

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

Newsletter for 26 July 2020

Dear Friends

Welcome to this weekly update for the seventh Sunday after Trinity.

Sunday Worship

Today our online service is on Youtube at this address:

<https://youtu.be/g0L6tjJzhrc>

and both our churches will be open for worship.

Next Sunday, 2 August, there will be a live-streamed service on 'St David's Church Exeter' Facebook Page and Alison Whiting will be preaching.

Churches Opening for public worship

We are now strongly encouraged to wear **face coverings** in church.

This week opening times are:

St Michael and All Angels – Wednesday Morning Prayer at 9.30am followed by Mass at 10am and Sunday Mass at 11am

Unfortunately, due to holidays, there will not be a Wednesday Mass on August 5th or 12th.

St David – Thursday 10.30am, Holy Communion, Sunday 9.30am Holy Communion

Covid-19 Safe

These are the special provisions we are making to keep worshippers as safe as possible.

Hand sanitizer must be used on entering and leaving church.

We are now strongly encouraged to wear **face coverings** in church. This not compulsory but we are strongly urged to wear them if we can. Please remove them carefully before receiving Holy Communion and replace them afterwards.

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.

Please observe appropriate distancing from others at all times and the one way systems through the churches.

Services should be 'no longer than necessary'; in practice that means about 45minutes.

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 or vulnerable. Although we will do all we can to make the church safe you attend at your own risk.

Thank you to our church members who have helped with this process and with cleaning and preparing our churches for re-opening to the public, it is much appreciated.

Live Daily Prayers

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

On 'St David's Church Exeter' page: Tuesday, Friday and Saturday at 9am and Compline on Monday evening at 8pm.

On 'Friends of St Michael's' page: Wednesday Angelus and Mass at **10am**.

Bible Study

This week our online bible study continues on Tuesdays afternoon for an hour from 2pm. This Tuesday, 28th July, Howard Friend will be leading a study based on psalm 23. Please join us if you can by Zoom. Here is the link:

Join Zoom Meeting

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

Meeting ID: 660 226 1392

Password: 196651

Bible study will continue for the first three Tuesdays in August hosted by Ash.

Reopening of Churches for public worship – a continuing process

The PCC agreed to open our churches for one midweek communion and one Sunday communion. This gives the chance for the churches to be 'quarantined' for 72 hours between times to minimize the risk of any infection. We will keep this under review in accordance with national and diocesan guidelines. We would love to return to a full range of services but that is not yet feasible so please be patient as we need to do this as safely as possible! Thank you for keeping this process in your prayers.

Magazine

Today is the last day for submissions for our August magazine.

Phone Networks

I know that many of you have appreciated phone calls from other members of the church community. If 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, Janine, Charles Speed-Andrews, Nicky Jarman and her husband Tim and their family, Jacqueline and her family, Joy and her family, Claude and Gillian Harbord, Elizabeth Hewitt, Grace Tointon, Pam Smith and her family, James and Katy Tyler, Andrew Wakley, Rosemary Willcox and Maurice Wright.

We give thanks that Jill Wellbelove is now doing well.

In the **Parish Cycle of Prayer** we give thanks for the recent renovations of the almshouses in New North Road and Mount Dinham and we pray for all the residents.

We pray for our neighbouring parish of St James Exeter as they celebrate their Patronal Festival this weekend.

If you would like to join in Exeter Prays at 8pm this evening please visit their website for full details www.southwestawake.com - it is an opportunity to pray online with ecumenical friends in the city.

We pray for those not yet able to return to church and all who are worshipping with us at home

Please also pray for:

those areas and countries suffering from through Covid-19, and those who are feeling lonely or isolated;

those who are facing unemployment;

children who are living in vulnerable settings;

Exeter Food Bank and Exeter City Council;

all oppressed people

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

Order of Service for the Seventh Sunday after Trinity on Youtube at

<https://youtu.be/g0L6tjJzhrc>

Opening Prayers

We come in the name of Christ to offer our praise and thanksgiving, to hear and receive God's holy word, to pray for the needs of the world, and to seek forgiveness of our sins, that by the power of the Holy Spirit we may give ourselves to the service of God.

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

Lord of all power and might,
the author and giver of all good things:
graft in our hearts the love of your name,
increase in us true religion,
nourish us with all goodness,
and of your great mercy keep us in the same;
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 – 1 Kings 3: 5-12

At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, ‘Ask what I should give you.’ And Solomon said, ‘You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart towards you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today. And now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. And your

servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?’

It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. God said to him, ‘Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you.

Gospel Reading – Matthew 13: 31-33 & 44-52

He put before them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.’ He told them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.’

‘The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

‘Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

‘Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

‘Have you understood all this?’ They answered, ‘Yes.’ And he said to them,

‘Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.’

An Address by Jonathan Draper for Sunday 26th July 2020

Trinity 7: Wisdom and the Kingdom of Heaven

One of the small jobs I’ve had during the past few months, and one that has made me feel vaguely useful, has been driving to Plymouth nearly every week to collect a wide range of PPE for Hospiscare. St Luke’s Hospice in Plymouth has been the central delivery point for PPE for hospices in the South West and they’ve got used to me turning up and filling the car with masks, gloves,

hand gel, waste bags, and even, though thankfully not used, body bags. It has sometimes been an unusual carload and I wondered, especially early during lockdown, what the police would have made of it had they stopped me. Thankfully, it has all gone without incident and it's been good to play even a very small part in keeping Maggie and her colleagues and patients in the hospice safe. But small things, as we shall see, can be great in the reckoning of the kingdom of heaven.

Our readings this morning give us an opportunity to think about wisdom and about the kingdom of heaven. The OT reading is the well-known story of King Solomon being asked by God what he should be given for his faithfulness. Solomon famously replies that he would like the gift of wisdom so that he can govern God's people well. God is pleased with this request and grants it, so that Solomon is famous throughout the world for his wisdom. Because of this he is also given all that he didn't ask for: long life, riches, and honour.

Equally famously, and as a test of his wisdom, Solomon is confronted by two women who each claim a baby is theirs. One of the women's children had died in the night and been swapped for the other. Each claimed the child as her own, and there were no DNA tests in those days to be able to tell who was telling the truth. Solomon's response is a proposal to cut the baby in half and give half to each woman. The woman whose child it is not agrees to this; the other, who would rather her child lived even with another woman, does not. Solomon then decrees that the child belongs to the woman who did not agree. Justice is served and all Israel is amazed. I'm not sure you would be allowed to get away with that sort of approach if you are a judge in the Family Courts today.

The Gospel reading from Matthew contains five short parables each of which is designed to give us a sense of what the Kingdom of heaven is. Elsewhere, of course, Jesus reminds his hearers that the kingdom of heaven is not so much a place as it is a state of being: the kingdom of heaven is near you, he says, it is in you. It's less a place to which you aspire than it is a way of life.

The five little parables give us indicators of how we are to become the place of the kingdom of heaven, and they are all about small things that over time can do great things. They are, in fact, about wisdom and the disciplines of wisdom.

The five things are all small: a mustard seed, yeast, treasure, including a small pearl, and a fishing net. Apart from the treasure, they are all everyday things, the kinds of things a woman or a man might have at home. Perhaps that is the first thing to take from these little parables. Wisdom is not about the heroic, it is not just a mysterious gift of God bestowed only on the very exceptional. Learning wisdom is about the small things of everyday, about how we nurture the small seeds of faith and love we have until they grow and mature. Learning wisdom is about allowing the yeast of God's love in us to fill us and transform us. Learning wisdom is about recognising the treasure we

have – the love we give and receive, the gifts we have been given, the skills we learn, the insights we have – recognising and prizing them above all else, using them to express the love of God within us. Learning wisdom is about being able to discern what is good and what is bad, what is helpful and what is not, what is loving and what leads to hate. Above all learning wisdom is about the discipline of taking what God has given you and making of it the most you can.

The prize here, the pearl of greatest price, is that learning the ways of wisdom is how we become the place of the kingdom of heaven. It's how others see in us the truth of the Gospel of God's love for the world. And people see this in what Jesus sometimes calls the fruit of a godly life, or in what St Paul calls the 'fruits of the Spirit': love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These, too, are small things – or at least they are great things that can be done and expressed in small ways, and it may be that we have seen some of that during the early stages of the pandemic and lockdown when people unselfconsciously looked after their neighbours, or isolated themselves to protect others, or even chose to wear a mask for the sake of the common good. These, too, are small and everyday things, but also treasure of great price. Most importantly they are the ways and disciplines of becoming the place of the kingdom of God; they are the ways and disciplines of wisdom.

This is also, perhaps, a way in which to understand the slightly enigmatic way in which this Gospel reading ends. Being trained for the kingdom of heaven, by following and developing the disciplines of love and wisdom, we are to be like the householder who brings something old and something new from his or her treasure. Perhaps, before the pandemic, you were a person who showed generosity towards family and friends – maybe in the time you give them, the ways you care for them, or even feed them. Perhaps this is the old in your treasury. Perhaps the new from your treasury is the way in which that generosity is now extended to others – through shopping for them, through donating to the foodbank, to ringing your neighbour to make sure they are OK. Perhaps the scribe who is trained for the kingdom of heaven is able to be flexible and imaginative, ready to do new things as times and contexts change. I suspect in the months, and maybe even years to come, we will all be called upon to be more imaginative than ever as we respond to a difficult, uncertain, and changing world. It is then that the discipline of the small things can lead to something greater, can give us the foundations on which we can build and grow as we seek to serve others and become the place of the kingdom of heaven.

Prayers by Ash Leighton Plom

Let's pray. The Lord appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and said, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you."

Father, we do not know what we ought to pray for, but your Spirit lives in us and intercedes for us. Give us faith to approach you boldly as you have asked, and wisdom greater than Solomon to guide our prayers. **Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer**

We pray for our councils locally, our government nationally, and all making massive decisions at this time, including businesses, charities, and our fellow churches, as we feel our way forwards through the current easing of lockdown.

We pray for people and communities in those parts of the world facing not just Covid but natural disaster and human conflict, especially the East Africa locust crisis, Yemen, and the unfolding situations with both China and Russia. We pray for all working to alleviate suffering and resist injustice, praying for your peace, Lord, to prevail. **Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer**

In our parish cycle of prayer, we pray for the alms houses in New North Road and Mount Dinham today, particularly at this time of great change for both of them – praying for the landlords, the teams working to renovate them, and the residents.

We give thanks – and I give thanks especially, Lord - for our church community. We thank you that by your grace we are a community of warmth and welcome. So we pray for all who are lonely and isolated at this time, especially those who would love to be here in person but are currently having to stay home. Bind us together by your Spirit whether we're congregating virtually or in the flesh. We praise you that you are a God who works through all things for our good. You gave your life, Jesus, and so we know there is nothing you won't give, as you went to the cross and through death and out the other side, for us.

We pray for those who are mourning, whether recently bereaved or remembering a lost loved one, comfort us, Lord God of all comfort: you are close to the broken-hearted, and bind up their wounds. By your wounds, Lord, we are healed. So we pray for all struggling with ill-health at the moment, particularly those named in our parish register of prayer. Now, in a moment of silence, we pray for those known to each of us individually who are in need of prayer.

Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer

Finally, give us dreams and visions, Lord, and faith that grows like a mustard seed. We pray for your yeast in the dough – in ourselves that we might grow like rising bread for you. And that we might serve as your yeast in the dough in our communities, that we might leaven those around us with the signs of your Kingdom and your love. Give us eyes to see the hidden treasure, the valuable pearl, that is your Kingdom that we might be filled with your great joy and live for you.

Merciful father, accept these prayers for the sake of your son our saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen

Closing Prayers

As we look ahead to the rest of the summer and autumn with real uncertainty it is good to remember that we are all one in Christ, whether at home or in church. Please continue to pray for our churches and our nation that we will find an increasing sense of unity and mutual care.

Almighty God,
who called your Church to witness
that you were in Christ reconciling the world to yourself:
help us to proclaim the good news of your love,
that all who hear it may be drawn to you;
through him who was lifted up on the cross,

and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

The Lord bless you and keep you,
the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you,
The Lord life us the light of his countenance upon you and give you peace,
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 service in church or on Facebook!

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