



**St Peter's Wolvercote & All Saints' Wytham**  
**Wednesday 3 June 2020**

*On 31st May (falling on Sunday this year, so transferred to 1st June) the church celebrates the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mary and Elizabeth greet each other in this rather touching engraving by Lucas van Leyden (1520)*

Charles writes:

Dear Friends,

This week we have seen significant changes to the lockdown in England, with primary schools starting to open and meetings between family and friends now permitted in gardens as well as public spaces, provided that social distancing rules are still maintained. Sadly this does not yet include churches, which like pubs and restaurants must wait a little longer.

When our churches do start to open, it is likely to be a slow and gradual process, and it will be some time before large congregations are able to gather for worship. There may be a period when our churches are open for private prayer, before we are able to hold services. The diocese will give us clear guidance and instructions, which we will of course follow.

The Church of England is in general taking a fairly measured approach, keen to set a good example, and to ensure that we are helping not hindering the rest of the country in controlling the coronavirus. However the diocese will certainly encourage us to open our churches as soon as we safely can, ensuring that we do so in ways that are safe for all who come in.

Sadly, most of the process of gradually reopening our churches will happen after I retire (and Jane and I will certainly pop in some time to see people when it is possible to do so). After I have finished, Revd Sarah Flashman, our half time associate priest, will work with Revd Shei Crowther and the churchwardens to oversee the process as services gradually begin again.

Meanwhile I am delighted that our worship and ministry can continue online, and I will be taking a full part in leading worship and preaching in my last few weeks until Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> July.

With love and prayers,

Charles

## Readers required!

We would like some further volunteers to video themselves reading a lesson for the Sunday service. Please email [info@stpeterswolvercote.org](mailto:info@stpeterswolvercote.org) or let Val Tate (07770 766546) know that you can help with this - we will be very grateful.

## Lord heal me

Bishop Steven's exploration of the psalms - *Reflections for a Church in lockdown* - focuses in this reflection on Psalm 6. He explores illness, anxiety and healing. If you can get online, listen to Bishop Steven's reflection on his blog page: <https://blogs.oxford.anglican.org/>



## Thy Kingdom Come

The Archbishop of Canterbury released a video of his audience with Pope Francis in 2019 to support Christians in the days between Ascension and Pentecost. The Pope's message may encourage us all. It can be found on the internet at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ooy4kJFCmNY&feature=youtu.be>



## First Turn Stores - the future?

Some readers will be unaware of the planning application for the demolition of First Turn Stores (2 St Peter's Road) and the construction of a terrace of three dwellings on the site. The planning application reference and details are as follows - you need to go onto the Oxford City Council website and navigate to 'Planning' to find all the paperwork. The deadline for comments by neighbours on the application is June 18th.



**20/01118/FUL | Demolition of existing building. Erection of 3 x 3-bed dwellings (Use Class C3). Provision of car parking, private amenity, bin and cycle stores. Repositioning of dropped kerbs. Formation of wall and railings to front and side of boundary. | 2 St Peter's Road Oxford Oxfordshire OX2 8AU**

## Contributions Please!

Thank you for your photographs, music suggestions, poems and anecdotes received over the last weeks. These help us keep in touch with one another and what's going on around us and are always hugely appreciated. Although restrictions are starting to ease for some, many of our friends will have to continue shielding for quite a few more weeks, most likely months. The next e-newsletter will be distributed on Sunday, 7 June. Please send contributions to: [info@stpeterswolvercote.org](mailto:info@stpeterswolvercote.org) or call 07770 766546. Thank you.

## Birthday Rose



My wife Julie and I call this 'Sally's Rose' because it was given us by our two daughters to commemorate Julie's sister Sally, who died in November 2017. Sally's birthday was on 31st May, and we thought 31st May 2018 would be a sad day; but it turned out differently, because on that day her great-niece, Esme Sally, our second grandchild, was born. The rose times its arrival rather brilliantly, as did Esme - this year its first bud looked ready to open on May 30th, but it waited until May 31st and was there for us when we looked out that morning. On the Feast of the Visitation we gave thanks for both those precious lives.

*Stephen Drew*

## The Flying Goose - June 2020

The new issue of The Flying Goose quarterly is online now - click here to download from the church website [https://mcusercontent.com/f25cf5db5f851e2b87ed1b5a7/files/169ac8bb-726f-4ef6-9195-aa7a7b84c992/Flying\\_Goose\\_issue\\_56\\_web\\_version.pdf](https://mcusercontent.com/f25cf5db5f851e2b87ed1b5a7/files/169ac8bb-726f-4ef6-9195-aa7a7b84c992/Flying_Goose_issue_56_web_version.pdf). Because of the lockdown it was decided not to print and distribute hard copies. We will investigate if it's possible to print black and white versions for those not on the internet.

In the meantime, we've copied (next page) Charles's last article before retirement and an appreciation written by Viv Bridges.

The copy deadline for the September issue is 3 August. Please email Stephen Drew - who edited today's newsletter - at [flying.goose.ed@gmail.com](mailto:flying.goose.ed@gmail.com) with ideas for articles.

## **In his last leading article as Vicar of St Peter's and All Saints', Charles reflects on the wildernesses and the solitary places which we are all inhabiting**

This is a strange time to be writing my farewell article for the Flying Goose. Our midsummer festival cancelled, and with it all our opportunities for farewell services and events at St Peter's and Wytham, means that I shall finish work quietly on Sunday 12th July, at a time when we may, possibly, be just starting to open up our churches again.... If anything is happening at church, Jane and I will certainly want to be there, either at St Peter's or All Saints', until we move in mid August. We want every opportunity to see people again before we go – albeit from a distance of 2 metres! The churchwardens have kindly said that they will ask us back for a Farewell Service when restrictions are lifted, so we look forward to that.



It's a strange time to be leaving – and yet I am glad to have been here through the worst of the coronavirus crisis. It has been like plunging into a wilderness experience. Most of us have been at home during the lockdown, but we are especially aware of those who live by themselves and those who are vulnerable. It has meant our congregations being unable to gather for worship or receive Communion, and adapting to church online, or print-outs through the letterbox for those not online. We have especially focused our thoughts and prayers on those in the thick of it, the NHS staff, care workers and other key workers, and above all, on those who are ill and those sadly bereaved.

There is a lot on the “Wilderness Experience” in the Bible and in Christian tradition. The “Wilderness” is a place of being stripped down and, as it were, brought to our knees. It is often a place of discovery, or encounter. If you are able to respond positively to this, it can become a place of renewal. For me, the experience of Parkinson's has been a kind of personal wilderness experience. Dealing with the side effects of Parkinson's – fatigue, anxiety, and occasional mild depression – has led to new discoveries; not only medication, but vigorous exercise, mindfulness, and what I hadn't expected – a powerful experience of renewal in my personal faith. I have found that the wilderness really can be a place where new shoots, new life and new growth spring up.

Coronavirus has been a struggle, not only for those who have caught the virus, their families, and those who have cared for them, but also for those who have lost their jobs or their livelihood, those who have had to rely on foodbanks to survive, the homeless, and those for whom lockdown has meant being trapped in abusive relationships. It has been a real wilderness for many.

And yet many of us have found positives emerging from this time: a sense of peace and stillness, with reduced traffic and more time, an appreciation of nature – whether the flowers in our gardens or the sound of birdsong – and for some an experience of the kindness of neighbours or a deeper bonding with others in our household.

Perhaps the greatest positive has been the sharp reduction in pollution and carbon emissions – cleaner air and purer water. Some of us are hoping that we won't go back quite to where we were before – that through this wilderness time we will have learned to live more simply, to appreciate the good things around us, and to care more both for each other and for our planet Earth. Maybe this wilderness could yet be a time of renewal for us and for our world despite, or even because of, the struggle.

My thanks to you all for your support and encouragement throughout these last five years,  
Charles

## **Retirement of the Revd Charles Draper, Vicar of St Peter's, Wolvercote and All Saints', Wytham**

It is with great sadness that we will bid farewell to Charles, Jane and their sons in July.

Charles was licensed to the Parish in November 2015. His first year was far more difficult than he or the Parish had anticipated so when he was diagnosed with Parkinson's at the start of 2017 it was almost a relief to him and his family. It confirmed that there was a physical reason for his tiredness and anxiety, but that it wasn't something worse. This amazing, positive reaction has been constant throughout his time with us. We value the fact that he has been so open with us, sharing his anxieties and the progress of the condition. Charles has brought a huge amount to the Parish - not in spite of Parkinson's, but often because of it. He has been an inspiration to us all.



Charles spent his first year here just observing what went on in the Parish, but then gradually suggested and implemented changes. They were not always greeted with immediate warmth but, underneath a mild exterior, Charles has a core of determination. This ensured that any changes have been accepted and supported by the congregation.

Charles has always shown himself to be an extremely gentle man. I am sure this is based on a deep prayerfulness which was always demonstrated when he led us in any form of worship. Charles has a deep pastoral sensitivity and is caring and generous in spirit, always looking to see the best in everyone. He is, however, very discerning and is ready to say things as they are - especially if he feels that someone is having a damaging effect on others - a sign, again, of that inner core of determination to do what he sees as 'right' in the eyes of Christ.

Charles is an extraordinarily gifted preacher. His sermons are never too long and complicated, they always relate to something we all understand, something that we all share in our lives, and always remind us of the love and understanding God has for us all.

We have also valued immensely all that Jane and the boys have brought to the Parish. Jane has entered fully into Parish life, in spite of having an extremely demanding job of her own. William, Ben and Edward have also given us much joy – just in being with us when they could, and in their music. We admire the way the whole family has continued to support James, having him home when possible and always being concerned for his welfare.

It is sad that Charles' last few months with us have been in such strange circumstances. We have missed meeting with him and his family and being with him as he leads us in worship. But we have continued to benefit from his many gifts as he has continued to lead us 'online' – in worship and in prayer. We wish Charles, Jane, William (and Karen), James, Ben and Edward the very best for the future, and we much look forward to seeing them now and then in the months and years ahead.

*The Revd Viv Bridges*