

Funerals. None.

Virtual prayer meetings. It's been lovely to have so many of you join in with our virtual prayer meetings. Here's a reminder of the details for anyone else who wants to join us. Please note that you no longer need a password if you phone in to the meetings, and the call is free:

Wednesday 9.30am phone 0203 481 5240 and enter the meeting ID 825 0404 5581#.

Saturday 10.30am phone number is the same but you need to enter 892 1449 8821# as the meeting ID.

If you want to join in via Zoom on a laptop or tablet then the details on the church website. (<http://olney.church>).

This week we're focusing on our own Amazing Grace as the words really resonate with the times we find ourselves living through and are our main discussion point this week.

<p>Amazing Grace! (How sweet the sound) That sav'd a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found, Was blind but now I see. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And grace my fears relieved; How precious did that grace appear, The hour I first believed! Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come; 'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far, And grace will lead me home.</p>	<p>The Lord has promised good to me, His Word my hope secures; He will my shield and portion be, As long as life endures. Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail, And mortal life shall cease; I shall possess within the veil, A life of joy and peace. The earth shall soon dissolve like snow, The sun refuse to shine; But God, who called me here below, Will be for ever mine.</p>
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In 1859 an American John P Rees added a new verse:
When we've been there ten thousand years, Bright shining as the sun, We've no less days to sing God's praise, Than when we first begun.

However, we do not usually sing this verse as part of our services.

Hymn from Richard. This week 'Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty' is our other hymn for you. You can hear it via Youtube at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YdbxSpJn1yQ>

Queens awards for volunteers. You may be aware that this week announcements were made for the Queens Awards for Voluntary Service. There have been 7 awards made to the County of Buckinghamshire: six of them are in Milton Keynes and two of those six within the town of Olney! Our Milton Keynes mayor, Andrew Geary, couldn't have been prouder and was delighted to share this news with us all. Both Olney Rugby Football Club and The Cowper and Newton Museum volunteers have received this prestigious award – equivalent, I understand, to an MBE! Several our church members are involved with both organisations, so warm congratulations to you all. More on this next week.



Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul, Olney

Sunday 7th June 2020

Today – Trinity Sunday



Welcome and notices

Reading: *Isaiah 40: 12-17, 27-end*

Gospel: *Matthew 28: 16-20*

Wed 10th: *1 Kings 18: 20-39*

Matthew 5: 17-19

Collect: Holy God, faithful and unchanging: enlarge our minds with the knowledge of your truth, and draw us more deeply into the mystery of your love, that we may truly worship you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Intercessions:

A prayer for these troubled times, adapted from William Barclay. I pray to You God for: those who are ill to be healed, those who are sad because someone they love has died; and for all who are disappointed and struggling to hope.

I pray to You God for: those for whom life is very difficult; those who have tough decisions to make, and those who honestly do not know what is the right thing to do.

I pray to You God for: those who have difficult tasks to do and to face, those who need strength for those tasks, and for all to know that they are not left alone.

I pray to God for myself: for help to live each day, one at a time, to be able to love, forgive and give, and to have faith and hope in these challenging days. Amen

We pray for the sick. *Toby O'Grady, Kevin, Michael Seabrook, Ted, Cyril, Rene Tourle, Pat Major, Emily, Helen, Gail, Martin, Keith, Teresia, Hannah and those who are self-isolating.*

We pray for the souls of the recently departed and their families. *David Adams and Ann Cahill.*

We remember and give thanks for those whose Yearmind is now.

Eucharistic Prayer: A

Prayer: Almighty and eternal God, you have revealed yourself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and live and reign in the perfect unity of love: hold us firm in this faith, that we may know you in all your ways and evermore rejoice in your eternal glory, who are three Persons yet one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Listening Ear. Please email prayer@olney.church for prayers.

Some material included is

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Contact details. Church Office 01234 241721 or by email at office@olney.church. The church website has links to the weekly prayer sessions, and to various support groups. These can be reached via <http://olney.church> or support@olney.church.

Rector's letter

We have celebrated Easter, The Ascension, Pentecost and this week The Trinity; Jesus died in our place to forgive and redeem us, He beat death and sin by the cross and His Resurrection, He is now back in the heavenly presence of the Father and the Holy Spirit, and so this week we celebrate the unity and diversity of our God who is One and is also Three.

When I had a season working with Muslim men we used to have some very interesting conversations about who God is and that He is One but also Three:

"How can God be One and God be Three?"

"Well how can a man be one and three?"

"He cannot!"

"But what if you go home and greet your father, and then your uncle comes in and greets his brother, and then later on your grandfather arrives and greets his son. There is only one man but he is father, brother and son." Your father can be one and also be three!"

In the Bible we see God as the Trinity at the baptism of Jesus:

"And when Jesus had been baptized, just as He came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to Him and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.'" (Matthew 3:16,17).

God (beyond our understanding) truly is our Father, Big Brother and Helper!

Stay safe and God bless! *Andrew+*

Amazing Grace and John Newton

Dear All. This week our wonderful, internationally acclaimed, local hymn has been the centre of attention. Firstly Judy Collins, who recorded "Amazing Grace" on an album 50 years ago, has re-released it, backed by a choir of singers across the globe. In order to support the Covid19 pandemic all proceeds from the single will be donated to the World Health Organization Solidarity Response Fund. You can find it here.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wrb9GjRMd6k>.

In conjunction with this David was interviewed on 3 Counties radio in relation to this new release by Judy. His interview can be found approx. 2 hour 45 min in at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p08dpcd>. You may need to sign in to 3 Counties Radio to get access. Our own Kate Nicholas listened in and complimented David for his recall of dates and facts and was pleased he raised the very topical point about what it teaches about racial equality against the background of the current unrest in the US. Our local best-selling Christian author Kate also tells us that she is working on a new book project as part of the AMG250 celebrations. She says that 'Amazing Grace: Following in the footsteps of John Newton' is about the places that shaped Newton's life and ministry – including Olney – and the people he continues to inspire today (think Bill Bryson + God).

But for me there is another truly "Amazing" recording. This time by 50 Covid affected countries who sing Amazing Grace in their own languages. The video, images and the song in multiple languages is spine-chillingly beautiful and the whole thing so moving. Please watch at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BA7pdABvpnc> and be

amazed!

"Amazing Grace" is one of the most recognisable songs in the English-speaking world and from our own website we learn that... *"The names of Olney and of John Newton have been connected since the former slave-trader was curate at St Peter and St Paul church between 1764 and 1780. Newton's friendship enabled William Wilberforce to become the greatest advocate of the abolition of the slave trade. Later, they worked together to establish a home for freed slaves in Sierra Leone {where we still have links today} - this is how the villages of Newton and Wilberforce came to being. Newton wrote the words from personal experience. He grew up without any particular religious conviction but his life's path was formed by a variety of twists and coincidences that were often put into motion by his recalcitrant insubordination. He was pressed into the Royal Navy and became a sailor, eventually participating in the slave trade. One night a terrible storm battered his vessel so severely that he became frightened enough to call out to God for mercy, a moment that marked the beginning of his spiritual conversion. His career in slave trading lasted a few years more until he quit going to sea altogether and began studying theology. Ordained in the Church of England in 1764, Newton became curate of Olney, where he began to write hymns with poet William Cowper. "Amazing Grace" was written to illustrate a sermon on New Year's Day of 1773, with a message that forgiveness and redemption are possible regardless of the sins people commit and that the soul can be delivered from despair through the mercy of God."*

This brings me neatly on to the fact that we will be celebrating 250 years since that New Year's Day sermon, and the first singing of Amazing Grace, with our own celebrations in 2023. Under the banner AMG250 Amazing Grace 250 the countdown has already begun with events being planned. There is already a search on for "Amazing Graces" to get in touch. Do you know an "Amazing Grace"? In line with this we are planning our own events at church and a dedicated area to display and celebrate the life and work of John Newton. Last year we were promised the gift of a triptych by the artist Mike Haywood (picture attached). The triptych shows scenes relating to John Newton. It has a central panel 64" by 48" and two side panels each of 32" by 48". The artwork is quite dramatic. The Fabric Committee has discussed the siting of the triptych and has concluded that it will fit perfectly on the back wall of the outer vestry. The plan would be to remove one or perhaps two pews and open up a reflective, quiet area themed around John Newton. This area could then accommodate more display materials, which would be especially appropriate, as we expect there to be an increase in the number of visitors in the run up to AMG250. Further discussion has led to us looking at moving the "John Newton" pulpit into the Welcome Area near the main door. This will give us more scope when we come to reordering the whole of the area at the back of the church. More news on this soon. *Susan Bailey, Churchwarden*

Update on Teresia

Teresia is still recovering at home and is grateful for all your prayers and good wishes. She hopes to keep moving forward and to be able to see everyone again soon.