

St Mary Magdalene Langridge

Langridge Parish Newsletter March –May 2021

**Letter from Revd Mark Searle
Rector of All Saints, Weston**

March 2021



Christmas at Langridge

A Road to Normality?

Many of us watched the announcements on Monday about the road map out of lockdown. It would be wonderful if everything was back to normal by the summer, but I am not holding my breath. The data and the dates might shift, but at least there is a way forward.

The experience of lockdown will have been different for each of us. I spoke to an introvert last week who has loved the whole experience and does not want to return to “normal” life. But I also took my first double funeral for a couple who both died of COVID-19 just a few weeks apart. There has been grief, anxiety, confusion and financial hardship. Return to normality seems a long way off.

But along the way, in the midst of the pain and confusion there have been moments of discovery and joy. We learnt to use video software and zooming has become every day. Online church in many forms has meant that people have been able to gather from across the nation, and even the world, to worship together. We have realised that while online version of church, zoomed or streamed are not ideal and doesn't connect for many, it's still valid. Shopping online is still shopping - worship online is still worship.

Whatever happens over the next few months we need to remind ourselves of an important truth. The presence of God does not depend on circumstance or location. The psalmist says God is with us in the valleys and that he prepares at table before us in the presence of our enemies. Jesus ends his ministry by saying that he will be with us always, and Romans reminds us that nothing can separate us from the love of God.

So what does the return to normal look like? In one of the letters in the New Testament Paul writes, “I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well-fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.” (Phil 4:12). His secret is to live a lifestyle rejoicing and thanksgiving that leads to knowing the peace and presence of God (Phi 4:4-9).

Therefore rather than desiring a return to normality, perhaps our new normal should be a rewrite of Paul's words. I have learnt the secret knowing the peace and presence of God, whether worshipping online, or at home, in a church building or on zoom, in joy and in a pain, because Jesus is with me always.

Whatever this next season holds and whatever your circumstances, I pray that you would know the peace and presence of Jesus. A road to normality?

Mark Searle

Rector of All Saints, Weston with Langridge and North Stoke

mark@allsaintsweston.org.uk

RECENT EVENTS WITHIN THE BATH DEANERY

At the Meeting of the Bath Deanery Synod before Christmas elections took place for a new Dean and Lay Dean. Those elected were Revd Stephen Girling and Pippa Page. You will be aware that Pippa plays an active and committed role at All Saints and we are always so pleased to welcome her when she comes to us at Langridge, and are delighted with her appointment

SERVICES AT LANGRIDGE

In recent months, the Sunday services at St Mary Magdalene Langridge have mainly been by telephone. During December we were able to hold two live services, led by Tom Peryer and Rev Robert Webb. Also that month, Mark Searle masterminded two pre-recorded services for our Carol Service and Christmas Day celebration. All of our other services have relied upon our telephone conferencing facility. Looking on the bright side, we have “kept the virtual doors open” throughout, our virtual congregation has remained loyal, and all of our service leaders have responded nobly to the challenges and opportunities of this format.

I have DVD copies of both Christmas services to lend to anyone who missed them, as well as a library of DVD’s made by Michael Messer, from St Martin’s North Stoke and his colleague Richard Elgar which I will be happy to circulate on request.

FUTURE SERVICES AND EVENTS

At the time of writing we are legally permitted to hold services in church, but I do not consider that it would be safe or wise to do so at the present. However as the virus hopefully recedes, and as more of those who attend our live services receive vaccination, we will keep the situation under review. We will seek to be flexible in the context of what is safe and legal. I am exploring putting in place, in the longer term, permanent technology for Zooming live services, for the benefit of those worshippers who prefer not to go to the church.

By the time you read this article, we will be in Lent. We are once again putting on a Lent course, consisting of four evening sessions (by Zoom/telephone) on Wednesdays in Lent – beginning on February 25th and then on March 3rd, 17th and 24th. We have adopted a six-session course designed by the London District of the Methodist Church, with the overall title of “Woven” but which explores certain parts of St Mark’s gospel. Our morning service on February 21st incorporated most of the first session.

Sarah Couchman has kindly agreed to make another pre-recorded service to form our Easter celebration. Rev Roger Clifton will lead us on Palm Sunday, and Rev Robert Webb on Maundy Thursday (at 6 pm) and Pentecost.

We have decided that a Quiet Day, which we usually arrange in April or May, would not work by telephone or Zoom.

TD

We have also decided that it would not yet be safe to resume Second Saturday. It is not clear when we will next be able to resume holding the event, but Victoria Humphries knows that its return is eagerly awaited! Similarly, Friends of Langridge events are on hold at the present.

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting in 2021 will return to the Spring, and will take place on May 18th. The Village Hall is booked, and we all hope that it will be possible to meet there that evening.

VISITORS

My thanks to those who carried out some churchyard clearance in the autumn, especially Phil Osborne – and also Tristan Howitt from Box, who likes to visit Langridge and kindly gave up a Saturday morning to join battle against the ivy.

The churchyard is in good condition, but there are more tasks to be done. Do please either join me for the next working party on Saturday 1st May, or feel free to go alone on a day of your own choosing. I will be happy to suggest some tasks.

I was pleased to see in our Visitors' Book that Nigel Rawlinson visited Langridge in January. Nigel is a huge supporter of our church, and greatly loved in the valley.

In connection with my role at the Somerset Churches Trust, I recently made a video of a 'virtual visit' to St Mary Magdalene. Please contact me if you would like a link to the movie on YouTube.

Tony Davies



North side of Churchyard in frost

MIKE JAMES – with thanks

Barbara James and family would like to say how grateful they are for all the love and support they have received after the sad loss of Mike. All the kind messages, cards, gifts and letters have meant so much to everyone.

A LOOK UP TO LOCKDOWN

At Christmas time I was able to visit Chris Britton but only 'at a distance'. I phoned him and asked if he might like to come out onto his balcony, which overlooks a brook where he lives in Larkhall, and I could talk to him from the ground below. I also suggested he might like to wear a warm coat as it was very cold outside.

I was then delighted to see this debonair figure emerge, wearing a smart hat as well. We laughed together when I mentioned it was a theatrical role reversal with him being Romeo on the balcony and Juliet down below. Most of you will remember the years that Chris was Churchwarden at St Mary Magdalene. He was so committed to this role and contributed much to researching the history of the church.



Romeo on his balcony

He and Margaret had lived with their family in upper Langridge for many years when the Pellys also lived near by. Joanna was Churchwarden then with Chris, and Peter was also very involved in the church life. Both families lived below the Lansdown ridge above the Langridge Valley, each close to a source of two streams. These flow down towards the church and join nearby, before descending to meet the brook from Tadwick. This then flows south down the Swainswick and Woolley Valley towards the River Avon.

Shortly before its confluence with the river the water flows below Chris' balcony. It seems so appropriate that he still has this continual daily link from the Valley and the Church which have played such a part in his life.

LW

SUNDAY COLLECTIONS/DONATIONS

As you can imagine the church finances are experiencing quite a hit due to Covid. Whilst there are some operational savings (e.g. no heating bills during the winter months) we are missing out on both weekly envelope donations and also the big events e.g. Carol Service and Christmas Day when the finances get a real boost. I know that everyone is having to tighten their purse strings at the moment but if you're able to spare a fiver or more, a donation into our bank account would be very gratefully received. If you want to Gift Aid any donations please let me know. Thank you very much.

Langridge Church Barclays Bank Account: 50556831 Sort Code: 20-05-06

For those of you who have a box of envelopes for weekly donations we have decided not to order any new ones for the next financial year – please can you just reuse your old ones and amend the date. Thanks.

Victoria Humphries

LAPTOPS FOR SCHOOLS – how you can help and how you can get help

Everyone has seen the headlines about the challenges of home schooling without having access to suitable digital devices. There are a wide range of companies offering their help and following on from a call with Joanna Pelly I have been in touch with a few local organisations recently in an attempt to help act as a link between schools and IT companies. I was also keen to ensure that any laptops being donated are being wiped/rebuilt safely by experts and that any funds donated are being spent wisely.



Laptops ready for distribution

The amazing Wiltshire Digital Drive is providing an invaluable service for schools in Wiltshire and the surrounding counties and there are a range of ways in which you can help. They have been supported by a National Lottery Grant and are fully accredited. I've attached a photo of their latest pile of laptops ready to be distributed.

How to help: If you have a laptop/PC/tablet that is no longer needed you can:

- drop it at their offices in Westbury (see link below)
- drop it at a drop off point in Bath (please contact me for details)
- get in touch with me and I'll collect the device from you if you live near Bath

Full details about what devices are accepted and the drop off point in Westbury can be found here: www.wiltshiredigitaldrive.org/support/

If you are a business that would like to support this campaign please think about joining their Business Hive - www.wiltshiredigitaldrive.org/business-hive/

If you would like to donate money to help with the costs of repairing and/or upgrading the devices there is a GoFundMe page and all donations, even a couple of pounds, would be very gratefully received - www.gofundme.com/f/the-wiltshire-digital-drive

If you need some laptops, tablets or PCs for your schools there is an application form on their website. Applications are currently open but there are a maximum of 5 devices per application. www.wiltshiredigitaldrive.org/apply/

Thank you in advance for your help.

With best wishes to everyone,

Victoria Humphries

---We have just had an update: 489 laptops have been distributed this year and they have processed another 26 applications from schools this month, and also that local companies are pledging donations.

VH

MEMORY CORNER

Memories from Chris Britton - THE LAST FIFTY YEARS – What a Change?

Written in 2003

We hold a record book in Langridge Church in which an entry is made each time a service is held. It shows the type of service, who officiated, the number of people in the congregation, and the amount of the collection, with very occasional comments. All churches have a similar book but, because services at Langridge are only held three or four times each month and there are thirty lines on each page, this book is now fifty five years old, and should last another fifteen or more years.

As the cover was falling apart it has been rebound. We took the opportunity to look back over the years to 1948, and although this is in the lifetime of many people living in the parish, it still provides an interesting insight into recent history here.

When the book started services were held at Langridge in both the morning and evening, but the congregation throughout the 1950's was rarely over ten, and on Christmas Day in 1948 only seven people attended. On 9th March 1952 the entry reads 'One attended- said prayers' , with a similar entry in September 1954. On 8th June 1952 it reads 'Very wet – only one present'. At that time the congregation would have come from the valley and from Lansdown. The 1950's was a period of austerity with the country recovering from war and both food and clothing still rationed. Very few people had cars and most would have walked to church.

The Rural Dean visited the church every five years to have a look round and make a short comment in the register. In 1954 his entry reads 'Congratulations to the Rector and Churchwardens on the condition of the church'. The churchwarden was the late John Griffin, husband of Vera. By 1961 the situation had deteriorated and the Rural Dean was commenting on damp inside the church and suggesting various repairs and maintenance jobs. His visit followed a period of very small congregations, particularly for evensong for which there are a number of entries 'No congregation'. As a result evensong was discontinued leaving only one service each Sunday. The Rural Dean's entry concludes with 'a very sincere wish that the people of Langridge fully support the Rector in the maintenance of this lovely little church'.

In the 1950's the total collection on a Sunday was always under £1, except at Christmas when it was £2 or £3. Collections increased in the 1960's but only to between £1 and £2 each Sunday and at Christmas £7 or £8. The entries illustrate how inflation had taken a toll on the value of money, and how attendance had increased. October 3rd 1971 thirty children attended a Gift service with a collection of £1/6/11/2d , and on Christmas day 1975 with a congregation of 68 the amount is £10/6/1. In 1980 eighty people attended the Carol Service and even then the collection only came to £23-9s-9d.

From the 1960's the congregation increased, remaining constant for a normal service between 15 and 25, but in recent years Langridge has been supported by more people from outside the parish. In the 1980's Peter Pelly had a cushion made for the stone seat in the tower and gave six stacking chairs to enable more people to have a comfortable seat. At the time the congregation for Carols, Harvest and Christmas was regularly over 70 with a good proportion of children from young families living in Langridge. It was not till 1993 that the first collection exceeded £100. 52 people at Harvest service £110.

Comments on weather have been occasional but regular.

The most notable is in January 1963 when there was no service for five weeks from 6th January to 2nd February – ‘Snowbound; roads impassable’. There are similar entries but only one for one service being cancelled on each occasion through snow in the years 1960, 1962, 1965, 1966, 1969 and the last in January 1981. Are people getting tougher- doubtful, or more able to cope with bad weather – again unlikely. It looks more probable that global warming has come to Langridge.

During the fifty five years covered by the register there have been nine Rectors, and two inter-regniums which lasted over a year. Until 1992 Langridge was part of the Parish with Swainswick and Woolley.

Parish boundaries were redrawn then and Swainswick and Woolley were linked with Larkhall and Langridge with Weston and North Stoke. Patrick Whitworth, our Rector, has been with us since 1992 – eight years – and is equal with one other as the longest serving in the period. Let us hope that he sets a record by remaining for many years yet.

Chris Britton

ASSISTANT BISHOP’S NEWLETTER

Pay loving attention

With the Lenten Season well under way, I wonder how it is going for you? I always anticipate Lent with a slight feeling of having to brace myself. Come on make an effort in something! If I am going to give something up don’t just make it an exercise in self improvement, how is it going to help others? If I am going to do something positive what will be its long-term effect? It is all too easy to ‘over think’ the whole exercise. Once the season is underway I begin to appreciate it. But in the end it should be about paying attention to God. I am always struck by the end of the story of the temptations in the wilderness. Jesus refuses to be a cheap miracle worker to benefit himself, and refuses to follow the route to worldly power and status. He faced temptation by stripping away all the necessities of life and knew deep hunger. At the end of this exhausting wrestle with his vocation the Gospel tells us “... suddenly angels came and waited on him.” (Matthew 4:10)

Whatever Lenten discipline you are following, perhaps the #Live Lent course, or a local study group, a focussed effort to support others or a form of self-denial (or all of them!), may it bring a greater focus on God. There were those who ministered to Jesus in the Gospel stories. The angels in the wilderness, the woman who anointed him, Simon who carried his cross for example. We might not be able to do those things for him, but we can pay loving attention. When we emerge from the austerity and effort of Lent, which has had an even more austere aspect in Lockdown, we come to the bright hope of Easter. We know in the Risen Christ, the same relief that Jesus knew from the Angels. As we offer our love to Him, His love for us is always returned. May the blessing of the Risen Christ be with you.

Nigel Stock, Assistant Bishop, Diocese of Bath & Wells

Living the story – telling the story <https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/2021/02/57668/>
Archdeacon Simon Hill

**Once again our sincere thanks go to Tony Davies
for all he contributes to our Church life**

LANGRIDGE SERVICES March – May 2021			
Date	Time	Type of Service	Preacher
March 7	9.30	BCP MP Telephone	Mr C Maggs
March 14	9.30	Mothering Sunday CW HC	ASW
March 21	9.30	PASSION SUNDAY CW MP Telephone	Revd J Harries
March 28	9.30	PALM SUNDAY BCP HC Live if possible	Revd Canon R Clifton
April 1 st	6pm	MAUNDY THURSDAY BCP HC Live if possible	Revd R Webb
April 4	9.30	EASTER DAY BCP MP Pre recorded	Mrs Sarah Couchman
April 11	6pm	CW HC Telephone	Revd A Claridge
April 18	9.30	CW MP Telephone	Reflective
April 25	9.30	BCP HC Live if possible	Revd Canon R Hunt
May 2	9.30	BCP MP Telephone	Mr C Maggs
May 9	9.30	Rogation Sunday CW HC Live if possible	ASW
May 16	9.30	CW MP Telephone	Revd J Harries
May 23	9.30	BCP HC Live if possible DAY OF PENTECOST	Revd R Webb
May 30	9.30	tbd Live if possible	tbd

If you have contributions for the next Newsletter (June to October 2021) please contact Liz White regarding Church matters, or other local news. We would like to hear about all items of interest – comments, events or special occasions by 17th May.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Rector	Revd Mark Searle	01225 421159
Church Warden	Tony Davies	01225 336124
Treasurer	Laura Somodi	07816 961951
Langridge Friends & Newsletter editor	Liz White	01225 744852
Regarding laptops	Victoria Humphries	01225 891361

You can follow current news over the next three months on our website.
The websites for All Saints and the Diocesan news are also both informative.

www.stmarymagdalenelangridge.com or let us have your email address if you would like to receive the e-newsletter. Contact: angelaumpleby@sky.com

All Saints Church, Weston: <https://www.allsaints.org.uk/churchlive>
Diocese of Bath and Wells: <https://www.allsaintsonline.org.uk>