

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

Parish Newsletter for 1 September 2024 - 14th Sunday after Trinity

New beginnings and putting faith into action

Our services this week:

Sunday 1 September 2024 - 14th Sunday after Trinity

9.30am Parish Communion at St David's Church with celebrant and preacher, Jonathan Draper

11am Sung Mass at St Michael's church with celebrant and preacher, Nigel Mason (with Banns)

6pm Evening Prayer at St David's led by Ian Cartwright

6 pm Evensong and Benediction at St Michael's

Services in church and online this week

Tuesday 3 September (Gregory the Great, bishop, teacher of the faith, 604) 9.00-9.30 am Zoom Morning Prayer. Please join us using this link:

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/75330401184?pwd=MIUTonKQK9bgFKV6lpn9rMbQUDyI8H.1>

Meeting ID: 753 3040 1184

Passcode: 5RWhXs

We use this app for our prayers – details here or via a phone:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer/daily-prayer-app-and-podcast>

6pm Sung Vespers at St Michael's Church (live-streamed via Facebook [facebook.com/stmichaelsmtdinhamexeter](https://www.facebook.com/stmichaelsmtdinhamexeter))

Thursday 5 September 10.30 Holy Communion at St David's

6pm Sung Vespers at St Michael's Church (live-streamed via Facebook [facebook.com/stmichaelsmtdinhamexeter](https://www.facebook.com/stmichaelsmtdinhamexeter))

Sunday 8 September 2024 - 15th Sunday after Trinity

9.30am Parish Communion at St David's Church with celebrant, David James and preacher, Ian Cartwright

11am Sung Mass at St Michael's church with celebrant and preacher, Hannah Alderson (with Banns)

No Evening Prayer at St David's this Sunday

Message from the Churchwardens

1. Licensing of Mike Clark - Our Archdeacon licensed Mike at last Thursday's 10.30 service which was followed by the monthly parish lunch, enjoyed by a good number of us. His first Sunday service with us will be on 22 September but he will be with us for a couple of Thursday services before that. This marks a major milestone in the ongoing steps towards a parish re-organisation and we look forward to working more closely with him as that progresses.

2. Men's Breakfast - Saturday, 7 September, 9 am, the Sylvania Community Store

The next Men's Breakfast will be on *7 September*. Please contact Alan Baker if you would like a reminder alan.baker1963@outlook.com

3. Boiler room clear-out - a big 'thank you' to Helen Sail, Dave Allin and Roger for our second go at the boiler room on Wednesday afternoon and another trailer full of stuff taken to the dump. Just a bit more to do!

4. Parish magazine - the September edition is available this morning so do pick up a copy. Many thanks and well done to the editorial team for producing it. The deadline for the October edition will be *Sunday, 22 September*.

5. Covid - there's a lot of it about! So please, if you have cold-like symptoms/Covid, for the sake of your fellow parishioners, please do not come to church!

Visiting and home Communion

If you would like to be visited or phoned by someone from the church community, please let Howard Friend know by ringing him on 07733 739453; for Communion at home, either for yourself or

someone you know, please contact Ian Cartwright on 07813 795616.

Safeguarding

1. The team has been thinking about the importance of being aware of those among us who are especially vulnerable. It is not always obvious, and therefore do please ask permission to sit with members of the congregation, to talk with them and particularly to touch them in any way. Sometimes our need to offer comfort is not welcomed or can be misinterpreted.

2. Date for your diary: Tuesday, 8 October 2024 - There will be an in person Safeguarding training session at St David's church on Tuesday 8 October at 1.30pm. More information to follow.

3. Safeguarding Officer needed - Mary Kirkland, our long-serving Safeguarding Officer, would like to step down from the role and we therefore need a replacement. If you feel this is something for you, please come and speak with us.

Newsletter colours

It has been brought to our attention that the use of red in the newsletter can be hard for some to read, so we are experimenting with a softer palette. Let us know what you think.

Tuesday Friendship Café

St David's Church is normally open on Tuesday mornings from 10.30 am to 12 noon as a drop-in for people to find a Christian welcome and company.

Wednesday Walks

Wednesday walkers meet and enjoy convivial conversation, gentle strolls, the changing of the seasons and a coffee together. Would you like to join us? We'd make you very welcome! We meet at 9am at the door at the west end of St David's and we leave promptly. If you'd like to join us please just turn up, or speak to Helena in church.

Parish Lunch - Thursday, 26 September, 12 noon

Some 16 of us had a very pleasant parish lunch with our new vicar, Mike Clark, at the Imperial on 29 August following his licensing. The

next parish lunch is likely to be on Thursday, 26 September, venue TBC. Do let Sue Wilson and Jenny Baker know if you would be interested in coming.

Priestly vestments – one conversation at lunch centred on what our priests (and altar party) wear, and how little we knew about the origins and significance of the various vestments. Would you be interested in a session to explain all this? Do let me (Hilary) know.

Conventional District Consultation: Sophie West ("Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Secretary") has produced consultation paperwork regarding the proposed "Conventional District" (CD) for St Michael's. We are asked to respond on behalf of "The Representatives of St David's Church on the Parochial Church Council of the Parish of St David" by Monday, 9 September. The hope is that the CD paperwork can be signed during the week commencing 26th September with a view to enabling the CD of St Michael and All Angels, Mount Dinham to be celebrated at Michaelmas, on Sunday, 29 September. If you are interested in the detail, please speak to us or any member of the PCC.

Parish of Central Exeter Prayer Around the Cross - dates for 2024

During 2024, Prayer around the Cross will be held in St. Pancras Church, Guildhall Shopping Centre, at 7.00 pm, on the following Fridays: 13 September and 15 November.

Your Prayers are asked for...

those who are suffering including:

Caroline Speed-Andrews; Maggs Bedford; Delia Bloom; Libby Clapham; Lois Draper; Andrew Francis; Hazel Gowland; George Hexter; Roger Luscombe; Anne Smith; Sarah Wood; Clive and Jeanie; Beth; Charlotte, Paul and Grace; Will

those who have died recently including:

In our Parish Cycle of Prayer please pray for:

Education Sunday, TicToc Nursery, St David's School, St Wilfred's School, Avanti Hall School, Language School

Please also pray for:

Our parish as we move forward and for Mike Clark as he begins his ministry with us

Our country and its leaders, both political and religious

Our world, for wisdom for its leaders and a wish for peace not war

Sunday 1 September 2024 - 14th Sunday after Trinity

Collect

Almighty God,
whose only Son has opened for us
a new and living way into your presence:
give us pure hearts and steadfast wills
to worship you in spirit and in truth;
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.

1st reading - Song of Solomon 2.8-13

The voice of my beloved!
Look, he comes,
leaping upon the mountains,
bounding over the hills.
My beloved is like a gazelle
or a young stag.
Look, there he stands
behind our wall,
gazing in at the windows,
looking through the lattice.
My beloved speaks and says to me:
'Arise, my love, my fair one,
and come away;
for now the winter is past,
the rain is over and gone.
The flowers appear on the earth;
the time of singing has come,
and the voice of the turtle-dove
is heard in our land.

The fig tree puts forth its figs,
and the vines are in blossom;
they give forth fragrance.
Arise, my love, my fair one,
and come away.

or

James 1.17-27

Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. In fulfilment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God's righteousness. Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls.

But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.

If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

Gospel Reading - Mark 7.1-8, 14-15, 21-23

Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him, they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the

elders; and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.) So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, 'Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?' He said to them, 'Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written,

"This people honours me with their lips,

but their hearts are far from me;

in vain do they worship me,

teaching human precepts as doctrines."

You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition.'

Then he called the crowd again and said to them, 'Listen to me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile.'

For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.'

Sermon by Jonathan Draper for Trinity 14, 1 September 2024

The beginning of September has always meant the beginning of the year to me: the end of summer and the start of the ever-shortening road to Christmas. I understand that in the real world the year starts in January, and that in the Church the year starts with the first Sunday of Advent. But if you've had children, been a teacher, worked in an environment dominated by school terms – like a cathedral – then September is when the year begins. Of course, now that I'm retired and don't always know what day of the week it is, it's all a little moot.

Beginning a new year, however, is never, for us any way, a *de novo* experience; it may be an opportunity for a fresh start, but it is no starting from scratch. The beginning of the new year is a mental construct which arises in a flow of continuity: we each and together have a history into which this new beginning will fit. The beginning of the Christian faith was a bit like that too. There was some history into which it fit, especially for Jewish Christians, but for gentile

Christians there was a great deal of the genuinely new – there was, no matter how hard St Paul tried with the philosophers of Athens, little by way of continuity with what went before. There was a new language to learn, new perspectives on the world, and history, and themselves and their communities to understand: faith and life and especially their understanding of God were radically changed. As St Paul put it, they were becoming a new humanity in Christ. A new beginning indeed.

The beginning of the Christian faith was not a smooth transition from Jesus to the church: it was – and it remains – a process full of conflict, contradiction, and challenge, as we can see even in the Church of England today. It's always been a process of formation and continual re-formation. As my old teacher Stephen Sykes observed, Christianity is, what he called, 'an essentially contested concept' – there has never been a 'golden age' when all Christians believed the same things in the same way everywhere.

We get a hint of that this morning in our reading from the letter of James. James is one of those letters of the NT which is often described as one of the 'catholic epistles': catholic in the sense of its original meaning of 'universal'. It was a letter meant for everyone and not just a specific Christian community as St Paul's were. And according to the scholars, it might well have been written by the James who is described as 'the brother of the Lord'. It was also thought to have been written at about the same time – the 50s or 60s, as the earliest of St Paul's letters. So at the beginning of the development of the Christian faith not only were they arguing about whether and how gentiles might be admitted to the Christian faith – and we've seen before just how nasty that could get, but they were also arguing about whether the Christian faith was primarily about faith – what you believed and only what Jesus alone did – or about works – what you did with that faith in the world. St Paul argued that it was faith alone that led to salvation and no amount or kind of works could make a difference to that. James would state quite bluntly later in his letter that 'faith, without works, is dead'.

Because of that, the letter of James has not always found easy acceptance in the Christian church, such was the influence of St Paul. It wasn't really until the 3rd century – that is, a couple of

hundred years after Christ - that this letter was accepted into what became the canon of Scripture. Even then its place was not always secure. Indeed, in the early 16th century the great Martin Luther, disciple, as he was, of St Paul, declared the letter of James to be 'an epistle of straw' and argued that it shouldn't be included in the canon of Scripture at all. This is a debate that continues today, not least among theologians of the Reformed and Lutheran traditions.

Part of the problem, especially in the early church as they struggled to understand how this faith, rooted in Judaism and emanating from Jerusalem, could include gentile, non-Jewish, believers, was that James clearly picks up one of the great themes of the Hebrew Bible and makes it central to the Christian faith. And that theme is that along with faithful worship of the one true God, your faith had to be lived out in the real world for it to really matter, and this is a theme that Jesus himself articulates as he argues, with the book of Deuteronomy, that the heart of faith is to love God and to love your neighbour. That is the point of some of Jesus's most caustic pronouncements, and part of the point of the Gospel reading we had this morning from Mark. Here Jesus complains that the Jewish religious leaders too often raise the observance of what Jesus calls 'human traditions' above the commandments of God. In other places this leads to Jesus comparing these same leaders to 'whited sepulchres', lovely on the outside, but full of corruption on the inside; or compares them to those who would wash the outside of the cup, while the inside remains filthy. If your faith doesn't lead to a righteous and loving life then it isn't really worth anything; it is the deepest kind of hypocrisy.

I think Jesus had a more profound understanding of human nature and the nature of God's intentions in creation than St Paul. I understand and appreciate St Paul's psychological recognition that it is difficult to do the right thing, to remain faithful to Christ, to act in Christ-like ways, because however much we might like to do the right thing it is often the wrong thing that we do, and that this conflict runs deep in the human psyche. St Paul, therefore, was keen that Christians should keep separate from the world in order not to give in to the weaknesses of the flesh. That is not bad advice when you feel weak in the face of life's difficulties. But Jesus recognised that it is not these external things that are the problem;

it was not just about following the rules and avoiding some things and doing others, it was not just about keeping ritually clean. For Jesus the real issue is what you do with your faith that matters. It's not about what we take in or what we experience, but what comes out, what we do with our lives that really matters. And when Jesus lists the kinds of evil things that come out of a person that leads to corruption, they are all about the kinds of life we live, the actions we take, the kind of person we are in relation to others. Faith – observing the beliefs, practices, and traditions – without works of love is dead.

The letter of James has had a rough ride in some sections of the church. But his emphasis is critical to a faith that matters in the world. As he writes in the middle of Chapter 3, 'What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill", and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead'.

Post Communion

Lord God, the source of truth and love,
keep us faithful to the apostles' teaching and fellowship,
united in prayer and the breaking of bread,
and one in joy and simplicity of heart,
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Robert Mitchell and Hilary Todd

Church Wardens

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(Please send notices/content to Hilary on
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(All readings can be found via Oremus Bible Browser:
<https://bible.oremus.org/> in the New Revised Standard Version
(anglicized edition))