

Martin Stevens

Sadly Martin died on Monday. He'd had a fall at the end of December and fractured his hip and been in hospital since then.

I am sure we all have many memories of Martin and Ann. Perhaps of him leading walks when we had been away at parish weekends or the quiet wisdom he shared.

For me there are two particular memories: the first was a few years ago when it had snowed. I had advised people it might be better not to try and come to church so only a few of us made it. But at about 10 or shortly after the door opened and in came Martin and Ann having walked from home. The reaction of some of us in church was priceless – overwhelmed

by their determination to make it! Snow was not going to put them off! The other memory is more recent. Last year when although we hadn't officially opened the church and I was only zooming a service, Martin and Ann arrived after I'd started and although they couldn't really hear they were there – and I think that was the last time Martin was able to be in church. His love of the Lord and his commitment to the church is an example to us all.

We will miss him terribly but may his memory be an inspiration in our walk with God.

Our thoughts and prayers are very much with Ann and the family.



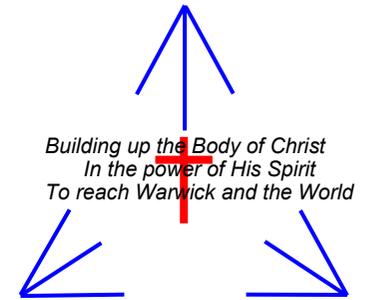
Foodbank

Even though the church is closed for services, we would still welcome donations to the Warwick Foodbank. Please put any toiletries and/or dry, non-perishable food in the Foodbank collection box.

If you need a voucher please email the office to arrange collection once the Church is back open. The Foodbank is open between 1pm and 3pm each Friday at Saltisford Church in Albert Street.



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January 24, 2021
Conversion of St Paul

Rev Jonathan Hearn

Today's 10am Service - Holy Communion

If you are a newcomer to our Church, or a visitor to the area, please introduce yourself to one of the welcomers, or to the clergy.

This week - January 24	Next Week - January 31
10am Holy Communion	10am Holy Communion

Readings	
January 24	January 31
Galatians 1: 11-16a Matthew 19: 27-30	Malachi 3: 1-5 Luke 2: 22-40

Our Bible verse for the year

Trust GOD from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own.
Listen for GOD's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; He's the one who will keep you on track. Don't assume that you know it all.
Run to GOD! Run from evil!
Your body will glow with health, your very bones will vibrate with life!
Proverbs 3:5-8 (from The Message)

Praying for the Persecuted Church

Barnabas Fund sources say the Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI) recorded 327 instances of discrimination and targeted violence against Christians in India in 2020. These included five murders, at least six churches burnt or destroyed and 26 incidents of social boycotting, according to its yearly report published on 14 January.

The EFI acknowledged the number of incidents recorded in the report was “by no means an exhaustive list”. The EFI noted that, during the past year, “Christians, especially in rural areas of several states across the country, were victims of violence, had their congregational prayers disturbed, and places of worship attacked.” Political manoeuvring, police impunity and extremist vigilante groups all contributed to the persecution of Christians.

According to the report, “The most alarming development has been the expansion and scope of the notorious Freedom of Religion Acts, which are commonly known as anti-conversion laws”.

Though the laws ostensibly prohibit only religious conversion by force, fraud and allurement, Christians actively and lawfully sharing their faith are vulnerable to false accusation. The laws have the potential to criminalise all conversions. At least 66 Christians were falsely accused or arrested in 2020.

Uttar Pradesh became the eighth state in India to enforce an anti-conversion law, with the passing of the “Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance” (2020) in November last year. The law was used by members of Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), a hard-line Hindu group, in January 2021, to accuse five Christians of trying to “unlawfully” convert people to Christianity. Uttar Pradesh was also the region where Christians were targeted most, with 95 incidents of discrimination and targeted violence recorded in 2020. This was followed by Chhattisgarh with 55 incidents, and Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh with 28 and 25 respectively.

The highest number of incidents across the country was recorded in the month of March during the countrywide lockdown at the height of the Covid crisis, including a Christian prayer hall being set on fire on 13 March by religious extremists in Dasmantpur Block, Koraput district, Odisha.

Elsewhere, a Christian woman was raped and murdered on 29 May, in Kumud village, Kondagaon district in Chhattisgarh, and in Bari village, Khunti district, Jharkhand State, on 8 June, a Christian, Kande Munda, was stabbed to death by a group of at least six religious radicals. On 19 July, in the same district, a Christian woman, Suman Munda, was killed trying to protect her daughter from sexual assault.

Pastor Munshi Devu Tado was murdered by Maoist Naxalists, on 10 July, in Bhatpar village Gadchiroli district, Maharashtra. The armed Naxalists tied the pastor's hands behind his back with rope, took him outside and shot him, leaving his body in a pool of blood.

Rev Vijayesh Lal, general secretary of the EFI, appealed to both national and state governments in India, pleading they should: “Ensure the rule of law and the security of religious minorities in India.”

Source: Barnabas Fund

Thought for the Week - It is always darkest before the dawn

It is always darkest just before dawn. If you are one of those people who are finding this second lockdown harder than before, you are not alone. It may be small comfort but many of us are finding it much tougher this time around.

This is probably due to a number of reasons, not least the English weather. It is darker and colder and just more miserable so we can't enjoy the outside as we did in those early days.

Also, although there is hope with the vaccine – and it's wonderful some of you have already had it and hopefully many more will in the near future - we are still having to be sensible and are limited in what we can do. Hopefully it won't be too long now.

In Paul's letter to the Romans chapter 5, having talked about the peace we can have in God through Jesus, he

goes on to say: “we also rejoice in our sufferings because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.

And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured our His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us”.

We may struggle with the sense of rejoicing in what we are going through but may we dig deep and allow God to refine our character through the work of the Holy Spirit, that we might exude a sense of hope and faith in God, that not only helps us get through this time, but can be an encouragement and hope to those we meet or talk to.

We will get there, and hopefully very soon.

Blessings, Jonathan.

Agape Meal and future Sundays on Zoom

At the PCC meeting on Thursday we took the decision to services on Zoom until the beginning of April – which is Easter Sunday.

If the situation changes before then we will review that decision but it was decided whilst we are waiting for the vaccine to be rolled out to more of the congregation, and given our need to observe the current restrictions, it seemed sensible to put off holding our services in Church for a bit longer. Zoom does give us the opportunity to sing and to have a bit of a chat and

catch up – albeit not as it would be if we could do it in person. It will be so nice when we can!

This morning we will hold an agape meal over Zoom.

It's a bit like communion but can't be quite the same as we are not able to be together in the same way.

So, if you are able to join the zoom service please have some bread and fruit juice or wine with you.

