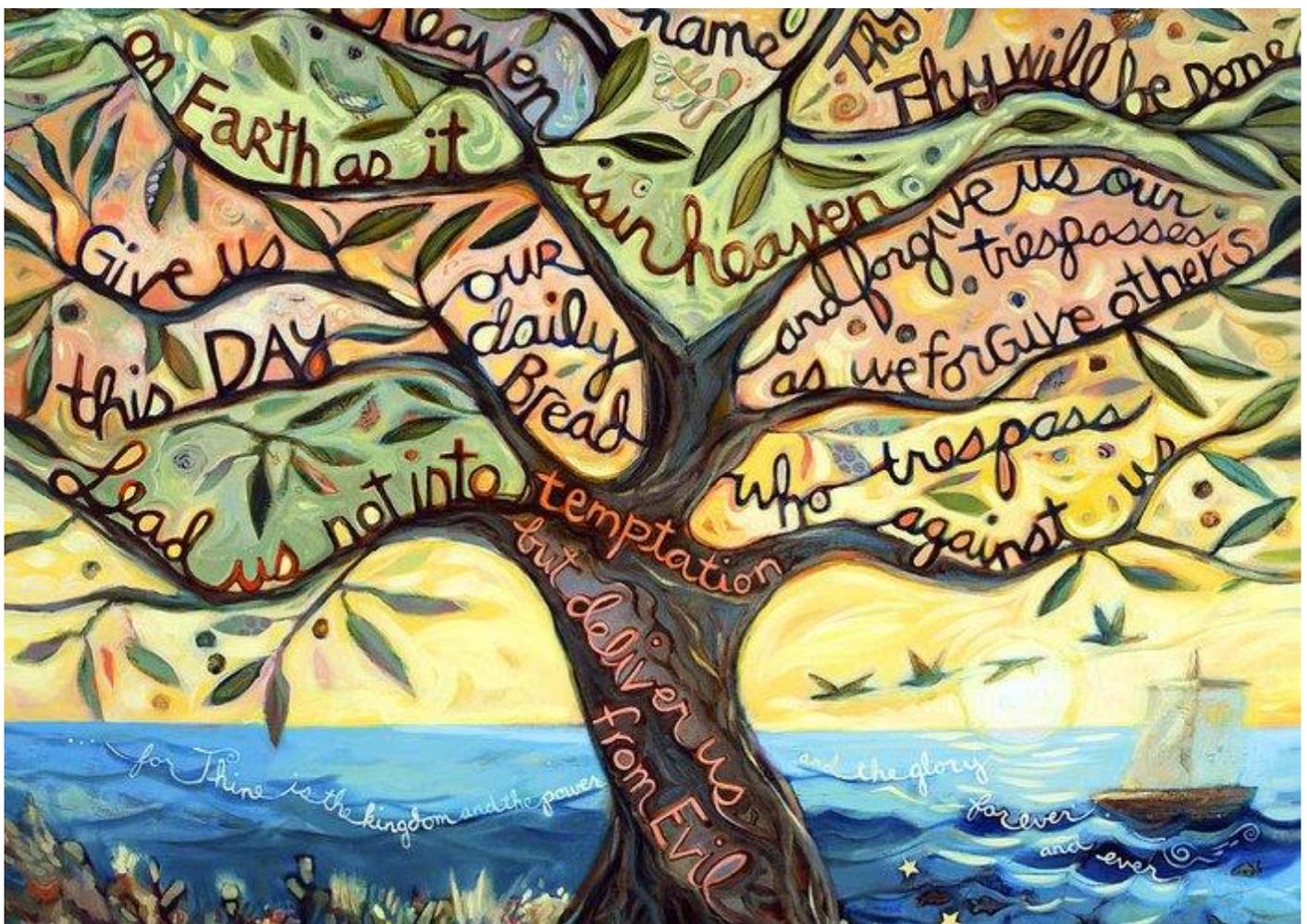




Lent

There is a lot happening this Lent it seems – books to study, groups to join, things to give up, things to take up, Easter to prepare for – the idea of time for reflection, for slowing down to notice God at work, to redirect our lives in the light of God's love for us – that deeper work can go missing in the daily thoughts and the general sense of activity.

One of the questions I was struck by recently is: "What have I said no to, so I can say yes?" – the no of self-discipline and self-denial is matched by a yes – and ideally a yes to something which is lifegiving, which contributes to our love for God and neighbour. It seemed to me to be a good question for a busy person



Our Father painting by Jen Norton





Rise, take your mat and walk

Women, men and children of all ages are called to 'Rise, take your mat and walk' to join this day of prayer. Women of Zimbabwe have prepared this year's service and they encourage us all to reflect on the difficulties and unrest that have plagued their country over many years. They share the challenges they have met and the hopes they have for the future. They encourage us to 'Rise, take your mat and walk' with them as they continue their often turbulent journey towards full reconciliation.

World Day of Prayer is an international inter-church organisation which enables us to hear the thoughts of women from all parts of the world: their hopes, concerns and prayers. The preparation for the day is vast. An international committee is based in New York and there are national committees in each participating country. Regional conferences meet to consider the service and then local groups make their plans. Finally, at a church near you on Friday 6 March 2020, people will gather to celebrate the service prepared by the women of Zimbabwe.

The Day of Prayer is celebrated in over 170 countries. It begins in Samoa and prayer in native languages travels throughout the world --- through Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe and the Americas - before finishing in American Samoa more than 36 hours later.

World Day of
Prayer Service
**Thatcham Baptist
Church**
Friday 6 March
2 pm
& 7.30 pm



(Continued from page 1)

like me – what is being busy pushing out of my life, and how can I say no to some of the busy things so I can get back to doing things which are important. One thing we can do in Lent is to spend some time and effort rebalancing our lives.

Then if we turn to a reading for Ash Wednesday – from the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6 – we see Jesus talking about the disciplines involved in serving God – in following Jesus. One of these is the traditional activity of fasting – of deliberately eating less – which we honour in our tradition of giving something up. Another is the giving of Alms – the making of a deliberate contribution in money for the relief of the poor. Quite often in Lent we focus on what we are giving in money and in other ways to those who may be in need. And the third is prayer – Jesus teaches his followers the Lord's prayer.

There is in fact a range of teaching on prayer in the gospels – sometimes how and what not to do, and sometimes on how to do it. Other times it is just noting the example of Jesus going to pray. We know also that there would have been prayers at the synagogues he visited. It is quite easy to get distracted or confused about the different instructions which were given to different people at different times and imagine that they apply to us every time we pray. It can also be unhelpful sometimes to read stories of spiritual heroes and imagine that we fall short if we aren't

(Continued from page 2)

praying as they did. In fact many of the heroes of the faith report real struggles in prayer, and have needed help and support in their prayers from others.

But when Jesus gives his instruction on prayer it is simple: pray like this – Our Father... There is no need to overcomplicate our prayers or to pray in words for every concern we can imagine and every need we notice in the newspapers. One beginning in prayer is to take a little time to get in touch with our real cares and concerns, the things which touch our heart, and Lent can be a good time to touch with the question of an experienced spiritual director “what sense of reality do you have in your prayers?” That same director suggests that we should not commit ourselves to heroic efforts in prayer, but (rather like Jesus) make sure that we keep it simple. He suggests measuring our prayer in time rather than in effort – simply five minutes in the morning and ten minutes later in the day, is one suggestion, not being concerned too much with technique or how or where to pray. For some, maybe the Lord’s Prayer said slowly, and praying for three or five people every day. Sometimes simple words of praise – perhaps a verse or two from a psalm. His observation is that we are all different, so our prayers are different. Sometimes we need a little help to fill out our prayers, but in the challenges of busy lives we begin where we are.

So if you want to make prayer your focus this Lent, or are having problems with prayer, or want to know where and how to begin – perhaps just use the Lord’s Prayer more often and see how that feels – and please do ask for help or guidance – I will always be happy to have a conversation.

Mark

Heaven's Grocery Store

As I was walking down life's highway many years ago
I came upon a sign that read 'Heavens Grocery Store'.

When I got a little closer the doors swung open wide
And when I came to myself I was standing inside.

I saw a host of angels. They were standing everywhere
One handed me a basket and said "My child, shop with care."

Everything a human needed was in that grocery store
And what you could not carry you could come back for more.

First I got some PATIENCE. LOVE was in that same row.
Further down was UNDERSTANDING, you need that everywhere you go.

I got a box of WISDOM and FAITH a bag or two.
And CHARITY, of course, I would need some of that, too.

I couldn't miss the Holy Ghost. It was all over the place.
And then some STRENGTH and COURAGE to help me run this race.

My basket was getting full but I remembered I needed GRACE,
And then I chose SALVATION, for Salvation was for free
I tried to get enough of that to do for you and me.

Then I started to the counter to pay my grocery bill,
For I thought I had everything to do the Master's will.

As I went up the aisle I saw PRAYER and put that in,
For I knew when I stepped outside I would run into sin.

PEACE and JOY were plentiful, the last things on the shelf.
SONG and PRAISE were hanging near so I just helped myself.

Then I said to the angel "How much do I owe?"

He smiled and said "Just take them everywhere you go."

Again I asked "Really now, how much do I owe?"

"My child" he said, "God paid your bill a long, long time ago."

Author Unknown

Daily reading: 29 February - Strength in temptation



Something to read

Philippians 4:10-20

'Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles'

Philippians 4:14

Something to think about

As I listen to this part of Paul's letter today, the themes of gratitude and contentment still ring in the readers' ears, though the images of need have perhaps changed. As I listen to Paul's words, I don't just hear of Paul in need, but I am aware of the need facing communities across the world. I carry images of persecution in Nigeria and devastation in Australia. I carry images from my own local community in Northern Ireland, of families wrecked by illness and others impacted by violence and I find myself asking 'what troubles am I sharing in?'

We live in a complex time when it is possible to be globally aware yet locally isolated – however, surely I need to hold to both, the local and global 'sharing in troubles.' Sharing is not simply about knowing, but like the Philippians, how am I showing concern and meeting needs; how is my faith worked out through my hands, my feet, my time, my compassion and my purse?

Something to do

So perhaps today, can I invite you to re-read these words from Paul and consider with God, how you might 'share in troubles'? Perhaps commit to a project globally (check out caid.org.uk/lent) and then make one small practical response to someone you know, near you, who needs your help.

Just as Paul's words reflect his very personal connection with and deep thankfulness for the people of Philippi, might we too consider both who we are thankful for and who we can help?

Something to pray

Help us God to find ways to respond to others' needs, to find ways to be generous with both our presence and our resource.

Contributor - Helen Warnock. Living in East Belfast, Helen is the Principal of Belfast Bible College and part of the leadership team at her local church.

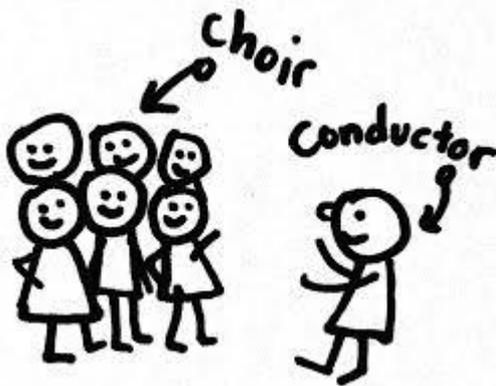
Jesus Christ, your love surrounds me - Choir Anthem 23 February

Feedback from the congregation was
“Lovely sound, but what was it all about?”
Oh dear!

The song was written by Sheila Wilson who lives in Harrogate but attends St. Mary’s when she visits family in Thatcham. She used to accompany choir rehearsals when she could which was wonderful as we had no regular accompanist at that time and were struggling through rehearsals ‘a capella’. She had written the music ,adapted the lyrics written by a blind friend, Sharon, and asked us to record it for her so that she could give it to Sharon, which we did. The words were much clearer on that occasion!

We’ll do better next time.

Viv Druce



*“Jesus Christ, your love surrounds me,
Fills my heart; I long to sing your praise.
On the cross you gave your life to save me
Thankyou Lord I’ll love you all my days.
Mary’s son, you came from heaven
Lived a life so full of Love and grace.
Faithfully, I’ll always serve you,
Then one day, I’ll see you face to face.
Mighty Lord, death could not hold you,
Gloriously you rose to life again
Brought us Joy and light from deepest
darkness
Endlessly in Love and power to reign.”*

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A View from the Parish Office

To Welcomers and Sidespeople and others on the front line – thank you for all you do. St Mary's has a hard earned and well justified reputation for a cheerful greeting for all who attend services and events.

It is not always appreciated that you get there early to get the (right) books out, check which service sheet is being used, make sure the heating is on, the wine, water and wafers are present, the contactless giving device is working and if Jim isn't there, to put the hymn numbers up.

You deal with issues like 'do you have large print copies, where are the toilets, can I get a drink of water, can I have a match to light a votive candle, can I sit anywhere....?' You arrange somebody to help with the collection, organise an orderly queue for receiving communion and you make sure the server or the priest know of those who need the communion to be brought to them.

At the end of the Service you collect, sort and put away the books and papers, encourage people to stay for refreshments, check that personal articles have not been left in the pews, ensure the collection is taken to the Office, counted and placed in the wall-safe and wish everybody a good-day with a smile that says 'Thank you for coming' and 'You are very welcome to come again'.

If all these tasks are too much then please ask someone to help you. We are all welcomers.

If you are a regular attender and not on duty for anything - expect to be asked to help. If you want to join in then ask to go onto the Welcomer and Sidespeople rota. Watch out for the nomination forms which will appear in the next week or so.

On a similar tack, the sound system struggles to cope with some of our microphones. Should we have somebody sat near the controls in the nave, able to adjust things if a 'Sermon', 'Reading' or 'Intercession' cannot be heard? Don't let the speaker carry-on regardless. If the microphone is not working the deaf cannot hear. Could you help with this? Speak to a sidesperson or one of the churchwardens.

Do you have any other suggestions for improving our welcome? Please tell me...

Chris Watts



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Dates for your diary

- Tue 3 Mar **Come and Pray** - 6 pm
- Fri 6 Mar **World Day of Prayer Service**,
Praying for Zimbabwe - 2 pm,
Thatcham Baptist Church
- Sat 7 Mar **Men's Fellowship Breakfast** -
8 am, Thatcham Baptist Church
- Fri 13 Mar **Eco Pop-Up Market** - 10 am-
12.30 pm
- Sat 21 Mar **Beenham Wind Orchestra** -
7.30 pm
- Sun 29 Mar **Annual Church Meetings** - from
5 pm
- Sat 4 Apr **Men's Fellowship Breakfast** -
8 am, Thatcham Baptist Church
- Sun 5 Apr **Palm Sunday**
- Sun 12 Apr **Easter**

For the Record...

Baptism

- 9 Feb Luca Roger Rance
- 23 Feb Archie George Stephen Harding
Carson Stanley Kerr

Weddings

None

Funerals

- | | | |
|--------|-------------------|----|
| 17 Feb | Michael Ainsworth | 82 |
| 19 Feb | Edward Wiltshire | 81 |
| 20 Feb | Ian Robinson | 84 |
| 20 Feb | Audrey Spiller | 90 |
| 21 Feb | Nicholas Huntley | 73 |
| 27 Feb | Vera Setchell | 91 |



Share and Prayer (S.A.P.)

An informal group meets every 2nd Tuesday of the month (10.30 am to 12.30 pm) to discuss various topics and views, with home made refreshments and concluding with prayers.

For details contact Linda Beaumont on 864223

**Next meeting: Tuesday
10th March**



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This months prayer...

Gracious God, Hear us and help us.

Almighty and Loving Heavenly Father, we praise your most holy and precious Name, giving thanks that you delight in listening to our prayers, and that through your Son Jesus, you acknowledge us as your children.

We know that we fall short of your perfect standard because we are human, and therefore fallible. We make mistakes and often repeat them; we don't listen to you and sometimes ignore your promptings which come through the Holy Spirit.

We carry on blindly doing things our way and then when they go pear-shaped, turn to you as a last resort.

We thank you that you don't hold any of that against us but love us unconditionally and have done so from the moment we were conceived. None of us deserve that love, but receive it freely and graciously from you. We cannot buy it nor earn it. But we can tell others about it and use it for your good.

Give us opportunity and show us how we can even if we are physically limited or inclined to keep things to ourselves.

Gracious God, Hear us and help us.

We pray for the work of the church, wherever it meets. We pray for the protection and safe keeping of all preachers, evangelists and teachers. Guide and uphold them in all places, especially those who face persecution, opposition, or a prison sentence for daring to share your message in public.

We ask for your continued blessing and favour for the work being carried out in Berkshire and more locally in Thatcham and Newbury. Help us to be more open and inclusive especially to those who feel left out or who are scared for whatever reason to come inside a church building. May they know that the church is made up of people, not bricks and mortar.

Gracious God, Hear us and help us.

We turn our attention to the world. With so much going on, it's hard to know where to begin.

We start by praying for those places that face war and civil commotion every day; for those who have become refugees and cannot call anywhere their home any more.

For all who face starvation; for all who cannot access clean, safe drinking water; for those who cannot get the medicine or treatment they need because of distance or cost - or both.

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agreements following the departure of the UK from the European Union.

We lift up all who suffer mental anguish, physical pain or spiritual confusion. For all who are worried about failing health, finances or a breakdown in family relationships.

We pray for all affected by the recent hurricanes and give thanks that the fires in Australia have been contained. Help us to look after the planet we have been given, to steward its' precious resources wisely for future generations.

Gracious God, Hear us and help us.

Some or many of us will be facing trials and tribulations of different kinds. In all we are going through, remind us that you are never far away. Indeed, you are there right with us and know what we are facing. May we know the comfort of your presence.

Give us patience, endurance and courage and to count our blessings always.

**Gracious God, Hear us and help us.
Amen.**



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Who's Who in the Thatcham Team Ministry

Team Rector

Mark Bennet 867342

Team Vicar - St. Barnabas

Nicola Hulks 864916

Associate Clergy:

Marion Fontaine 861742

Brenda Harland 865064

Leonard Onugha 07415042442

Parish Administrator

Ann Watts 862277

The Parish office is open Monday and Friday mornings, 9.30am to 1.00pm, answer phone at other times.

Email: admin.stmarysthatcham@ntlbusiness.com

Churchwardens

Viv Druce 820718

Chris Watts 864567

Glenn Peters 869409

Future copies

Connect is published ten times a year and is available from St. Mary's and St. Barnabas Churches, Thatcham, or by post from the Parish Office, tel. 862277.

Article Deadline

Please give articles for the **April** edition to Steve Rice (860431) or any of the clergy or churchwardens or email julie@dunwell.org by **15th March**.



Services at St. Mary's Church

Sunday Services

Morning Services

8.00 am **Holy Communion**

10.00 am **Parish Communion**

Children's groups on 2nd, 4th and 5th Sundays at 10 am, workshop on 3rd Sundays.

The Parish Communion services on the 1st Sunday of the month is for people of all ages, especially the young, (includes Baptism Welcome).

6.30 pm Evening Services

1st Sunday **Sung Evensong**

2nd Sunday **No service**

3rd Sunday **Healing Service**

Weekday Services

Wednesdays

9.45 am **Holy Communion**

10.30 am **'ABC'** (Adults, Babies, Children)

Every Weekday

9.00 am **Morning Prayer** (In the chapel)



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Inspired by the love of Christ to build God's kingdom



Services at St. Barnabas Church

(meeting in Thatcham Park School)

10.00 am Sunday Services

1st Sunday **Worship Service**

2nd Sunday **Communion**

3rd Sunday **Worship Service**

4th Sunday **Communion**

5th Sunday **Worship Service**

More details from Revd. Brenda Harland 01635 865064

www.stbarnabasthatcham.weebly.com

Serving to Build Community



Lent 2020 – Join us Online?

This Lent we are trying out a Lent course with a difference! Rather than meeting together in person each week I will be running a course where we can meet together without even leaving our own sofas! This Lent group, following the book *Dust and Glory* by David Runcorn, will take place online and there we will share thoughts and discuss all that we are reading as we journey through Lent together.

Why online? Well perhaps getting out of an evening after work isn't a straightforward task for you. Perhaps you have children and finding a weekly babysitter isn't practical. Or perhaps you struggle to get out and about physically. Or perhaps you simply want to dip your toe in the water and join along with a group of people thinking about the themes of Lent without the pressure of turning up in person to a new and unfamiliar place?

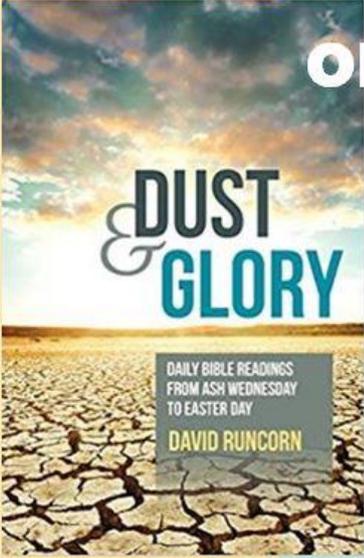
Even though you don't have to leave home to be part of it, this course will take us all on a journey. Did you know that the word 'Lent' derives from an ancient word meaning 'spring' or 'long' referring to the time of year when we are turning from winter cold and dark to the warmth and new life of spring? Through the course this is the journey that we will be taking too. The short daily reflections from Ash Wednesday to Easter Day range across the whole business of living and believing, where the questions are as important as the answers.

We start this group on Ash Wednesday, the 26th February, but you are welcome to join us if you are reading this after that date and to join in our discussions in our Facebook Group. This group is open to absolutely everyone whether you regularly come to church or you've never been at all!

If you would like to join all you need to do is buy a copy of *Dust and Glory* by David Runcorn and search for our group 'Dust and Glory Lent Group' on Facebook. Do get in touch with me at Nicola.hulks@hotmail.co.uk if you have any trouble joining.

I hope to see you there!

Nicola



ST BARNABAS CHURCH, THATCHAM

ONLINE LENT COURSE

As winter turns to spring join us this Lent on a journey of reflection on unexpected life, hope and new beginnings.

Begins Wednesday 26th February



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