

St David with St Michael and All Angels, Mount Dinham, Exeter Newsletter for the Third Sunday before Lent, 13 February 2022

Dear Friends,

Welcome to this week's newsletter. On this third Sunday before Lent we reflect on St Luke's version of the Beatitudes or the 'joys and woes' as they might better be described. They show us that God's kingdom, and the values which define it, are very different from the forces which often drive this world. How can we align our lives more closely with the vision which Jesus sets out?

In view of the continued incidence of Covid infections in Devon we encourage you to wear face-coverings in church unless you are exempt, to maintain social distancing and to use hand sanitizer on entering the building. We are pleased to be serving refreshments after our services and thank you to those who are making this possible. Please be patient, kind and respect the personal space of other people if they don't wish to get too close!

Our services today are:

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

11am Sung Mass at St Michael's with celebrant, Nigel Guthrie and preacher, Howard Friend

4pm Thrive – in Church

A special music session celebrates Thrive Live! Members of several local churches, including our own will be offering Christian worship music in a variety of styles.

6pm Evening Prayer at St David's Church led by Ian Cartwright

Services in church and online this week

Tuesday 15 February, 9.30 – 9.55am Morning Prayer on Zoom.

Please join us on this link:

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

Meeting ID: 660 226 1392

Passcode: 196651

6pm Sung Vespers at St Michael's (live streamed on Friends of St Michael's Facebook Page)

Wednesday 16 February, 9.30am Mattins and 10am Mass at St Michael's
11am Memorial Service for Michael Hickmott at St Michael's Church

Thursday 17 February, Janani Luwum, Bishop and Martyr, 10.30am Holy Communion at St David's Church

6pm Sung Vespers at St Michael's Church (live streamed on Friends of St Michael's Facebook Page)

Friday 18 February, 9.30 Morning Prayer in St David's Lady Chapel and live streamed on St David's Facebook Page

Sunday 20 February – The Second Sunday before Lent

9.30am Parish Communion at St David's Church with celebrant, Nigel Guthrie and speaker Deborah Leighton Plom. (live streamed on St David's Exeter Facebook page)

11am Sung Mass at St Michael's with celebrant and preacher Ash Leighton Plom

4pm Thrive in St David's Church

6pm Evening Prayer at St David's Church led by Belinda Speed-Andrews

Covid-19 Safe for Public Worship

At St David's we encourage 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.

Please mingle with care before and after services and be mindful not only of your own wellbeing but also of your neighbours' safety and make sure that you are not sitting directly behind other people especially if you would like to sing.

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.

Knit and Natter

We will meet again on 26th February and 26th March at St David's Church from 10.30am until 12noon. All are welcome to knit, natter or learn! Tea and coffee available.

Men's Breakfast

The next Men's Breakfast will be next Saturday 26th February at 10am at the Farmers' Union. Please contact Nigel if you would like to be on a mailing list reminder for this.

Prayer after Church at St David's

Prayer will be available for you this Sunday, 20th February, after the 9.30 service at St David's - just head to the Lady Chapel, to the left of the altar, where our prayer team would love to pray with you or for you. We hope to offer this roughly every fortnight, and please let Nigel, Glynis, or Ash know if you are interested in joining the prayer team.

Parish Lunch Returns!

After a long break during the worst of the pandemic our Parish Lunch at Exeter College returns this month.

The first one will be at Exeter College's @34 restaurant on Thursday 17th Feb at 12noon.

Preorder sheets will be at the back of both churches this Sunday. All are welcome. Any queries to Sue Wilson on 01392 437571.

Men's Walk for Hospiscare

We have got team together the Men's Walk but it is not too late to join. Please just have a word with Clive Wilson as further entries can be linked to our Just Giving page. As you may know fundraising for Hospiscare has taken a real hit during the pandemic so it would be good to raise as much as we can to help. We would be delighted if you would be willing to support the Men's Walk fundraising please find the Just Giving page at <http://www.justgiving.com/team/StDavidsExeter22?invite=true>

Tuesday Café

We are planning to open St David's Church for a Tuesday café time – as a drop-in for people to find a Christian welcome and company. This plan has been long delayed by the completion of works at the back of church and then..... Covid! Our initial plan is to open St David's from 10.30am to 12noon on a Tuesday and we would like to recruit a team who would not only help to serve tea and coffee but also to talk with people. We would plan that people would help about once a month. Is this something you would like to be involved with? Or would you like to bake a cake for us? If so please sign up on our "Tuesday Café" sheet at the back of church. If we get a good response we would hope to start in March.

Thrive Onsite 13th February – moving into church

This Sunday, 13th February, we're bringing Thrive into the building with a session of music at 4pm, featuring church bands and musicians from across Exeter. We want this to be a gift and not an ask, so no pressure to contribute, but if you'd love to be involved, talk to Ash for more info or reply to these notices. Volunteers especially welcome in any of the following teams: core group, leafleting, welcomers, hospitality/catering, backstage/tech support, cleaners, and musicians and vocalists - talk to Ash for more info.

Parish Quiz – save the date!

St David's Social Committee is organising a Quiz in aid of St David's church funds. The Quiz will be on **Friday 18th March** at 7.30pm and the tickets will be £10 including Ploughmans Supper and a drink. Under 16 tickets are £4. Please aim to make up teams between 6 and 8 people, although you are welcome to do this on the night, of course. Tickets will be available from next Sunday.

Lent Groups

St David's church are offering 2 different courses

On Tuesday afternoons 2pm at 95 Howell Rd on 8, 15, 22, 29 March and 5 April
York Course 'Caring for Creation' Please email nigel.guthrie1@gmail.com to book a place or sign the list at the back of church. Course booklet will be available for £4.

On Tuesday evenings 7pm Venue TBC on 8, 15, 22, 29 March and 5 April

Sanctuary Mental Health Course: <https://www.sanctuarymentalhealth.org>

This will be led by Revd Belinda Speed-Andrews. If you would like to join or know more details, please contact her on bspeedandrews@gmail.com

Lecture and Reading Group at St Michael's

Desmond Atkinson will give a **S. Michael's Lecture** at 7.30 pm on Wednesday 23rd February on *Canonsleigh Abbey: a Thriving Devon Nunnery*

On Wednesdays 16, 23 and 30 March at 7 pm the **Lent Reading Group** will discuss Bede's *Historia* with Oliver Nicholson

Church Electoral Roll

The revision of the Church Electoral Roll is currently underway. If you are a regular worshipper but not already on the Roll please pick up a form from church. You need to be on the Roll to vote at the APM or stand for election. Any queries please contact Sue Wilson at St David's or Paula Lewis at St Michael's.

Funeral for John Darch

Thank you to all those who helped at John's funeral and supported Monica and her family. £700 was collected for the Children's Society.

New Leaves

The February edition of our Parish Magazine with lots of great news and views is now available. Thank you to all our contributors and our editorial team.

Green Team

There will be a **Churchyard Morning** at St David's on **Saturday 5 March** from 10am until 12noon to: work on wild flower areas, tidy up and remove unwanted saplings. Everyone is welcome and refreshments will be provided.

Clive has now planted the remaining fruit trees. Thank you again to all those who donated towards the trees. Those planted this week are 2 Cox apple, 2 Katy apple, 1 Scrumptious apple, 1 crab apple. We look forward to enjoying and sharing some fruit in due course!

Thank you also to the Community Payback Team from Probation who are continuing to weed around the church and clear rubbish from the churchyard most Saturdays. Do say hello to them if you are passing.

Phone Network and Home Communion

If you would like to be phoned by someone from the church community or know someone who would appreciate Communion at home, please let Nigel know

at nigel.guthrie1@gmail.com or by ringing him on 01392 660226 or Ash on 07855305519.

St Michael's services and prayers

If you would like to access the service details and prayer list for St Michael's please contact Oliver Nicholson at virtualsaintmichaels@gmail.com and he can add you to that weekly mailing.

Your Prayers are asked for...

Please remember those who are suffering

Please remember those who have died recently including:

John Darch, Liz Searle, Michael Hickmott

In the **Parish Cycle of Prayer:** The Dales and Barton Place Nursing Homes

Please also pray for:

'Thrive' launching in church today;
purposeful follow-up from the COP26 conference;
those being impacted by the rising costs of energy and housing in this country;
for integrity and good leadership in our national life;
the people of Ukraine who are fearful in the current situation;
those suffering in Afghanistan through lack of food and medical facilities;
the people of Yemen and Ethiopia facing continued conflict and famine;
those facing long waits for treatment in the NHS;
those suffering from Covid around the world.

With every blessing,
Nigel Guthrie

Prayers, Readings and Address for the Third Sunday before Lent, 13 February 2022

Collect

Almighty God, who alone can bring order
to the unruly wills and passions of sinful humanity:
give your people grace
so to love what you command
and to desire what you promise,

that, among the many changes of this world,
our hearts may surely there be fixed
where true joys are to be found;
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 Jeremiah 17: 5-10

Thus says the Lord:

Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals
and make mere flesh their strength,
whose hearts turn away from the Lord.

They shall be like a shrub in the desert,
and shall not see when relief comes.

They shall live in the parched places of the wilderness,
in an uninhabited salt land.

Blessed are those who trust in the Lord,
whose trust is the Lord.

They shall be like a tree planted by water,
sending out its roots by the stream.

It shall not fear when heat comes,
and its leaves shall stay green;
in the year of drought it is not anxious,
and it does not cease to bear fruit.

The heart is devious above all else;
it is perverse— who can understand it?
I the Lord test the mind and search the heart,
to give to all according to their ways,
according to the fruit of their doings.

Gospel Reading – Luke 6: 17-26

He came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and

those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

‘Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

‘Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.

‘Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

‘Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice on that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

‘But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

‘Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry.

‘Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep.

‘Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.

Address by Howard Friend for Sunday, February 13th 2022

And Jesus came down - with his disciples - to a level place. So began our Gospel reading – of the Sermon on the Plain - in contrast with the account in Matthews Gospel – The Sermon on the Mount where Jesus is described as going up a mountain.

Are they just different versions of the same event or events – quite possibly. The Matthian account destined for a Jewish audience and this one in Luke for a Gentile or more inclusive, one.

So, was Jesus half way up a mountain or indeed half way down as some would have it – the compromise position - Sermon on the Plateau?

Is being half way up the stairs the same as being half way down? (As in ‘The place where I sit’.)

Fans of AA Milne or perhaps the Muppets will have their own view on that.

And no - I’m not going to sing that song – you’ll be relieved to hear.

But I do want to talk about being down on the plain - on a level place - because for me this is the essence of Luke’s interpretation of Jesus’s teaching. And it’s Luke’s pitch - if you like - that has grasped my attention – this time round - looking at the Beatitudes.

For me - Luke’s implied direction of travel of the disciples - from up a mountain - where they had been called by Jesus – as recounted in the few verses just before our

Gospel reading - to being down and among the crowd on the plain - is highly significant.

I think Luke is encouraging us here to:-

Get down and get real.

Luke 'The Good Doctor' as he was nicknamed by Paul, his travelling companion, I'm sure, had a working understanding of the problem that Jesus addresses here in these beatitudes.

Blessed are the poor

Woe to you who are rich

I think he knew first-hand knowledge of what Wilkinson and Pickett the Nottingham University Epidemiologists described brilliantly in their book *The Spirit Level*. Their acclaimed and much quoted research showed that countries where there is a wide polarity of wealth, the UK for example, have more health problems and social dysfunction than say our Scandinavian neighbours where that inequality of wealth is less. Politicians at the time of publication got excited about the policy implications of this research and I'm sure it's informing the present political talk of Levelling Up and indeed Levelling Down.

But I'm not here to make a political point this morning. It's the personal and church implications of this problem that I want to concentrate on.

I want to encourage us in this church, like Luke, to:-

Get down and get real.

Because this is what Jesus did. He blessed and got alongside the poor, the sick and disadvantaged and he challenged the Rich and privileged.

There's an earthiness about Luke's Beatitudes isn't there, not found in Matthews account:

Blessed are the poor (not the poor in Spirit)

Blessed are the Hungry (not those who hunger and thirst after righteousness)

Blessed are those who cry and who suffer for my name.

And the Woes. Found only on Luke's plain. We can't sidestep the Woes.

Woe to you who are rich, and well fed, and who are well thought of.

This is Luke the doctor speaking – someone who has witnessed at first hand the consequences of the inequalities of society.

And I can identify with that – as some of you will know -I'm a retired medic and have spent many years in Malawi working for Dfid and the Foreign Office, working with some of the very poorest – but also with the rich and self-important.

I want to tell you about a woman whose actions and approach greatly influenced me as a Medical Student in London in the 70s.

She taught me how to

Get down and get real

Which is my theme this morning. (In case you had dozed off)

Dr Cecily Saunders - as many of you know - was the founder of the modern Hospice movement. During my training I elected to have a two week attachment at St Christopher's Hospice in South London, where she was Consultant in charge. I went on ward rounds with her and generally followed her around. Her approach to her patients revolutionised my thinking and practice. Instead of standing at the foot of the bed and looking down on the patients as the totally aloof Consultants did at the Middlesex - she got a chair and sat down or knelt down by her patients. She listened to them and tried to understand their worries and made a treatment plan with them.

She levelled with them.

She got down and she got real.

I have never forgot that.

I think this is what Luke is encouraging us to do with his interpretation of Jesus's teaching – The Beatitudes.

Now what about the implications of this observation for our churches. Well firstly I've come to realise just how much people in this church / parish do along the lines of what one might call 'Love in Action':

Prison Visiting

YMCA

Homeless support

Hospiscare

Food banks

And there are no doubt other activities or services like these that I'm not aware of
You are Blessing the poor and disadvantaged. You are:-

Getting down and getting real.

And you deserve commendation – and our encouragement.

And those of us who are not so involved need to look at ourselves and ask how we can get involved either in direct action, or in prayer or perhaps financially.

Ah - and - here's the rub:

We are a relatively wealthy church – that is to say we are mostly affluent - and we can't escape this:

'Woe to you who are rich'

challenge.

What are we, who are well off, who have assets or disposable income, doing about redressing the balance of inequality in our society.

We have to face this challenge. Financial support of some of our church related activities is an option, there are plenty of others. What is not an option for the Christian is to sit on a pot of gold.

Back to AA Milne – for some light relief – perhaps.

And here I might ruffle a few more 'Christopher Robin' like feathers.

I suggest - in line with my theme of :-

Get down and get real

That Half way up or down the stairs is not the place we should chose to sit and ponder in droopy Edwardian nostalgia.

- Neither should we be in the nursery at the top of the stairs, with its implication of wealth and privilege but rather at the bottom of the stairs – in the town – in the real world.

For after all – in the words of Paul to the Philippians:

Let your attitude be the same as that of Christ Jesus

Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be held on to but made himself nothing and took the nature of a servant. Being made in human likeness, he humbled himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross.

Jesus came down to our level

Jesus got down and got real

So should we.

Post-Communion Prayer

Merciful Father,

who gave Jesus Christ to be for us the bread of life,

that those who come to him should never hunger:

draw us to the Lord in faith and love,

that we may eat and drink with him

at his table in the kingdom,

where he is alive and reigns, now and for ever.

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