

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

Newsletter for 9 May 2021 – The Sixth Sunday of Easter - Rogation Sunday

Dear Friends,

Welcome to our newsletter for the Sixth Sunday of Easter. Jesus gives his disciples the commandment 'love one another as I have loved you'. This means that we should treat those around us with love, respect and generosity. But what does it mean for those neighbours who live far away? Christian Aid Week reminds us to include the world's poorest in our prayers and loving action. And what does it mean to those who will come after us? What will the earth we leave behind tell future generations about our love for others?

Our PCC meets this Wednesday 12th at 7.30pm by Zoom. We do still have a vacancy for a Deanery Synod representative from St David's. Please have a word with myself or Ash if you are interested. Significant decisions are likely to come before Synod in the coming year or two so it is important that our congregations are represented.

Our services today are:

9.30am Parish Communion at St David's (live streamed on St David's Exeter Facebook page) with celebrant and preacher, Nigel Guthrie

11am Rogation Prayers and Mass at St Michael's with celebrant and preacher, Nigel Guthrie

4pm Thrive

Please join us for questions and discussion.

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88685738289?pwd=WEh1dlNCY3NRQTlCcXFjK2ZlejR0UT09>

Meeting ID: 886 8573 8289

Passcode: 159821

Services in church and online this week

Tuesday 11 May, Rogation Day, 9.30am Zoom Morning Prayer (from Common Worship). Please join us using this code <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6602261392?pwd=VzdOaU1XUFBjWk9jV0xvMDZWajZBQT09>

Meeting ID: 660 226 1392

Passcode: 196651

Wednesday 12 May, Rogation Day, 9.30am at St Michael's Mattins followed by 10am Mass in church (also live streamed on St Michael's Facebook page)

Thursday 13 May, ASCENSION DAY, 9.30am, Morning Prayer, on St David's Facebook Page

10.30 Holy Communion at St David's Church

Thursday 13 May, ASCENSION DAY, 7.30pm Sung Mass at St Michael's Church

Friday 14 May, St Matthias the Apostle, 9.30am, Morning Prayer, on St David's Facebook Page

Sunday 16 May

9.30am Parish Communion at St David's with celebrant, Nigel Guthrie and preacher, Howard Friend

11am Mass at St Michael's with celebrant Fr Dominic Cyrus and preacher Howard Friend

4pm Thrive

Join Zoom Meeting:

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

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Covid-19 Safe for Public Worship

Please avoid touching door handles – Thank you.

Hand sanitizer must be used on entering and leaving church.

Please wear a face covering in church unless you are exempt.

At St David's we are encouraging people to wear face coverings to come forward to receive Holy Communion and then to consume the host after moving away from the altar rail.

At St Michael's the priest will distribute Holy Communion to people in their seats.

Seating will be distanced to approximately 2 metres. Please sit on the seats where service books are placed. Seating is also marked by white labels at St Michael's.

Services should be 'no longer than necessary'; and congregational singing is still not permitted indoors.

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

Please avoid mingling inside church before or after services.

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.

Living in Love and Faith – starts this Tuesday

I would like to invite you to explore and discuss these new resources from the Church of England which are billed as ‘Christian Teaching and learning about identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage’.

We have now planned two parish groups starting in May to study the material together. We are holding a Tuesday afternoon group starting at 2pm and a Tuesday evening group starting at 7.30pm. The dates are as follows: 11 May, 18th May, 25th May, 8th June and 15th June. It would have been lovely to hold these in person but given the current restrictions they will have to be on Zoom and the links will be published in the weekly notices. Because the sessions touch on sensitive material we need to restrict the size of each group to 12 so that we can work in sub-groups of no more than 6. The study course is based on videos which include personal stories and there is time for discussion and sharing of thoughts and feelings about the topics. Each session should last no more than 90 minutes. So please join us if you can and let me know nigel.guthrie1@gmail.com if you would like to join the afternoon meetings or Belinda bspeedandrews@gmail.com if you would like join the evening meetings. There will be some modest initial ‘homework’ required.

All those taking part will be invited to make their responses to the Church of England as the House of Bishops will be considering their approach to these matters during 2022. All the material can be found online by searching for ‘Living in Love and Faith’ and accessed free through the LLF learning hub. This is a very significant consultation for the Church of England and for many people within it so please join one of our groups if you can.

Christian Aid Week

We will be holding **Christian Aid Week online Big Breakfast**. As we still can’t hold live events this will be on Zoom on Saturday 15th May at 9.30am for about 45 minutes. Please find the link below. Do join in, if you can, and, make a donation to Christian Aid so that we can continue to support their work in fighting poverty and

injustice. I have set up a 'Just Giving' Page which you can use to donate and which will collect Gift Aid automatically. <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/nigel-guthrie1>

Here is the Zoom link for the Breakfast:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6602261392?pwd=VzdOaU1XUFBjWk9jV0xvMDZWajZBQT09>

Meeting ID: 660 226 1392

Passcode: 196651

Or if you are feeling energetic...there will also be an **Exeter Canal Walk** on the same day, 15 May starting at 11am. All ages and abilities are welcome and you set your own target and walk or cycle. Registration and route details are available from Mary Ellis on 01392 273456 or maryellis@phonecoop.coop
All funds raised will support Exeter's Christian Aid Week Appeal.

Time for Quiet Reflection

Belinda will be leading a time of corporate Silent Reflection next Friday, 14th May at 5.30pm. Please email her for further details and joining link at bspeedandrews@gmail.com

Help with Churchwarden tasks

Typically Churchwardens pick up many tasks which could be done by others. We have already had some kind offers but there are a number of jobs which we will advertise in the coming weeks.

Would you be willing to help with one of these, please, even if you can't do every week?

Opening and closing the church on Sunday (weekly)

Recording the number of attendees and communicants in the book at the end of the service (weekly)

Updating the church inventory which is now online (annual job)

Clearing the churchyard on Sunday mornings before the service (equipment provided).

Thank you!

Keep the Fête Date!

We are planning a Parish Fête for Saturday 17 July. It may not be on the usual scale but we hope it will be a wonderful parish and community event. Offers of help or raffle prizes would be most welcome.

Painting Exhibition for Hospiscare- a message from Howard Friend

SAVE THE DATE: Saturday June 5th - 10 till 4 at St Leonard's Church Hall. I'm holding a Lockdown Art Giveaway Exhibition. Come and see what I've been up to during Lockdown (clue - painting watercolours) and if you like one you may have it FREE - as long as you promise to make a generous donation to Hospiscare. See my work on Instagram @ friend.howard.

Traidcraft Stall & St Michael's Bountiful Table

We have restarted our regular stalls but please be careful to maintain social distancing and just approach the stalls one at a time. Thank you for your support.

Men's Breakfast

We plan to hold the next Men's Breakfast on Saturday May 29th. It may be by Zoom or in person so please watch this space!

Parish Magazine – New Leaves

The Magazines for May are now available in church and online with a great range of articles. Thank you to all our contributors and editors.

Green Team

Thank you to everyone who contributes to the paper recycling scheme at St Michael's Church and to John Darch who organises the collection.

The Green Team met recently and are planning a morning focussed on the environment, with lunch of locally sourced food, for 11th September 2021. Please keep the date!

Cleaning at St Michael's Church

We will be holding a 'summer clean' on Saturday 3 July from 9.30-11.30am so please put the date in your diary and come along if you can to help. We hope to be able to provide refreshments (regulations permitting!).

Phone Networks

Many of you have appreciated phone calls from other members of the church community. If you 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.

Your Prayers are asked for...

Please remember those who have died recently including:

Frederick Stapley, David Walford (formerly hospital and hospice chaplain), Bill (Belinda's uncle)

In the **Parish Cycle of Prayer** we pray for Christian Aid and for our Big Breakfast; for those who are impoverished due to conflict and climate change

Please also pray for:

students taking exams and finishing assessments

all Devon farmers, farmworkers and their families

those working in care homes, hospitals and hospices - giving thanks for their commitment and courage;

those elected to office this week in UK elections

those suffering from Covid around the world, especially in India and Brazil;

Please give thank for:

the vaccination programme in this country and praying for the equitable distribution of vaccine throughout the world and the Covax programme;

the rain which has fallen this week, helping crops and gardens;

May God bless you and those you care for,

Nigel Guthrie

Prayers, Readings and Address for The Sixth Sunday of Easter, 9 May 2021

Collect

God our redeemer, you have delivered us from the power of darkness

and brought us into the kingdom of your Son:
grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life,
so by his continual presence in us he may raise us to eternal joy;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen

First Reading – Acts 10: 44-end

While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, ‘Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?’ So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.

Gospel Reading - John 15: 9-17

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

‘This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

Address from Nigel Guthrie, 9 May 2021

Psalm 98, John 15: 9-17

Jesus said ‘This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.’

Thomas Fuller, the 17th century churchman said ‘He that plants trees, loves others besides himself.’

And Warren Buffet, the American tycoon and philanthropist said ‘Someone is sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago.’

In the calendar of the Church of England the next three days leading up to the Ascension, are called Rogation Days; the word Rogation coming from the latin word ‘Rogare’ to bless. In the countryside Rogation processions ask God’s blessing on the fields and crops and usually at St Michael’s we hold a procession (although today we are simply holding outdoor prayers at the beginning of Mass). We are all vividly aware of how much the earth needs blessing now. The festival of Rogation is finding a new value within church life as all of us, urban and rural, realise that we rely on a complete functioning ecosystem to make life possible and good.

We usually think that Jesus’ command to love one another means that we should be respectful, kind and generous to those around us, here and now. And let us pray that we should always try to act like that! But what if our actions here and now cause pain, degradation, hunger and disaster to those who come after us? What if our use of the world’s resources now causes others in the future to lack what we have enjoyed? What if our failure to act causes suffering to those far away, whose lives are already vulnerable through poverty and climate change – something being highlighted by Christian Aid?

I recently found a book on my shelves which I was sent in 1972 from the family of my mother’s American pen friend. They lived in California and the book is entitled ‘The Last Redwoods’. When I picked it up recently I expected a rather sentimental view of the grandeur of the Redwoods and a lament for their loss. But in fact the book the book is a fascinating account of the former extent of the coastal Redwood Forest in northern California and of the attempts to secure its future. When the book was written in 1969 more than 90% of the original 2 million acres of Redwoods had been lost to logging and only half of what was left was in its pristine state. Redwoods can live for more than 2,000 years, but most of the forest, which had existed for millions of years, had been lost to commercial felling in just one century.

I learned quite a bit about these amazing trees which can grow to over 100 metres in height and 8 meters wide near the base. They have bark that can be a foot or more in thickness which repels moderate fire and their high tannins make them highly disease resistant. They can even make their own rain by capturing the fog in the foliage

which condenses to provide moisture for the tree. You may know the fine specimen nearby at Killerton Gardens which is a mere 41 meters high!

Yet these monarchs of the natural world have been exploited with no concern for long term management of the forest and the consequences of this exploitation have been realized for a long time. Save the Redwoods league was set up in 1918 and continues its work today and it's been fascinating to learn about it from their website. Back in my 'The Last Redwoods' book there is a story about an area of Coastal Forest at Bull Creek which was supposedly saved in 1931 in one of the early projects of 'Save the Redwoods' supported by John D Rockefeller. But only the flatlands and immediately adjacent slopes were part of the scheme with the rest of the large watershed being left in private hands. In 1947 industrial logging really got going in the rest of the valley leaving the soils with no protection. Research had shown that there had been serious flooding every 50 years or so, but with the rest of the valley heavily forested the damage was always limited because the water was absorbed and the land was held together by the structure of the forest. Then in 1955, following the logging there was torrential rain in the watershed and massive slides of rock and gravel from the slopes were washed down eroding the streams and making them torrents which in turn undermined hundreds of mature trees further down the valley, forever changing the character of the forest and the waterways. Following further flooding in 1964 another 400 mature trees were lost from the conservation area. Gradually restoration work has gone on but it will be hundreds of years before areas of forest will be fully restored and land which was developed or put to other uses adjacent to the protected areas may never be restored. 'Someone is sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago.'

This story from the middle of the last century struck me as a vivid illustration of what we are up against in blessing the earth today. Small scale improvements are good and significant but they need to be part of a larger plans which include all of our land so that good management can lead to a virtuous circle of environmental improvement. Our wonderful conservation groups including the National Trust, RSPB, Woodland Trust and local wildlife trusts need and deserve our support. And they are increasingly working together with other charitable and government bodies on large scale restoration of habitat. Locally you might like to find out about the restoration of wetland locally at the mouth of the river Otter at Budleigh, which happens to be by one of our favourite walks.

David Attenborough is 95 this week. He has said “**In the end, important actions can only be taken by big business, by industry, and by politicians.**” For better or worse we know this is true. If large scale and urgent action is to happen international cooperation is needed and it is good for us to pray at this Rogation time for the forthcoming COP 26 UN Conference due to be held in Glasgow in early November this year. In the story of the Redwoods it is shocking how long it has taken to accelerate effective conservation measures and the same is true in so many other areas of work towards sustainable living. Like it or not we need the urgency which David Attenborough and Greta Thunberg bring to their environmental work. But we also need to be engaged ourselves, not only in doing our bit to live sustainably but also in making our views known to politicians and other leaders, because is it only by public pressure that matters will rise to the top of a crowded political agenda.

In several Old Testament passages the writers envisage the whole creation praising God; people and animals, trees, mountains and hills, rivers and seas. God blesses the earth and in turn the earth, and everything in it, blesses God. It is a joyful vision and one that is severely compromised by the damage which is being done to our wonderful earth. Surely there can be no more important legacy of love for those who come after us to put our best efforts into looking after the earth that God has entrusted to us

Closing Prayer and Blessing

God our Father,
whose Son Jesus Christ gives the water of eternal life:
may we thirst for you, the spring of life and source of goodness,
through him who is alive and reigns, now and for ever.

The God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus,
that great shepherd of the sheep,
through the blood of the eternal covenant,
make you perfect in every good work to do his will,
working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight;
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 in church and online!

