

LAUNDE LEAVES

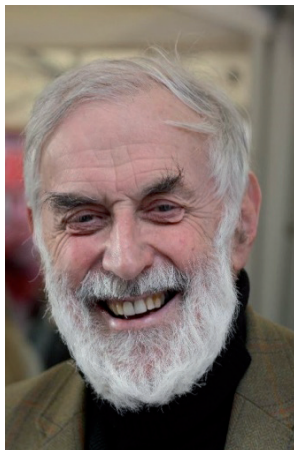


THE FRIENDS OF LAUNDE

EASTER 2021

THE BODY
OF CHRIST

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



FROM THE WARDEN

IT'S ALL ABOUT BUILDING COMMUNITY

The theme for this Launde Leaves is ‘The Body of Christ’ and of course the key text is St Paul writing in 1 Corinthians 12, ‘All of you are Christ’s body, and each one is a part of it’ (GNB). It perhaps all goes back to Paul’s conversion on the road to Damascus to arrest some Christians. He was thrown from his horse and he heard Jesus says to him, “Saul, Saul why are you persecuting me?” He realised that by persecuting Christians he was persecuting Jesus, because Christians formed the body of Christ on earth. As St Teresa said, ‘Christ has no body now on earth but yours...’

There is very little in the New Testament that tells us how the first Christians worshipped but in 1 Corinthians 11 we get some idea of what happened. The Lord’s Supper (Holy Communion) involved bringing and sharing food. The wealthier people provided food to be shared. But Paul says some people behaved disgracefully: the better off helped themselves to all the food, while the poor people went hungry. After reporting the words that Jesus used at the Last Supper, words that we use in every Holy Communion, he then says, ‘All who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgement on themselves’ (NRSV). Is it about reverently receiving the bread and wine as the Body and Blood of Jesus, or more likely, is it also about sharing your food with the hungry? ‘Discerning the body’ is about loving and caring for one another in the body of believers and building the church as a loving, caring community.

All through my ministry I have been taking parish groups to Launde for weekends. There, as many as fifty people can really experience what it is

like to live together in a Christian community. There is something special about living under the same roof for two days. A strong sense of fellowship can be built up: worshipping, discussing, eating, laughing and even sometimes crying together! I remember a special weekend in 2000 when I was at St Mary's, Hinckley. We took 50 adults and 14 children to Launde and had a marvellous family week-end together, building community.

CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP

That is why I am so keen to encourage parishes to come and spend a weekend at Launde. We will be sending out a flier to all the churches in Leicester and Peterborough Dioceses with information about becoming corporate members. In return for a membership fee of £50 (larger parishes or groups of parishes might like to give more), they will receive various benefits such as a reduction of 25% for a Quiet Day at Launde, and for parishes booking a weekend, one in ten people would come free.

Canon Brian Davis

Prayer of St Teresa of Avila (1515–1582)

Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
Compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.
Christ has no body now but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
compassion on this world.



*Chaplain's visor
and resources*

The Fragile Body:

A HEALTHCARE CHAPLAIN'S REFLECTION



*'The Presiding Woman'
by Sonya J Wratten*

I write this reflection as I come towards the end of my ministry as a Healthcare Chaplain with the University Hospitals of Leicester before I begin a parochial post in the Diocese of Oxford. It is therefore timely for me to look retrospectively at what has been an intense, unusual and fragile time in the past ten months in acute healthcare. I never imagined when I was ordained a priest ten years ago this summer that part of my ministry-life would include wearing goggles, a visor and a face mask but these items have become part of the chaplain's tool kit since Covid-19 took hold in March last year.

Wearing PPE now seems as normal as taking a copy of the Lord's Prayer, oil for anointing and Holy Communion to the bedside of Christian patients. At first glance we may perceive such items as barriers to making human connection but they have in fact been significant resources that have enabled healthcare chaplains connect with people who are gravely ill or relatives of those who have come to the end of their lives. In fact, PPE has provided a sense of security and safety in what feels to be a very fragile context physically, emotionally and institutionally. Reflecting on the Easter season, I have been making connections between the broken body of Jesus in the aftermath of Good Friday and the fragile body of the NHS.

My experience of ministry at the coal-face has opened my eyes to the injustices of poverty and the continuing presence of societal inequality that is laid bare in the wards and beds of our hospitals. I leave the NHS

with heartfelt thanks for the care and compassion I have witnessed (pre and post pandemic, personally and professionally) from staff spanning the positions of domestic to consultant, but I leave also with a sense of righteous anger. My anger of prophetic proportion is targeted at the leaders of our land with a strong sense that our Covid-19 story could have been better and could have been different. I am emboldened as a priest who took the ordination vow to ‘speak in season and out of season’ to write, as one colleague succinctly articulated, that our hospitals mop up the effects of the government’s austerity measures which have been further magnified by this pandemic. The body of the NHS is a political football and just as the Body of Christ cries out for a better way of being in the world so does the near broken body of the NHS at this time.

I implore you this Easter season to reflect on our healthcare institutions and what we have learnt as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. What action can we take to ensure the fragile body of the NHS is restored and resurrected receiving the economic and political support it truly needs in order to serve the most vulnerable of our society? As members of the church, we are one Body so let’s play our part in building up Christ’s Body for the inclusion of all.

The Reverend Sonja J Wratten

1 Corinthians 12: 24-27

God has put the body together, giving greater honour to the parts that lacked it, 25 so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. 26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it. 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

BEING THE BODY OF CHRIST

Odd things happen to our sense of time during Lockdown; for some the days and weeks seem to stretch out interminably, for others it's a surprise that we've already completed a year of it. Sharing this time with my husband and Burmese cat in our home and garden situated in a pleasant town helps us cope with the many challenges and frustrations. Much is missing from our former way of life, but we're sustained by being part of our local church community, our own pattern of prayer, input from Launde Abbey and elsewhere, and continuing with some ministry such as giving Spiritual Direction; all expressions of being the body of Christ.



A pre-lockdown glimpse of Friday Connect at Pat's church

Last year several bishops responded robustly to early media comments that the Church has 'shut down' and pointed out that churches continue to be active, just

not always in their buildings. There is regular Sunday worship with study and prayer meetings in small groups often using online social media. Many churches reach out and care for those in difficulty in the local community as illustrated by the picture of Friday Connect in our church. I know of many people, some very limited in outside activities themselves, who have been a lifeline by regular phone contact to elderly and disabled people living alone and thus avoided them becoming isolated and lonely. This is arranged informally with people they already know or by a rota drawn up by their church. This web of care, supporting friends and neighbours by bubbling, phoning, skyping,

running errands and of course praying, illustrates what St Paul wrote to the first century Corinthian church: 'You are the body of Christ and each one is a part of it'. I feel this applies not only in our local church but also the fellowship we share with others further away. Some are not known personally to us - when we pray for fellow Christians in need or suffering persecution for their faith. All are part of Christ's body.

It is interesting that when he uses the metaphor of the body of Christ to the Corinthians and Ephesians, Paul puts it in the context of spiritual gifts and the need for love to be paramount. The gifts are given to enable the body to be fruitful, doing the work of Jesus here on earth and worshipping Him. A famous prayer attributed to Teresa of Avila says: 'Christ has no body but yours, No hands, no feet on earth but yours'. So in what way are we the body of Christ here on earth? Is my attendance at church or a retreat at Launde Abbey any different from going to a club or staying in a hotel? Any of these experiences may feel like being in a family, but there is something different about 'being church'. The key to being part of the body of Christ here on earth is surely our relationship of love with Him and one another.

Some Christians regard being able to meet up as crucial. In China and other countries Christians have paid a high price for physically meeting together. However, experiences of being alone in our own home (as now) or deliberately taking time out in solitude, suggest this is not always required in order to be part of the body of Christ. Writers like Henri Nouwen and Thomas Merton suggest solitude not only helps in the development of the inner spiritual life and relationship with God, but can also increase an awareness of love for other people and so develop community as part of Christ's body. This is one of the many paradoxes that came up in the latest retreat I attended with David Newman on his book: 'Growing up into the Children of God'.

I've been amazed at how effective worship, ministry and even a retreat have been by 'meeting' virtually. This can be one-to-one, in a small group, or as a congregation on Sundays. I'm pleased to discover God does not seem to be limited by electronic media, even if I am! This year

I've attended Quiet Days and Retreats from Launde Abbey mostly online, using their guidelines to make the most of a Retreat at Home. Although we're not physically in the peace, quiet and remoteness of the space that is Launde, and not able to sit in our favourite corners of the House or grounds, there are benefits in staying home. We've attended more often as it's so easy to make a quiet space in a room and it's quicker with no travelling by car - we just go upstairs to our study for the sessions! It's harder not to get interrupted or fill the time for reading and reflection with other distracting activities that beckon at home, but it all feels more integrated into everyday life. We are linked with the body of Christ, joined with others in Him while remaining in our own home, finding God and experiencing Him in the midst of everything.

Pat Dale

Pat first visited Launde Abbey nearly 30 years ago and goes more often since living in Stamford, co-leading a bi-annual retreat from her church there. Appreciating the fellowship of a lively evangelical church, Pat is a 'Spiritual Companion', enjoying this one-to-one ministry with many from Lincoln and surrounding Dioceses, even on Zoom. She is a Friend of Launde.

INTERVIEW WITH REVD CLAIRE GOODE

We are very aware that your arrival at Launde has come at a very strange time.

When we all experienced the first lockdown, I was still serving in my previous post, so I don't know how it affected Launde. What is Launde Abbey without guests, without staff and without volunteers? The church is not the building, it is the gathered people, but the people need a place to gather. Many people are currently having to do their jobs in a very different manner, including me.

Do you recall your first visit to Launde?

I first came to Launde in the summer of 2005 when I was in the first year of the East Midlands Ministry Training Course (EMMTC). I was on the cusp of going forward for ordination selection. I didn't know that places like Launde existed outside monastic communities. I've always loved the atmosphere in the chapel. It's a "thin place", people have worshipped there for hundreds of years, it carries the imprints of people's prayers, their handprints, their footprints. The gardens were lovely. I am a gardener; there is a sense of space. This was in the days before en-suite bedrooms; one has to say the plumbing was not as it is now.

What experiences have you gathered in your previous ministry that you now bring to your role at Launde?

I've served two incumbencies, the first as Priest-in-Charge of seven villages to the south and east of Southwell, the second to the north of Nottingham city centre. My last post was a gathered church with one worshipping community and one PCC, for which I was very grateful.

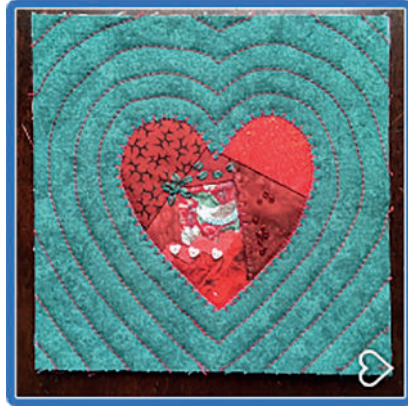
What is your official title at Launde and are there particular areas that you will work on?

My appointment is as Chaplain. One of my responsibilities is going to be to develop the schools work. I've been in conversation with the Area Dean about that but until Launde and the schools reopen, it is on hold. I shall continue the textiles retreats and quiet days like the one I recently led on line. Whilst we are keen to welcome guests back to Launde, there is a desire to maintain the online provision. It enables people who are too far away to travel, or who may be not well enough, to join in a retreat that would otherwise be inaccessible to them.

Can you tell us something about your work in textiles and how you see it in relation to your priestly calling?

I've always been a dressmaker, as was my grandmother and her two sisters who trained in tailoring in order not to work in a munitions factory in the First World War. I then branched into patchwork. Sewing is a creative activity which can put us in touch with God as creator, and God's ongoing creation. When we make things we join in that work of creation. It can be very life-giving. On these creative stitching retreats we always start with an opening project whose purpose is to make people slow down. We all come from a busy, frenetic world. With a needle and a piece of fabric in your hand you give yourself a chance to go more slowly, to be thoughtful, to think about what is going on around you. My role is to give something for people to focus their thoughts on. Even on the recent online retreat we were sewing together, able to chat and to talk about the topic. What we missed were the one-to-one conversations, and of course the meals together at Launde. However, the retreatants enjoyed the companionship. In my view, textiles retreats are not for those who seek deep silence. They are for really extroverts or sociable introverts because a lot of it is about the God-conversations that take place. People can find themselves voicing things that are quite profound.





Is there a place at The Abbey that gives you a greater sense of God's presence?

I love the Chapel. It's place where you can pray and worship, it has a lovely atmosphere, very calm, very tranquil. I like walking round the grounds. I like going into the walled garden and into the glasshouse with the cacti – they are amazing. I like having space to walk and the paths have been developed over the years. I cannot imagine how Karen the head gardener keeps on top of it all.

Thinking about the theme of the Easter 2021 edition of Launde Leaves, how can we be the body of Christ at this time?

It's to do with supporting each other and being there for each other. I shall be delighted to meet the committee and other Friends of Launde when that becomes possible again but we can pray for one another and give and receive spiritual direction via Zoom or on the phone. We become the body of Christ –it is an ongoing process. We do well to remind each other that we have a heavenly dimension, a divine spark,

because currently we can't take things for granted. In some cases people are experiencing bereavement as a terrible, premature foreshortening of a life. We think of being able to be with loved ones at the end as a human right but that has in so many cases not been possible.

Has the experience of the coronavirus pandemic changed the way you view things?

We have all learnt that there is a fragility about life. There is only so much health care you can buy; you can't buy health itself. This pandemic is shocking and it is right to be shocked. It can become paralysing when you begin to become frightened by it. There are those who are not going out at all. Isolation and separation have been shocking. I have not seen my daughter who lives in Wales since August last year. Lives are diminished by it. We need human contact. In faith I have booked a camping holiday with friends in May half-term. We cancelled last year's. We try to follow the rules but it is not okay, for example, that a friend can't visit her mother who lives in a care home. We do, however, have to take care and do our best to not put others in danger.

Are there any other questions that you thought you would be asked?

I thought you might ask what I did before I was ordained. My ordination was the same year as our Silver Wedding Anniversary so I often see my life in two halves: for the first part of my married life I was a lay person; in the second part I am ordained. I bring to ministry a lot of experience from the secular workplace.

I've worked as a teacher in Further Education, in marketing, I've bought vehicle spares for the Ministry of Defence. It is an asset but one that the Church does not perhaps always recognise.



Who would you like to spend 24 hours with in the Chapel, at Launde and why?

It might be more than one person alive or from the past....We provide tea or coffee, or a cork screw if you prefer.....

For me the refreshments would be proper afternoon tea, the works. I'd invite Rowan Williams, Desmond Tutu and Tom Wright, sequentially. Desmond Tutu would be a hoot. Rowan Williams and Tom Wright represent different church traditions but they also represent New Testament scholarship of a very well-respected level. I met Tom Wright when as Bishop of Durham he licensed my training incumbent to a new post. I'd love to have a conversation with him.

Thank you to Revd Claire Goode for conducting this interview via Zoom. We all look forward to many encounters with her at Launde and wish her all the very best as Covid restrictions are lifted.

LAUNDE ABBEY – IN THE COMFORT OF YOUR HOME

I'm really appreciating the online resources Launde Abbey is continually offering while it is closed due to the pandemic. There are different online opportunities for reflection, rest and reconnection with the Divine. Although it will be great to be back at Launde Abbey whenever it reopens, during times of lockdown the online Quiet Days, Retreats and Discipleship Days mean that more is available to everyone and much of it is freely accessible (although donations are very much appreciated). I've learnt and grown listening to an amazing range of varied, insightful and caring leaders. My first online Launde Abbey Discipleship Day was led by Rhona Knight with wisdom, beautiful images, small and large

group discussions, times for personal reflection, handouts to sustain and nurture after the day and music (ranging from You Want it Darker by Leonard Cohen to Blinded by Your Grace by Stormzy). The December Quiet Day by Lusa Nsenga-Ngoy opened my mind to a more global and diverse theology, including learning about the wonderful Howard Thurman (African-American theologian, educator and civil rights leader).

The annual post-Christmas weekend retreat at Launde Abbey I usually enjoy with female friends and family was cancelled so instead I listened to Chris Webb’s online Epiphany retreat over that weekend and shared



Photo of a small resident in the garden, Jan Zientek

the link with others. I found his focus on beauty and art to be really helpful during a January that seemed dark and challenging. I especially enjoyed his fourth reflection, which included studying The Great Piece of Turf painted by Albrecht Dürer, which reminded me

of the beauty that is literally under our feet and all around us. I thought about the beauty and specialness of individually crafted things which are ‘imperfect’ as opposed to mass produced items and also the beauty of outside - flowers, butterflies, plants, clouds and friendship.

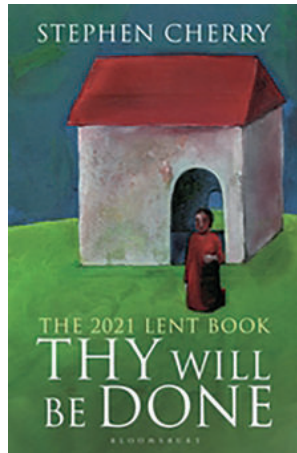
Waking early on dark and cold January mornings, I accessed the Deepening Discipleship day on Love means Love by David Runcorn from the comfort and warmth of my bed. It was inspirational in exploring how the church can be inclusive and welcoming, although the

focus was on scripture and those with same-sex relationships and marriages, it extended beyond this to include the wide open arms of Jesus - the symbol of Launde Abbey and mentioned the wonderful website resource: www.churchforeveryone.info

Other online days have included Stephen Cherry focusing on the Lord's Prayer, where I found his critique of the patriarchal and hierarchical translation we usually use to be really helpful and pray and hope that the church and Launde Abbey will also seek to increasingly use more inclusive language for the Divine in prayers and Bible translations.

I hope you too, are able to access the online resources and opportunities offered by Launde Abbey to support, stretch and strengthen you during this time, and if you are financially able to make a donation it would be very much appreciated.

Miriam Stoate



*Thanks to Ann Green and Frances Rendall
for proof-reading many of the articles in this edition
and to Lizette Pugh for providing questions for the interview
with Revd Claire Goode.*

NEWS FOR THE FRIENDS OF LAUNDE

NOTICE OF AGM VIA ZOOM

7:30 pm 9th September 2021

Make this year's AGM even better attended than the last.
Please email Jan Zientek to receive the Zoom link nearer the time.
We look forward to seeing one another on screen.

FAREWELL

The warmest wishes of the Friends of Launde go with Bishop Guli and her family as they move to Chelmsford. We are very thankful for her time of service as Chair of the Trustees.



FRIENDS' RETREAT

Thank you to The Reverend Mike Playdon who writes:

The retreat planned for February has had to be postponed, and will now be held 3rd & 4th December 2021.

Since the retreat previously scheduled for February had a pre-Lenten theme, Bishop Mike Harrison has changed the theme of the rescheduled retreat to one more suitable for pre-Advent. I thought you would be interested to know that the theme for 3rd - 4th December will be "Helpful practices through Advent" - a look at some spiritual disciplines,

habits of mind, heart and body which are seasonally appropriate and offer opportunities for deeper formation in Christ.

Some 20 retreatants have already agreed to transfer their bookings to the new date, and there may still be places available. If you are interested please contact Mike Playdon as soon as possible:
playdon.mike@gmail.com, 0116 230 4634.

WELCOME

Jennie Page, a former Chief Executive of English Heritage, and current Chair of the Church Buildings Council, has been appointed by Bishop Martyn as interim Chair of Launde Trustees having become a member of the Board in 2019.

We look forward to meeting her.

PRAYERS

offered by The Revd Mike Playdon at the Friends' Committee Meeting in February.

Gracious loving God, we give you thanks for the privilege of supporting the work of Launde Abbey, as we serve on the Friends' committee: for the gifts and contributions we bring, for the way in which your Spirit enables us to share and develop our gifts.

We give thanks for all Friends, past and present, for their generosity, enthusiasm, and loyal support, and we pray for them now as we represent them in this committee, those whom we see fairly regularly at the Abbey, at retreats and quiet days and other events, and those scattered around the country whom we see only infrequently. We hold them up to you...And we pray especially for any who are unwell at this time; may they know that they are held by your love.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord,

Amen

FROM THE WARDEN

Dear Friends

As I write, Helen and I have just announced our decision to retire from Launde in August this year. As I reach my 67th

birthday and complete 42 years of ordained ministry, I feel it is time for a change of pace with more time for family and friends, and the creative opportunities of retirement.



Launde has been a wonderful place for the final years of stipendiary ministry. The only regret is that this last year has been dominated by the pandemic and nine months of it have seen Launde closed to guests. It has not been completely wasted. Through online ministry we have connected with people far and wide including those who might never visit Launde because of the distance, inability to travel or expense. We have also been able to catch up on administrative and maintenance jobs. However Launde is a special place – a ‘thin’ place to use the adjective attributed to George MacLeod of Iona – and the actual coming here is an important part for many in encountering God. So we look forward to opening doors again hopefully well before August.

A highlight of our time was the celebration of the 900th anniversary with its theme of “Ancient Wells, Living Water”. Launde as a place of refreshment and renewal is for me core to our purpose. And as I think about that, an old preacher’s story comes to mind about an old pump that offered the only hope of drinking water along a remote trail across Nevada’s Amargosa Desert. Attached to the pump was a tin containing this letter:

“This pump is all right as of June 1932. I put a new sucker washer into it and it ought to last five years. But the washer dries out and the pump has got to be primed. Under the white rock I buried a bottle of water, out of the sun and cork end up. There’s enough water in it to prime the pump, but not if you drink some first. Pour about one-fourth and let her soak to wet the leather. Then pour in the rest medium fast and pump like crazy. You’ll get water. The well has never run dry. Have faith. When you get watered up, fill the bottle and put it back like you found it for the next feller.

(signed) Desert Pete.

P.S. Don’t go drinking the water first. Prime the pump with it and you’ll get all you can hold

Our ministry at Launde is like priming the pump, enabling those whose leather has got a bit parched to reconnect with the flow of water that never runs dry. This is more than just being a filling station for tanks quickly empty again. It is hopefully connecting people with the resources that are always there in every place. We need special places, to help us realise that all places are special.

In the end that is like ordained ministry. We need particular ministries to help everyone realise that they have a ministry. We have certain leadership gifts, as Paul writes to the Ephesians, “to prepare God’s people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up...” As we emerge from the pandemic the ministry of all the baptised is going to be more significant than ever. Places like Launde Abbey will continue to be vital in encouraging that to be so.

With every blessing.

David Newman

LAUNDE LEAVES

is published by the Friends of Launde Abbey

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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 www.laundeabbey.org.uk

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