

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

Newsletter for 21 February 2021 — The First Sunday of Lent

Dear Friends,

Welcome to our newsletter for the First Sunday of Lent. Please join us today for our online worship. The link to our **Youtube service** is here:

<https://youtu.be/0YSxjekdW0E>

Our service today includes an address by Adrian Butland who is on placement with us as part of his ordination training course.

At 10.30am we will hold a **Zoom coffee** for 40 minutes including an opportunity to chat in groups. Please join us, if you can, for a catch up. The link to click is below.

Join Zoom Meeting

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

Meeting ID: 660 226 1392

Passcode: 196651

At 4pm **Thrive** will continue on Zoom with time for learning, discussion and prayer today. The theme will be keeping Lent. Thrive is opening up our parish life to others and proving very enjoyable so do give it a try! Please click here to join:

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

Meeting ID: 886 8573 8289

Passcode: 159821

Church Opening Times for Private Prayer

Thursdays: 10.30-11.30am at St David's Church

Sundays: 9.30-10.30am at St David's Church
11am-12noon at St Michael's Church (with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament from 11.30am)

Covid-19 Safe for Private Prayer

These are the provisions we are making to keep you as safe as possible during Private Prayer. Please avoid touching door handles.

Hand sanitizer must be used on entering and leaving church.

Please leave your name and contact details with Track and Trace.

Please wear face coverings in church. There are exemptions which 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 take an 'I sat here' notice and leave it on your seat so that others who come later can sit elsewhere.

Please observe appropriate distancing from others at all times.

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

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.

Online Daily Prayers

Monday 22 February, 8pm Compline (Night Prayer) on St David's Facebook Page

Tuesday 23 February, 9.30am Zoom Morning Prayer.

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

Meeting ID: 660 226 1392

Passcode: 196651

Tuesday 23 February, 6pm Vespers on the Friends of St Michael's Facebook Page

Wednesday 24 February, 9.30am Prayer Book Mattins on the St Michael's Facebook Page for St Matthias, Apostle and Martyr

Thursday 25 February, 9.30am, Morning Prayer, on St David's Facebook Page

Friday 26 February, 9.30am, Morning Prayer, on St David's Facebook Page

Food for vulnerable community housed at the Great Western Hotel

A big thank you for the generous donations of food that continue to arrive for our Tuesday packed suppers. The scheme is still set to continue until the end of March.

We would welcome donations of crisps but we are well provided with chocolate bars for the moment, thank you!

Traidcraft Stall & St Michael's Bountiful Table

Unfortunately we are not able to run our regular stalls in church during the current lockdown but we hope to keep them going through orders. Richard Featherstone is happy to take orders through his email address:

r.w.featherstone@gmail.com

these will be available for collection from the vicarage porch or elsewhere. In addition to normal Traidcraft goods Richard will also be taking orders for Traidcraft's Christian easter eggs from now until Friday March 19th. They can be collected, cash on delivery, from St.David's church at private prayer time on Sunday March 28th.

The usual milk chocolate ones are £5, dark chocolate £6, hens egg size £5 for six and mini eggs £4 for a bag of 17. God bless us all.

Richard is also able to supply catalogues giving a full range of Traidcraft items.

You can support St Michael's Virtual Bountiful Table by ordering baked goods from Elizabeth Hughes through her phone 01392 259878 or by Stephanie Aplin by email stephaniecaplin@yahoo.co.uk These will be for collection, rather than delivery to church.

Thank you for your generosity in supporting these stalls.

Men's Breakfast

A dozen of us gathered for a successful Men's Breakfast yesterday - thanks to everyone who joined in. We plan to meet again by Zoom on Saturday 27 March at 9am. Do join us if you can and I will publish a Zoom link nearer the time.

Magazine

This is the last day for material for the March magazine. Thank you to everyone who is busily writing!

Green Team

Good news! The pipes in the boiler room underneath St Michael's Church have been professionally lagged recently, as recommended by the architect, to prevent heat loss and improve efficiency.

Fairtrade fortnight is from 22 February – 7 March. Why not support our Fairtrade Stall run by Richard Featherstone (see above) or include an extra Fairtrade item in your shopping trolley? There are good ideas and resources here from:

www.fairtrade.org.uk

Here is an excerpt from their webpage:

In Fairtrade Fortnight 2021, we will highlight the growing challenges that climate change brings to farmers and workers in the communities Fairtrade works with. The facts are straightforward. Farmers and workers in countries such as Kenya, Ethiopia and Honduras, who have done the least to contribute to climate change, are disproportionately affected by it. They have told us that:

- Climate change is one of their biggest challenges right now.
- Low prices for their crops mean that they are struggling to fight back.
- Only with more money will they feel equipped to meet their everyday needs and deal with the challenges they face from climate change.

Lent Course - in partnership with Churches Together Central Exeter

These Are Our Stories: Lent in a Pandemic Year

Hosted by St David's Church Exeter on Tuesday afternoons at 2pm on Zoom from 23rd February to 23rd March

. Here is the link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6602261392?pwd=VzdOaU1XUFBjWk9jV0xvMDZWajZBQT09>

Meeting ID: 660 226 1392

Passcode: 196651

This Lent course is based on the pandemic stories of five people from across Devon and will encourage each of us to tell our own stories and reflect on where our faith fits into the experience of the past 12 months. The teaching is based on the work of a group of clergy and lay people from across Devon thinking about Covid-19. The sessions use videos, worksheets with a bible passage for discussion, and illustrations, each week focussing on a different story and theme, with plenty of space for our own thoughts and feelings and discernment of God's activity in our lives.

Also available:

Monday afternoons 2.00pm, 22nd Feb to 22nd March

Hosted by St James' Church, Exeter, Contact fr.steveturner@icloud.com

Tuesday evenings 7.45pm, 23rd Feb to 23rd March

Hosted by the Parish of Central Exeter, Contact sheila.pite@cooptel.net

Wednesday mornings 9.45am, 24th Feb to 24 March

Hosted by the Parish of Central Exeter. Contact sheila.pite@cooptel.net

Persecution and the Early Church

Professor Oliver Nicholson will be hosting and leading a series of three Zoom Talk-Discussions on Thursday March 4th, 11th and 18th from 7 to 8pm. Please find full details in the magazine. I will publish the Zoom code here nearer the time.

Clewer Initiative Lent Group – Women in the Shadows

Belinda Speed-Andrews will be hosting this Tuesday evening Lent group from Tuesday 23rd February at 7.30pm for five weeks. If you would like to join here is the calendar link and recurring Zoom invitation which should work every week. Please download and import the following iCalendar (.ics) files to your calendar system.

Weekly: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/tZYvfuyqqDouHdL0H05Bx0li2LKbGxxaAWxj/ics?icsToken=98tyKuGqrDlvGNKUtB6BRpwQAIr4Z-rwpm5bgqdxzDe1VgJLMg_ZM5pMJVnCNnx

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82295261476?pwd=TGJhbytHb0krQnBHOXR0eXpncnpBUT09>

Meeting ID: 822 9526 1476

Passcode: 6L6bzG

Here is an introduction to the course:

Worldwide women and girls account for 71% of the 40.3 million people living in modern slavery. In the UK it is harder to gather exact numbers, but we know that in

2018 a third of cases reported to the UK modern slavery helpline related to female victims.

To help shine a light on the suffering of marginalised women the Clewer Initiative has launched 'Women in the Shadows', a new five-week course for Lent focusing on the different ways women and girls are exploited in the UK today. During the course you will discover how women are drawn into modern slavery and exploitative situations and what life can be like for them once they are rescued from exploitation including the many challenges they face as they recover from trauma. You will also find out more about sexual exploitation, labour exploitation and County lines and how to recognise signs of modern slavery.

Please click on this link (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7iXsZeGHFuM>) to see the trailer for this course. The course is predominantly about women but I would encourage men to join as this is a problem for all of us, men and women.

The course has five short films and a devotional booklet. The films include haunting survivor stories with insightful contributions from frontline experts and campaigners. The booklet was written by colleagues in the Clewer network who are all deeply committed to combating modern slavery in their dioceses. Through Bible study reflections and prayer we will explore what the Bible says about social injustice, exploitation, and God's heart for the poor. The devotional booklet will also encourage you to reflect on how we can take action to help vulnerable women in our communities.

Hospiscare Men's Walk

Last year's 'Men's Walk' was one of the last things that happened before the first lockdown. The past year has been very challenging for Hospiscare as so many of the usual fundraising events have been cancelled. But the Men's Walk is going ahead albeit in 'Covid secure' with many people walking on their own or in twos – or whatever might be possible by March 20! We already have the makings of a parish team with at least seven of us signed up to walk. If you would like to support Hospiscare through our Justgiving page we would be delighted and grateful.

<https://www.justgiving.com/team/StDavidsExeter>

If you haven't signed up and would like to please contact Clive Wilson or Nigel Guthrie for further details.

Phone Networks & local Walks with a friend

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. At our recent PCC it was

suggested that there might be church members who would appreciate going for a local walk with someone else from church. If you would like a hand organising that for yourself or for someone else please have a word with one of the clergy (as above) or with Howard Friend (07733739453).

Your Prayers are asked for...

Please remember those who have died recently including:

Elizabeth Hewitt whose funeral will be held at St Michael's on Friday 5th March at 12noon. Please remember Adrian and their family.

Luke Pearce and Shirley (in Australia), the sister of Ros Payton, who have died recently.

In the **Parish Cycle of Prayer** this week please pray for our Lent Groups and those who will be leading them.

A Prayer during Covid 19

Loving God, at this time of crisis

when so many are suffering, we pray for our nation and our world.

Give our leaders wisdom, our Health Service strength, our people hope.

Lead us through these parched and difficult days to the fresh springs of joy and comfort that we find in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Please also pray for:

the equitable distribution of vaccine throughout the world;

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

our Government, local and national, in the difficult decisions they must make and implement, those carrying out the vaccination programme;

school, college and university staff delivering online and in person teaching;

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

those who are facing unemployment or economic hardship;

those who are enslaved in the modern world;

give thanks for those working towards fairer trade in the world;

May God bless you and those you care for,

Nigel Guthrie

Order of Service for the First Sunday of Lent, 21 February 2021

Opening Prayer

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.

Prayers of Penitence

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. Let us confess our sins remembering before God the times when we have fallen from temptation into sin.

Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness and cleanse me from my sin:
Lord have mercy, **Lord, have mercy.**

Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me:
Christ, have mercy. **Christ have mercy**

Cast me not away from your presence and take not your holy spirit from me:
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

Almighty God,
whose Son Jesus Christ fasted forty days in the wilderness,
and was tempted as we are, yet without sin:
give us grace to discipline ourselves in obedience to your Spirit;
and, as you know our weakness, so may we know your power to save;
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 – Genesis 9: 8-17

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ‘As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.’ God said, ‘This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.’ God said to Noah, ‘This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.’

Gospel Reading – Mark 1: 9-15

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord.

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.’

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.’

This is the gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, O Christ.

Address from Adrian Butland for the First Sunday of Lent

Cutting to the Chase

Good morning. I suspect for many of you I will be a new face, so some introductions first. My name is Adrian, I am married with two grown-up daughters.

I am an ordinand from South West Ministry Training on placement with Nigel and his team at St Davids and St Michaels.

Some of you may remember me as I did spend some time here during my Church Discernment process, so may I say greetings to you all from myself and my home church St Ida in Ide.

So let's start with prayer. Heavenly Father through the power of your Holy Spirit guide my thoughts and words and open our hearts and minds to your truth. Amen I have always liked the way Mark in his Gospel doesn't hang around. He opens up his gospel in chapter 1, very simply.

This is what I am writing about, Jesus, the Son of God. He points us to an OT prophecy about Jesus through Isaiah preparing the way in terms of the past and moves straight to the more current preparation for Jesus in the form of John the Baptist.

All done in 8 verses.

Mark is very much a person who likes to get to the point or as a well-known saying goes he cuts to the chase. This leads us into the six verses of today's gospel reading. Again Mark doesn't waste any time; he lays out three important scenes in just in six short verses.

Now the first Sunday in Lent always brings us to the story of Christ's temptation in the desert, so let's focus on this wilderness for a moment.

Not far beyond the city of Jerusalem, the wilderness stretches out to the east as you would see from the top of Herodion, the fortress Herod the Great built for himself just outside Jerusalem. The way to Jericho lies in what is commonly called "The Valley of the Shadow of Death." The road through this valley is treacherous, and in Jesus' time the dangers would have included robbers as well as wild beasts and thirst. As you get nearer to Jericho you would find the Mount of Temptation rising above the city.

Some traditions hold that Jesus spent his forty days in the wilderness on this mountain, and if so Jesus would have been able to see the oasis of Jericho just below him, less than an hour's walk away. He would have seen fresh water springs, palm trees, and cultivated fields, only minutes away from the barren wasteland where he was being tested.

Fresh food and cool water could have been within his view throughout those forty

days, yet these were not what Satan used to tempt Jesus according to the other gospels.

Mark's story is laid out in three distinct scenes, and each scene gets only two verses. The initiation scene is Christ's baptism; the temptation scene sends Jesus into the wilderness for forty days, complete with wild beasts and angels. And the final scene brings Jesus into the world proclaiming the Kingdom of God is near and the need to 'repent and believe the good news'.

There's only one problem with this story, as brief as it is, because the story isn't over yet. Certainly, Christ already reigns over the Kingdom of God in resurrection power, but that kingdom is not yet complete. It's what theologians call the "already but not yet" aspect of the Kingdom of God. There is still evil in the world. We are still broken people. God is still at work among us to bring all creation to its fulfillment. And the part we play is written into this story.

To understand how we fit into this great story, let's take a look back at the Old Testament reading we heard earlier, the story of God's covenant with Noah, and compare it to this passage from Mark's gospel.

Jesus may be heading into a wilderness filled with wild beasts, but Noah has just spent more than a year cooped up with his two of every kind of animal.

He and his family must have been fulltime zookeepers.

Mark doesn't explain why the wild beasts are important to his story, and he is the only gospel writer who mentions them. We are left to decide if the wild beasts pose a threat, or if they are symbolic of the coming Kingdom, where all is at peace and wild animals no longer present any danger. Certainly in Noah's story, the animals represent God's desire to start over, to give creation a second chance.

There are more significant parallels between these two stories, though. For example, there's the water, and the voice of God. Just as Jesus comes up out of the Jordan River's baptismal waters, Noah comes out of the flood. Both Jesus and Noah immediately hear the voice of God make an announcement. For Jesus, it is the assurance that he is God's beloved Son, and God is pleased with him.

But the words God speaks to Noah form the very first covenant we find in the Bible. That word 'covenant' is so important; God mentions it seven times in these nine verses. Unlike the covenants that will follow, *this* first agreement is completely one-sided.

There is no requirement for the "party of the second part" to *do* anything in this covenant.

God simply says, "I promise I won't ever again destroy the earth by flood."

And to seal the agreement, it is like God has put a very big post-it note in the sky, and

God being God has made it a multi-coloured one, very visible to all as a reminder.

A sign that God intends only good for his creation, not destruction.

Noah doesn't even have to agree for this covenant to go into effect.

God makes a promise, and that's that.

As Noah climbed out of the ark, he accepted God's promise and headed off into his own version of the wilderness. Though the flood had destroyed everything, new growth had already begun by the time God called Noah out of the ark. Noah walked into a world that no one had ever seen before, a world that was being re-created right before his eyes. But he didn't go alone. When God placed that rainbow in the heavens, he was reminding Noah that he keeps his promises and that God would always be with him.

As Jesus walked out of the wilderness and headed up the road toward Galilee, he was also walking into a world being re-created before his very eyes, but the change was not yet visible to anyone else but he had a mission to preach it.

When the voice from heaven had spoken at Jesus's baptism, Mark tells us the heavens were ripped open. It's the same word he uses later to describe the rending of the curtain in the temple at the time of Christ's crucifixion (16:38). God was breaking into the world to establish his Kingdom once and for all.

Both Jesus and Noah experienced God's presence, God's provision, and God's promise as they made their way through the wilderness.

God's very first covenant was a promise to Noah that he would never again destroy the world with a flood.

God's final covenant is the promise, sealed with Jesus' own blood, that he will restore all of creation to its intended perfection and right relationship to God.

And this is where we come into the picture. This is where we are called to cut to the chase. Just as Jesus received the Holy Spirit at his baptism, we also can be filled with the Holy Spirit.

We already have been sealed or marked with the HS, when we accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour. You can see this in Ephs 4:30.

The NRSV says that the Spirit descended on Jesus like a dove, but that little preposition in Greek really means "into." The Spirit descended *into* Jesus, filling and strengthening him, even as it anointed him.

It is only through the power of the Holy Spirit that we can accomplish anything for the Kingdom of God.

It is only through the power of the Holy Spirit that we can withstand the tests and temptations that bombard us every day.

God is present with us in his Spirit. By the Spirit, God stays with us.

Do be careful though.

That same Spirit also took Jesus into the wilderness, to be tested, to live among wild beasts, and to depend on God's provision. We need to remember this when we ask God to fill us with his Holy Spirit, we are asking him to change us to become more like his Son, Jesus, more Christ-like. At the same time we need to remember that this is the same God who gave his all in dying for us on the cross to save us from the consequences of our wrong-doing,

Jesus knew he had to go to the cross to save us as well as to release the gift of the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit. That wonderful Comforter, Guide, Teacher, Sanctifier and Healer just to name a few of the things he is and does.

When we seek God's Spirit to live in us, we must be prepared to set out on a spiritual quest that will transform us, as individuals and also as church. What we learn and our faithfulness in any task we are given, will determine how successfully we complete that task.

So what does cutting to the chase mean for us. It means cutting out the unnecessary noise in our lives, the clamour of things that pull our attention away (the mobile with its Facebook and Tik-Tok, the 24 hr news, the email loaded workstation at home).

Pulling us away from spending time in the presence of God, and with the things of God.

So cutting to the chase here means giving God our full attention.

When we cut to the chase, we can hear God say, "you are my beloved child, with you I am well pleased." We can hear God promise, "I'm not going to destroy you. I am with you. I will be with you always, even to the end of the age."

God did not leave Jesus in the desert, any more than he left Noah in the ark.

Just as the Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness, the Spirit also led him into his ministry in Galilee. That same Spirit takes us, if you are willing to let him, to a place where we can learn to depend on God's provision and where we can learn to face our trials by depending on God's strength, not our own.

The season of Lent is a perfect opportunity to do just that.

These forty days give us time to seek God, to develop our trust in him, to walk in his way at any time, even in pandemic times such as these.

May be you could join the Lent course being run by the Church team to help encourage you in this endeavour.

Then we can be ready when the Holy Spirit calls us from where we are at present, whether in a wilderness or not and into our purpose as individuals and as a church.

Our purpose is the same one Jesus carried with him from the wilderness into Galilee.

Christ calls us to repent of following our own way, to turn, and to follow him.
He calls us to join him in proclaiming and sharing the good news that the Kingdom of God is here, in the strength and fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Closing Prayer and Blessing

Heavenly Father,
your Son battled with the powers of darkness,
and grew closer to you in the desert:
help us to use these days to grow in wisdom and prayer
that we may witness to your saving love
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Christ give you grace to grow in holiness, to deny yourselves,
take up your cross and follow him;
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 on Youtube and Facebook!