

St Andrew's Church

Newsletter for February 14th 2021

Sunday next before Lent

10.00am Service of the Word on Zoom

Led by Stuart and Val

Collect

Almighty Father, whose Son was revealed in majesty before he suffered death upon the cross: give us grace to perceive his glory, that we may be strengthened to suffer with him and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Reading

2Kings 2;1-12

Now when the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; for the Lord has sent me as far as Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel.

The company of prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that today the Lord will take your master away from you?" And he said, "Yes, I know; keep silent."

Elijah said to him, "Elisha, stay here; for the Lord has sent me to Jericho." But he said, "As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they came to Jericho.

The company of prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that today the Lord will take your master away from you?" And he answered, "Yes, I know; be silent."

Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here; for the Lord has sent me to the Jordan." But he said, "As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on.

Fifty men of the company of prophets also went, and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. Then Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up, and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, until the two of them crossed on dry ground.

When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you." Elisha said, "Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit."

He responded, "You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not."

As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven.

Elisha kept watching and crying out, "Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.

Gospel

Mark 9;2-9

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them.

And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He did not know what to say, for they were terrified.

Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

Please pray for people who are sick or in need of prayer: Resham Kaur Sanghera, Annette Black and family, Beverly Mitchell.

For those who have recently died: Mrs Hawkes

Anniversary of death: Pauline Finney, Roy Taylor.

Birthdays:

Notices

1. On Ash Wednesday, 17th February, there will be a service of the word with ashing on line starting at 7pm. Please join us.
2. There will be a Lent Course on Zoom on Thursday nights from 7, starting Thursday 18th February. The course will run for seven weeks until April 1st Details for the first session - see below. Zoom code for the Lent Course. Meeting ID: 869 8031 1804 Passcode: 284221
3. On Tuesday February 23rd there will be a Deanery Day of Prayer. St Andrew's and St James' will be leading 20 minutes of prayer at 11am. Please join us if you are free.

Prayer

"Ask, and it will be given to you seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."

Lord Jesus Christ, light of this world, thank you for the hope you have given us. Help us to give our worries to you and, above all, to trust in your unfailing love. For you have promised us "Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you."

Almighty God, our protector, let us trust in you to carry us through this time of uncertainty. Jesus, hear our cries as we mourn those who've left us. Whatever tomorrow may bring, we will praise your name. Amen.

Prayer: Sasha Breakenridge, CAFOD volunteer

Merciful God, hear our prayers for a world that continues to grapple with a relentless virus, and our gratitude for the light beginning to emerge at the end of a long and deadly tunnel.

As vaccines are at last becoming available for COVID-19 and as people begin to be inoculated around the globe, we give thanks for all whose tireless labours have brought us to this day: technicians, scientists, medical personnel, biotech companies and government agencies that have worked together to find a cure that will restore our communities to wholeness and health.

We pray that the reach of these vaccines will encompass the world, especially those places where medical resources have far too often been inadequate to the need — places where histories of colonialism have left abiding scars and where under-resourced medical systems are overwhelmed by the essential work of caring for those who have been infected.

We continue to pray for healthcare workers around the globe who are worn out after months of high-risk essential work on the frontlines of this pandemic. Grant them strength, endurance, wisdom and courage for the living of these days. We pray for all who are desperately ill, for those who grieve the loss of loved ones and for those whose physical, mental and economic well-being have been most severely impacted by the havoc wrought by the pandemic. Grant wisdom to all entrusted with civic leadership as they discern and negotiate just ways in which to aid those most afflicted. Move our hearts to put partisanship aside for the common good, so that safeguards against the coronavirus will not be ignored and that our communities may be restored and revitalized.

Let us live in the Spirit of Christ for one another and for our world.

God, in your mercy, hear our prayers. Amen.

Prayer from The Presbyterian Outlook

Live Lent; God's Story, Our Story

Zoom code for the Lent Course. Meeting ID: 869 8031 1804 Passcode: 284221

These notes are printed in the newsletter to enable those who cannot join us on Zoom to follow the course on their own. Those joining on Zoom may like to prepare for the session by reading through the notes.

What are the key elements of the Lent 2021 resources?

From Ash Wednesday (17 February) to Easter Sunday (4 April), there are six reflections for each week, written by Stephen Hance, the Church of England's National Lead for Evangelism and Witness.

Each reflection includes a short passage from the Bible, a brief exploration of the reading, and a prayer. Additionally, each week has a unifying theme and an action to be taken during the week.

The course begins on Thursday 18th February and runs until Thursday 1st April. 2

Session 1: The Greatest Story of All Time Thursday 18th February 2021 – 7.00pm

Featured Bible Passages • Matthew 24:14 • 1 Corinthians 9:14 • Mark 16:15

Summary This session explores the story of Jesus and how evangelism is rooted in the resurrection. It aims to encourage you to think about how the first disciples heard and told Jesus's story and what that means for evangelism today. It also features an interview with Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury. This session is based around Chapter 1 of Hannah Steele's book *Living His Story*. A featured passage is below, but you are encouraged to read the whole chapter as the questions often reference the book.

Featured Passage, from Chapter 1 of Living His Story

The gospel of Jesus Christ is a story. It is a story about God that can be told and recited, studied, and analysed, debated and discussed. Robert McKee is a lecturer in storytelling who has coached many Hollywood screenwriters and he says this is about our sense of connection with the idea of stories: 'Our appetite for story is a reflection of the profound human need to grasp the pattern of living, not merely as an intellectual exercise, but within a very personal, emotional experience.' We show this hunger through the stories that we tell of our lives, often using a narrative to describe how our day has been. When we meet someone for the first time, we tend to get to know them through recounting experiences we have had rather than presenting a list of facts.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is a story, but it is quite unlike any other story we will ever encounter. In fact, it is not something that we simply hear and understand but a reality in

which we live and find our sense of belonging. His story is the living story that makes sense of all the other stories in our lives.

On the first Easter Sunday morning the women set off for the tomb, taking with them spices that they had prepared for Jesus' dead body. They thought that Jesus' story had come to an end. Peering into the tomb these women began to grasp that something in the fundamental structure of the world had changed. Though they did not fully realise this at that moment, they had seen into a world where death was no longer the final frontier, where sin did not get the last word. They glimpsed a new world where resurrection is possible and where death is defeated. To the other disciples this announcement initially sounded unbelievable, so much so that they had to check it out for themselves. What these disciples discovered that first Easter morning was that the Jesus story was far from over; in fact, it was only just beginning.

The gospel is the good news of the risen Jesus. It is the narrative which stands at the centre of human history and upon which the Christian faith is built.

The good news of the risen Jesus is the story we are called to pass on to others. We must be reminded once again of why the good news is really good news for those around us. We need to learn not only to say what Jesus did but to communicate in the way that Jesus did.

As witnesses, one of our roles is to connect this story with the stories of those that we meet. Our job is not to change the story to try and make it fit better with contemporary values. Our role is to help people to see its relevance and significance to them. We do this in a number of ways, through speaking of our own story and talking of the difference that Jesus makes here and now. We do it through connecting the gospel with the stories that shape our cultural landscape, which so often point to the gospel but which we can often fail to see. We do it through listening to others and finding points of connection. We do it through prayer and through living out the story in our character and actions.

Video

For this session, there will be a video interview between Hannah Steele and Archbishop Justin Welby, discussing the Archbishop's experience with evangelism and storytelling. This video will be available from 8th February 2021.

Discussion Questions

1. How did you first come to hear Jesus' story? How did his story help you to make sense of your own?
2. What are the fears or concerns that hold you back from evangelism? Has this chapter made you think differently about them?
3. We've heard that personal invitation is still the most effective form of evangelism – who first invited you to the church and into the story of God? How did they do it? What can you learn from the people that helped you on your journey of faith?
4. How can you connect the story of the gospel to people in your local community?