

## The Parish of St David, Exeter

### Parish Newsletter for 29 September 2024 - Michael with All Angels (Michaelmas)

Angels or devils?...or both? A bigger picture than usual this week perhaps.

David

#### Our services this week:

#### Sunday 29 September 2024 - St Michael and All Angels (Michaelmas)

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

11am Sung Mass at St Michael's church with celebrant and preacher, David Gunn-Johnson

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

#### Services in church and online this week

**Tuesday 1 October** (Remigius, bishop, 533; Anthony Ashley Cooper (Earl of Shaftsbury), social reformer, 1885) 9.00-9.30 am Zoom Morning Prayer. Please join us using this link:

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/75330401184?pwd=MIUTonKQK9bgFKV6lpn9rMbQUDyl8H.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>

*Please note there will be no Sung Vespers at St Michael's Church 1, 3, 8 and 10 October*

**Thursday 3 October** (George Bell, bishop, ecumenist, peacemaker, 1958) 10.30 Holy Communion at St David's

#### Sunday 6 October 2024 - 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity

9.30am Parish Communion at St David's Church with celebrant and preacher, Sue Astbury

11am Sung Mass at St Michael's church with celebrant and preacher, David Gunn-Johnson

6 pm Evening Prayer at St David's led by Robert Mitchell

## Message from the Vicar and Churchwardens

- 1. A big 'thank you'** to our splendid cake-bakers who provided such a feast last Sunday as we formally welcomed Mike.
- 2. Update on our parish** – It has been quite a week – we held our last PCC for St David's with St Michael and All Angels on Tuesday; on Wednesday the Conventional District of St Michael and All Angels, Mount Dinham, came into being, its first APCM was held and it has proceeded with the creation of its own PCC and election of its Churchwardens. Mike will be the incumbent for the parish within which the CD sits, and arrangements for priestly and pastoral oversight are being worked on with Archdeacon Andrew. The new CD is being celebrated this morning at St Michaels as it is appropriately Michaelmas, the patronal festival. Huge thanks go to everyone who has been involved in making this all happen.
- 3. Part 2 of the adjourned APCM** - will take place after the service on Sunday 20 October at 10.45. The purpose of the meeting is to receive the signed accounts, and two copies are now on display on the round table at the back of the church if you want to study them. If anyone wants an electronic copy of the accounts please contact [maggie.draper.exeter@gmail.com](mailto:maggie.draper.exeter@gmail.com) for one.
- 4. Our harvest festival will be on Sunday, 20 October** – and plans are in train for a **Parish Supper on Friday, 18 October, at 7 pm**. It will be a bring-and-share so do please join us for an evening of good food, conversation and lively music.
- 5. Christmas Shoebox Appeal** – Gina Redman has kindly agreed to act as coordinator again, and sheets with details of what can be included in the boxes are at the back of church (do photograph one rather than taking it if you can). The intention is that the boxes will be blessed in church on *Sunday, 17 November* so they can be shipped in time.
- 6. Former Churchwardens** – Jeremy Lawford has kindly put together a list of incumbents of this church from 1832 which prompted me to think I'd (HT) like to put together a list of Churchwardens + dates starting from John Henton's time onwards,

or further back if we can. I can do a lot of names but not dates. If you'd like to help me out, that would be great.

**7. Songs of Praise** – the BBC have told us that a song from St David's Church, Exeter will be on this Sun at 13:15 BBC 1 on Songs of Praise and also on BBC iPlayer

### **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.

**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!

### **Safeguarding**

**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.

**We need a Parish Administrator!** We are looking for a person who is a flexible self-starter with good communication and administrative skills to support the work of St David's church in central Exeter. This flexible 10-14 hour a week post has three key strands: Parish administration, Administration of our Safeguarding records and a Website and communications role.

For more information about this varied and interesting role, please contact: [wardens@stdavidschurchexeter.org.uk](mailto:wardens@stdavidschurchexeter.org.uk). Completed applications should be sent to the same email address by Friday 11 October 2024. We hope to interview in the week of 14 October.

### **Men's Breakfast**

The next Men's Breakfast will be advised soon. Please contact Alan Baker if you would like a reminder [alan.baker1963@outlook.com](mailto:alan.baker1963@outlook.com)

### **Parish Lunch**

The October parish lunch will be announced shortly. We are back at the College's restaurant, @34. All welcome. Sue Wilson and Jenny Baker

### **Parish magazine**

The October edition will be out shortly.

### **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.

### **Green Team**

From Sue Wilson, a reminder of 'green' activities:

*Second-Hand September* (All Month): A month-long challenge that encourages people to avoid buying new clothing and opt for pre-loved items. Embrace second-hand clothing shops, host clothes swaps, upcycling workshops, and promote sustainable fashion. [Find out more here.](#)

### **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 Friday: 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, Dave

**those who have died recently including:**

**In our Parish Cycle of Prayer please pray for:**

The new Conventional District of St Michael and All Angels, Mount Dinham, as they celebrate their patronal festival

**Please also pray for:**

Our parish and its re-organisation as the Conventional District comes into being and for Mike Clark as he begins his ministry with us. Also for all starting the new academic year at schools, colleges and universities

Our country and its leaders, both political and religious

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

**Sunday 29 September 2024 - Michaelmas**

**Collect**

Collect

Everlasting God,

you have ordained and constituted

the ministries of angels and mortals in a wonderful order:

grant that as your holy angels always serve you in heaven,

so, at your command,

they may help and defend us on earth;

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**

**Revelation 12, 7-12**

And war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back, but they were defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven.

The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, proclaiming,  
‘Now have come the salvation and the power  
and the kingdom of our God  
and the authority of his Messiah,  
for the accuser of our comrades has been thrown down,  
who accuses them day and night before our God.  
But they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb  
and by the word of their testimony,  
for they did not cling to life even in the face of death.  
Rejoice then, you heavens  
and those who dwell in them!  
But woe to the earth and the sea,  
for the devil has come down to you  
with great wrath,  
because he knows that his time is short!’

### **Gospel Reading    John 1.47-end**

When Jesus saw Nathanael coming towards him, he said of him, ‘Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!’ Nathanael asked him, ‘Where did you come to know me?’ Jesus answered, ‘I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.’ Nathanael replied, ‘Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!’ Jesus answered, ‘Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.’ And he said to him, ‘Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.’

### **Sermon by David James for Michaelmas, 29 September 2024**

Maybe there’s somebody here who’s seen an angel - I’m afraid I haven’t. But I’ve twice met someone who had.

They both happened to be priests and the first one I met when I was a curate in Tavistock back in the mid-1980s. He rejoiced in the wonderfully apt name of Vickers Bell! I have almost no recollection of the context at all but once he suddenly said, ‘Oh yes, I’ve seen

angels.' And he clearly wasn't joking, but he was a laconic man and I must have been so new to the job, slightly overawed by him and amazed at his comment that I don't remember asking anything else about it.

The other, though, was Alec Motyer, a wonderful Irishman, who had retired to Bishopsteignton from being the principal of Trinity Theological College in Bristol. He was one of the best Bible preachers I ever heard.

Again, I can't remember the context of the conversation but I do remember him describing the event.

He'd been out preaching somewhere in the deep countryside and it was getting late when his car broke down near a dangerous corner. He was not a mechanic and his car was stuck. Instinctively he prayed. The next thing he knew along came, in the opposite direction, a little Morris Minor which stopped and a couple of guys got out. They were very friendly and helpful and managed to push him away from the corner to where they could lift the bonnet and in next to no time had got the motor going again. Alec turned to thank them, but they and their car had disappeared. He was quite convinced they were heavenly helpers. I believed him.

I tell you this simply because I guess we all tend to read passages such as we've heard this morning and in some way park them as something unreal, biblical, but, hey, in the 21st century we don't really buy that sort of stuff, do we? That was then, this is now.

So my stories are just a small corrective to that. And here's a comment I recently read in Martin Amis's memoir called *Inside Story*.

Towards the end he quotes the S American writer and philosopher, Borges, saying that 'he spoke with bafflement about all the people who simply fail to notice the mystery and glamour of the observable world. In a sentence that stands out for its homeliness he said, "They take it all for granted."' Amis comments, 'They accept the face value of things.' (p.498)

Staying for a moment longer in S America, we were watching that programme, *Race across the World*, the other night and at one point two of the participants are high up in the Andes, outside, in the

middle of nowhere. And the camera suddenly pans up to the night sky, And beyond the contours of the mountain peaks, there you see a myriad of stars, swirls of galaxies, a sky filled with sparkling light reaching out into the depths of space.

Even on TV it was amazing. Here was just one illustration of how, removed from their normal world, all of the participants found their perspectives changed in some profound way simply by deep contact with the wonder of creation.

That Andean vision is in a way a bit like what happens to Nicodemus in today's gospel. He's going about his usual business in Bethsaida one day, when his friend Philip comes up to him and tells him he's seen the messiah, and he's a guy from Nazareth. He's sarky and dismissive, but he comes along, presumably out of friendship, and meets Jesus. The meeting transforms him. He discovers Jesus knows him already and offers him a vision of the heavens opened and angels ascending and descending on the ladder between earth and heaven such as Jacob once saw at Bethel (the house of God). He is amazed and changed.

So here's one thing. Mystery and amazement and their ability to change how we see ordinary things and discover them to be extraordinary. A different perspective.

Do we allow enough space in our lives for mystery and amazement, when are we transported elsewhere by a sense of wonder that somehow displaces us and, speaking figuratively, opens the heavens? It could happen anywhere, in the Andes, in a concert hall or a picture gallery, in solving a mathematical problem, in a scientific observation, in a personal moment of ecstasy - a word which means standing outside ourselves.

Speaking figuratively is what St John the Divine is doing in his Book of Revelation. Now, because it's figurative it doesn't mean it's not true, it simply means that John's giving us another way of looking at reality, but obliquely. He's obviously had some kind of ecstatic experience. So he takes us to a world of dragons and beasts and conflict and violence and angels and trumpets and visions of heaven and elders and thrones and the Son of Man and a wounded Lamb.



This imagery doesn't come out of nowhere.

John is steeped in the Jewish scriptures. Here we meet 'that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan.' Remember him? He slithers through the Garden of Eden in Genesis and causes Adam and Eve to taste the forbidden fruit which drives them from paradise. He is Satan, the adversary of Job, in that fascinating book about the paradox of the good man to whom bad things happen as a result of the freedom to test him that God has given Satan. That too is a book of two worlds, the heavenly one having earthly consequences. There is indeed more to life than meets the eye is one of the things it seems to say.

The dragon, the serpent, the devil - and later on the beast - are all visionary pictures of earthly realities. Revelation is undoubtedly a violent book and is unafraid to picture violence and conflict, blood and gore. There's a reason the serpent or dragon is red. And who, whether looking at the world at the end of the first century or of the early twenty-first century, would not also find such things? I don't even need to list them; we've only to turn on the news.

This world of conflict, of push and pull in different directions is not just out there in the world of politics, it's inside us too.

At theological college I was once in one of those group sessions where the leader of the group said, 'Now I want you all to think of something you've never told anybody else.' You sensed everyone freeze. But the leader's point was simply to illustrate that we all have hidden sides. It's actually inevitable and may be desirable. As T S Eliot once famously said in his Four Quartets, 'Humankind cannot bear too much reality.'

Hence the shadows behind the glitz of Strictly, the seemingly stolid Huw Edwards proves to have an unpleasant, unseen side, as do the cheerful Jimmy Saville or the swaggering Mohammed Al Fayed. But isn't there something we recognise in them? The sexual temptation, the bullying, the deceit, the lie, the envy, the pride, the cowardice, the greed, Ah yes, that must make at least seven deadly ones! They emerge in all sorts of different ways and in different degrees.

Peter, remember, is both Satan and the Rock on which Christ builds his Church.

Revelation is dealing with such things and doesn't turn away the gaze. And it's graphic and catches our attention. The danger, though, is to see everything in terms of darkness light, angels and devils, good and bad. The universe as the Bible sees it, however, is not binary. There may be conflict but, as Revelation goes on to show, there is ultimately no contest because God rules over all. In the end God's rule in Christ is absolute. There is to be a new heaven and a new earth. For God has no competitors.

Indeed, how could it be otherwise? As I read the other day in the Book of Wisdom, 'You hate nothing you have created...How could anything have continued in existence had it not been your will...You spare all things because they are yours, who love all that lives.'

So today we have readings which stretch our minds and imaginations outwards to realise the wonder and mystery of a creation we really barely comprehend.

But they also take us inwards to that other enigma of who we are and the reality of the mayhem we can create when we forget the love it all began with. Those then are our huge themes: the wonder of creation and the mystery of good and evil. They both stretch our minds and colour our experience.

Understanding these things more deeply is part of our spiritual journey. We need to grow in the ability to hold seeming contradictions together; it's part of our exploration of the mystery of love. This is the key which sustains everything and brings together the opposites, bridges impossible divides by enabling forgiveness, and will, in God's providence, always prevail. Revelation ends in God's victory.

Here's a poem to finish with. It's by Alice Elgar and was beautifully set to music by her husband, Edward in his sequence called Sea Pictures.

In Haven

[Caroline Alice Elgar](#)

Closely let me hold thy hand,  
Storms are sweeping sea and land;  
Love alone will stand.

Closely cling, for waves beat fast,  
Foam-flakes cloud the hurrying blast;  
Love alone will last.

Kiss my lips, and softly say:

'Joy, sea-swept, may fade to-day'

'Love alone will stay

Let's listen to it now.

### **Post Communion**

Lord of heaven,  
in this eucharist you have brought us near  
to an innumerable company of angels  
and to the spirits of the saints made perfect:  
as in this food of our earthly pilgrimage  
we have shared their fellowship,  
so may we come to share their joy in heaven;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

### **Amen**

(Please send notices/content to Hilary on  
[todd.stdandm@gmail.com](mailto:todd.stdandm@gmail.com))

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