

Dear all

Apologies for the delay in writing this letter. I have been concerned about recent news stories, and wanted to consider carefully before responding.

Many Christians round the world, let alone in America, have been stunned and shocked by President Trump taking a photo opportunity outside St. John's, Lafayette Square. He was pictured holding a bible aloft – in the place that a peaceful group, including clergy and helpers with medical kits, had just been cleared out by riot police, using tear gas and concussion grenades.

The powerful image of a bible held aloft has divided commentators. Some of Trump's Evangelical apologists have praised his strong position against the forces of evil, disorder and violence. The Anglican Episcopal Church of the USA has roundly condemned it as dangerous and divisive posturing – using as a prop, without the slightest hint of irony, a book that tells us to love one another and to forgive of our enemies. As Christians, we know that a largely secular society is often suspicious of our beliefs, and the use (abuse!) that is far too often made of scripture. We need to reclaim the truth of the Gospel that is Good News for all humankind, regardless of race, colour, creed, sexuality, or any other characteristic that is used to differentiate.



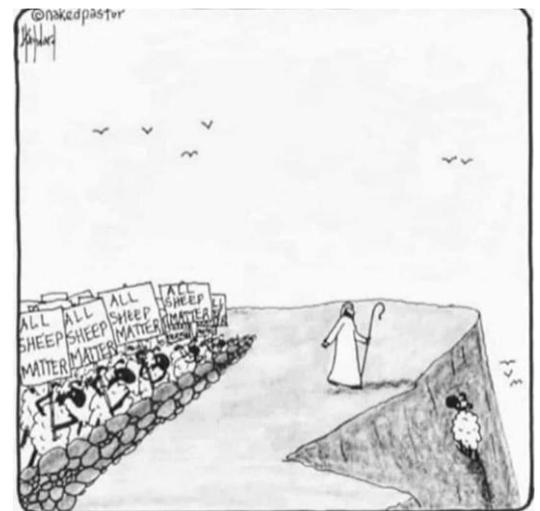
The protests, and especially the trigger that caused them, namely the death of George Floyd while being arrested, have brought to the forefront again the 'Black Lives Matter' campaign, as the protests started because of yet another death of an unarmed black man.

There has been an attempt to expand this to the argument that 'All Lives Matter', which

would obviously include 'black lives'. I once had some sympathy for this view, but since have changed my mind. A much-shared analogy on social media states if you have 4 children, and one falls over and cuts himself, your reaction is to immediately go and comfort that child. This does not mean that you love the other 3 any less, but he is the one who is hurting.

If you want a biblical analogy, again on social media – Luke 15 and the parable of the Lost Sheep. There are 100 sheep. One goes missing. Jesus leaves the 99 and goes after the one. The 99: "But... what about us? Don't we matter?" Of course, the 99 still matter, but they're not the ones in danger. The one is!

I have mentioned earlier the need for the church to speak out prophetically. This is one issue that we particularly need to. In this country, as well as America, there is still institutional racism, even indirectly. Prisons still hold disproportionately more BAME (Black and Minority Ethnic) people. Covid-19 is statistically much more of a problem for BAME people too – and our response to this is also an issue of racial justice. See the Archbishop of Canterbury's comment on this: <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2020/5-june/news/uk/archbishop-links-death-rate-to-racism>



My former Area Bishop, Johnathan Clark's blog today shares a guest post from a Croydon priest, Revd Darius Weithers: George Floyd and Black suffering. Possibly the most haunting sentence is *And in the same gaze, we saw Christ, hanging from a Roman cross, uttering over and over, "I can't breathe!"* If you are interested, the link is here:

<https://clarkinholyorders.blog/2020/06/03/george-floyd-and-black-suffering-a-guest-post-from-revd-darius-weithers/>

Here is a prayer by Nick Fawcett:

Loving God,  
forgive the racism that has scarred our world across the centuries –  
the hatred it has engendered,  
persecution it has led to,  
injustices and misery it has caused,  
violence, murder and genocide it has been used to justify.  
Break down the barriers, Lord,  
and make us one.  
Forgive the racism that has scarred the Church over the years:  
persecution of Jews and Muslims,  
the iniquity of apartheid,  
innate white elitism,  
rank prejudice and discrimination.  
Break down the barriers, Lord,  
and make us one.  
Reach out to those who continue to be victims of racism today,  
being intimidated,  
discriminated against,  
victimised,  
abused,  
suffering on account of the colour of their skin or place of origin.  
Break down the barriers, Lord,  
and make us one.  
Reach out to the family of George Floyd,  
to the people of Minnesota,  
to people of colour throughout America and across the world,  
wherever they continue to encounter persecution and discrimination.  
Help them to express their anger clearly and powerfully,  
peacefully but effectively,  
so that their voices will be heard  
and real change be effected.  
Break down the barriers, Lord,  
and make us one.  
Prosper, we pray, the work of all those who work to combat racism,  
and break down the barriers of prejudice that keep people apart,  
so that everyone,  
everywhere,  
may learn to recognise, respect and value the common humanity we share.  
Break down the barriers, Lord,  
and make us one.  
Amen.

This week is quite a week for birthdays. Nancy Titman celebrated her 102<sup>nd</sup> birthday yesterday, and still going strong. We agreed that, after the lockdown, we'd celebrate her 103<sup>rd</sup> in style!

Ted Fisk has set up a Just Giving page for our church to help offset the loss from the cancelled (at least in its usual format) Rose and Sweet Pea show. The link is below. Please consider this, and share it widely. Thanks, Ted, for setting this up, and for other community & fundraising ideas.

[https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/ted-fisk?utm\\_term=kRPrBy7xJ](https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/ted-fisk?utm_term=kRPrBy7xJ)

One of the glories of the Church of England are its psalms, pointed and set to Anglican Chant. Here are a couple you may not have noticed in your prayer book before!

1. I have dwelt long in the house of lockdown: I have enclosed myself in the habitation of Netflix and groaning.
  2. They have set me my bounds which I shall not pass: I keep the statutes and observe the laws.
  3. I entered into the supermarket, but it was barren: its plenty was turned into empty shelves, and there was no toilet paper in it.
  4. Neither were there delivery slots by day nor by night: verily, not even from Ocado.
  5. Deliver us from the wilderness of delivery: and deliver our deliveries unto us.
  6. I am become a stranger unto the pub, and unto the office: even an alien unto Pizza Express.
  7. The sun ariseth, and I go forth to work and to my labour: even in my pyjamas until the evening.
  8. I am weary of Zoom, my throat is dry: it melteth away like wax as my broadband vanisheth.
  9. Yet they gape upon me with their mouths and say: thy toddler sitteth lurking in the corner of the screen, and lo he imagineth mischief.
  10. And thou, oh daughter of lockdown: thou shalt do thy phonics in exile.
  11. Also thy literacy and numeracy work, and thy comprehension: yea verily, even thy fronted adverbials.
  12. They have sprayed markers for my feet: they have set a place for me on the pavement outside Tesco Metro.
  13. The unrighteous forget their social distancing: I swerve from their transgressions.
  14. The people rebuke each other: and bear in their bosoms the rebukes of many people.
  15. A mask hath covered my face and I wash my hands: neither have I found any hand sanitiser to comfort me.
  16. The pestilence layeth siege against me: according to the cleanness of my hands shall I be recompensed.
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1. Clap your hands, all ye neighbours: clap in the front gardens and on the doorsteps.
  2. Make a thankful noise, for it is Thursday: clap your hands and bang the pots; bang the mighty pan from the stove, the frying pan from the draining board, and the little pan from under the sink.
  3. Rejoice, for thou hast booked a delivery: a weekly slot even unto the end of June.
  4. Surely plenteousness shall be in thy house: goodness shall follow thee, at a two-metre distance, all the days of thy life.
  5. [2nd part] Our garners shall be full: and Netflix shall bring forth thousands and ten thousands of new episodes for evermore.
  6. Arise! Yea, verily, for the lockdown easeth: gird thy face with apparel and go into the city.
  7. Rejoice in the fruitful offices, all ye who were furloughed: but thy going out and thy coming in shall not be on public transport.
  8. Rest ye alert by day, and alert by night: and the pillars shall deliver ye out of the wilderness.
  9. Judgement and remembrance shall be thine heritage: and ye shall dwell in the house of austerity for ever.

Our local magazine, *I'd Rather be in Deeping* is online at this link:

[https://issuu.com/zerosixdesign/docs/deeping\\_june\\_20?fbclid=IwAR0N3nwOM-2Z-7XHWARFwdY4lqZA-ehv6KwXQQ8eX1tug-CslCr542Hdq8](https://issuu.com/zerosixdesign/docs/deeping_june_20?fbclid=IwAR0N3nwOM-2Z-7XHWARFwdY4lqZA-ehv6KwXQQ8eX1tug-CslCr542Hdq8)

As well as lots of local information, as usual, there are articles on VE-Day celebrations and local wildlife. Page 44 has a full-page spread on our revised Rose & Sweet Pea 'Show'. Thanks to Judy Stevens and her team for their hard work. A [copy of the page](#) is attached.

Finally, as I type this, I'm listening to *King Arthur* by one of England's greatest composers, Henry Purcell. One very unseasonal song in this is quite extraordinary – The Frost Song. Here is a link to one of the most astonishing performances.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8K8wFk-tn8>

Perhaps my favourite piece of Purcell is his Evening Hymn, here in a beautiful version, sung by Iestyn Davies.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oCovzDgo\\_T4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oCovzDgo_T4)

Stay safe

Blessings and love

Mark

