

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

Newsletter for 25 April 2021 – The Fourth Sunday of Easter

Dear Friends,

Welcome to our newsletter for the Fourth Sunday of Easter. Today we give thank that we have a good shepherd who knows our weaknesses and struggles, and never gives up searching for us. We pray for ears to listen to his voice.

Our annual Parish Meeting (APCM) is this week on Wednesday April 28th at 7.30pm. Please join us for this important meeting. We hope that this will be a time of mutual encouragement at the end of a difficult year. Please read the notice below and consider if this is a way in which you could support our parish life. We would be very grateful to hear from anyone interested in standing as Churchwarden or for PCC or Deanery Synod in the next few days.

Our services today are:

9.30am Parish Communion at St David's (live streamed) with Celebrant, Belinda Speed-Andrews, and preacher, Ash Leighton Plom

11am Mass at St Michael's with celebrant, Nigel Guthrie, and preacher, Ash Leighton Plom

4pm Thrive

Thrive on 25th April will be on Songs of Praise, so please do join by Zoom then if you can. You will have seen Thrive publicised here, but maybe you haven't dropped in on a session yet, or maybe you've only been to one or two. Whether you are a regular or have never been, or are somewhere in between, do join the session on 25th at 4pm using the link below to support Songs of Praise, the session, and for a chance to be on TV!

Join Zoom Meeting:

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

Meeting ID: 886 8573 8289

Passcode: 159821

Services in church and online this week

Tuesday 27 April, 9.30am Zoom Morning Prayer (from Common Worship). Please join us using this code <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6602261392?pwd=VzdOaU1XUFBjWk9jV0xvMDZWajZBQT09>

Meeting ID: 660 226 1392

Passcode: 196651

Wednesday 28 April, 9.30am at St Michael's Mattins followed by 10am Mass in church (also live streamed on St Michael's Facebook page)

Thursday 29 March, 9.30am, Morning Prayer, on St David's Facebook Page
10.30 Holy Communion at St David's in church

Thursday 29 March, 6pm Sung Vespers at St Michael's Church (public worship)

Friday 30 March, 9.30am, Morning Prayer, on St David's Facebook Page

Sunday 2 May

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

11am Mass at St Michael's with celebrant Nigel Guthrie

4pm Thrive

Join Zoom Meeting:

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

Meeting ID: 886 8573 8289

Passcode: 159821

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.

Annual Parochial Church Meeting – could you join our PCC? Nominations closing soon!

We are holding our APCM online on Wednesday 28th April 2021 at 7.30pm. Because of the continued uncertainty about meeting inside, parishes are holding APCMs by Zoom. Please find the link to join here:

Join Zoom Meeting

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

Meeting ID: 660 226 1392

Passcode: 196651

Papers will be sent by a separate email in the next day or two.

We will be looking for three new PCC members from St David's and one from St Michael's and another Deanery Synod member. Please think about whether you might serve our parish community in this way. The link for the nomination form is here:

<https://exeter.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/nom-pcc.doc>

We will also be seeking to elect a Churchwarden for the parish and a Chapel warden for St Michael's.

These are **essential** roles for the health and good running of our parish so please pray for the right people to come forward. Please speak to Nigel or one of our existing church and chapel wardens if you might be willing to stand.

The link for the nomination form is here:

<https://exeter.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Nomination-of-churchwarden.doc>

We are happy to receive nomination forms by email and can accept these from your personal email account as having been signed. Please send them to me nigel.guthrie1@gmail.com or to our PCC Secretary, Helena Walker, helena.walker@blueyonder.co.uk

Pray for YMCA Exeter

Thursday 29th April (and the last Thursday of every month), 11.30am (after communion) at St David's Church.

Last year we started hosting a prayer group to pray for the YMCA, their staff, clients, and projects across the city. You can join in, either in person (safely distanced etc as usual) or via Zoom using the link below.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88197392078?pwd=WlFvaEFzVUNKRit2RzJvbE1ZaW1VQT09>

Meeting ID: 881 9739 2078

Passcode: 161422

Whether you've been each time, not been for a while, or never been yet, you are welcome to join us in support of this local ministry. We will be welcoming Bethan Spender from Exeter YMCA to speak at our service on 17 October so that we can learn more about their current and proposed work.

Food for vulnerable people

It is not clear when or how our soup evening might return and we are in conversation with St Petrock's about what other practical ministry we might be able to take on. Please keep this process in your prayers as we look for the best way to serve our community in these times of change.

Traidcraft Stall & St Michael's Bountiful Table

The Traidcraft Stall is running today at St David's Church. We have restarted our regular stalls 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

This weekend is the deadline for articles for our May magazine. Thank you to all our contributors and editors.

Green Team

Thank you to all those who came to help with preparing the ground for two wild flower areas. We hope that there will soon be some blooms to show for our efforts! But we also realise that it will take some time for these areas to get established and that they will need further work.

The Green Team met recently and are planning a morning focussed on the environment, with lunch of locally sourced food, for 11th September 2021. Please keep the date!

Cleaning at St Michael's Church

We would love to recruit some more volunteers to help clean at St Michael's Church, especially in the Chancel and Lady Chapel. Cleaners usually go in every other week and Elizabeth Hughes is usually in church once a fortnight on a Tuesday morning. We would also like to arrange an occasional cleaning party but this will have to wait until restrictions loosen. Please have a word with Stephanie Aplin or Elizabeth Hughes if you would be able to help. Thank you.

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:

The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, Stella Ugbo

In the **Parish Cycle of Prayer** this week please pray for Exeter Community Initiatives. Also we pray for our APCM this week giving thanks for all those who have served as church officers and committee members during the past year. Today as Christ the Cornerstone is mentioned in our reading from Acts we pray for the Cornerstone Housing Association and give thanks for their work in our parish.

Please also pray for:

our Government, local and national, in the difficult decisions they must make and implement, wisdom to 'build back better' considering the human and environmental costs and benefits;

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

those whose lives are still being disrupted by the after-effects of the bomb that was exploded in our parish

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;

the falling Covid case numbers and deaths in this country;

May God bless you and those you care for,

Nigel Guthrie

Prayers, Readings and Address for The Fourth Sunday of Easter, 25 April 2021

Collect

Almighty God,
whose Son Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life:
raise us, who trust in him,
from the death of sin to the life of righteousness,
that we may seek those things which are above,
where he reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

First Reading – Acts 4: 5-12

The next day their rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. When they had made the prisoners stand in their midst, they inquired, ‘By what power or by what name did you do this?’ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, ‘Rulers of the people and elders, if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. This Jesus is “the stone that was rejected by you, the builders;

it has become the cornerstone.”

There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.’

Gospel Reading - John 10: 11-18

‘I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.’

Address from Ash Leighton Plom, 25 April 2021

Good morning once again, and for those of you who don’t know me, my name’s Ash, curate here at St David’s Church Exeter with St Michael’s Mt Dinham.

In that reading from John’s gospel, Christ gives us a parable of himself as the Good Shepherd of the sheep and foreshadows his own death and resurrection with the words that he has the authority to lay down his life and the authority to take it up again.

Not that long ago, the question of Jackie Weaver’s authority in a parish council meeting on Zoom was the talk of the country, in fact the world, but how’s this for authority: Jesus has the authority to take up his life again after having laid it down. Not even Jackie Weaver can do that.

So, we have in this scripture the familiar imagery of Christ as Good Shepherd, but we also have a prophecy from his own lips, of his death and resurrection. Jesus uses imagery from Old Testament scriptures like Psalm 23, “The Lord is my shepherd”, which represents God caring for his flock, and Isaiah 40 (v.11), which says God “tends his flock like a shepherd, gathering the lambs in his arms and carrying them close to his heart”.

In doing so, Christ is asserting the Messianic claim that *he* is this Good Shepherd, as prophesied for example in Ezekiel 34 (v.23) where God says, “I will place over the people one shepherd, and he will tend them” or even Zechariah 13 (v.7) where God cries, “Awake, sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is close to me!

Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered”, a prophecy of Christ’s abandonment by his followers at his crucifixion, written five or six centuries before it happened.

The Psalmist, the Prophets, and Jesus use the analogy of a shepherd partly because it would have been familiar to the people they were speaking to. I wonder what a similar analogy might be today? We have with us some guests from Cornerstone Housing Association – so, maybe something like, “I am the good landlord, who works hard for their residents”? Bless you for all you’re doing, Tom, and your whole team.

I invite you, friends, to consider afresh this week, in what ways are you being like Christ the Good Shepherd, giving of yourself to those around you? From family relationships, professional networks, neighbours and more, we all have God-given opportunities each week to imitate Christ’s goodness in those places. This 'Good Shepherd' kind of self-giving can be costly, but be assured, we do so with his help, alongside him, by his Spirit, serving us as we serve others.

Close your eyes for a moment... see the care and love of the Good Shepherd, the provision he makes for his sheep. Imagine the way they hear his voice, perhaps as he speaks familiarly to them as they come into the fold. Feel the way they know him and trust him.

Contrast this with the way sheep flee from danger, this way they know to listen to their shepherd for their own safety. Picture a flock of sheep running in, responding to a call from their shepherd? In the parable we have the Good Shepherd contrasted with a wolf who attacks the flock. I wonder, how well do you know the voice of your Shepherd, and how good are you at fleeing to him, away from danger? You can always get to know him better by spending more time reading or listening to his Word, and having communion with him in the Sacrament we will share together shortly.

I’d be remiss if I didn’t weave in the reading we had from Acts, too, hinging on that word Cornerstone, with our guests here today. In that reading, Saint Peter and Saint John were brought before the Jewish high council, condemned for preaching Christ crucified and raised from the dead, but instead of cowering at the threats and coercion from the authorities, these bold Christians seize the opportunity to share the good news again, even with their persecutors.

They face trial for preaching Christ’s resurrection as though this were a crime, but Peter and John know rather that sharing Jesus with those who don't yet know him is in fact the best service we can offer God or people. Christians today are sometimes charged in a similar way – like sharing our faith is not allowed – but what if we

reclaimed the faith Peter and John show, built on this knowledge that sharing our faith in Christ's resurrection is the greatest service we can offer.

Talking about Christianity with friends can be terrifying, and so Peter and John's confidence is all the more remarkable when we consider that the same people putting them on trial had crucified Jesus only a few weeks before, and the disciples had hidden themselves in a locked room after the crucifixion for fear of their own lives.

But now, after the resurrection, we see this awesome boldness in their speech.

Those who know that Christ is risen, who have been with him in Word and Sacrament, praying in his name, can conduct themselves even with Christ's authority, for Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples..." (Matthew 28.18-20) and "Behold, I give you the authority". (Luke 10.19)

So Peter preaches, "Let it be known to you, and to all the people, that this Jesus, whom you crucified, God has raised from the dead." He asserts the resurrection as the strongest testimony for Jesus, and can't hold back on sharing this earth-shattering fact.

Even to this hostile audience, Peter knows we have authority to say: "come into the fold". To invite them to enter. And as Saint Peter makes clear, our salvation — our restoration to God's favour and blessing — is by what Christ has done, not by our own good deeds. Saint Paul says elsewhere, "all have sinned and fallen short... but the free gift from God is eternal life in Christ." (Romans 3.23, 6.23) What Christ has done for us, his death on the cross, his victory over sin and death, testified in power by his resurrection, this is why we call him Cornerstone. If you don't yet know Jesus as your Good Shepherd and your strong Cornerstone, come to him now, join the rest of us in the creed, the prayers, and sacraments of our forefathers and mothers.

If you're already a follower of Christ, a sheep of the Good Shepherd, can you pray about who you can share the good news of Jesus' resurrection with like Peter this week. It's not too late to invite someone to Thrive at 4pm today, with the bonus chance of them getting on Songs of Praise! And in the week ahead, you can invite them to church in person or online next Sunday.

Friends, you have authority from Christ. In fact, you're commissioned in it, to share our faith as the greatest service you can offer. I'll look forward to meeting your friends either this afternoon on Zoom, or perhaps next week in church or online. Maybe both.

Amen.

Closing Prayer and Blessing

Merciful Father,

you gave your Son Jesus Christ to be the good shepherd,
and in his love for us to lay down his life and rise again:
keep us always under his protection,
and give us grace to follow in his steps;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus,
that great shepherd of the sheep,
through the blood of the eternal covenant,
make you perfect in every good work to do his will,
working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight;
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!