

Prayer Pause.

Giving thanks for friendships of all kinds.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for our friends especially those who have shared our troubles and our joys. We thank you for those close to us who know our moods and shortcomings yet still offer their affection and understanding. Those who offer us unconditional love and encourage us to rise above our failures and delight in our successes. Lord, we pray and give thanks for friendships past and present. Help us to keep all relationships dear to us in good repair. May we and all those dear to us be held within the circle of your love. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.



Our churches remain closed for public worship, but we are able to offer funeral services with limited numbers. We send our condolences to those who have been recently bereaved in our four villages and beyond.

Great Paxton church is open for private prayer on Sundays, 10.30am to 4.00pm.

Southoe and Diddington churches are open every day for private prayer. DAILY HOPE is a free telephone service which offers daily hymns, prayers and reflections. The number is 0800 804 8044.

Benefice YouTube services continue to be produced every Sunday.

Mel Eyeons, our LLM, continues to offer a mid-week YouTube service with readings, hymns and prayers on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays in the month.

On our Facebook page @thePaxtonsBenefice you can find links to all our YouTube services. Anita Bailey also emails out the links and can always add names to her email database – you can contact her via Annette.

Would you like to be part of a twice a month on-line study group with Mel? Five friendly folk met via zoom for the first study on February 4th. The next meeting will be on Wednesday February 17th at 5.30pm and you would be very welcome to join. Do contact Mel if you would like to know more: meleyeons@hotmail.com

A Blessing.

**May the love of the Father,
the tenderness of the Son
and the presence of the Spirit,
gladden your heart
and bring peace to your soul,
this day and all days. Amen.**

The Benefice of the Paxtons with Diddington and Southoe

February 14th, 2021

“Keeping in Touch” Edition 47

Jesus’ Transfiguration and Valentine’s Day



Greetings Everyone.

I hope you are all keeping well and warm in this cold snap. The middle of February often brings particularly chilly weather, but we have two themes this weekend to warm our hearts.

This last Sunday before Lent brings us a reading which can capture our imaginations in a vibrant and comforting way. Jesus takes three of his most trusted friends to the top of a mountain and in powerful moments of prayer and revelation, his appearance changes dramatically. Transfiguration means literally a change in form and we can feel the gospel writer struggling to find words to describe what happened. Jesus is surrounded not only by a dazzling white but is bathed in the glory of God. And, as at his baptism, the voice of God affirms him with pure love.

“This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him!”

How Jesus would have needed that affirmation and assurance of love as it wasn’t long before he and his disciples made their way to Jerusalem and the hostility of those who wanted him gone. Love is at the heart of Jesus’ self-sacrifice, a theme which we explore in Lent which begins on Ash Wednesday, February 17th.

Today we also remember St Valentine. I will write more on who he might have been on page 3. Commercialism has seized this ancient saint’s story and used it to commend heart shaped gifts of all kinds. But in a hurting world at the moment, anything that brings warmth and love into our hearts and minds has surely got to be welcomed.

I trust that whatever your circumstances you will feel loved this and every day by God who knows each one of us as his beloved and precious child. God Bless you all, keep well and keep safe.

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The Gospel for the Sunday next before Lent.

Mark 9:2-9

Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them.

And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' He did not know what to say, for they were terrified.

Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!'

Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them anymore, but only Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

Collect for the Sunday next before Lent

Almighty Father, whose Son was revealed in majesty before he suffered death upon the cross: give us grace to perceive his glory, that we may be strengthened to suffer with him and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Praying on the theme of Christ's Transfiguration

Radiant God, source of light,

as you surrounded Jesus with your glory,

so, you come to us in penetrating brightness.

*We choose the limelight while you call us to explore the shadows
and brighten the darkness.*

*We seek to stay on the mountain or in a comfortable pew while
you walk to the valleys of need.*

Radiant God,

*fill us with light and courage to share your good news
in our everyday living and to rejoice in your presence.*

Amen

And quite who was St Valentine?

Annette explains that we really don't know!



"Tomorrow is Saint Valentine's Day
All in the morning betime,
And I am a maid at your window,
To be your Valentine".

So says Ophelia in Shakespeare's play Hamlet, written in 1600.

Valentine's Day has been around a long time but who was he?

Sorry to say, we can't be sure. In early Christian days there were several St Valentines. But one priest by that name lived in Rome in the 3rd century during the reign of the tyrannical emperor Claudius, who forbade young men to get married as he needed them to fight his wars. But the priest Valentine secretly conducted weddings under cover of darkness – until he was caught and thrown into jail.

The legend recounts how as a captive he befriended many who gave him gifts, especially the jailer's daughter. On the night before he was killed by the emperor, he wrote a letter thanking her for their deep friendship. The date he died is traditionally thought to be 14th February. Some think that the idea of writing love notes and exchanging gifts with those we care for and appreciate originated from Valentine's story.

Whether or not this brave priest existed as portrayed above, we cannot be sure. But what I believe exists for all time is God's love for each of us and his longing to be at the heart of all of our varied relationships of love and caring. May his blessing be on all of us who cherish and care for one another in these challenging times.

And sorry, Shakespeare, but popping up at someone's window on Valentine's Day is currently prohibited due to the need for ongoing social distancing....