

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

Newsletter for 15 November 2020 – Second Sunday before Advent

Dear Friends,

Welcome to our weekly update. Our online service this week is on Youtube at:

<https://youtu.be/tiqxoScc6TM>

including a sermon by Ash Leighton Plom on the parable of the talents.

Although we won't be able to gather for worship another two Sundays you are welcome to come to church for our times of private prayer if you feel it is right and safe to do so. But whether at home or in church I encourage you to find time to lay your own concerns before God who daily bears us up (Psalm 69 verse 19) and to rest in his presence.

Below are the times for our online prayers on Facebook this week and I will also be offering a Morning Prayer by Zoom on Thursday morning at 9.30am. We will use a shortened version of the Morning Prayer service which can be found in 'Common Worship Daily Prayer' book or on the corresponding 'Daily Prayer' app. The advantage of the app is that it finds the psalm and readings for you!

You are welcome to join us today for **virtual coffee time** on Zoom at 10.30am and the code can be found in the notices below.

Public Worship

Public Worship has been suspended until 2nd December. As soon as we get any definite news about the resumption of services we will let you know.

Churches Opening for Private Prayer

We are allowed to open our churches for private prayers only and I will publish the times each week when our churches will be open. These are the times for the current week:

St Michael and All Angels

Wednesday 18 November: 9.30 - 10.30am with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament

Sunday 22 November: 11am – 12noon

St David

Thursday 19 November: 10 - 11am

Sunday 22 November: 9.30 – 10.30am

No public prayers are allowed during this time and please observe the usual

Covid-19 Safe practices:

Hand sanitizer must be used on entering and leaving church.

Your name must be recorded on the sheet when you enter church.

Face coverings should be worn in church. There are important exemptions that 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 keep at least 2 metres away from others and leave an 'I sat here' notice on the pew or chair to warn others not to sit there in the same session.

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

Please do not come to Private Prayer 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.

Zoom Coffee on Sundays

Nigel will be hosting a virtual 'coffee time' on Zoom on Sundays from 10.30am during the current regime of restrictions. Anyone is welcome to join in for conversation and fellowship. If there are enough people we will split into groups for chat. Here is the link for today:

Join Zoom Meeting

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

Meeting ID: 660 226 1392

Passcode: 196651

Thrive – an interactive Advent Experience

Ash will now be launching this online on Sunday 29 November at 4pm. Look out for further details about this and we will publish a Zoom joining code in this newsletter. It will aim to provide space for 'peace, questions and growth'.

Curates on Air!

Belinda Speed-Andrews had been interviewed for the St Martin-in-the-Fields service about her online involvement with their community. St Martin's puts out a great range of online worship, music and resources.

Ash Leighton Plom is going to be featured on Radio Devon's Advent coverage talking about the launch of 'Thrive' and the questions has been asked by St David's School pupils – including some pretty challenging ones!

Food for vulnerable community housed at the Great Western Hotel

A huge thank you for the help and donations that have already been offered towards making our Tuesday packed suppers. The scheme is running well and if you would be willing to provide small bags of crisps or individually wrapped chocolate bars

towards this outreach work then please leave them in church at Private Prayer times or in the Vicarage porch.

Live Daily Prayers

Please join us, if you can, for our streamed prayer services during the week on our Facebook pages:

On 'St David's Church Exeter' page: Tuesday, and Friday at 9am. Compline on Monday 16th and Thursday 19th November at 9pm.

On 'St Michael and all Angels, Mount Dinham, Exeter' page: Wednesday Angelus and Mattins at 9am.

If you would like to join in **Zoom morning prayer on Thursday 19th at 9.30am** here is the link: [Join Zoom Meeting](#)

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

Meeting ID: 660 226 1392

Passcode: 196651

Shoebboxes for Moldova

Thank you to everyone who has already prepared and delivered a shoebox.

We are supporting CREE (Christian Response to Eastern Europe) again this year by sending Christmas Shoe Boxes to Moldova. Our boxes need to be in church by the morning of **Sunday November 29th** for transport to Moldova.

For further information about box preparation can be found at:

www.cr2ee.org.uk

Please ring Ann Watts 01392 276948 for further information and look out for stories in the November magazine! Boxes can be left in St David's Church during times of Private Prayer or in the Vicarage porch.

Living in Love and Faith

All the licensed Clergy and Readers were invited to an introductory online day about this new resource from the Church of England. It is a resource which offers 'Christian teaching and learning about identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage.' All Church of England churches are being invited to engage with it and we will be working out how we can best explore this in our parish. But if you would like to explore the resource for yourself you can do so at

<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/living-love-and-faith>

Work on St David's Vestry Roof

The work is now almost complete with a further coat of waterproofing due to be added - as soon as the weather allows!

Traidcraft Stall

If you have ordered a REAL advent calendar it will be possible to pick it up from the Vicarage porch. Thank you for supporting Fair Trade producers.

Magazine

The magazines for November are now available through our websites with a few copies available in church to pick up. Thank you to our contributors and to our editorial team.

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 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...

Charles Argall; Charles Speed-Andrews; Charlotte, Paul and Grace; Maggs Bedford; Nicky Jarman and her husband Tim and their family; Jacqueline and her family; Joy and her family; Claude and Gillian Harbord; Elizabeth Hewitt; Mike Newman; Anne Smith; Grace Tointon; Pam Smith and her family; James and Katy Tyler; Andrew Wakley; Rosemary Willcox; Hannah; David and Beryl.

Please remember Janine, Pam Stephens and Maurice Wright who have died recently. May they rest in the peace of Christ.

In the **Parish Cycle of Prayer** and on this world day for the poor we give thanks for the charity shops in our parish, for Exeter Food Bank, St Petrock's, and we pray for the vulnerable community housed at the Great Western Hotel, and elsewhere, and for those sleeping rough

Please also pray for:

the people of USA as their election process concludes – and those recently elected to office;

the people of Nagorno-Karaback

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

our Government, local and national, in the difficult decisions they have to make and implement, our police service

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

those who are facing unemployment or economic hardship;

A Prayer for use during the Covid outbreak

Loving God, your Son Jesus Christ came that we might have life and have it abundantly;

pour out your blessing upon our nation;

where there is illness, bring your healing touch;

where there is fear, strengthen us with the knowledge of your presence;

where there is uncertainty, build us up in faith;

where there is denial, lead us into truth;

where there is discord, may we know the harmony of your love;

this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

May God keep you in peace and good health, Nigel Guthrie

Service for Second Sunday before Advent, 15th November, available on Youtube with links to our Facebook pages

<https://youtu.be/tiqxoScc6TM>

Prayer of Preparation

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open,

all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden:

cleanse 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.

Confession and Absolution

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith firmly resolved to keep God's commandments and to live in love and peace with all.

May your loving mercy come to us, O Lord,

and your salvation according to your word:

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

Your word is a lantern to my feet and a light to my path:

Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

O let your mercy come to me that I may live,

for your law is my delight:

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

Heavenly Father, whose blessed Son was revealed
to destroy the works of the devil
and to make us the children of God and heirs of eternal life:
grant that we, having this hope, may purify ourselves even as he is pure;
that when he shall appear in power and great glory
we may be made like him in his eternal and glorious kingdom;
where he is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

First Reading – 1 Thessalonians 5: 1-11

Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When they say, ‘There is peace and security’, then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. So then, let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

Gospel Reading – Matthew 25: 14-30

‘For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five

more talents, saying, “Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.” His master said to him, “Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.” And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, “Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.” His master said to him, “Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.” Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, “Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.” But his master replied, “You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

An Address by Ash Leighton Plom, 15 November 2020

Multiplication. Are you any good at it? During the first lockdown, when we were 'home tutoring' Alfred with worksheets sent to us by St David's Primary, I was put to shame by how slow I am at multiplication, and stunned by how quick he is.

The Gospel reading we've just heard is all about multiplication, and the reading from Thessalonians gives us some specifics on the skills we need.

The Gospel reading ends Jesus' discourse in Matthew on the Second Coming and the End of the World. It serves as his farewell sermon - meant as both a comfort, and a warning to us, and what a great need we have of both!

The reading from 1 Thessalonians was similar. Paul has just written in the last chapters about the resurrection, and then the Second Coming. So Paul exhorts us to Christian duties: faith, hope, love, exhorting us to be well-armoured with faith and love, and to wear salvation like a helmet. So we must encourage one another, with the comfort we have from the Lord – the assurance of salvation. It is easier to comfort

others, even in lockdown 2.0, when we fix our minds on the comfort we have received from God.

The simple meaning of the gospel parable is to live and serve with diligence as we get ready for Jesus' return, making the best use of the resources he has given us.

In the parable, the Master is Christ, who ultimately owns all things, as he's the creator of all things.

However, in characteristic generosity, he doesn't horde his property, but lets us steward it, and so the servants are humans, entrusted with the care of his creation. This is a reminder, then, that everything we have comes from Christ. We are tenants on his land, and stewards of his gifts.

In the parable, the Master is going on a journey, which may be symbolic of his ascension. I think this means that the servants entrusted with their Master's property are *Christians* particularly - we the Church are his household, we are employed by him in his ministry to the rest of creation, and we are given his Spirit when he ascends into heaven.

So we have everything we need, even in lockdown - Scripture, the Spirit, friendship with one another – and not just for our own benefit, but specifically *so that we will multiply*, by sharing the faith with others. We are stewards of grace, and we are tasked to make a profit with it.

Perhaps here I should note that the value of even a single talent, just one of the coins we see Christ entrust to his people in the parable, was about the same weight as a person! A single talent was worth about 16 and a half years of labour! So don't let anyone suggest to you that the dude who only got one talent was hard done by!

In a way, this signifies God giving you *you*, even if nothing else(!): you are worth your own weight in gold. You yourself are a valuable gift from God, to yourself, and to those around you.

So, two of the servants make good use of the resources they receive - they invest them and multiply the wealth. It says they were active about this, they went and invested, traded, and so harvested the returns.

We need to be at work, as Christians, in our own lives, loving and serving, in the name of Jesus, to reap a harvest for him.

Lockdown 2.0 may offer us more, not fewer, opportunities to love and serve. Ask for help when you need it, offer it where you can. Encourage one another - I am impressed and proud of this congregation's generosity responding to local and global needs.

What of the other servant, then? I notice his attempt to justify his inactivity: he says "I didn't lose anything you gave me - here it is, all of it... I didn't squander any of it on sin, I never opposed any good cause, I never misused my power or hurt anyone."

But the Master doesn't want you to break even, he wants multiplication!

The parable says this servant was given just one talent, and buried it, but I fear the Church (globally, not just us here, and throughout history) has too many servants who have been given 5 talents or more of skills and gifts and haven't used them profitably for God's Kingdom! Don't be like that when you meet your Master! He won't be impressed.

Finally, notice the third servant's posture, his attitude. The first two servants were thankful and acknowledged to the Master "You gave me" five talents or two talents. But this last guy has a bad attitude, and blames God. "You're a hard man", he says. But the opposite is true! God generously blessed him with a share of his creation! And Jesus generously gave it all - I mean, his life - to give us eternal life. He's not a hard Master, but a generous one. Often people blame God for their own sinfulness, and if that's you, I encourage you: end that today.

Instead, let's be like the good servants, who take stock of what they have received, and invest it well in Kingdom causes. Then the Master will commend you, as he commends these two in the parable, "Well done, my good and faithful servant".

One way you might invest in multiplication is by sharing our services with others. You could forward the links to a friend, or share them on social media. Pray. Love. Hope. And I'd like to personally invite you to try our Advent Experience, called Thrive, which we'll be linking you to in our notices and online.

Put on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us, so that we may live with him in glory.

Closing Prayers

Eternal God,
the light of the minds that know you,
the joy of the hearts that love you,
and the strength of the wills that serve you:
grant us so to know you
that we may truly love you,
so to love you that we may truly serve you,
whose service is perfect freedom;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

The love of the Lord Jesus draw you to himself,
the power of the Lord Jesus strengthen you in his service,
the joy of the Lord Jesus fill your hearts;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Do join us next week for our services in church or on Facebook!

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