**October 2020 Newsletter**

I wrote this newsletter prior to the announcement this evening about another Lockdown till the beginning of December and sadly this is going to affect us all again. There may well be changes in the advice from the Church of England. Please take your health and the health of those you minister too seriously. I am aware of the risks to mental health particularly and would encourage you to take time for yourself in these unprecedented times. The news in the later part of this letter are still relevant.

As we approach the end of a very strange year which has turned out in unexpected ways and looks as if it will continue in the same vein I reflect on the highs and lows.

Our amazing God is the rock on which we rest and even when we step of onto shifting sands, he remains constant and steady. Throughout the Old Testament he is the refuge in good and bad times and that continues today. Whatever the next few weeks and months hold, we know that our God, the rock, our rock remains and will be our foundation.

From Genesis where we first see the Lord called the Rock of Israel, to the New Testament, the reality of the refuge our God provides is real and there for us. He was the Rock for Hannah when she gave Samuel to serve God, He was the rock for David in times of turmoil, He is the foundation on which we build our lives, He is our rock when life is uncertain: Psalm 18:1-2

 I love you, O Lord, my strength.
The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer,
    my God, my rock in whom I take refuge,
    my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

The next weeks and possibly months may well be different from what we had hoped for but our God remains our Rock.

**Advent Retreat**

I would like to draw your attention to the online Advent Retreats that Bishop John is leading on either Saturday November 28th or Wednesday 2nd December. The link to book is below: <https://www.coventry.anglican.org/online-retreat-for-advent.php>

**Book Review**

Lorraine Baker our Assistant Warden was asked to review **“Why I’m no longer talking to White people about Race” By Reni Eddo-Lodge,** for her work. The book challenged her and we thought it appropriate to share with you all in this year when BAME issues have challenged us all:

*Beginning as it does with the history of the slave trade in 1562 through to its abolition in 1833, before moving on into the racial inequality, prejudice and hatred detailed in events from the 1950’s to the present day (including the circumstances surrounding the Brixton and Toxteth riots of 1985 and the murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993), this book quite rightly makes for really uncomfortable reading.*

*Reni Eddo-Lodge writes that white privilege is one of the reasons she stopped talking to white people about race. It forces people like me, who don’t think we are racist, to confront the reality that we are complicit in racism if we aren’t actively trying to change the world.*

*The book also looks at the effects of the Patriarchal Structure and the Feminist movement, not only on women from ethnic minorities, but those from other minorities too – those who don’t fit with the “young and white is beautiful” image: those of us who are growing older; those who don’t conform to a binary gender; those with disabilities; and those who are LGBTQ+. Eddo-Lodge reflects that as humans built our society, it is up to us as humans to push for change, to recognise that each of us is still learning and to continue to want to learn and to change things around us for the better.*

*One of the parts I found most concerning was about class and poverty. With my husband and many friends being teachers, I am well aware of the numbers of children living in poverty – teachers buying breakfast for their students out of their own pockets – a fact that has become more highlighted in 2020 with schools closed for so much of the year, as children who might rely on their free school lunch as the best and sometimes only meal of the day were left in more difficult situations than ever.*

*Eddo-Lodge reminds us that we can each support one another, but in particular, that those of us with white skin need to be prepared to talk to other white people about race, to recognise the need and the necessity to intervene in bystander situations and to take opportunities to offer assistance in other places, while also remembering that it is certainly not our place to wallow in guilt or to be loudly anti-racist just because of who might hear you. We need to be honest with ourselves, to recognise our own inherent biases and deal with them positively and effectively.*

*The book ends by talking about the rise of the far-right neo-Nazi parties across Europe and their growth in both numbers of votes and members of the various Parliaments. It is both a sobering and a fascinating read and one I will need to reconsider from time to time as I work through what impact the book has for me.*

**News:**

1. Due to Covid 19 we will not be celebrating Reader Ministry this year with a Service but will hopefully be able to have a joint celebration next September, Watch this space.
2. For those of you who were due to renew your Licences this year, we will be sending a Letter of extension once you have completed your Reviews.
3. For those moving to PTO this year, we will be sending a Permission to Officiate documents out to you once your Reviews are completed.
4. For those with PTO who were due to be reviewed this year, we will be sending new Permission to Officiate documents once the Review is completed and we have copies of your ministry agreements.
5. For those with PTOs’ I will sending an email shortly.
6. If any of you would like to share information about a course, or a book you have read or anything else with your fellow Readers please let me know.
7. Fellowship dates: Monday 23rd at 7:30pm and Thursday 26th at 2:30pm by Zoom.

Please let Lorraine know (Lorraine.baker@covcofe.org) if you would like to attend.

1. We are trying to arrange training for Readers dealing with people with mental health issues. Dates will follow when they are confirmed.

Finally all Readers over 70 who are involved in Public Worship are asked if they haven’t already done so to contact Bishop John to discuss the implications of COVID 19 on their ministry.

My prayer is that you enjoy the beauties of Autumn and have time to reflect on the change of seasons and that you may grow closer to God and as a result your ministry will be blessed.

Keep safe and God bless

Jo

Warden of Readers