



Across

- 1 Church historian (4)
- 5 Saint whose bones were carried to Durham (8)
- 7 Thy ____ come (7)

- 9 Abbess of Whitby (5)
- 11 Wife of Abraham (5)
- 14 Colour for Ordinary Time (5)
- 15 Queenly (?) wife of Zachariah (9)

Down

- 2 "Thanksgiving" Holy Communion? (9)

Answers to last month's crossword



- 3 She came to visit Solomon (5, 2, 5)
- 4 St. Francis service? (3)
- 6 Meat eaten at Passover (4)
- 8 As the ____ pants (4)
- 10 Enemy cut up by Samuel (4)
- 12 Youngest son of Noah (3)
- 13 Head and shoulder, knee and (3)

Answers in next month's issue.

Editorial

This month's magazine is a special bumper edition, with an extra article by Fr Simon on *Living in Love and Faith*. I've also included an old photograph of the church interior, which will be one of the illustrations in the forthcoming church guidebook, and a seventeenth-century poem. Happy reading!

David M. Sargent

From Fr Simon

Dear all

A few weeks ago, I managed to go rock climbing for the first time in over a year. It felt so good to be in touch with the rock face with hands and feet, getting the feel of the surface, and testing the grip. Over the last many months, I have seen rocks, I have walked past them and over them. I have read climbing magazines. But I have not seriously approached a significant rockface with the intention of going up it. All of a sudden you notice so much more: how warm the rock feels, the big and the tiniest of features, the texture, the slightest ripple in the surface that might offer some grip, the smallest of indentations. You notice where it is rough and where it has been worn smooth by other people. You notice the safe places; points to get to and breathe after a tenuous patch. And when I was half way up, I realised how poor I was at climbing compared with a few years ago.

Lockdowns have left us rather out of touch with things. We have lost connections. Things like Zoom and Facebook have helped, but for me these don't give the real connections that we all need. They are like watching a video of someone climbing rather than encountering the rock for real.

We are out of touch, quite literally. But, as humans, we do need to physically connect. Studies have shown that tiny babies in incubators need to be touched, to be held; it makes a difference to their chances of survival and wellbeing.

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For All the Saints

by Mother Janet, Associate Priest

This married couple are remembered on 26th July.

I have always thought these saints for July make a good quiz question – can you name the grandparents of Jesus?

Well now you have the answer. Joachim and Ann (He only had two of course!).

If you have never heard of them don't be surprised. You will not find the parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary mentioned in the Bible – but Christian tradition tells us quite a lot about them.

Joachim was supposedly born in Nazareth, and he married Ann while he was still a young man. Ann was the daughter of a nomadic Jew called Akat (who had come to Nazareth with his pregnant wife) and Mary too was born there.

For many years the marriage was childless and just like the parents of John the Baptist, they were either pitied or held in contempt by their neighbours.

Ann would weep and pray to God to give her just one child. Legend says that while she was praying under a laurel tree an angel appeared and told her that God had heard her prayers and she would give birth to a child who would be praised all over the world. Ann replied that her child would be a gift to God and serve Him in holiness and lifelong obedience.

They were known as excellent parents and Mary is often shown in paintings on her mother's lap learning how to read. Presumably, they taught Mary the faith which enabled her to say to Gabriel, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done to me according to Thy word".

The Magnificat which is, of course, the song which Mary sings, echoes the song which Hannah sings after her prayer for a son has been answered. Mary must have been very familiar with the scriptures, so they obviously did a great job.

Tradition says that Ann and Joachim lived to see the birth of their divine grandson and that Joachim died shortly after Jesus was presented in the Temple. Unsurprisingly, Joachim and Ann are the patron saints of Grandparents.

Peace

by Henry Vaughan (1622-95)

My soul, there is a country
Far beyond the stars,
Where stands a wingèd sentry
All skilful in the wars;

There above the noise and danger,
Sweet Peace sits crown'd with smiles,
And One born in a manger
Commands the beauteous files.

He is thy gracious Friend,
And—O my Soul awake! —
Did in pure love descend
To die here for thy sake.

If thou canst get but thither,
There grows the flower of Peace,
The Rose that cannot wither,
Thy fortress and thy ease.

Leave then thy foolish ranges,
For none can thee secure,
But One, who never changes,
Thy God, thy life, thy cure.



Interior of St. Mark's between 1882 and 1914

From Fr Simon [continued from page 1]

Modern thought is that we don't exist purely in our minds or in our hearts. It is more as if we think and feel with our bodies too. If we stop touching then we limit our thinking and feeling. We exist less. We say and hear less.

One of the huge difficulties of Coronavirus has been losing touch, quite literally: not shaking hands, not passing items, not having your head touched by the hairdresser, not being hugged. Even small accidental touches have disappeared, for example when change is handed over by the shop assistant.

Touch can also be inappropriate and "creepy", that is not what I'm talking about here. And we know that some people don't like to be touched.

In church we now have to drop the consecrated bread into your hands with no direct touch, and there is no chalice that is touched by everyone in turn. There is no exchange of peace (some people prefer this).

We listen to the hymns rather than singing them with our breath and bodies.

We have necessarily retreated from making contact with each other and the world.

As we are released from the pandemic over the coming months and years, let us rejoice at the simplest things given back to us. Let us be thankful for the things we have taken for granted in the past.

The joy of a handshake or a hug. The wonder of singing. The sharing of the chalice. Visiting one's neighbour. An encouraging hand on the shoulder.

And let us vow to stay in touch with those we love, with our wider society and with the world.

God Bless

Notices

Our monthly bible study is usually on the third Monday of the month.

Our next one is 19th July at 7.30pm via Zoom. Meeting ID: 821 7505 2779

All are welcome, no experience necessary.

The gardening teams at both churches do a tremendous job. Volunteers are welcome to join in at St Mark's on Wednesdays at 2-4pm.

Church cleaning will take place on the first Saturday of the month, at 10am.

Living in Love & Faith, part 2

by Fr Simon

In the last magazine I explained that I am affirming of gay people and gay relationships. I told you some of my background and how my attitudes and beliefs had developed. I want to continue to stress to everybody that people are allowed their own opinions on this, as long as these are expressed lovingly and carefully.

One of the arguments put forward against LGBTQ+ relationships is that it is not the received and historical belief and teaching of the church. This month I'm going to explain why I'm not persuaded by this.

Historically in church, the official line has been that marriage is between a man and a woman, and that sexual intercourse should only take place within marriage.

But things can change, and the church itself has changed its mind on a lot of things. I'll tell you about a few of these things now.

The issue most often quoted in this context is slavery. It was only in 1834, that the British Abolition of Slavery Act came into force. Initially most of the church were in favour of slavery, there were many biblical texts used to justify it. The people who campaigned for its abolition were a minority, and were seen as radical modernists, dangerous liberals.

The church has also changed its attitude about baptism. In the Book of Common Prayer, it states very clearly that those who are not baptised must not be buried in churchyards. Baptism is still important nowadays, but we don't tend to believe that it is necessary for salvation. In addition, those who had committed suicide were not permitted to be buried in churchyards, mercifully we have changed our minds about that too. The Book of Common Prayer has the "Churching of Woman" services, to be used before a woman could return to church after having given birth – we no longer see this as necessary.

There are many other changes in church thinking which have happened over the years covering areas such as the place of women in the home and in the church, corporal punishment, capital punishment, fighting righteous wars (such as the crusades), science, divorce (now thankfully people are not expected to stay in an abusive marriage). Until not long ago contraception was not permitted by the Church of England on religious grounds. We have changed our minds radically about this, but it doesn't seem like it, because it happened about a hundred years ago.

In summary, the church has changed her mind, her thinking, her doctrine on a wide range of issues – and rightly so. In which case the church can and should change her thinking on LGBTQ+ issues in the light of contemporary knowledge, understanding and compassion. I cannot see a convincing argument against LGBTQ+ relationships on the grounds of inherited church doctrine.

Next month I plan to take a brief look at the history of marriage.