

*St Mary and St Cuthbert's Church,
Chester-le-Street*

**FEBRUARY/MARCH 2021
NEWSLETTER**



Dear friends

As I wrote last time in January the PCC with the Bishop's blessing closed our church building to February 15.

The Bishop encouraged us to extend that to March 8 (which we did) because the risks are still high and the numbers in hospital is still very concerning.

We will now **review the situation on March 2** in an extra PCC meeting, to make a further decision, based on:

- COVID rates in the local area
- The numbers vaccinated in the region
- Guidance from the Bishop of Durham and the Church of England
- The government's announcement on February 22

At present our online services on our Church Facebook page continue every Sunday at 10 am & 6 pm. There is also a weekly musical devotional every Wednesday, with a song or hymn chosen by a church member.

I think it is quite likely (but certainly not definite) that we will start holding socially distanced services in church again from Sunday March 14 (Lent 4, which is also Mothering Sunday).

We all need God's peace and patience (2 parts of the fruit of the Spirit – Galatians 5. 22) at this time

Blessings



Rector's Letter

David (Rev David Tully, Rector)

NEWS

This Newsletter also contains readings and prayers for Lent starting with an introduction and Ash Wednesday – see pages 11 - 20

LENT GROUPS – the home groups that are meeting will be using the diocesan 2021 course linked to Black Lives Matter. It is designed to be used over zoom. If you want to be part of this and are not already in a group – contact one of the staff team.

There is a zoom **PRAYER GATHERING** organised by Chester-le-Street **Churches Together** on Wednesday February 24 at 7.30 pm. We will pray together for our town for 45 minutes. You can join it using the ID code 279 739 3290.

There will be **no MARCH OF WITNESS** and marketplace gathering on Good Friday. The Church of England guidelines have already ruled out such events.

There will be online services over **HOLY WEEK AND EASTER** and probably limited physical gatherings too.

HOLY TRINITY, WASHINGTON have a new Rector being licensed on March 17 on zoom. He is Philip Lockley who trained at Cranmer Hall and is coming have had a curacy in Oxford. His wife was brought up in the North Lodge Family service and Philip wrote a paper about the history of church plants in Chester-le-Street when he was at Cranmer.

We need someone to take on the responsibility of assembling a weekly **BIBLE STUDY FOR THE HOME GROUPS** of our parish. It has been done by Christine Tully for over 6 years and, as she and David move in May, we need someone to replace her. Before Christine did it, Karen Richardson, Lynda Beveridge and Ann Wilson were involved. Speak to Rev David if you are interested.

We are in the process of creating a **NEW CHURCH WEBSITE** – using the same address www.maryandcuthbert.org.uk

It is likely to go live very soon.

FROM THE REGISTERS

Funerals

January

29 Anne Shuttleworth (82)

February

5 Brian Smith (72)
Gordon Jarvis (87)

8 Elsie Graham (94)
Hilda Gears (84)

11 Andrew Arthur Dryden (42)

12 Dorothy Mary Ridley (92)

FLOWERS In memory of

Colin Jackson Stuart Carmichael

THE BEATITUDES & SOCIAL MEDIA from the Bishop of Oxford

At the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus commends eight beautiful qualities. Matthew 5.1-10 (NRSV)

But what do the Beatitudes mean for social media and life online?

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven
I will remember that my identity comes from being made and loved by God, not from my online profile.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted
This world is full of grief and suffering. I will tread softly and post with gentleness and compassion.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth
I will not boast or brag online, nor will I pull others down.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled
There are many wrongs to be righted. I will not be afraid to name them and look for justice in the world.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy
I will not judge others but be generous online. I will be conscious of my own failings.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God
I will be truthful and honest, and I will not pretend to be what I am not.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God
I will seek to reconcile those of different views with imagination and good humour.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven
I will not add to the store of hate in the world, but I will try to be courageous in standing up for what is right and true.

MISSIONAL DISCIPLES

John Wesley, the 18th century founder of the Methodist renewal movement in the Church of England, considered just this question in a pamphlet in 1742. In essence a missional disciple is someone who's heart has been filled with the love of Christ, by the power of the Spirit. He identified ten characteristics of Spirit-filled, missional people.

1. They are happy - They have a deep contentment that is not dependent on circumstances. They know they've been forgiven by Christ, made new and adopted into God's family and are secure as his sons and daughters.

2. They are thankful - They know God orders everything for good, whatever they go through. They cast all their anxieties onto the Lord, knowing he cares. They trust him and are always giving thanks.

3. They are prayerful - That doesn't mean they're always in church, or kneeling down, or crying out in intercession - although they often do those things. It's more that their heart is constantly lifted up to God.

4. They are loving - They love their neighbour as themselves. They love people, even their enemies, doing good to those who don't like them.

5. They are humble - They don't want to be unkind or proud or haughty but instead are kind, meek and long-suffering. Their desires are for God and to honour his name.

6. They seek God's will - They want to do God's will, not their own. They want to please God. That's their single passion.

7. They are obedient - They do what God says. They obediently follow his commands, knowing they are the way of life. Like the angels in heaven they want to do what God says.

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8. They glorify God - They serve God with everything they have, wanting all the glory to go to him. In every aspect of life - at home or work - and whatever they're doing, they want the praise to go to the Lord.

9. They are not worldly - They don't get caught up in the latest fad or fashion. Knowing they will have to give an account for their life, they don't get enticed in gossip, negative talking or unkind words.

10) They care for the poor - They do good to all they can, especially to those who are hungry, naked, sick or in prison.

QUIET CORNER

“Time is of the essence” so it is often said on a whole host of topics too numerous to mention.

In this pandemic, many have “time on their hands” but for others, the opposite is true; there are simply “not enough hours in the day”. For some, “time goes slowly” but for many of us, the older we get, the “quicker time passes by”.

Time and what we do with it is a fascinating subject. It is said that “we all have 24 hours in each day and it's how we use that time that determines our lives”. That is true to a certain extent providing we survive those 24 hours. We can become rich and/or famous if we use our time pursuing that option, or we may choose to use it in other directions. For those that pursue the fame and fortune route, they can also become “Heroes” to past and present and future generations.

On the question of heroes, some of mine from boyhood, are Capt. Scott (of the Antarctic). Antarctic explorer Ernest Shackleton and mountaineer Edmund Hilary, who with Sherpa Tensing were the first to climb Mount Everest.

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They obviously used their time in quite different ways to my other heroes King Alfred the Great, Erasmus the Dutch medieval theologian and philosopher, Sir Francis Bacon medieval lawyer, scientist and Lord Chancellor of England. Another hero for me is the 19th century Scot, Alexander Fleming, scientist and recognised discoverer of Penicillin. Finally, Thomas Carlyle the 18th Century Scottish historian, essayist, philosopher, poet and translator.

It was Carlyle who wrote in his famous book "On Heroes, Hero Worship and the Heroic in History" that "history is shaped by the actions of great men and that the history of the world is but the biography of great men". Many who have read his books would argue that he was more interested in the idea of "heroic struggle" than what the struggle was about. One deeply poetical idea he had above all else, was the idea of "*Time,*" which he saw as a "*deep mystery, which devoured what it brought forth, rushing in and on us yet above us, all uncontrollable by us*".

As we progress from the seasons of Christmas and Epiphany towards Lent, we have a wonderful opportunity to spend time in reading the stories of heroes of the Bible, the patriarchs like Abraham, Moses, King David or any of the Old Testament prophets, even perhaps John the Baptist. We also have the Gospel writers Matthew, Mark, Luke and John or even St. Paul and of course in this region the Northumbrian Saints Aidan, Bede and Cuthbert.

All these great people of scripture spent their time in pursuing not fame or fortune but holiness, through doing God's work in the power of the Holy Spirit. For all of them, God's words "*Be holy for I am holy*" which lie deep in the Old Testament Book of Leviticus (chapter 11 verse 44) were their driving force.

Why no mention of Jesus? Well, He is so much, much more than an heroic figure as God's only Son and Saviour of the world.

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For me, Lent is not about giving up anything (other than perhaps trying to get rid of all my bad and annoying habits once and for all), but a time of self-examination and preparation for what lies ahead; time well spent I hope without anything remotely heroic in mind.

John Hopper
Lay Reader

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND Daily Hope Line continues, on it you can hear hymns, reflections and prayers. Many people are finding it very helpful. Free phone: 0800 804 8044

PARISH OFFICE

The Parish Office is still functioning with Jan Rowland working from home and occasionally checking what has been posted to the Parish Centre. She can be contacted – on the phone 0191 388 3295 or jrowland@clsparish1.plus.com

FACEBOOK SERVICES

There will continue to be a live service on our church Facebook page each Sunday at 10.00 am and 6.00 pm – [St Mary and St Cuthbert Parish Church, Chester-le-Street.](#)

There is usually a daily reflective photograph and prayer topics posted each day on our [St Mary and St Cuthbert Parish Church Congregations and Friends](#) Facebook page.

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There is a **short devotional time** lead by Rev Mark including a song choice by a member of the church congregation and prayer time at 10.00 am on a Wednesday. This is posted on our Congregation and Friends Facebook page as well as our Church Facebook page.

Messy Church is on our church Facebook page on the 2nd Sunday in the month

Rev Simon continues to post on his Facebook page
Contemplative Morning and Evening Prayer

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The following pages contain prayer
resources for our Journey Through Lent



The spiritual focus of the season of the Church year shapes the readings and liturgical prayers that guide our journey through it. Whilst we may focus on parts of the earthly life and ministry of Jesus and other times in our history as God's people, seasons of the church year flow together, only making sense and revealing their true meaning in their totality.

So, we live each day in the reality of creation by God for whom, *'we are awesomely and wonderfully made' (Psalm 139:14)*

God who seeks the mutually loving relationship and partnership with us that we are created for. The way of love; for God, ourselves, one another, and God's creation. The way that is fullness of life.

We live in the reality, that we acknowledge once more upon Ash Wednesday, that in our humanity and God given freedom we are weak and wayward.

'When Jesus heard this, he said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.' (Mark 2:17)

We live in the reality that the Lenten journey reminds us of, that there are many choices we make that place barriers between ourselves and God. Such is their weight and scale that we cannot move them. Such is the enslaving power of their chains that we cannot break them.

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Such is their mark that a human race's worth of happy birthdays whilst washing our hands could not get them clean. Yet the happiest of birth days, that of God as one of us, find its purpose in willing death, that we might be freed;

'Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.'
(John 3:17)

We live in the reality that such is the crazy, 'foolish' love of God, whose love and desire for us to live in the intimate relationship of mutual love is so great, God is looking upon each of when declaring;

'I came that they might have life and have it abundantly' (John 10:10)

This Lent is an opportunity to choose afresh to live each day considering that reality. To get to know Jesus more and open ourselves up to the love of the Father and the equipping of the Spirit.

It might be said that we have been journeying through a Lent like time of denial for nearly a year now. There would only be truth in that if, through the denials or additions of life during the pandemic, we have become more embracing of the God gifted reality in which we live. The prayers and the readings that follow are a means of us sharing together in our Lenten journey, remembering that what Jesus wants us to hear is this,

'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.' (Matthew 11:28-30)

The Bible readings

The Bible readings listed for each week will be used in our Ash Wednesday service and our Sunday services at 10.00 am. The optional Psalm for that day is also listed. You might choose to read one a day, all of them at once or to journey with one through the week, possibly using the method of imaginative contemplation found below.

The Prayers

There is a prayer for each week. They are known as the 'Collect'. They gather our intentions within the theme of the readings

They will be prayed together in each of our services, and in Morning and Evening prayer each day in the week that follows.

The prayers can be read or spoken and reflected upon at any time. The prayers could be used daily Sunday to Saturday.

Encountering Jesus through the Gospel readings

One way that we can get to know Jesus more, and grow in love and faith is through encountering Jesus in the Gospel. We do this by asking God to use the gift of our imagination and our senses to bring the passage to life for us.

1. Choose the gospel passage for the week or any other Gospel passage where Jesus is interacting with others.
2. Read the Gospel passage twice so that the story and the details of the story become familiar.
3. Close one's eyes and reconstruct the scene in one's imagination. See what is going on. Watch the people in the scene. Pay attention to the sounds and the smells. What does Jesus look like? How do the others react to him? What are the people saying to one another? What emotions fill their words? Is Jesus touching someone?

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4. Where are you in the scene? Maybe you are observing. Maybe you are one of the of the correctors. Continue to observe or be in the scene as it comes to you visually or verbally.
5. As this time draws to a close, take the opportunity to say to Jesus anything that you would like to.

Recognising Jesus in the day to day (The Examen)

The prayer of the Examen helps us to review our day and become more aware of how God is with and within us and working for our good.

1. Find a quite, comfortable place, close your eyes and begin to become aware of God
2. Let God look at you and savour God's love
3. Ask God to lead you through the day from its beginning
4. Recall one thing for which you feel gratitude and savour this in God's love
5. Review the day – considering events, people, thoughts, feelings. What brought life, light and energy today? Where was faith, hope, love? For what are you thankful?
6. What was hard today and not how you would wish it to be? Share that with God.
7. Ask God for what you need.

Ash Wednesday - 17th February



'The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise' (Psalm 51.18)

Readings

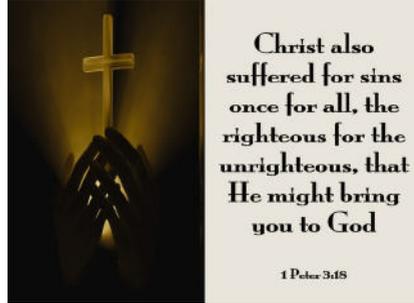
- Joel 2:1-2, 12-17
- Psalm 51
- 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10
- Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Collect

Almighty and everlasting God,
you hate nothing that you have made
and forgive the sins of all those who are penitent:
create and make in us new and contrite hearts
that we, worthily lamenting our sins
and acknowledging our wretchedness,
may receive from you, the God of all mercy,
perfect remission and forgiveness;
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 Sunday of Lent - 21st February

‘For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit,’ (1 Peter 3.18)



Readings

- Genesis 9:8-17
- Psalm 25:1-9
- 1 Peter 3:18-end
- Mark 1:9-15

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.

Second Sunday of Lent - 28th February

'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.' (Mark 8:34)



Readings

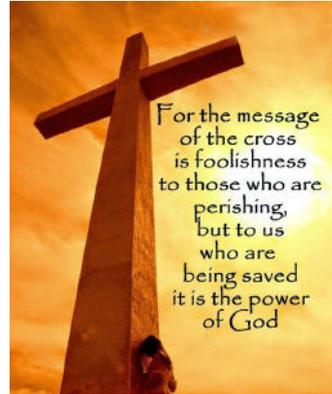
- Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16
- Psalm 22:23-end
- Romans 4:13-end
- Mark 8:31-end

Collect

Almighty God,
you show to those who are in error the light of your truth,
that they may return to the way of righteousness:
grant to all those who are admitted into the fellowship of
Christ's religion,
that they may reject those things that are contrary to their
profession,
and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same;
through our Lord Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever

Third Sunday of Lent - 7th March

'For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.' (1 Cor 1.18)



Readings

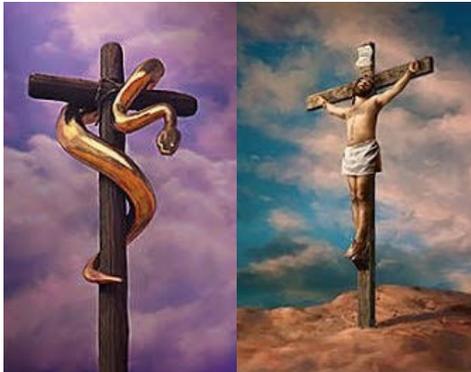
- Exodus 20:1-17
- Psalm 19
- 1 Corinthians 1:18-25
- John 2:13-22

Collect

Almighty God,
whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he
suffered pain,
and entered not into glory before he was crucified:
mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross,
may find it none other than the way of life and peace;
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.

Fourth Sunday of Lent - 14th March

'And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.' (John 3.14-15)



Readings

- Numbers 21:4-9
- Psalm 107:1-9
- Ephesians 2:1-10
- John 3:14-21

Collect

Merciful Lord,
absolve your people from their offences,
that through your bountiful goodness
we may all be delivered from the chains of those sins
which by our frailty we have committed;
grant this, heavenly Father,
for Jesus Christ's sake, our blessed Lord and Saviour,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
One God, now and for ever.

Fifth Sunday of Lent - 21st March

'I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.' (Jer.31.33)



Readings

- Jeremiah 31:31-34
- Psalm 119:9-16
- Hebrews 5:5-10
- John 12:20-23

Collect

Most merciful God,
who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ
delivered and saved the world:
grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross
we may triumph in the power of his victory;
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.