

**Last Sunday after Trinity
Sunday, 25th October 2020**

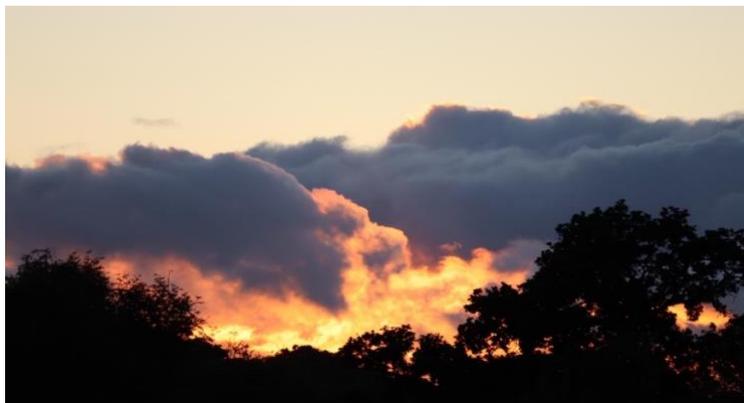


Dear Friends,

'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' (Matthew 22: 37)

On this Last Sunday after Trinity, love is in the air! In a resounding answer to prayer, our Benefice Administrator, Caroline McAulay, was able to fly out to attend the marriage of her son, John, to his beautiful Mallorcan bride, Leti, in Palma last Saturday, and those of us not daring to breathe lest Coronavirus regulations scuppered her chances of getting there, were finally able whoop with delight and praise the Lord as we gathered to watch the nuptials unfold on Zoom!

Jesus, as described in Matthew's Gospel, is also focussed on love as He underscores for the disciples the greatest commandment of all – that we must love the Lord our God with all our heart, all our soul, and all our mind. And, Jesus says, so we must also love each other. As we move through October, our thoughts caught in the possibilities and consequences of such selfless and focussed love, are perhaps turning to those souls who have journeyed beyond us to heaven; those we have loved and those who have loved us enough to die in the service of peace.



'A Fiery Sunset over Northwood Park' by John Cleverly

Monday, 26th October brings us to our annual commemoration of one such selfless soul, Alfred the Great, King of the West Saxons and defender of the City of Winchester. Born in the year 849, Alfred was the youngest son of King Æthelwulf of Wessex, and was just twenty-two years old when he followed his brothers Æthelbald, Æthelberht and Æthelred in succession to the throne. Alfred's reign brought to an end the oppressive threat of Viking domination in the British Isles.



'Alfred the Great' by Samuel Woodforde

Revered as an erudite and merciful King who fought hard to improve the quality of his peoples' lives, Alfred's Christian legacy to our shores also brought peace to State and Church. Alfred attended Mass every day and his whole life was marked by the compassion of Christ. As King, he had the oversight of his bishops and brought about a system of training and pastoral care for priests; introducing biblical texts into mainstream education. Alfred gave half of his income to founding religious education centres, which themselves became places to care for the elderly and sick and to provide respite for travellers. We have Alfred to thank for the promotion of Primary education in Old English rather than in Latin, and for modifications to our military, navy, legal and taxation systems among other reforms designed by Alfred rooted in common sense and Christian mercy to ensure peace and stability. Plagued his whole life by a mystery illness, Alfred died at the age of 55 in the year 899. Modern medics now believe that Alfred suffered from Crohn's Disease.

Did you know that, in the history of Winchester, it was the Saxons that referred to a Roman settlement as a '*caester*.' Therefore, in west Saxon Wessex, 'Venta Belgarum' (where 'Venta' meant 'market') became 'Venta Caester,' before being changed to 'Wintancaester' before time chipped away and the city became known as Winchester!



'Mandell Creighton, Bishop of London' by Sir Hubert von Herkomer

Since I am trying to take Annual Leave this week, and our wonderful Ministry Team Members are all hard at work serving our Benefice, I hope you will forgive me that this week's Newsletter is, by necessity, short! I shall leave you with the wonderful ode to Marriage written early in 1900 by Mandell Creighton, Bishop of Peterborough and London, for the wedding of the Hon. Sarah Kathleen, daughter of the 4th Lord Lytton, at St. Margaret's Church, Westminster. Creighton's poetic distillation of all that is sacred in the union of a couple in the bond of Christ's blessing, gives each of us food for thought, as we perhaps reflect on the legacy of love brought to us by Alfred the Great; on opportunities we have to work for the love of others in our own lives – and in the greatest relationship of all, with our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

A Marriage Hymn

O Thou who gavest power to love,
That we might fix our hearts on Thee;
Preparing us for joys above,
By that which here on earth we see.

Thy Spirit trains our souls to know,
The growing purpose of Thy will;
And gives to love the power to show,
That purpose growing larger still.

Larger, as love to reverent eyes,
Makes manifest another soul;
And shows to life a richer prize,
A clearer course, a nobler goal.

Lord, grant Thy servants who implore,
Thy blessing on the hearts they blend;
That from that union evermore,
New joys may blossom to the end.

Make what is best in each combine,
To purge all earthly dross away;
To strengthen, purify, refine,
To beautify each coming day.

So may they hand in hand advance,
Along life's path from troubles free;
Brave to meet adverse circumstance,
Because their love points up to Thee

Yours, in the rest and peace of Christ,

Jax

Rector, The Downs Benefice

Schedule of Services for November and December 2020

Our churches are open for regular prayer and for Sunday services - please see our website for more details at: <http://downsbenefice.org/>

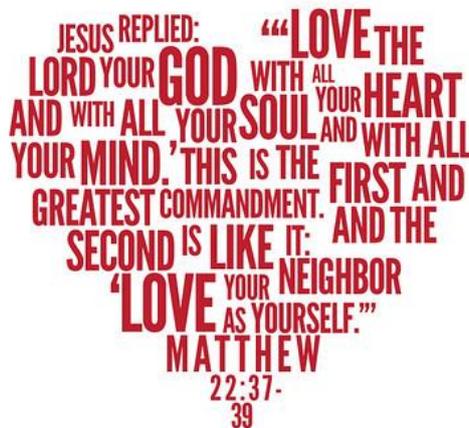
All seats at our services need to be booked in advance. Please see the table below and book your seats by either calling or emailing the **Benefice Office** on **(01962) 880845** or office@downsbenefice.org.uk. The Benefice Office is open from 9-5pm each day. Please do not leave it until the last minute to book as the churches need as much notice as possible to ensure correct social distancing measures.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Chilbolton</i>	<i>Crawley</i>	<i>Littleton</i>	<i>Sparsholt</i>	<i>Wherwell</i>
1 Nov	All Souls' Service	All Souls' Service	Holy Communion with All Souls'	6pm - All Souls' Service	6pm - All Souls' Service
8 Nov	10.50am - Remembrance Service	10.50am - Remembrance Service	10.50am - Remembrance Service	10.50am - Remembrance Service	10.50am - Remembrance Service
11 Nov - Wed	X	X	10.55am - Act of Remembrance	X	10.55am - Act of Remembrance with the School
15 Nov	Closed	Closed	Closed – Wedding 14/11	Holy Communion	4pm – Evening Prayer
22 Nov	Holy Communion	Morning Prayer	Morning Prayer	Closed	Closed
29 Nov	4pm - Evening Prayer	Closed	Holy Communion	Closed	Holy Communion
6 Dec	Closed	Morning Prayer	Closed	Holy Communion	Morning Prayer
9 Dec – Wed	X	x	Holy Communion	X	x
13 Dec	Holy Communion	Closed	Morning Prayer	6pm - Carol Recital (not a service)	Closed
20 Dec	Advent Readings & Prayers	4pm – Readings & Music by candlelight	Morning Prayer	4pm – Crib Service	4pm - Evening Prayer
24 Dec	x	x	x	x	x
25 Dec	Family Christmas Service	Family Christmas Service	Family Christmas Communion	Family Christmas Service	Family Christmas Service
27 Dec	x	x	x	Patronal Holy Communion	x

An Urgent Appeal for Karis Kids

As new Coronavirus restrictions are put in place across our country, as Christians with an imperative to 'love one another,' we must also focus our attention on the plight of many across the world who are in desperate need. Our Benefice supports the work of Karis Kids, a Winchester-based charity, which works to support the poor and destitute in the slums of Kampala, Uganda. The Downs Benefice is linked with St Paul's church, Okuvu, led by Rev John Atiku. Many families and individuals within our benefice make regular donations to linked families to help pay for schooling, medical care and basic necessities and others have responded generously to recent appeals to help feed families in the wider slum communities who have been are in desperate need during the Coronavirus pandemic.

We are now making a fresh appeal to raise £1,500 to help St Paul's church's ministry in Okuvu. Rev John and church staff have not been paid since March, as this only happens when congregations bring cash offerings to services to help pay for community outreach, church running costs and staff salaries. Currently this isn't possible and there is great suffering within the church and the communities served. Any donation, however small, would be gratefully received. Please look at our website or contact the Benefice Office for details.



Collect Prayer for the Last Sunday after Trinity

Blessed Lord,
who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning:
help us so to hear them,
to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them
that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word,
we may embrace and for ever hold fast
the hope of everlasting life,
which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.



Matthew 22:34-46 - The Most Important Commandment

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees with his reply, they met together to question him again. One of them, an expert in religious law, tried to trap him with this question: 'Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the Law of Moses?' Jesus replied, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments."

Then, surrounded by the Pharisees, Jesus asked them a question: 'What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son is he?' They replied, 'He is the son of David.'

Jesus responded, 'Then why does David, speaking under the inspiration of the Spirit, call the Messiah "my Lord?" For David said,

"The Lord said to my Lord,
Sit in the place of honour at my right hand
until I humble your enemies beneath your feet."

Since David called the Messiah "my Lord," how can the Messiah be his son?' No one could answer him. And after that, no one dared to ask him any more questions.