

St David's with St Michael's and All Angels, Mount Dinham, Exeter

Newsletter for 7 February 2021 — The Second Sunday before Lent

Dear Friends,

Welcome to our newsletter for the Second Sunday before Lent. Please join us today for our online worship. The link to our **Youtube service** is here:

<https://youtu.be/q7nXreDGBJE>

Today we give thanks for the immense creative power of God and pray for grace to find God's presence and image in the wonders of creation, including in those around us. The service includes an address by Bill Pattinson. The first reading is by Jeremy Lawford and prayers are led by Adrian Butland, who is currently on placement with us as part of his training for ordination. Richard Barnes sings verses from 'Thou whose almighty word' and the service concludes with a setting of words by Richard Skinner based on Proverbs and set to music by Nigel Walsh.

At 10.30am we will hold a **Zoom coffee** for 40 minutes including an opportunity to chat in groups. Please join us, if you can, for a catch up. The link to click is below. It will appear as 'Thrive' but it is still the correct link (technical meltdown at the vicarage – so Ash is kindly hosting the meeting!): <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88685738289?pwd=WEh1dINCY3NRQTICcXFjK2ZlejR0UT09>

Meeting ID: 886 8573 8289

Passcode: 159821

At 4pm **Thrive** will continue on Zoom with time for learning, discussion and prayer today. Deborah Leighton PLom will be leading the session on the theme of spiritual pathways. Thrive is opening up our parish life to others and proving very enjoyable and rewarding so do give it a try! Please click here to join:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88685738289?pwd=WEh1dINCY3NRQTICcXFjK2ZlejR0UT09>

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Church Opening Times for Private Prayer

Thursdays: Not open this week due to funeral service for Gillian Harbord

Sundays: 9.30-10.30am at St David's Church
11am-12noon at St Michael's Church (with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament from 11.30am)

Covid-19 Safe for Private Prayer

These are the provisions we are making to keep you as safe as possible during Private Prayer.

Please avoid touching door handles.

Hand sanitizer must be used on entering and leaving church.

Please leave your name and contact details with Track and Trace.

We should wear face coverings in church. There are important exemptions which can be found at:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-08/COVID%2019%20advice%20on%20face%20coverings%20v3.0.pdf>

and which include those with a hearing impairment.

Please take an 'I sat here' notice and leave it on your seat so that others who come later can sit elsewhere.

Please observe appropriate distancing from others at all times.

Toilet facilities will be available and please follow the instructions for use.

Please do not attend church if you are feeling ill or are shielding. Although we will do all we can to make the church safe you attend at your own risk.

Online Daily Prayers

Monday 8 February, 8pm Compline (Night Prayer) on St David's Facebook Page

Tuesday 9 February, 9.30am Zoom Morning Prayer. You are welcome to join using the code below which will come up as 'Thrive':

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88685738289?pwd=WEh1dINCY3NRQTlCcXFjK2ZlejR0UT09>

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Tuesday 9 February, 6pm Vespers on the Friends of St Michael's Facebook Page

Wednesday 10 February, 9.30am Prayer Book Mattins on the St Michael's Facebook Page

Thursday 11 February, 9.30am, Morning Prayer, on St David's Facebook Page

Friday 12 February, 9.30am, Morning Prayer, on St David's Facebook Page

Funeral for Gillian Harbord

Gillian's funeral will be on Thursday 11th February at 11am at St David's Church and although attendance will be limited the service will, by request of Gillian's family, be streamed on St David's Church Exeter Facebook page.

Food for vulnerable community housed at the Great Western Hotel

A big thank you for the generous donations of food that continue to arrive for our Tuesday packed suppers. The scheme is still set to continue until the end of March. We would still welcome donations of chocolate bars and crisps.

Traidcraft Stall & St Michael's Bountiful Table

Unfortunately we are not able to run our regular stalls in church during the current lockdown but we hope to keep them going through orders. Richard Featherstone is happy to take orders through his email address:

r.w.featherstone@gmail.com

these will be available for collection from the vicarage porch or elsewhere. Richard is also able to supply catalogues giving a full range of Traidcraft items.

You can support St Michael's Virtual Bountiful Table by ordering baked goods from Elizabeth Hughes through her phone 01392 259878 or by Stephanie Aplin by email stephaniecaplin@yahoo.co.uk These will be for collection, rather than delivery to church.

Thank you for your generosity in supporting these stalls.

Men's Breakfast

The Men's Breakfast and Parish Lunch have been casualties of the restrictions over the past year. But some of us thought we would try and run a Men's Breakfast online and will give this a try on Saturday 20th February at 9am. I will post a link here next week. It's 'cook your own', I'm afraid, but it will be great to see anyone who would like to join us!

Magazine

The magazine for February is now available through our websites and there are some paper copies in our churches too. Thank you to our magnificent editorial team for producing another bumper edition, and to all our contributors.

Green Team

Clive Wilson and I put up the first seven nestboxes in St David's churchyard this week. Please see my letter in the magazine about our request for nestboxes for St David's Churchyard. We have room for a few more!

A message from Belinda Speed-Andrews

If you were able to read my magazine article back in December you will know that

I am a Companion of the Nazareth Community based at St Martin-in-the Fields.

The rule of life for the Nazareth Community is based on 7 areas; silence, scripture,

sacrament, sharing, service, sabbath & staying with. I have begun to appreciate

time spent in silence and please know that there are days when I don't do it but I keep returning to it and it is a blessing. And 'staying with' has kept me grounded and rooted in the light of Christ over the last year when there have been times, as I am sure there have been for many of us, when it was all we could do to put one foot in front of the other and sometimes not even wanting to do that.

Before I moved to Exeter nearly two years ago I used to travel to & from work in Exeter from North Devon on a full time basis. There were times when there were not many blessings to find in that journey but one blessing that I received every day was the ability to gradually leave behind the challenges of the day before I arrived home. Sitting in silence is a bit like that. We are able to sit with God and unwind in his peace, or begin the day in his peace which we can then carry through into our daily tasks.

With all of this in mind I would like to hold a short time of both contemplation and silence as a community. We do this at St David's at the beginning of advent, in particular for women. I would like to do something similar to this on a regular basis, perhaps once a month to begin with. Perhaps the early evening (6pm) for 30-40 minutes would be a good time where we can unwind and reflect on the day. Perhaps even a Friday evening where we can come together and reflect on our week? For now this will have to be on Zoom but my hope is we will be able to hold this as a hybrid time, both Zoom and face to face for those who can.

Please email me on bspeedandrews@gmail.com if this is something that you are

interested in and if you have any thoughts to offer.

Lent Course - in partnership with Churches Together Central Exeter

These Are Our Stories: Lent in a Pandemic Year

Hosted by St David's Church Exeter on Tuesday afternoons 2pm on Zoom
23rd February to 23rd March

This five week Lent course is based on the pandemic stories of five people from across Devon and will encourage each of us to tell our own stories and reflect on where our faith fits into the experience of the past 12 months. The teaching is based on the work of a theological reflection group of clergy and lay people from across Devon thinking about Covid-19. The sessions use videos, worksheets with a bible passage for discussion, and illustrations, each week focussing on a different story and theme, with plenty of space for our own thoughts and feelings and discernment of God's activity in our lives.

Also available:

Monday afternoons 2.00pm, 22nd Feb to 22nd March

Hosted by St James' Church, Exeter, Contact fr.steveturner@icloud.com

Tuesday evenings 7.45pm, 23rd Feb to 23rd March

Hosted by the Parish of Central Exeter, Contact sheila.pite@cooptel.net

Wednesday mornings 9.45am, 24th Feb to 24 March

Hosted by the Parish of Central Exeter. Contact sheila.pite@cooptel.net

Persecution and the Early Church

Professor Oliver Nicholson will be hosting and leading a series of three Zoom Talk-Discussions on Thursday March 4th, 11th and 18th from 7 to 8pm. Please find full details in the magazine. I will publish the Zoom code here nearer the time.

Clewer Initiative Lent Group

Belinda Speed-Andrews will be hosting a Tuesday evening Lent group focussing on the issue of modern slavery and in particular how women and girls suffer through this scourge. We will publish further details here soon.

Phone Networks & local Walks with a friend

Many of you have appreciated phone calls from other members of the church community. If would like to be phoned by someone and haven't had any contact, or would just like to talk, please let me know at nigel.guthrie1@gmail.com or by ringing me on 01392 660226 or Ash on 07855305519. At our recent PCC it was suggested that there might be church members who would appreciate going for a local walk with someone else from church. If you would like a hand organising that

for yourself or for someone else please have a word with one of the clergy (as above) or with Howard Friend (07733739453).

Your Prayers are asked for...

Please remember those who have died recently including:

Gillian Harbord whose funeral will be held this coming Thursday at 11am. Please remember Claude and their family.

Alan Roberts, Sam and Luke Pearce and Shirley (in Australia), the sister of Ros Payton, who have died recently.

In the **Parish Cycle of Prayer** this week please pray for the work of the YMCA: for Emma White and Deborah Leighton Plom and all the Trustees and staff. For those living in St David's Hill hostel and in other accommodation throughout the city. We pray for the successful appointment of a male support worker currently being advertised.

A Prayer during Covid 19

Loving God, at this time of crisis

when so many are suffering, we pray for our nation and our world.

Give our leaders wisdom, our Health Service strength, our people hope.

Lead us through these parched and difficult days to the fresh springs of joy and comfort that we find in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Please also pray for:

the equitable distribution of vaccine throughout the world;

people here, and around the world, suffering from Covid-19, and those who are feeling anxious, isolated or afraid;

our Government, local and national, in the difficult decisions they must make and implement, our emergency services, those carrying out the vaccination programme; school, college and university staff delivering online and in person teaching; those working in care homes and hospitals - giving thanks for their commitment and courage;

those who are facing unemployment or economic hardship;

give thanks for all those engaged in environmental protection and recovery projects around the world.

May God bless you and those you care for,

Nigel Guthrie

Order of Service for the Second Sunday before Lent, 7 February 2021

Welcome to worship in the parish of St David and St Michael, Exeter on this Second Sunday before Lent, when we celebrate God's work in creation.

When bad things happen we often ask, 'how can God allow this?'. And this pandemic is undoubtedly a test of faith in all sorts of ways. But our faith can also grow in times of difficulty as we learn to trust God's grace and promises. When God had finished the Creation he saw that it was very good and we are challenged to see the good in creation and in those around us every day. As we rejoice in the gifts of God in Creation let us offer our worship with glad and joyful hearts.

I would like to lead an opening prayer and act of confession before reading the Collect for the day.

Opening Prayer

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

**Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleansing the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Prayers of Penitence

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith.
You delight in creation, its colour and diversity;
yet we have misused the earth and
plundered its resources for our own selfish ends.
Lord have mercy, **Lord, have mercy.**

You have brought order out of chaos,
light in darkness, good out of evil;
but we have preferred darkness
in words and deeds which dishonour God's holy name.
Christ, have mercy. **Christ have mercy**

You have showered us with blessings;
but we have been grudging towards others

and lacking in generosity in speech and action.

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

The priest pronounces the absolution.

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent,
have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Collect

Almighty God, you have created the heavens and the earth
and made us in your own image:
teach us to discern your hand in all your works and your likeness in all your
children;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit reigns
supreme over all things, now and for ever.
Amen.

First Reading – Proverbs 8: 1 & 22-31

Does not wisdom call, and does not understanding raise her voice?
The Lord created me at the beginning of his work,
the first of his acts of long ago.
Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth.
When there were no depths I was brought forth,
when there were no springs abounding with water.
Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth—
when he had not yet made earth and fields,
or the world's first bits of soil.
When he established the heavens, I was there,
when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,
when he made firm the skies above,
when he established the fountains of the deep,
when he assigned to the sea its limit,
so that the waters might not transgress his command,
when he marked out the foundations of the earth,
then I was beside him, like a master worker;
and I was daily his delight,

rejoicing before him always,
rejoicing in his inhabited world
and delighting in the human race.

Alleluia

Alleluia. By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the hosts of them by the breath of his mouth. Alleluia.

Gospel Reading – John 1: 1-14

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

This is the Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, O Christ

Address from Bill Pattinson for the Second Sunday before Lent

February 7th 2021 “...and the Word became flesh.”

Readings: Proverbs 8:1, 22-31. John 1:1-14

The two Sundays before Lent have special themes. Today's theme is “Creation” and next week's, when Howard will be preaching, it is “transfiguration.”

Perhaps, considering a theme of creation is why the wonderfully poetic opening verses of John's Gospel are chosen for today, verses we are more likely to recall at the end of a Christmas carol service or as the Gospel on Christmas Day itself. Or

perhaps it is because the opening phrase “In the beginning..” is the same as the very start of Genesis and the story of God’s creation of the world. Or perhaps it is preparing us for Lent, a time when we look carefully at our own journeys of faith and where we are with our relationship with Jesus, whose story is so fully introduced to us in this prologue to John’s Gospel.

In the beginning, at the start of Lockdown 1, when the sun was shining, the birds were singing, gardens were budding and a strange silence fell on our streets, we perhaps thought this change in our life pattern brought unexpected benefits. Soon, we hoped, we shall return to normal or “new normal” living. This, we now know, was not to be. Our fears, anxieties, losses and sheer horror grew as Lockdown 2, quickly followed by 3 saw hospitals overcrowded and short-staffed and the death toll from the virus grow to over 100,000 by January of this year. Within this wider story of the pandemic, we all have our own stories to tell. We became worried, anxious and confused by the illness and death of so many from Covid-19, by the immense pressure on the NHS, by the closing of shops and businesses leading to redundancies, by the closing also of schools leading to home schooling and examination chaos, by the stress of an isolated life style where the visits of loving family and friends were denied and the missings...so many missings! In February’s “New Leaves” magazine my poem for the month was Stewart Henderson’s “Breakages”. He writes:

“We will be broken by many things;
We will be broken by events and loss;
the diagnosis and gaunt treatments,
the riots of grief and the frozen days that follow.”

So in such a fragmented, fractured world, where is our faith? This does not, at first glance, appear to be fertile ground for developing our relationship with God? How can He allow such heartache, confusion and grief? “Grow your faith” is the wording on the front cover of our magazine. How can our faith grow in such desperate times?

In the letter to the Hebrews we read”

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”
(Hebrews 11:1).

What are the things we can hope for? Especially when it is so much easier to be convinced by things seen, rather than unseen. The author of John’s Gospel, in these

opening 14 verses, points directly to the Word, that is Jesus, for such hope. Look long and hard at Jesus if you want to know God. Nobody has seen God, who has made himself known through Jesus, whom we have seen.

The opening words of books are so important. Good openings encourage you to read on, because they give a strong flavour of what you are to taste in the book. Jane Austen's novels are renown for their wonderful starts:

“It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.”

The start of “Pride and Prejudice.” You already have a good idea of what the story will be about. However one of my favourite starts, which both grips your imagination and predicts events, is Graham Greene's “Brighton Rock.”

“Hale knew, before he had been in Brighton three hours, that they meant to murder him.”

The beginning of John's Gospel is just as arresting.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

This book is clearly about the Word and we don't have to read much further to understand that the Word is Jesus, who “became flesh and dwelt among us”. God in Jesus is over all. John wants to make sure that his readers appreciate the full meaning of who Jesus was, and is, and shall be and what he has accomplished and done for us. The Word, Jesus, was there at the beginning of God's creation. This links with the Jewish principle of Wisdom, whom we heard in our first reading from Proverbs that “The Lord created at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago.” God, Word, Wisdom - Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who in the beginning brought light into the world. Now at the beginning of John's Gospel, God is saying again “Let there be light.” A re-creation, a new world which becomes tangible in the person of Jesus Christ. In Jesus, God loves us as we are, completely, unconditionally. When we look at the breath-taking beauty of creation, it points not just to God the creator, but also because of the Word to Jesus who was instrumental in creation also. Malcolm Guite in his poem simply called “John” sums this all up:

This is the Gospel of the primal light,

The first beginning and the fruitful end.”

Nor is this second light, this new creation, this Jesus, set free from the suffering and darkness which we, in these present times, so surely experience. “He came to what was his own and his own people did not accept him.” Jesus knows our worries and fears, because he has experienced them himself. It is in times like these where God is so clearly to be seen in his acts of love and compassion and we have seen plenty of that during this pandemic. So in Jesus there is great hope and John, in this wonderful prologue, invites us to find out all about him. If you want your faith to grow then in the next few weeks of Lockdown 3, read John’s Gospel.

And Nigel and his ministerial team invite us to another way of growing in faith, of challenging our relationship with God, by joining a Lent group this month, where we are following the Diocesan course, “These are our Stories”.

This five week Lent course is based on the pandemic stories of five people from across Devon and will encourage each of us to tell our own stories and reflect on where our faith fits into the experience of the past 12 months.

So here’s my sermon summary. Three questions to ask. “Where is Jesus in my life now? Where can I see hope? How can my faith grow?”

Three things to do: Find an opportunity to tell your pandemic story. (You can always send a copy to me which I can put in the magazine.) Read John’s Gospel. Join a Lent group.

“Let us light a candle in the darkness
in the face of death, a sign of life
as a sign of hope where all seemed hopeless
as a sign of peace in place of strife.”

Conclusion

Thank you for sharing in our worship. Please join us, if you can for our Zoom coffee meeting at 10.30am this Sunday, which gives us an opportunity to catch up and chat in groups. And this afternoon, at 4pm, we will be meeting for Thrive, also on Zoom.

Today Deborah Leighton Plom will be introducing spiritual pathways, which can lead to growth and flourishing.

And if it is safe for you to do so, you are welcome to come to church for private prayer from 11am to 12noon on Sundays at St Michael's and from 10.30 -11.30am on Thursdays and 9.30-10.30am on Sundays at St David's.

I would invite you to join our online prayers during the week, if you can, so that we can continue and increase the daily prayer offered together as a parish. An excellent edition of the parish magazine for February is now available on our websites and there are also some paper copies available in church. And do join us for a Zoom service at 7.30pm for Ash Wednesday which is on 17th February this year.

Our worship today concludes with a setting of words by local poet, Richard Skinner based on chapter 8 of the book of Proverbs and set to music by Nigel Walsh. But first I would like to offer a closing prayer and blessing.

Closing Prayer and Blessing

Eternal God and Father,
you create us by your power and redeem us by your love,
guide and strengthen us by your Spirit,
that we may give ourselves in love and service to one another and to you;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

May the road rise up to meet you,
May the wind be always at your back,
May the sunshine warm upon your face
and the rain fall softly on your fields,
and until we meet again may God hold you in the hollow of his hand.
and the blessing of God almighty, the Father,
the Son and the Holy Spirit be upon us and remain
with us always. **Amen.**

Do join us next week for our services on Youtube and Facebook!

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