

St. David's Church Exeter and S. Michael's and All Angels, Mount Dinham, Exeter.

Newsletter for 9th August 2020

Dear friends,

Welcome to this weekly update on the Ninth Sunday after Trinity.

This week, we have a recorded YouTube service available below, with many thanks to contributors for videos and to Nigel Walsh for editing them together:
<https://youtu.be/ISvv6QAEUJw>

Additionally, both our church buildings will be open for worship, St David's at 9.30am for Holy Communion and S. Michael's at 11am for Mass.

Please note especially that masks are now mandatory in church unless you have an exemption, so do wear one or collect one when you come in (donations gratefully received). To find out more about exemptions or get an exemption card, search here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>

The service at St. David's will also be live-streamed on St David's Church Exeter's Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/stdavidschurchexeter>). If you're on Facebook, please do like and share it!

Alison Whiting will be presiding, Cathy Knowles will be reading the first lesson, Ash Leighton Plom will read the Gospel and preach, and Robert Mitchell will offer our *time of prayer* intercessions.

Covid Secure

- *Masks are now mandatory when attending church to protect others, unless you have an exemption. We have masks available at the back of church if you don't have your own - donations welcome to help cover this cost.*
- *You must use the hand sanitiser provided on entering and leaving the church building.*
- *Please observe safe distancing from others at all times and the one-way systems through the churches.*
- *At St. David's, welcomers will direct you to available seating: family groups/households and bubbles can pull chairs together to sit at the back. There is overflow seating available in the South Transept (to the right of the altar as you come in) and in the Choir Stalls (between the service altar and the high altar). Belinda Speed-Andrews and Bill Pattinson lead this week's designated officers to help you stay seated safely. They will politely help relocate you if they find you not safely distancing in a designated seat!*
- *Seating will be distanced to approximately 2 metres. Please sit only in the seats where service books are placed. Seating is also marked by white labels at St Michael's.*

- *At St. David's, please remain masked when you go up to receive Holy Communion, then walk a short distance towards your nearest side aisle, consume the wafer, and replace your mask. Return to your seat using your nearest side aisle where possible.*
- *At St Michael's, please remain masked and in your seat to receive communion, and wait for the priest to move on before removing your mask to consume the sacrament, if possible.*
- *Toilet facilities will be available at both churches: please follow the instructions provided for safe use.*
- *Government guidelines require that services should be 'no longer than necessary' (in practice that means about 45minutes), and that no refreshments be served.*
- *Please leave your orders of service where you found them so they can be quarantined for next time.*

If you are feeling ill or otherwise have to stay home, please do not attend church. Although we will do all we can to make church safe, you attend at your own risk.

Please be reassured that we are undertaking ongoing dynamic risk assessment on how to do church safely in this pandemic. Thank you to everyone who is helping with this process, risk assessing, cleaning and preparing our churches for re-opening. It is much appreciated.

Service Times in August:

Next Sunday, 16th August, there will again be services in both buildings (9.30am at St David's and 11am at S. Michael's), St. David's will be live streamed, and we'll have a recorded service on YouTube. The link to this YouTube service will be in next week's notices.

Service Pattern This Month:

Mondays: 8pm Compline (Night Prayer) live streamed at <https://www.facebook.com/stdavidschurchexeter>

Tuesdays: 9am Morning Prayer live streamed at <https://www.facebook.com/stdavidschurchexeter>

Wednesdays:

12th 9.30am Angelus and Mattins BCP Morning Prayer (Traditional English), live streamed on Friends of St Michael's Facebook Group at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2227703237>

19th and 26th 9.30am Mattins Morning Prayer (Traditional English) at S. Michael's followed by 10am Mass (Traditional English) and Angelus, live streamed at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2227703237>

Thursdays: 10.30am Holy Communion at St David's

Fridays: 9am Morning Prayer live streamed at <https://www.facebook.com/stdavidschurchexeter>

Saturdays: 9am Morning Prayer live streamed at <https://www.facebook.com/stdavidschurchexeter>

Sundays:

9.30am Holy Communion at St David's, live streamed at <https://www.facebook.com/stdavidschurchexeter>

11am Mass at S. Michael's

Plus, a recorded Sunday service on YouTube each week until 30th August.

Bible Study

Our Bible studies by Zoom continue for just two more weeks. Whether you've so far been to all, some, or none at all, please do join us on Tuesday afternoons from 2 to 3pm.

The link to join is:

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/75466890146?pwd=a0RIZFBEWGdWTIFDNDgrQUdZR0hqZz09>

Call Ash on 07855 305519 or email him on aescleal@gmail.com for more info or if you have trouble joining the study.

Pastoral Phone Networks

Many of you have appreciated phone calls from other members of the church community during lockdown. If you would like to be phoned by someone over the next couple of weeks and haven't had any contact, please let our new curate Ash know at aescleal@gmail.com or 07855 305519.

Magazine

Our August magazine is now available on our websites:

<https://stdavidschurchexeter.org.uk/>

<https://www.stmichaelsmountdinham.org.uk/>

Your Prayers are asked for...

Charles Argall, Janine, Charles Speed-Andrews, Nicky Jarman and her husband Tim and their family, Jacqueline and her family, Joy and her family, Claude and Gillian Harbord, Elizabeth Hewitt, Grace Tointon, Pam Smith and her family,

James and Katy Tyler, Andrew Wakley, Jill Wellbelove (recovering after receiving a pacemaker), Rosemary Willcox and Maurice Wright.

In the Parish Cycle of Prayer we pray for our Hotels and Bed and Breakfasts in the Parish

We pray for those not yet able to return to church and all who are worshipping with us at home.

Please also pray for:

Beirut and Lebanon;

Those areas and countries suffering through Covid-19;

Those who are lonely or isolated;

Those facing unemployment;

The migrant crisis

Vulnerable children

May God keep you in peace and good health,

Ash Leighton Plom

Licensed Lay Worker

You can follow along to this week's YouTube service (<https://youtu.be/ISvv6QAEUJw>) using this order of service appended:

Opening Prayers

With grace, mercy & peace from God our Father

And the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

And also with you.

Confession

Almighty god

Long-suffering and of great goodness:

I confess to you,

I confess with my whole heart

My neglect and forgetfulness of your commandments,

My wrong doing, thinking and speaking;

The hurts I have done to others,

And the good I have left undone.
O God, forgive me, for I have sinned against you;
And raise me to newness of life;
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Absolution

May almighty God have mercy on you,
Forgive you your sins, And bring you to everlasting life,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

First Reading Romans 10:5-15

Moses writes this about the righteousness that is by the law: “The person who does these things will live by them.” But the righteousness that is by faith says: “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down) “or ‘Who will descend into the deep?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.” For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

Gospel Reading Matthew 14:22-33

Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. “It’s a ghost,” they said, and cried out in fear.

But Jesus immediately said to them: “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”

“Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.”

“Come,” he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!”

Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?”

And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

Sermon

By Ash Leighton Plom

“Beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news”:

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer. Amen

Well, good morning! And for those of you who don't know me, my name's Ash, newly started here last month as a trainee vicar.

Have you heard the one about the pessimist, and the dog who could walk on water? There was once this pessimist, who always saw the worst in everything. But they had a friend who wanted to cheer them up.

This friend decided to buy the pessimist a pet. So, the friend goes to the pet shop and says they want a really special pet for their pessimist buddy. And the pet shop owner says, “Well, we do have a dog that can walk on water.”

The friend is pretty amazed, and says, “Hey, wow, that’s like Jesus in the reading we just had from Matthew’s Gospel a moment ago...”

The pet shop owner says, “Yeah, that’s why this joke works in this sermon.”

So the friend says, “I’ll take it,” and buys the dog and takes it round to the pessimist, and gives it to them as a gift.

A week or so later, the friend thinks, ‘I’ll call them up and see how they’re getting on.’

So the friend calls the pessimist, and asks, “How’s it going? Have you noticed anything special about the dog?”

And the pessimist replies, “Yeah... It can’t swim.”

You can look at things in life from more than one angle. You could see a dog that walks on water as amazing, or you could see it as a disappointing swimmer. In my nature – and I suspect you'll get to know this about me – I am sometimes a bit the pessimist.

And I think, if I can be a bit vulnerable with you a second, I suspect the last five or so months have made me worse, in terms of the anxiety of this year's events and its ramifications on my character and how I function.

But it's alright. I'm human. I'm growing and learning as I heal from what this year has thrown our way.

Our reading from Matthew this morning picks up where it left off last week, with Jesus trying to process the ramifications of a shock, himself: he is still seeking some alone time after his first attempt on receiving the horrific news of the death of his friend and relative, John the Baptist (earlier in Matthew, 14.1-12), when he was then interrupted by the Feeding of the 5,000 (verses 14-21).

Last week, Alison beautifully majored on Jesus' compassion: how he pivots to heal and teach and feed the crowd despite desperately wanting some alone time for himself! But this week, we see he makes sure he gets his quiet time, too: he directs the disciples to go ahead of him, while he dismisses the crowd, and then finally he gets to a quiet place to pray (at the start of our reading, verses 22-3, today).

I wonder, how often do you get quiet time to pray? Alison rightly encouraged us last week to encounter God in the Eucharist and the prayers, and to carry that encounter with God out into the world. That's such an important invite that I want to reiterate it, like a sermon series, today.

And if you're not already seeking regular quiet times with God throughout your week, can I encourage you to start? Maybe you never have, maybe you've fallen out of the habit. Well, Jesus himself - God in the flesh - sought quiet time with his Father, and so should we. Perhaps you can build this into your daily rhythm - read some Scripture over coffee in the morning or a cup of tea in the afternoon, and you could tune in to our midweek services online or in church if you don't already. Let me know if I can help, too, I'm here for you.

So... open yourself up today and in this week to seek quiet time with God.

After Jesus' quiet time in our reading, he walks out on the water to meet the disciples in the boat - another famous passage - and that's when Peter has a go at walking on water, too. The Christian life is often likened to this archetypal experience of Peter, walking on water: we step out in faith in response to Christ's call, but flounder about suddenly when we doubt or lack faith as Peter did, and so we grasp for Jesus' outstretched hand as he reaches and saves us and hauls us back in.

I wonder whether you have felt like you're sinking recently? You are not alone - it has been a common reaction to the stresses of the last several months. But quiet time with God can help. Jesus had gone through all that stress, then persisted in seeking his quiet time. He role-modelled it to you for a reason! And then he walked on water, so... it's pretty good.

That's not quite where I want to end today, though.

I want to weave in what St Paul said in Romans, too. Because in it, he powerfully reminds us that Christian hope and Christian joy comes, a bit paradoxically, from admitting our weaknesses and what we've failed to do. Basically, from accepting we're not as good as Jesus.

So if you're not seeking regular quiet time with God, it's a comfort to know that this isn't some pressure you must feel, a requirement - like wearing a mask!

Instead, it's built on a foundation of freely admitting that Jesus makes up for our shortfall, that when we try to walk on water and fail, it's not a problem, because he's there, standing firm, and offering his hand.

And so, encouragingly, the Christian life is not trying hard to squeeze a little extra quiet time into your week, or trying hard to meet with God at church, because the new curate Ash basically berated you into it saying Jesus does it and so should you... no, the Gospel is in confessing we're not very good swimmers, and we need the Lord's help to save us.

And suddenly, I think, when we know we're meeting with a generous, gracious, kind, gentle, loving God when we get quiet time with him, it makes setting aside the time much more appealing than if we're trying to do it just because I told you to! And perhaps with the humility of knowing we need the Lord's help to keep us afloat, we don't need to criticise the dog, like the pessimist, doing everyone and everything down because of our own negativity.

And so, to end by paraphrasing Paul: "How can others grab the hand of one they do not believe in? And how can they believe in one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone telling them?"

Everything you've heard today would be helpful to someone else in your life who is not tuning in with you online or sat here in church – the transformative value of seeking quiet time over Scripture and prayer with the Spirit, and the reassurance that when you're floundering and feel you're not good enough, Jesus' hand is extending graciously to you to save you.

So... who can you share your hope and joy with this week? You could ask God to bring someone to mind in your quiet time in the service or the week ahead. And then you could invite them to tune in or come along with you next week. Because 'beautiful are the feet of the one bearing good news.' They can even walk on water.

Final prayer

God of power,

May the boldness of your Spirit transform us,

May the gentleness of your Spirit lead us,

May the gifts of your Spirit

Equip us to serve and worship you

Now and always.

Amen.

Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face to shine on you,

And be gracious to you.

The Lord lift up his countenance upon you

And give you peace.

And the blessing of God, Father, Son & Holy Spirit

Be with you all and all whom you love now and forever more.

Amen.

Do join us in church or on Facebook or YouTube for our service next week!

Peace and blessings,

**Ash Leighton Plom
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