

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

Newsletter for 16 May 2021 – The Seventh Sunday of Easter - The Sunday after Ascension Day

Dear Friends,

Welcome to our newsletter for the Seventh Sunday of Easter. On Thursday we celebrated the Ascension of Jesus and the knowledge that he 'sits at the right hand of the Father' and lives to make intercession for us. Today in our address Howard Friend reflects with us on the reading from Ezekiel God promises to put a new heart and a new spirit within his people, removing their heart of stone and giving them a heart of flesh.

Don't forget to watch Songs of Praise today at 1.15pm to see Thrive featured alongside other examples of the Christian faith in action in Exeter – and a song from the previous recording session at St David's.

Our services today are:

9.30am Parish Communion at St David's (live streamed on St David's Exeter Facebook page) 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

We all have a story of God's activity in our lives, whether a dramatic conversion at school or university, a gradual journey in a relationship with a spouse or friend, a lifelong process from childhood to today, or something else entirely. This week at Thrive we'll be exploring how to share these stories well with friends, family and others around us, at the bus stop, over lunch, or wherever we find ourselves.

Join Zoom Meeting:

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

Meeting ID: 886 8573 8289

Passcode: 159821

Services in church and online this week

Tuesday 18 May, 9.30am Zoom Morning Prayer (from Common Worship Book or Daily Prayer app). Please join us using this code <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6602261392?pwd=VzdOaU1XUFBjWk9jV0xvMDZWajZBQT09>

Meeting ID: 660 226 1392

Passcode: 196651

Wednesday 19 May, St Dunstan, 9.30am at St Michael's Mattins followed by 10am Mass in church (also live streamed on St Michael's Facebook page)

Thursday 20 May, Alcuin, Deacon and Abbot, 9.30am Morning Prayer, on St David's Facebook Page

10.30 Holy Communion at St David's Church

Thursday 20 May, 6pm Sung Vespers live at St Michael's Church and on the Friends of St Michael's Facebook page

Friday 21 May, Helena, protector of the holy sites, 9.30am, Morning Prayer, on St David's Facebook Page

Sunday 23 May - Pentecost

Nigel is preaching on May 23rd at St James' Palace as part of his duties as Chaplain to HM the Queen.

9.30am Parish Communion at St David's with celebrant, Belinda Speed-Andrews and preacher, David James

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

4pm Thrive

Join Zoom Meeting:

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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 – continues this Tuesday

This Tuesday afternoon group continues this week exploring and discussing these resources from the Church of England which are billed as 'Christian Teaching and learning about identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage'.

The group starts at 2pm and will be running on the following dates:, 18th May, 25th May, 8th June and 15th June. 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. Please let me know if you would like to join on nigel.guthrie1@gmail.com

This is a very significant consultation for the Church of England and 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.

Thy Kingdom Come

Thy Kingdom Come is an exciting chance to pray with Christians from around the world that people you know might come to know Jesus. It is led by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and takes place between Ascension and Pentecost from 13 – 23 May.

Organised by Mission Enabler James Grier, there will be 24/7 Devon Zoom Prayer Room for the 11 days of Thy Kingdom Come and we have signed up to be part of it by hosting a one-hour slot on Friday 21st May 1-2pm. Deborah Leighton Plom is hosting the hour, and will facilitate a mix of led, collaborative, individual and silent

prayer. If you would like to join, please contact Deborah at d.leightonplom@gmail.com or on 07938 895890 for the Zoom link.

Christian Aid Week

Thank you to those who joined in with the **Christian Aid Week online Big Breakfast**, and to those who very generously donated. I'm delighted that we have already raised just over £300 plus gift aid but if anyone else would like to donate through our 'Just Giving' Page that would be wonderful and it will collect Gift Aid automatically. <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/nigel-guthrie1>

In view of the terrible events this a week in Israel and the Palestinian territories you may like to look up this video which illustrates some of Christians Aid's long-term work in the area. It was made in 2016 but, sadly, many of the critical issues remain the same: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OiiBvIov_aQ

Time for Quiet Reflection

Belinda will next be leading a time of corporate Silent Reflection on Friday 28th May 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

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)

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 – 17 July!

We are planning a Parish Fête for Saturday 17 July from 11.30am to 2.30pm. It may not be on quite 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 and there

will be a sheet at the back of St David's Church where offers of help can be recorded.

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

In the last year our whole world has been turned upside down by COVID. It has created in most of us emotions that we never knew we had and for some it has been a strange blessing. Whatever the impact on each of our individual lives it has within church communities challenged us to think about how we are a community. What does community mean for us here in our parish? What is our ethos? How are we to live God's kingdom now? Covid has opened the door for all of us to re-think and re-set what it is we say we are. I would like to encourage an open discussion about what the next 5 years could potentially look like for us here in our parish.

The bible verse I would like us to hold on to is from John 14: 12:

“Those who believe in me will do what I do - yes, they will do greater things”

Are we a blessing to the community around us?

Are our two churches places of encounter or just places for those who belong?

Often at the heart of all we want to do there is a question of resources, whether that is financial, time, space, or human input. But in the words of Sam Wells I want to argue that ‘God gives his people all they need to follow him, and following him is expressed in answering the call to worship him, to be his friends and to eat with him.’

In light of this I would like to bring together a group of 12 people from across the breadth of the community beginning at the end of May, to read through and discuss 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 begin to think and discern what God is calling us to for the next 5 years. This would of course mean a solid commitment to meet once a month for up to an hour and a half to discuss one chapter at a time, to pray together, to share openly and honestly about our life together as a community and how we become a blessing to and receive gifts from the wider community.

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

5 places have already been taken by clergy, churchwarden and a Reader.

The first date I have suggested (nothing concrete yet) is Thursday 27 May and then the following 4th Thursday for 4 months and our last gathering on Thursday 14 October, before a meeting with Archdeacon Andrew Beane.

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

There will be a Traidcraft Stall at St David's on Sunday 23rd May. Those would like to make an advance order should do so via R.W.Featherstone@gmail.com before midnight on Sunday 16 May. Many thanks, Richard.

We are delighted that our stalls are running again 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 are planning a morning focussed on the environment, with lunch of locally sourced food, for 11th September 2021. Please keep the date!

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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, Terry Ham, David Walford (formerly hospital and hospice chaplain), Bill (Belinda's uncle)

In the **Parish Cycle of Prayer:** for travelers using St David's and Central Stations and for railway staff and the Transport police.

Please also pray for:

The people of Israel and the Palestinian Territories, praying for a reduction in violence and a will to tackle underlying injustice;

students taking exams and finishing assessments;

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

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;

our Big Breakfast and the work of Christian Aid with those who are impoverished, oppressed and suffering through climate change.

May God bless you and those you care for,

Nigel Guthrie

Prayers, Readings and Address for The Seventh Sunday of Easter, 16 May 2021

Collect

O God the King of glory,
you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ
with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven:
we beseech you, leave us not comfortless,
but send your Holy Spirit to strengthen us
and exalt us to the place where our Saviour Christ is gone before,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

First Reading – Ezekiel 36: 24-28

I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. Then you shall live in the land that I gave to your ancestors; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

Gospel Reading - John 17: 6-19

‘I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am

coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

Address from Howard Friend, 16 May 2021

Seventh Sunday of Easter, Sunday after Ascension Day
Ezekiel 36 v 24 – 28, John 17 v 6 – 19

You don't develop a hard heart overnight. It takes time. And then suddenly - like a heart attack - it hits you.

I remember - as if it were yesterday - doing a ward round in Malawi with a Medical Student from the UK. I think she'd only got off the plane that morning. She was keen. It was a pretty ordinary ward round for me. About 40 very sick children top and tailed in 20 beds (Kids with the usual Malaria, Meningitis and underlying Malnutrition) – and during the course of the morning - 3 deaths – which wasn't that unusual - and the attendant wailing from all the mothers that is the normal free expression of grief in that setting. And this poor girl just started crying. It was all too much.

Now the point here is that hers was the normal reaction. She had a soft heart. It was my heart that had become hardened, you might argue, of professional necessity. She taught me to see such suffering and the reasons for it - anew.

Hardness of heart. It creeps up on you. The first time you pass a homeless person on the street you feel really bad. Soon you learn to quicken your step – pass by on the other side.

Was indifference to the suffering of others the 'Hardness of Heart' that Ezekiel was referring to in our first reading? Well partly I suggest - but that wasn't the whole story.

We perhaps romanticise the story and feel sorry for the exiled Israelites weeping by the waters of Babylon too homesick to play their traditional music. - But they had been warned!

Ezekiel chapter 22 chronicles the evidence of their Hard Heartedness – the reason for their exile. Basically they had forgotten about God, learned to live without him, lost in the pursuit of personal wealth. Bribery and corruption were rife. Sexual abuse common. The widow, orphan and immigrant abandoned to their fate.

Sounds sort of familiar doesn't it?

Hardness of heart in all its forms – it creeps up on you. And then suddenly you're made aware.

Now, I want to update the Cardiac Imagery Ezekiel uses: Heart of Stone / Heart of Flesh – Hard heart / Soft heart to something more relevant to our modern age. Never let it be said that St David's / Michael's is behind the times.

The main pathology of the diseased 'First World' heart is narrowing of the Coronary Arteries – as is well known. And - as many of you will know - clever Cardiologists can now insert a catheter via a groin or elbow artery, have a good look at the arteries of our hearts to see where the blockage is and then do a rebore and / or insert a small cage like structure called a stent to keep the heart artery open and prevent the scarring, the hardness, the death of the heart muscle itself.

So - what would the divine Cardiac catheter and angiogram make of our spiritual coronary arteries? Would they be blocked with the debris of self interest?

Would it throw light on our shortcomings: our abandoning of Godly principles - our lack of care for the disadvantaged, the environment, our sexual misdemeanors, our financial greed, our corruption?

The answer if we're honest is yes. It's no good us looking back on the Israelites in Exile and pretending we're really any different from them.

We – each of us – have developed Hardness of heart of various sorts. Hardness which estranges us from God.

Hardness of heart creeps up on us until suddenly we're made aware. Like the narrowing of the coronary arteries which eventually produces that chest pain that says – now you know you've got a problem.

But here's the good news – the rather extraordinary news which is just as relevant now as it was then – and it's this:

If the Spirit of God is the instrument of our being made aware of our own hardness of heart then just like the Cardiac catheter it offers a solution – the Holy Spirit stent - if

you like - to deal with the underlying problem to make our heart function normally again.

Let's take a step back from the modern medical metaphor- not before time some of you might be thinking - and remind ourselves perhaps in more traditional terms that: God's Holy Spirit searches the deep places of our hearts but doesn't condemn us. He offers us healing a change of heart – a stent.

The main reason I suggest a change of metaphor from the Heart transplant - Stone to Flesh image of Ezekiel - is that in my experience this change of heart that the Love of God effects in our lives is more gradual, more incremental more like having successive stents inserted than a one-off Total Heart Transplant.

God is always seeking to soften our hearts and deepen our relationship with him - we therefore constantly need to examine them. (Our Hearts)

Finally: How about a poetic or liturgical turn of phrase to examine this Heart Problem. It's in a prayer we use every Sunday and which we tend to skip through without reflecting on what we've said. But it expresses the challenge well and is worth closer examination

It is of course our: the 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.

Hardness of Heart – it creeps up on you.

But God's love is always surprising us.

May our hearts be open to his transforming love today and every day.

Closing Prayer and Blessing

Eternal God, giver of love and power,
your Son Jesus Christ has sent us into all the world
to preach the gospel of his kingdom:
confirm us in this mission,
and help us to live the good news we proclaim;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Spirit of truth lead you into all truth,
Give you grace to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,

And strengthen you to proclaim the word and works of God;
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!