing insects that inhabit it.

Here is the link to the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ij6obd4B6Ho>

Thank you to the Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust for permission to include this link.

THE THIRTY FOURTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE FRIENDS OF LAUNDE ABBEY

8th October 2020 7.30pm Venue: The inaugural virtual AGM meeting over a Zoom platform

Present: There were 49 Zooms, with a total of 57 committee members and Friends participating. Apologies: There were 76 apologies.

This is the largest gathering at a Friends of Launde Abbey AGM that we can remember. Some joined us from different parts of the country, and it was heart-warming to see so many Friends on our computer screens.

Item 1 Welcome The Chairman Revd Canon Brian Davis welcomed members and friends to a virtual Annual General Meeting and opened by reading a passage written by Thomas Merton, following this with a prayer. Our thoughts are never far away from feeling for our country and the people in it during this powerful pandemic.

Item 2 Last Minutes The minutes of the AGM held on 10th October 2019 were accepted as a true record and unanimously approved.

Item 3 Chairman's Report The Chairman reflected on this strange year, particularly from March 2020. The Abbey had been closed in lockdown but to the credit of Warden David and his loyal staff it was now open again and offering peace and serenity in a controlled fashion, following social distancing protocols. It would need the support of the Friends more than ever. He listed the support that Friends had provided to Launde over the last year. These included:

a. Pathway A pathway to assist people coming in from the car park had been completed.

b. Brown Directional Signs

The Council was persuaded by our case for directional signs and these have been erected to point people to Launde.

c. Pathway to the Shepherds Huts The work had not yet been completed, but funding had been set aside.

d. Parishes and Benefices There continued to be a move to encourage parishes and benefices to take out a corporate Launde membership. The cost was £50 annually, but bigger parishes are invited to consider giving more. As well as approaching parishes that will have limited funds, there would also be a benefit to approaching commercial organisations, many of whom may be better placed financially to contribute or join as corporate members. With so many Retreat Houses having closed, the chairman said that in these difficult times places like Launde were more important than ever. Launde Leaves was being published online. The next edition was due out shortly.

e. January 2021 Friends' Retreat Details of the Retreat in January had been published with the circulation of the notice for this AGM. It would be led by Bishop Mike Harrison and subject to Covid restrictions would be limited to 21 people. It was now full, and Mike Playdon was keeping a waiting list. Mike was asked whether there could be a zoom link for this retreat. That would be explored.

f. Friends' Support The Chairman thanked the Friends for their support, where some had helped in the gardens, on reception and stuffing envelopes, with thousands stuffed all in one day. Support for Launde was always very much appreciated.

g. Fund Raising Effort The Chairman spoke of his plan to hold a reception musical fund raising evening at Noseley. The Chapel could comfortably sit 200 people. Robert and Sue Wilkinson had generously agreed to cover many of the costs towards erecting a marquee and



for the reception. It was the intention to hold the event in the spring of 2021, but of course planning for that had been put in abeyance until the Covid restrictions had been lifted.

h. Eco Audit Notwithstanding Covid, the eco audit is ongoing at Launde.

i. Trees Friends were aware that Mike Hind-Woodward through Rotary had kindly donated 200 Oak and 50 Horse Chestnut trees to be planted on the Launde estate. The Chairman had hoped it might be possible to plant 900 trees at Launde as part of the 900 years celebrations. However, it had become clear that finding space for planting more trees was not straightforward and work still had to be done to find suitable areas. The gift of these trees was very much appreciated and planting them remained firmly on the agenda.

Item 4. Secretary's Report The Committee of Friends has met 3 times in the last year. We did not meet in April as planned because of the Covid outbreak. We did however meet in July virtually. Our experience at that meeting was that members had quickly grasped the Zoom technology and the meeting was well attended. The retreat in January organised by Revd Mike Playdon and led by Bishop Guli was extremely successful. The Abbey accommodation was fully booked, and some had to drive in from home each day. Bishop Guli received many plaudits. The Friends continue to fund projects at Launde and the Chairman had included these in his report. Finally, the Secretary thanked Jan Zientek for his support and care in helping to make arrangements for this AGM, which was of course, the first that had taken place virtually.

Item 5. Treasurer's Report Sarah Longhill presented the Financial Report, copies of which had been circulated. The current balance amounts to £25,000 in the Bank, with £12,000 earmarked for new windows in the stable block and £4,000 for the path to the Shepherds Huts. Support continues for bursaries. A query was raised about the calculation of Gift Aid. After some discussion this was clarified.

Item 6 Approval of Accounts The Accounts were proposed and seconded by members at the meeting. In addition, there was a proposal to appoint Michael Jones, the same examiner of accounts as this year, and this was approved.

Item 7 Membership Report There are 282 individual members against the previous number of 269. Although this is a welcome increase, a small number of Friends are no longer with us. There are 360 joint members, which includes the figure of 282 above. Church membership has reduced from 13 to 11 which could be Covid-related. Jan Zientek noted income for churches has diminished because of the pandemic and so more churches might withdraw from membership. Bishop John Holbrook advised the meeting that we should not give up on encouraging more churches and benefices to take up membership.

Item 8. Election of Officers for 2019-2020 The following officers agreed to stand and were elected for one year: Chairman: Revd Canon Brian Davis Vice Chairman: Revd Mike Playdon Hon. Treasurer: Sarah Longhill Hon. Secretary: Patrick Rendall

Item 9. Election of Committee Members The following members had again agreed to serve on the committee and were re-elected for 3 years: Revd Canon Brian Davis, Sarah Longhill, Patrick Rendall, Beverley Lott, Bart Hellyer. The following new members were elected for 3 years: Gill Bruce. Ex-officio members serving the committee: Ven. David Newman, Warden; Revd Chris Webb, Deputy Warden; Ian Andrews, Business Manager; Representative of the Board of Trustees, Madeleine Wang.

Item 10. Warden's Report The Warden thanked Friends for their friendship over the last 6 extraordinary months. Even though income had been reduced to nil at the beginning of the pandemic and then to a reduction of the normal figure as Launde became able to provide once more, in line with the social distancing constraints, he expected Launde to survive. The last 4 years had provided a good cushion of reserves. In addition, Launde had received some very generous legacies. The legacies were there *in extremis*, for the Board of Trustees wanted to use that money for capital projects. The Abbey was closed for 4 months and many of the staff

were sent on furlough. Only a nucleus remained for mainly maintenance duties. During this period there was time for refurbishment and reorganisation, and the chance to think how the Abbey might operate once more. But ministry continued and when the Holy Week Retreat was cancelled, the Warden with the resident chaplain went online and were very pleasingly surprised to attract over 1000 viewings. This was also spiritual direction by Zoom and had much to commend it as it reached so many more people. The Palmer Report on restructuring Launde to take account of its busier operation up until the lockdown is on hold, but it is a useful document and will provide a direction when life becomes more normal and the Abbey continues with its broad ministry. The continuance of capital projects is also ongoing with investment for 5 new windows in the stable block and a generous donation from the Samworth Foundation for other necessary projects. During the 4 months of lockdown there were shifting scenarios for reopening. Eventually the 1st August 2020 was agreed when people could return to Launde albeit in a restricted capacity. In order to make this possible considerable work was done producing a detailed risk assessment, which was turned into an operating document. This has been shared with other retreat houses to help them. Since 1st August people have been coming to Launde and the Warden was delighted to say that some were new to the Abbey. Of course, the resident staff have had to work extremely hard cleaning, sanitising and make sure the Abbey was safe for people to visit. The Business Manager said the business of the Abbey had changed and numbers of residents were restricted to between 19 and 21 people depending on married couples. There are staggered meal times. Some groups have unfortunately cancelled their booking in 2021, which leaves gaps for planning purposes. However, after deliberation it has been decided that Launde will be capable of fully reopening in April 2021, although of course that will be Covid-dependant. 2021 and probably 2022 were going to be challenging years. He paid a special tribute to staff who had worked so hard. Motocross: The Warden provided a short update about the intention of a neighbouring landowner to hold large motocross events on land adjacent to the Launde estate. Motocross events are very noisy and incompatible with the mission of the Abbey. Market Harborough District Council had checked the noise levels at the first event held in August and had determined they were too high. No further events were planned as far as he was aware. There had been talk, however of using electric bikes. These might be quieter but would nevertheless still produce an unwanted noise level. Jane Thornalley said local residents and parishes were campaigning hard for the events not to happen, for not only were they noisy, but the country roads could not support either the volume of traffic or size of vehicles.

Item 11. Any Other Business

- a. Madeleine Wang had developed a Facebook page to attract more members. However, she wanted more input and pictures. Properly set up with regular and interesting updates, the Facebook page could attract extra members.
- b. The Warden was about to licence Revd Claire Goode as an assistant chaplain from November 2020. This is a House for Duty appointment. She will live in the Stables Cottage.

The meeting finished with Bishop John Holbrook giving the Blessing.



A peaceful Christmas
and a happy new year
to all our readers

FEEDBACK FROM FRIENDS

As spring turned to summer our Membership Secretary Jan Zientek emailed friends to check they had received Launde Leaves, plus other admin matters. Here are a few of the replies he received. As always, your feedback is always welcome.

From: Jette Walther Birk in Denmark

I have received your email, and in times as these it is good to reminded of all you others who are out there. A glimpse of friendship, of former joys that will be possible again and of a shared hope.

From: Peter Carr

It is a long time now since I founded the Friends of Launde and, the more I think about it, the more I realise how old I am getting! We founded the Friends in the early 80's. We appointed a representative for each deanery to liaise with Launde and they in turn appointed a parish representative so that there was a direct link from Launde to each Parish in the Diocese. Within 2 years we had 850 Friends of Launde. I am perhaps reminiscing too much but we did have a very happy time.

From: Bev Reekes

I am missing Launde terribly as I'm sure everyone is. I loved the Holy Week virtual retreat that David and Helen did, very moving. Best wishes to you and here's to Launde opening its doors again.

From: Barbara Mangles

Launde Leaves arrived safely – a very welcome addition to my inbox. Thank you to all those of you involved in producing it and getting out to us. I live in Sheffield but have been coming to Launde for many years, mainly with The Wives Fellowship (now Women in Fellowship), but also to some of Launde's own events. The highlight was the 900th celebrations last year – I came to the whole event. Praying for Launde, and indeed for the whole world – our daughter is a doctor in the Basingstoke hospital. Be strong, stay safe, hope, peace and love to you all.

Canon Alec Boyd

Thank you for your email. We have the same burden to share as the College and Cathedral of The Isles are closed for now and our cash flow is pretty critical. Storms will pass and we look to the future with hope. Give our kind regards and best wishes to everyone. With a Celtic Blessing, Alec



*May the road rise up to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face;
the rains fall soft upon your fields
and until we meet again,
may God hold you in the palm of
His hand.*

From Richard and Rosemary Pestell: *Many thanks from your e-mail and for the Launde Leaves which we look forward to reading.*

We are both well and hope you are too. These are difficult times and it is good to see all that the team at Launde are doing to help us through it all. As you say the crisis will present Launde with some financial challenges and it is good the Friends are able to help as they do. We will keep the prayers going.

Prayers continue for Launde, Mike Harrison, Bishop of Dunwich

From: Keith Wilding



In Holy Week I did tune in each day to the presentations by the Newmans which I thought were very good. I will check the Launde website for further material. Keep safe.

From: Hilary Lewis

Like everyone I am longing to get into the country and to walk in the grounds of Launde Abbey would be wonderful. However, those of us with gardens are so fortunate. It must be quite dreadful to be

stuck in a small flat especially for children having no outdoor space.

From: Sir David Samworth

Please give my best wishes to David, Helen and everyone associated with Launde Abbey.

From: Sheila Walters

I have very precious memories of Launde Abbey and pleased to be in touch. This year I was amongst those who were invited to Lambeth Palace to celebrate the first Priesting of Women. Thank you for taking on the role of keeping people in touch by newsletter.

From: Aileen and John Orme

We have received Launde Leaves and will digest over the next few days. We trust that you are keeping well; we are fine and are still doing jobs that we now have time for!! Take care and 'Stay Safe'.

From: Joan Maud

Thank you so much for your email and news of Launde, including copy of 'Launde Leaves'. This is greatly appreciated and valued, especially during these difficult and uncertain times at the moment. Take care yourself and keep safe. My thoughts & prayers are with you.

From: Sarah Cooper

I was fortunately last at Launde for the retreat led by Ian Cowley just before lockdown in February, and have some fond healing memories and photos to remind myself of the beauty, wonder and sacredness of the Abbey and grounds. I have tuned into the online Holy Week

services led by Helen and David and am pleased to be starting the Easter 2 Reflections just this afternoon.

From: Ray & Joan Wallis

I have printed Launde Leaves and look forward to reading it. We are both turned 90, so we are not able to be actively involved, but we look forward to news of events. My last stay was the Mothers' Union Retreat 2 years ago. We have happy memories of the August Bank Holiday fundraising weekends, with our caravans parked up for 4 or 5 days. God Bless.

From: Andrew Hartley

I have cycled past Launde Abbey several times on my road bike during these past weeks of Lockdown. I cycle regularly and it is always a joy to be able to cycle out from where I live to enjoy the beautiful countryside surrounding us.

Launde Abbey is a very special place. I adore the chapel and have fond memories of taking my wife down through the side entrance of the chapel (before the lift was installed) to attend a beautiful Taizé-style Service.

From: Cynthia McLauchlan

Thank you for sending this issue of Launde Leaves I very much enjoyed reading it and feel part of the community with you all at Launde Abbey. I Look forward to receiving further emails and will certainly share this around the Parish.

PRAYER

Circle me, Lord.

Keep protection near

And danger afar.

Circle me, Lord.

Keep hope within.



Keep doubt without.

Circle me, Lord.

Keep light near

And darkness afar.

Circle me, Lord.

Keep peace within

Keep evil out.

David Adam

GATHER US IN

Thank you to Stephen Ibbotson at Southwell for bringing this poem and many other pieces to the Editor's attention. Since the March lockdown Stephen has offered material for quiet contemplation in his weekly Stilling Prayer emails.

Gather us in,
the lost and lonely
the broken and breaking,
the tired and the aching
who long for the nourishment
found at your feast.

GATHER US IN,
the done-in and doubting,
the wishing and wondering,
the puzzled and pondering,
who long for the company
found at your feast.

GATHER US IN,
the proud and pretentious,
the sure and superior,
the never inferior,
who long for the levelling
found at your feast.

GATHER US IN,
the bright and the bustling,
the stirrers, the shakers,
the kind laughter makers
who long for the deeper joys
found at your feast.

GATHER US IN,
from corner or limelight,
from mansion or campsite,
from fears and obsession,
from tears and depression,
from treasured successes
to meet, to eat,
be given a seat,
be joined to the vine
be offered new wine,
become from the least,
be found at the feast.

GATHER US IN!

Iona Community



WELCOME TO REVD CLAIRE GOODE



Revd Claire Goode

A few weeks ago Launde Abbey appointed the Revd Claire Goode, Vicar in the Benefice of St Andrew, Nottingham in the Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham, as the new House for Duty Chaplain at Launde Abbey. The Bishop of Leicester announced the appointment publicly at the beginning of August. You can find a short interview with Claire on the Launde Abbey website laundeabbey.org.uk

Make space on Monday 11th January for the Quiet Day to be led by Claire.



January ONLINE Quiet Day: A Glimpse of God – A Revelation

11th January 2021, 10:00 am to 4:00 pm

£20

Revd Claire Goode

This Quiet Day will now be taking place online.

Visit the Launde Abbey website to book your place.

How have we received God, and how has he shaped our faith? As we enter the season of Epiphany we will reflect together on the experience of a God who reveals.

Claire has recently joined the team at Launde as House for Duty Chaplain.

Previously she was the Vicar of St Andrew's Church, Nottingham, a small city centre parish, and one of the team offering spiritual direction (or accompaniment) and mentoring in Southwell and Nottingham Diocese.

GREEN SHOOTS AND BLUE SKIES?

Miriam Stoate reflects on new opportunities for “being church”

The tragedy of Covid-19 has, for us all, meant engaging with different types of worship and spiritual reflection – on-line, by email, phone or between those living nearby. Old and new friends from across the world have met in homes, gardens and when walking – like Jesus, who enjoyed spending time in homes and walking with others. The initial simplicity, slowing down and silence enabled fresh ways of being church to emerge.

For example, “Roots and Wings” (a young people’s group) used to meet monthly at Launde Abbey, and now meets on-line every fortnight. During the lockdown they have become more theologically reflective, exploring everything from normal and the “new normal”, to how other faiths have reacted to the pandemic - with Muslim and Hindu guests humbling us with their generous giving and dedication to prayer and fasting.

I’ve noticed a new openness to spiritual exploration among secular networks too. I was invited to talk about Christianity and the climate crisis at an Extinction Rebellion online event, with activists from across the UK and beyond. I asked everyone to bring some soil or something living to reflect on, in silence together – a physical way to connect and deeply share with one another, remembering how precious the earth is and how some people do not even have access to a handful of soil.

The lockdown temporarily released Christians from some of the financial, time and greenhouse gas burdens of their buildings and too many journeys to too many meetings (though, as a result, church donations have plummeted). Most congregations and churchwardens are elderly and vulnerable; many ordained and lay people are exhausted and burnt out. Is too much energy, time and money being spent on maintaining stones at the expense of nurturing and caring for people made in God’s image?

Even before Covid-19 I was aware that this might be so, as a few years ago, with much sadness and sense of failure, the Methodist Chapel which had been active in our community for over 100 years was closed. However, released from the burden of caring for an old, inefficient building that was sometimes only used for an hour a fortnight, I now had time and energy to help with Fresh Expressions, Taizé services, as a Friend of Launde Abbey, and alternative ways of being with others.

For example, while walking, I recently met a woman who felt so alienated, hurt and excluded by the predominantly masculine language used for God in many prayers and Bible translations that she had left church. This prompted me to search for alternatives, including the delightful “Inclusive Bible” which is a welcoming and honest translation.

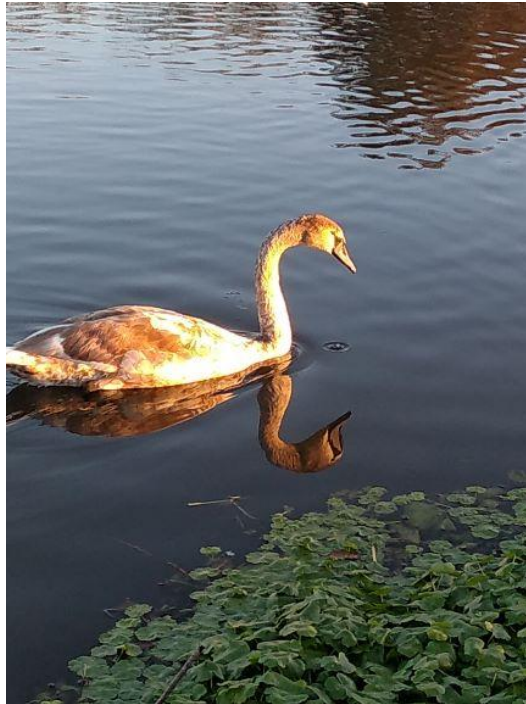
Similarly, older church buildings can feel out-dated and unwelcoming, especially to the disabled and newcomers, while being impossible to heat efficiently and very expensive to maintain. Our parish church includes the tombs of crusaders – which I felt embarrassed by, when welcoming a group of Muslim visitors in the past. In comparison, our village hall is warm and welcoming and people who don't usually enter the church have been happy and able to attend the annual World Day of Prayer in this community building.

While looking forward to physically meeting and appreciating the sacred peace and stillness found in ancient places of worship, the welcome green shoots arising from the pandemic need

nurturing. The climate crisis requires less carbon-intensive travel, more on-line and outside connectivity, while reflecting on which buildings to maintain and retrofit, so the people of the church can, like Jesus, have time and capacity to love others, ourselves and the beautiful planet which is our shared home.

Miriam Stoate

Miriam is a Pioneer in the Leicester Diocese who encourages people to share silence, be together outside and to live simply and creatively. She wrote this article for the Green Christian magazine.



THE PEACE OF WILD THINGS

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting for their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

Wendell Berry

HOPE AT SOUTHWELL CATHEDRAL

From Southwell Minster's weekly online Pew News



Many of us are in need of a shot of hope this Christmas, so it's timely that Southwell Minster has taken delivery of a huge consignment of hope – in the shape of the 'Wall of HOPE', a 'prayer installation' that has been touring England's cathedrals and arrived this week for its latest stop in Southwell. The 'wall' consists of four six-foot-high, backlit letters spelling out the word 'hope'. Situated at the far, east end of the cathedral, in front of the High Altar, they stand in striking contrast to the ancient architecture around them and provide an opportunity to reflect on the hope of the gospel as we approach the end of a difficult year. The aim is to make people stop and think about what hope means today. They are there as an invitation to prayer and special 'hope prayer cards' will be available to visitors to fill in; those prayers will later be prayed in the Minster, bringing people's hopes and needs to God this Christmas season.

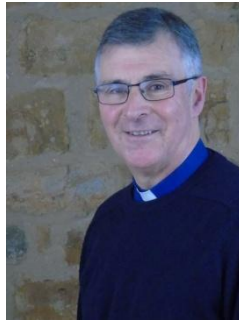
PRAYING

It doesn't have to be
the blue iris, it could be
weeds in a vacant lot, or a few
small stones; just
pay attention, then patch
a few words together and don't try
to make them elaborate, this isn't
a contest but the doorway
into thanks, and a silence in which
another voice may speak.

Mary Oliver, Thirst



FROM THE WARDEN



Dear Friends

Lockdown for me began in the chapel at Launde, praying on my own, and feeling deeply the solitariness of a closed house and absence of congregation in our regular place of worship. At that early stage we had hoped to keep the chapel open for visitors who wanted to come and pray. It soon became clear that this would not be possible. So the socially distanced chairs and the removal of bibles and books created an empty, echoing space that felt deeply sad, uncertain and symbolic of the losses that we were entering into.

However, as I stayed with that sense of emptiness, I felt the dawning of a hope, that the space created by the pandemic and all the painful losses that it would cause, need not just be empty space, but could become space for God, space to have our normal routines interrupted to discover a presence that could be missed in busier or more settled times.

We began to experience how loss could become opportunity when we decided to put the talks from our cancelled Holy Week Retreat on line and found ourselves receiving sometimes over a thousand viewings a day. Various forms of online ministry – talks, blogs, courses and spiritual direction continued through the lockdown, though for most of Launde staff it was a time of furlough. A small team remained to continue the necessary administration and maintenance.

Hopes of re-opening were frequently deferred - May – July – and finally August but all the time working through plans as to how to welcome back guests safely with risk assessments of the capacity of our different spaces and the ways of working that would keep staff and guests safe.

Then we were back in the chapel again, as a clergy team thinking and praying about how to re-start our rhythm of daily worship and prayer, such a vital hub of all that we do here. We were back in that empty space, but with God-filled potential. And the idea came to symbolise that potential with an installation that filled the spaces and proclaimed God's renewing power. The River of Life was imagined flowing through the middle of

the chapel with plants growing from the fertile surroundings it created.

The symbol of water has been with us at Launde from our 900th anniversary celebration last year – Ancient Wells, Living Water. Now though, we found our thoughts turning from wells to rivers, and to the great biblical visions in Ezekiel and Revelation of rivers that flowed from the temple or the presence of God into the world bringing new life, sustenance and healing.

Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear fruit, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing.

Ezekiel 47:12

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Rev. 22: 1-2

In the chapel the river can be imagined flowing both ways. First from its source at the altar, the place where the sacrifice of Christ is celebrated in the Eucharist to the font where that grace meets each person in the new birth and renewal of baptism. In turn it flows out from the font into the world as believers live out their baptism creating channels of grace and healing.

We will continue for some time to find spaces carved into our lives by Covid 19, and losses will be real and painful. We are believing though that they can be God-filled spaces, here at Launde, but in the wider church too with a new sense of what is really important, and how in hope, we can look forward not just to a return to normal, but to something better, fairer, more sustainable and more faithful.

The Reverend David Newman

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The Launde Abbey Prayer

Father,

here may the faithful find salvation

and the careless be awakened;

here may the doubting find faith

and the anxious be encouraged;

here may the tempted find help

and the sorrowful comfort;

here may the weary find rest

and the strong be renewed;

here may we all find inspiration,

and that peace which the world cannot give:

your precious gift to us in Jesus Christ our Lord,

Amen.

For more information about Launde Abbey and its programme of events ring (01572)
717254 (between 10.00am and 4.00pm), email info@launde.org.uk or visit
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