

PETER'S FACEBOOK DIARY - FRIDAY 20 TO MONDAY 30 MARCH

Monday 30 March

Facebook tells me that over 500 people read yesterday's post about changing the clocks. I changed all the clocks downstairs. I forget to change the one beside the bed.

This morning the phone rang at 0815. It was one of my churchwardens. I stopped myself telling him I was still under the duvet, or asking him what he thought he was doing phoning me so early. While on the phone to him, my mobile rang - one of the church treasurers. I pressed the "decline" button, while getting cross that two of my church officials were phoning me before 9 am. Then I noticed the time on the mobile.

O well, probably not the only mistake I'll make today.

While sorting my railway room out last Thursday I found two things that took me back to my youth. The Sooty and Sweep clock was my bedside clock for many years. Looking at it now, I wonder whether watching Sooty hit Sweep on such a regular basis has damaged me in any way. I also found the Young Persons' Railcard of a beautiful young lady. I've also got the records of the train journeys we made in 1983, so there may well be more nostalgia over the next few weeks.

If you want something deeper to read this morning, may I suggest

[https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-norfolk-](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-norfolk-52020227?intlink_from_url=https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/localnews/2641181-norwich/0&link_location=live-reporting-story)

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Dr Janina Ramirez (one of my favourite academics) talking about Julian of Norwich.

Look after yourselves - and keep in touch.



Sunday 29 March

Today is my least-favourite Sunday. My 8 o'clock congregation know I am not always sweetness and light first thing in the morning, and the day we lose an hour in bed just makes it worse. The most dreadful day is when they change the clocks on Easter Sunday, especially in my Cathedral days when we'd have a 6 am service (and really it was only 5).

This morning I lay in bed listening to the clock strike 8, or was it 9, or is it 10? Who cares? I got up when I needed a cup of tea, and then went back to bed. I'm sure I should be feeling guilty (and a bit of me is), but it's the first time in 25 years of ministry I've had a lie in on this day (and it will probably be the last time).

We have a grandmother clock. Julie's Auntie Rhona was an honorary granny. When she died in 2002 she left us some money, and this clock was one of the things we purchased. It seemed appropriate - Rhona would talk through every TV programme you tried to watch, this clock chimes every 15 minutes.

Over the years, especially when the kids were ill, I have spent many sleepless nights listening to the clock. There has been a sense that it continues "steadily, sensibly, never too quickly, never too slowly", whatever the world threw at us. (This is your facebook quiz - tell me the source of that quote).

Love and prayers to those who had to work an extra hour last night - whether you're in hospital, running the railways, or just keeping Society going. Love and prayers to those who sit and watch the clock, or lie there and listen to it, frightened by what is going on.

Apparently they should change again on Sunday 25 October. Let's hope and pray we'll be back to normal by then.

Incidentally, St Matthew's clock needs hand-winding every week, so we've stopped it for the duration. St Edmund's is electrically-wound, so that keeps going, and it should be showing the right time.



Here's an email Alex Hunns sent me in reply:

A letter to my honorary godfather.

Peter,

In times such as these it is probably natural to feel cowed and insignificant; only those in a mask and gown can help. In the singular moment of virus treatment, this is true. But the person being treated the person doing the treating have come from somewhere.

Mercifully, I am in good health, and probably more fortuitously I am not a doctor (though you have given the world a doctor, and kept others in a job over the years). Therefore it is perhaps more apropos to talk more abstractly.

You wrote quite eloquently about the grandmother clock this morning. I think I can fairly safely say I've been through some of my worst moments listening to that clock, though that being said also some of the best moments. Flashes of those memories come in good times and in bad. Not all of those moments are induced by your late son, though he is responsible for a fair few of them; but while trying to sleep with the noise of gunfire surrounded by the worst human suffering I have ever seen, comfort often comes from those moments.

In any number of crises, you have taught me how to be empathetic to oneself and others, look after oneself, make a bread pudding, how to remain upright when the whole world has gone off kilter; how keep plodding on though oceans of tea and years of railway TV.

I won't see you this Easter, alas, but I have more than enough to be grateful for from the past, which is a gift I cannot possibly repay.

Do not be discouraged, you've done more than you think.

A

P.S. when are you ever sweetness and light?

Several people got the Trumpton link

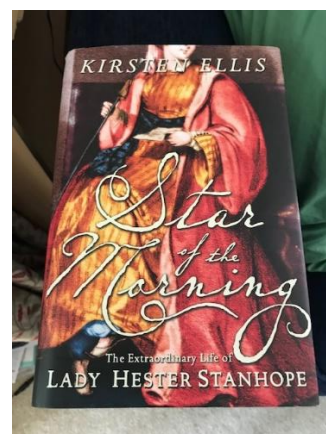


Saturday 28 March

Hannah has two tortoises, Stanhope and Livingstone. Hannah brought the tortoises to the Vicarage last November as she prepared to move house. Guess what ladies and gentlemen, the tortoises are still here! So I have spent a happy half hour cleaning the tortoise run.

In the Bible, the Book of Leviticus lists the unclean animals, those that the Israelites should not eat. 11.29 "These also shall be unclean unto you among the creeping things that creep upon the earth; the weasel, and the mouse, and the tortoise after his kind". Well, Hannah's tortoises are now clean! (Modern translations use "the great lizard", I prefer 'tortoise').

Stanhope and Livingstone are named after the explorers. David Livingstone is one of those people I remember learning about in Sunday School, and I'm sure I had the Ladybird book about him. Hester Stanhope was the niece of William Pitt the Younger. She travelled round the Arab world, and apparently (Wikipedia says) "her archaeological expedition to Ashkelon in 1815 is considered the first modern excavation in the history of Biblical archaeology" My dad loved his Biblical archaeology, and I said how sad I am that I can't phone him up to ask him about her. Julie just walked into the dining room, straight to the appropriate shelf, and said "Here you are." If anyone wants me, I'm reading.



Friday 27 March - St Edmund's 157 reached, St Matthew's 112

Thank you everyone who sent me encouraging messages yesterday - much appreciated. Can we keep supporting each other please - and those people in our churches and communities who aren't on facebook. I had a sort of my Railway Library yesterday afternoon - nothing makes an aged librarian feel better than a bit of re-shelving and re-sorting.

This morning's Psalm (102) assured me I'm not alone. Verse 8 "I keep watch and am become like a sparrow, solitary upon the housetop" (though I am fortunate enough to keep watch with another sparrow). Today my 7 days of isolation ends, but Julie has to do another 7, and I do not intend to leave the Vicarage grounds unless I really have to.

I will drive to Croots Farm Shop in Duffield today as I have ordered through their "click and collect" service. As they support our Toddler Group every week with a box of fruit, I make no apologies for giving them some advertising in return - <https://www.croots.co.uk/> It is ironic that Julie and I are eating better than usual. Having time to cook is wonderful. Be impressed with my bread pudding. Our kids are amazed we are eating vegetables.

It is ironic* that we are eating superb food from a lovely farm shop while our son is helping his charity FoodCycle - <https://www.foodcycle.org.uk/> - respond to the crisis and continue to feed the hungry.

It is ironic* that while we eat, our monthly collection for the Food Bank at the Hope Centre in Derby has had to be paused. Churches in the Deanery are working to try and find a way to help - and I'll publicise that when I know more. I have emailed the Centre to ask them to get a "donate here" button on their website.

*I've used the word "ironic" but I wonder if "evil" would actually be the right word to use ... Yesterday a politician commented that "There's suddenly a realisation that we're only as healthy as the safety of our neighbour".

The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10) springs to mind.



Thursday 26 March St Edmund's 159 reached, St Matthew's 89

I must admit to feeling a bit depressed this morning. Hannah has posted a photo of her in her mask at work - I'm glad that (finally) she has some protective equipment, but I'm scared of what she's dealing with. Harry is organising food parcels for people who have so little. I'm feeling rather useless, I need cheering up.

Stagecoach buses have sent me an email about their temporary timetables, so I start my research. When I was a lad we had a choice of buses from Barton into Cambridge for school. The Eastern Counties red bus 118 ran from Conkers shop to Drummer Street bus station - and 45 years later, the 18 still runs from Conkers shop to Drummer Street bus station. United Counties green bus 175 ran from Biggleswade to Cambridge via Barton, and the 75 still makes the journey. One of my fellow pupils travelled to the Boys' Grammar School from the village of Tadlow, and left home at 7 every morning. If he was travelling today he'd have to catch it at 0655. Liz got on at Arrington to travel to the Girls' Grammar - I always hoped there was an empty seat next to her when I got on in Barton! I was in the last year of the grammar school system, in my seven years of travelling the number of pupils declined as the younger ones were educated locally, but the bus still runs to serve the Sixth Form Colleges. There will come a time when all this is over, when we can catch the Transpeak to Buxton and have a wander round the town, or jump on the yellow bus up the Derwent, or enjoy the local bus from Wirksworth across to Ashbourne. Perhaps I'll have a ride from Cambridge to Barton and back, just for old time's sake.

David Ogden has written some lovely pieces - our choirs have his "Christ has no body now but yours" anthem in their repertoires. Here is his setting of the words of Julian of Norwich "All shall be well" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RUyIgGw4WKg>

Stay safe, stay at home, and keep in touch.



Wednesday 25 March - St Edmund's 166 reached, St Matthew's 113

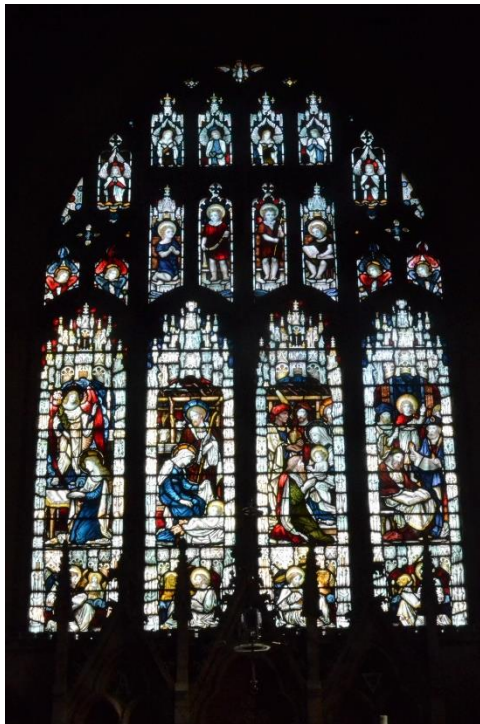
Today is the Feast of the Annunciation, when the Angel Gabriel came to Mary and asked her to be the mother of the Messiah, the mother of Jesus. You can read the story in Luke's gospel, chapter 1 (and if you haven't got a bible, find it at <http://bible.oremus.org/>). Here is the scene depicted in the East Window at St Matthew's, Darley Abbey.

If we had been having a Wednesday communion today, we would have celebrated this Feast Day (and had cake over coffee rather than biscuits).

I like the way Mary is reading a book. I know that if one disturbs a young lady while she's reading a book, she is likely to be somewhat annoyed. I have this vision of Mary looking up and saying "What?" to Gabriel in tones my wife uses to me! (As I write this, the man from DPD has just delivered two more books for Julie to review. Help!!).

In these different times, try and listen to God - even though it's not easy. If you find "Derby Cathedral Music" on facebook you can listen to their organist playing a beautiful bit of Brahms in honour of this Feast Day. Sit and enjoy (If you are trying to cope with your kids, you might want to do this when they've gone to sleep!)

Why is today the Feast of the Annunciation? Because it is the 25th March, and Mary had a perfect pregnancy. Nine months today we will be singing "O come all ye faithful" (but you are very welcome to sing it today as well. Find it on youtube, turn the volume up, and sing). May I be the first to wish you all a Happy Christmas.



Tuesday 24 March - St Edmund's 100 reached, St Matthew's 97

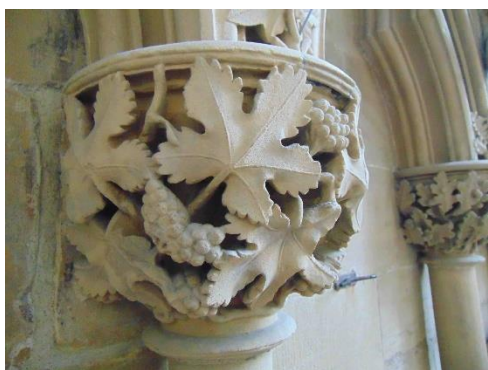
Three weeks ago today I had a day in Southwell. I went on a tour of the Minster roof. Now I can't leave my house, my churches are locked, and there are no services in them. I've put on-line resources on our website - <https://www.stedsandstmatts.co.uk/worship-while-our-buildin...> - but telling people that they can't come in, can't have the weddings and funerals they want (need), this is horrendous.

We went into the Chapter House where the carvings are incredible. Have a look at my blog - <http://www.northernvicar.co.uk/>. Stone masons carving the beauty of the natural world, flowers, leaves, Green men (and women), they are incredible.

No doubt previous generations of clergy sat like me, looking at the beauty of creation around them, the beauty of creation caught by the skill of the mason - and tried to make sense of the plague, sickness, pain and suffering that they saw all around them.

Some would have been upbeat ("We can be a radically different church"), some would have been stoical ("God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble"), and some would have been scared. They would have got cross with each other, they would also have laughed together and cried together. Some people in the town would have been marvellous and loving, caring for the people around them. Others would have been evil. Humanity doesn't change.

I love Ellis Peters' books about Brother Cadfael. He found solace in his herb garden. I shall go and model myself on Cadfael. Keep in touch, and keep safe.



Monday 23 March - St Edmund's 406 people reached, St Matthew's 409

Another beautiful morning. I have spent it trying to reorganise funerals and weddings. In the current circumstances they can only take place with very small numbers of people. So of the 13 weddings booked in between Easter and the end of July, most are looking for new dates. Some are moving to 2021, others to later this year, and one clever husband-to-be has re-booked for his wife's birthday (which means he will only have one significant date to remember every year - clever move!). A huge thanks to Archdeacon Chris for taking last week's wedding at very short notice. The doctor told me to isolate three hours before I was due to be in church! Huge thanks too to Dawn from St Nick's for agreeing to do Wednesday's funeral this week. I am grateful to everyone for being so understanding - and we continue to pray for all our families whose plans have been so disrupted.

In 1982 I proposed to a young lady from Coventry. She was sat on a bench in the old Cathedral, and she said yes. On our 35th wedding anniversary we went back to Coventry. Julie is pictured here wondering why she said "Yes". Love to you all - get in touch if you need anything.



Sunday 22 March - St Edmund's 193 reached, St Matthew's 119

My facebook and twitter feed are full of enthusiastic church and clergy offering virtual church - for ideas look at <https://www.stedsandstmatts.co.uk/worship-while-our-buildin...> (and there you can read the talks Clive and I (Peter) wrote for today). This week's Noticesheet is on the front page of the website. Make the effort to pray and worship, and give thanks to God for the amazing technology which is helping us to stay together. We've spoken to our kids today and in good news, Hannah has had a friend help sand her sitting room floor

and collect her sofa from storage (so when we finally get to see her, I won't have to labour and will have a sofa to sit on. Result!).

Many of us find Mothering Sunday a very difficult day (and not just this year). This statue of Mary and Jesus is in St Edmundsbury Cathedral in Suffolk (it was made by Leonard Goff). It brings over to me that parenthood is hard work. Look after each other.

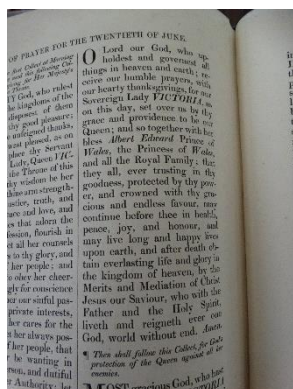


Saturday 21 March - St Edmund's 198 reached, St Matthew's 126

I've (that's me, Peter the Vicar) just said Morning Prayer on the Feast of Thomas Cranmer. It's his words behind the Book of Common Prayer, the traditional Prayer Book we use every Sunday evening (and quite often on Sunday's mornings too). In a church in Cumbria I found a Victorian Prayer Book still in regular use (have a look at the image and see which Monarch is being prayed for) - more details at <http://www.northernvicar.co.uk/.../brougham-cumbria-st-ninian/>

What would Thomas Cranmer make of our current situation? I'm now in isolation (I coughed while on the phone to the doctor yesterday and he told me to isolate for a week), so I said Morning Prayer in my room. No doubt there were times when Thomas couldn't get to church, so prayed where he was. I've got to finish a talk for tomorrow (no doubt Thomas was sometimes in that position), and then get it online (never a problem he had) - look at stedsandstmatts.co.uk later on today.

I have just discovered that if you download the Daily Prayer app - see <https://www.stedsandstmatts.co.uk/worship-while-our-buildin...> - you can "switch to traditional language" and use Cranmer's words. I think he'd be fascinated by the technology helping us to walk together in faith.



Friday 20 March - St Edmund's 169 reached, St Matthew's 96

Good morning. I've just said Morning Prayer on this Feast Day of St Cuthbert, so here is a banner our church school produced for a Festival when I was in Northumberland. There is material for your prayers on the website at <https://www.stedsandstmatts.co.uk/worship-while-our-buildin...> and a simple Order for Morning and Evening Prayer is in the centre of the April church magazine, being printed this morning. Keep safe out there!

