

**St David's with St Michael's and All Angels, Mount Dinham, Exeter
Newsletter for Sunday 15 August 2021 – Blessed Virgin Mary / Trinity 11**

Dear Friends,

Welcome to this week's newsletter.

Standing Committee will soon review our current #CovidSecure precautions, but for now please maintain safe distancing, wear a face covering if you can, and be gracious to one another as we each navigate our own circumstances – “space, face, grace”!

Our services today are:

9.30am Parish Communion (live streamed on St David's Church Exeter's Facebook Page) with celebrant Belinda Speed-Andrews and preacher Jonathan Draper

11am Mass at St Michael's with celebrant and preacher, Robin Eastoe

4pm Thrive on Zoom: a space to meet and chat about faith and life. Sessions in August are casual socials, no agenda, so why not join in, whether you're a regular, have never been before, or are somewhere in between!

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88685738289?pwd=WEh1dINCY3NRQTIcCXFjK2ZlejR0UT09>

Meeting ID: 886 8573 8289

Passcode: 159821

Services in church and online this week

Tuesday 17 August, 9.30 Morning Prayer on Zoom. Please join us using this code:

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

Meeting ID: 660 226 1392

Passcode: 196651

(prayers are from Common Worship Book or Daily Prayer app which can be downloaded here:

https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.aimermedia.dailyprayer&hl=en_GB&gl=US).

Wednesday 18 August, 9.30am Mattins and 10am Mass (live streamed) at St Michael's Church

Thursday 19 August, 10.30 Holy Communion at St David's Church

Friday 20 August, Bernard of Clairvaux, 9.30 Morning Prayer at St David's Church

Sunday 22 August – Trinity 12

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

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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 there will be no congregational singing 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.

Food for the Vulnerably housed in Exeter

Working through St Petrock's we are providing 16 packed suppers each week for people who are in transitional accommodation at the Crescent. Thank you to the small team which has convened to buy and make them. We don't need any additional support at the moment as there is a significant amount in our 'Soup Evening' kitty which can fund this for the time being.

Time for Quiet Reflection

Belinda will be leading the next time of corporate Silent Reflection on Friday 20 August at 5.30pm in person and on Zoom. Please email her for further details and joining link at

bspeedandrews@gmail.com

Help with Churchwarden tasks

Often Churchwardens pick up 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)

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

August Open Church at St David's

St David's Church is open on Saturdays in August from 11am -12noon. Please have a word with Glynis if you would be willing to help staff one of these occasions so that we can have the church open and perhaps a small stall, too.

Men's Breakfast

The next Men's Breakfast will be Saturday 21st August at 10am at the Farmers' Union. We may have to be on two separate tables depending on numbers on the day. Contact a service leader for more info.

The next 5 years - who are we and where are we going?

Belinda is leading a study group based on the book 'A Future that's bigger than the past'

(https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B07YNTLDKB/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?_encoding=UTF8&btcr=1)

as we think and discern what God is calling us to for the next 5 years.

If you are interested in joining in the conversation please do email her directly at bspeedandrews@gmail.com

The dates for the meetings at 7.30pm are: Thursday 26 August, Thursday 23 September and Thursday 14 October, before a parish meeting with Archdeacon Andrew Beane on Saturday October 16th. It would be good to have as many people as possible from both churches at that meeting when Andrew will outline possibilities for the future organisation of ministry in Exeter city and listen to our hopes and plans.

Grow Courses

The Diocese of Exeter offers courses to help *you* grow in prayer, make new disciples, and serve the people of Devon with joy. Sessions coming up include 'Sharing Our Faith', 'Stewardship Advocates', and 'Pastoral Care'. For more information or to sign up, please see

<https://exeter.anglican.org/ministry/lay-ministry/lay-learning/>

Thriving Communities Welcomers and Guides

Do you love the St David's area of Exeter? Local charity *All's Well St David's* is offering the opportunity for people to become welcomers at Exeter Community Centre on St David's Hill or guides for the brand new St David's Walking Trail which swings by both our churches, to help people explore the history and stories of the people who have lived in this area in the past. If you're interested, please get in touch with pippa.marriott@eccentre.org or 01392 420549

Chaplaincy

Volunteer mentors wanted to help people leaving prison

South West Community Chaplaincy have produced a new video, recruiting volunteer mentors in Exeter for prison leavers, here: <https://youtu.be/etTmRiFQXyE>

Can you provide support for men and women leaving prison to overcome whatever challenges they face to make a fresh start and build a positive future for themselves? SWCC are looking for new volunteer mentors to join our team in Devon and are offering full training for the role in September. If you are interested, please contact Managing Community Chaplain Cathy Jerrard on cathy@southwestcc.org.uk or 01392 284285 / 07816 428 470. No experience needed, full training provided.

Youth Ministry

You don't need to be a young person to train to offer youth ministry in church! SWYM recruit people of all ages to train and minister to our region's youth, so whether you're a student, or mid-career considering a change, or retired and interested in study and serving in youth work, why not find out more, here:

<https://swym.org.uk/if-not-now-when/>

Heritage Open Days at St Michael's

Saturday 11th September: St Michael's will be open from 9am – 6pm

Refreshments served all day

2pm Guided Tour of the Church by Dr Richard Parker

3pm Informal Organ Recital

Sunday 12th September: St Michael's will be open 10am – 6pm

11am Sunday Service

Refreshments will be served from 12.30pm

3 – 5pm Cream Tea with singing from Boys of the Old Brigade

We plan to run a bookstall at these days so please hold on to your books so that they can be sold in aid of church! We can store them in church if it would help.

Green Team

Survey on sustainable forms of transport: This survey will help identify better ways of travelling to church. Car parking near the church is already difficult and unlikely to improve, so we need to consider and seek other solutions.

Please help by completing the survey (which takes about one minute) online at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/TJY7SHP>

Paper forms are also available in church. The Survey closes today, 15th August!

Green Event: Ideas for how we can live more sustainably

Saturday 11th September 2021

10am to 2pm

Vegetarian Lunch £5

With:

Co Cars and Bikes

Wildlife talk

Eco church
Churchyard tours
Mending & making things
Tea, coffee, cake
Traidcraft stall
Harvest produce
Participation table - bring your own ideas
Children's activities
And much more

The team would like to invite volunteers to staff stalls at the event especially for 'home and handicrafts' and 'harvest'. Tickets for the local produce lunch will be available in the second half of August. If you have green photos of local wildlife and plants or environmental projects that could be part of display on the day please send them to Neil: mrpragnell@gmail.com

Parish Magazine – New Leaves

Please pick up your magazine for July & August. Thank you to our magazine team and distributors.

Phone Networks

If you would like to be phoned by someone from the church community or would just like to talk, please let Nigel know at nigel.guthrie1@gmail.com or by ringing him on 01392 660226 or Ash on 07855305519. Nigel is on annual leave this week.

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 have died recently including:

James Tyler, Dorothy Guthrie

In the **Parish Cycle of Prayer:** taxi and bus drivers and all who travel with them.

Please also pray for:

All those affected by the tragic shooting in Plymouth;
those held captive in modern forms of slavery in this country and around the world; for our own continued awareness of their plight;
the people of Afghanistan;
the humane and fair treatment of migrants and refugees arriving in this country;
the worldwide vaccination programme, giving thanks for all those who have enabled a rapid roll-out in this country;
school leavers and those seeking direction and employment at this time;
those working in care homes, hospitals and hospices - giving thanks for their commitment and courage;

those suffering from Covid around the world; for those anxious about the lifting of restrictions and for wisdom for those making arrangements for worship;

Peace and blessings to you, those you love, and those you are learning to love,

Ash Leighton Plom

Prayers and Readings for Trinity 10, 8 August 2021

Collect

O God, you declare your almighty power most chiefly in showing mercy and pity: mercifully grant to us such a measure of your grace, that we, running the way of your commandments, may receive your gracious promises, and be made partakers of your heavenly treasure; 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.

First Reading – Isaiah 61.10-11

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

Gospel Reading – Luke 1:46-55

And Mary said,

“My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,

and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

Address for 15 August 2021 by Jonathan Draper

Communion, St David's, 15/8/21

Mary the Mother of Jesus

Celebrating the Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary in August always seems a little counter-intuitive to me, though with the weather we've been having, it does begin to feel a lot like Christmas. We even turned on the heating in the cottage we rented in Wales last week.

If I can be just a little bit personal, and perhaps a bit controversial, this morning, I'd like to say that temperamentally and theologically I prefer Christmas to Easter, and not just because of the presents. What I mean is that for me incarnation is the more profound event: God becomes one of us, one with us, joins us in our human condition, comes to know us from the inside, as it were, and not just from outside. God is born, and nothing can ever be the same again.

Pivotal to the incarnation of God among us is, of course, a young woman named Mary, and today we can remember and celebrate her role in the story of our salvation. I've not often had the opportunity publicly to reflect on Mary and her role; truth be told, I've probably avoided it. In the very Protestant and conservative evangelical traditions in which I grew up, Mary was almost a peripheral figure. Incarnation, in these traditions, was all 'Act of God' in which Mary was but the vessel by which God's will is done. To think otherwise was to think that a human being played some part in our salvation, when salvation was understood to be a pure act of God's grace: God does something for us that we couldn't do and does it without our help or aid or even agreement. Mary's role is simply to acquiesce to the announcement of the Angel that she is to give birth, whether she likes it or not, to a child who will be Son of God and the salvation of Israel.

This was in sharp contrast to what we were told Roman Catholics, some Anglicans, and other idolaters believed. Mary in these traditions was seen as an active participant in our salvation, even seen as a sort of co-redeemer with Christ, and who now sits as Queen of Heaven making intercession for us with her Son and the Father. Mary was worshipped, we were told, as a sort of second God, when God alone in Christ should be worshipped; she was prayed to, along with all sorts of other so-called saints, when only God in Christ should receive our prayers. Mary was a sort of fourth person of the Trinity, if that isn't too absurd a thing to say. And as for the statues of her in churches, well that was just pure and sinful idolatry; and they were often vulgar.

Neither of these views, of course, is helpful. The Protestant view is too hard and blinkered: of course our salvation is an act of God's grace, but at the most fundamental level it requires at the very least our co-operation, and Mary shows this in her somewhat bemused 'yes' to God. The

Catholic view, if I can put it that way, makes too much of Mary by, in my view, removing her too far from her humanity. She is, of course crucial to our salvation, but is not its author; Mother of God she may be, but she is no more divine than you or me. There were many before Mary who co-operated with God for our salvation; there have been others since and even today, who, in their very humanity, can also bring God to birth for us.

Because we know almost nothing about Mary, it is easy to see how logic un-tempered by evidence could make more of Mary than might be warranted. Mark and John tell us nothing about the birth of Jesus, and Mary only really features in John towards the end. She is there, in the Book of Acts, at Pentecost with the rest of the disciples, but nothing is made of her place or presence; and Paul tells us nothing more. Matthew tells the story of the birth of Jesus more from Joseph's point of view, and so it is only in Luke that we get very much about Mary. Later traditions give us names for her parents, but once Pentecost has come and gone, we don't even know where she lived or how she died. We know nothing of what she did or the circumstances of her life before the angel makes his announcement to her. She's engaged to Joseph, who is a carpenter; she has an older cousin Elizabeth who is just ahead of her in a pregnancy; her husband Joseph was not originally from Nazareth, and the baby Jesus was born in Bethlehem. That's about it.

But that, of course, is much more than we know about the vast majority of people who have ever lived. And what emerges from even the scant information we have about Mary in the Bible is a picture of a young woman who is pretty secure in herself, who is able, even when surprised by an angel, to accept the possibility of God working through her, and whose life is defined by her faith and, ultimately, by her love for her child. Her extended family seems to have been connected to the priests who served in the Temple, and her husband was a tradesman; all in all not quite the picture sometimes painted by those who would like to see Mary as the equivalent of a modern-day, homeless, single mother from a rough housing estate. Joseph, after all, had the means to flee to Egypt when the family was threatened. I think it is unhelpful to create myths around Mary, no matter how well intentioned they may be.

Against the iconoclastic pull of my Protestant upbringing, I have come to find in Mary some really important things for our faith and for our understanding of how God acts in our world. I may not yet be ready to join a Walsingham cell, but I have no difficulty in placing Mary right at the heart of the story of our salvation.

It may seem a slightly odd thing to say, but Mary was, first and foremost, a genuine human being, and it is in her absolutely ordinary humanity that the strength of her place in our understanding of salvation and the activity of God is rooted. The more unlike you and me she becomes, the less helpful she is, for without her full and normal humanity there is no Christ. The point of the incarnation is that God takes on the fullness of our humanity, warts and all. Jesus need not be born of an immaculate mother, with a string of immaculate conceptions all the way back down the evolutionary tree, for it is our ordinary humanity which God assumes, and through which our salvation comes. Mary need not be assumed into heaven as if it was undignified for the mother of our Saviour to die, for it is our ordinary human life and death which our God suffers and through which our salvation comes. Mary places humanity right at the heart of our salvation, for without her the Christ of God is merely another supernatural being as unconnected to the human condition as any other alien. The humanity of Mary is the humanity of God and the vehicle of our salvation.

Mary didn't have much time to prepare for Christmas, at least not in the ways that we sometimes do. For Mary Christmas, as it were, came as a bolt out of the blue; there was no run up, no sense of needing to get things ready, no list from last year from which this year could be prepared. On the other hand, Mary did have the words and traditions of the prophets of Israel and their longing for God's kingdom of justice, mercy and peace; she did have the family tradition of worship at home, in the synagogue and in the Temple in Jerusalem, and the shared sense of God's presence and purpose in her life; she did have that deep sense of the world being God's world, and the hope that God's world should be a place where everyone lived in peace with themselves and with their neighbours, and where justice flows like a river and the stranger is loved and respected, and where no one needs to live in fear. Where, in the words of the Magnificat, the powerful are brought down from their thrones, the lowly are lifted up, the hungry fed. All of this - all of this longing and hope and expectation - is what prepared Mary for Christmas. And it is why we rehearse that longing and hope and expectation when we celebrate Advent - only 3 ½ months away - even today, for we need to prepare the ground of our hearts and the state of our faith for the coming of Christ as well.

Mary was an ordinary human being trying to live a godly life, and that was all the preparation she needed to say 'yes' to God. We are offered that same opportunity, to live godly lives in the midst of our normal humanity.

Closing Prayer

Lord of all mercy,
we your faithful people have celebrated that one true sacrifice
which takes away our sins and brings pardon and peace:
by our communion
keep us firm on the foundation of the gospel
and preserve us from all sin;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Do join us next week for our services in church and online!