

The Benefice of Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme

This has certainly been a time of rapid change in the way we live our lives. What used to be normal is now something that we can only look forward to finding again when this situation is resolved. But hopefully that future will be enhanced by what we have gained through our shared experience.

We have activated a network of people in our churches who are keeping in contact with the church community by phone, to share conversation and to check that people are doing OK.

Our churches are part of the Local Area Emergency Plan and are among the 130 local faith and community groups which have volunteered support. We have provided local support already for people who need items delivering, and I have been humbled by the number of people who have volunteered to help with this as the time of isolation continues.

It has been very special to share with people using this midweek act of worship. For Sunday we distributed paper copies of the newsletter to all those who are not online and I was aware of people throughout the benefice, and beyond, gathering together in worship at 10.30am on Sunday morning.

In our growing online benefice church community, over 200 people watched the live streaming of Morning Prayer on Tuesday! Technology gives us great opportunities and we are now looking into how we might be able to have an online Lent group later in the week.

If you know of anyone who is slipping through the net, please let us know straight away so that we can make sure that we are not missing anyone. Our need of and care for each other is of more value than ever at this time.

With every blessing,
Richard

Midweek worship:

Take a moment to be still.

God is with you and unites his church by His Spirit.

Almighty God,
Unto whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Today's Readings:

Isaiah 7:10-14

Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test. Then Isaiah said: 'Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.

Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.'

But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a

son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.'

Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.'

Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her.

Reflection:

Today is the feast of the Annunciation. It is the day we remember how the Archangel Gabriel appeared to Mary and told her that she was to give birth to a son. It marks exactly nine months to Christmas Day!

In both readings there is news of a coming son, and there is a charge that each will be given a special name.

In the first reading the son is to be called "Immanuel". It is a name that has a very Christmassy feeling to it! It means "God is with us." It is a name of promise and a name that proclaims the presence of God among us. It is a name that we should rejoice in today. We are never alone, but God is with us!

In the second reading Mary is charged to call her son "Jesus". It means "God saves." Again this is a name filled with promise and action. It is a name that we should find hope in today. I am convinced that God is active in his love and care for us.

The second reading ends with Mary's great self-offering, "Here am I." The journey Mary was to travel on through the following thirty-three years would

be filled with great joys and sorrows. But above all, she would come to know the active reality of those two names: God is with us and God saves.

Let us offer ourselves today too, praying that we may be open to the joys and sorrows that we face. May we also truly know the active reality of the names for ourselves and be a blessing to those around us.

Prayers:

Be aware of your name and perhaps what it means

Be aware of what it means to you

Call to mind your family and friends

Think about the joys and sorrows you face

Be aware of God's promise to be with you

Even if you find it hard to hold on to him, he will never let go of you

Pray for carers, hospital and medical staff

Pray for schools

Pray for our local communities and church family

Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your disciples,
'I am with you always'.

Be with me today, as I offer myself to you.
Hear my prayers for others and for myself,
and keep me in your care.

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy.
Sustain and support the anxious,
be with those who care for the sick,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may find comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done,
on earth, as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread,
forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen

May the blessing of God rest upon you and all those you pray for today.
May you see the presence of God and show his hope to others.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all, now and evermore. Amen.

Information:

All public church services are now suspended but this is not stopping us from gathering in prayer together from our homes. We will be sending out our Sunday newsletter again this week and it will include a service for us to share together at 10.30am on Sunday. We hope you will be able to join in.



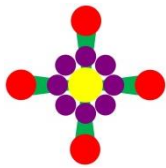
We are also continuing to light a candle in a window each evening at 7pm. Make sure you light it safely! If you have a pretend candle that would be even better. Light it and put it in a window at 7pm each night. "It will be a sign of solidarity and hope in the light of Christ that can never be extinguished."

If you or anyone you know is in need of shopping or you need something collecting from the chemist, please let us know. There are several people who have said that they are willing to help our community in this way. Just ring Rev'd Richard on 01535 273758 or Rev'd Suzy on 01535 270687.



Follow our Benefice Facebook Page. Search for:

“Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme Benefice”



There are lots of uplifting things in our Facebook community and there will be more regular features in this time when we cannot meet as we normally do!

If you have any news to share:

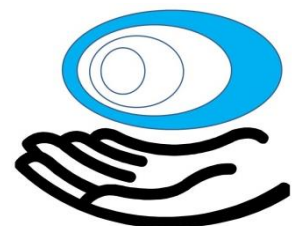
If you have a birthday, a message of greeting, a prayer request or any news you would like to share through this newsletter please let us know.

You can always contact Rev'd Richard on 01535 273758 or email:

ecrb@live.co.uk or richard.burge@leeds.anglican.org

An Online Lent Group meeting!!!

We are going to attempt an online Lent Group meeting for 40 minutes on Thursday evening at 7.30pm. We will be using the “Zoom” platform. All you need to do is to email: beneficehwcd@gmail.com to let us know you would like to be part of it and we will be in contact to set it all up. It is very easy and it will be lovely to see anyone who joins in!!



Also, if you are on Facebook, Richard is live-streaming Morning Prayer at 8am and Evening Prayer at 5pm. You can join him live, or watch later. If you search in your app provider for “Daily Prayer Church of England” you will find the Free Daily Prayer app.

May God bless you in the today and in the days ahead!