

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

Newsletter for 11 October 2020

Dear Friends

Welcome to this weekly update for the nineteenth Sunday after Trinity on which we celebrate the feast of St Luke the Evangelist.

Sunday Worship

This Sunday the 9.30am service from St David's will be live streamed on Facebook at <http://facebook.com/stdavidschurchexeter/>

Nigel Guthrie will be celebrating with Ash Leighton Plom preaching at St David's and at St Michael's.

Services this Week

This week opening times are:

St Michael and All Angels - Wednesday Morning Prayer at 9.30am followed by Mass at 10am and Sunday Mass at 11am

St David – Thursday 10.30am, Holy Communion, Sunday 9.30am Holy Communion

If you would like to join a quiet and well spaced out service why not come to one of our midweek Holy Communion services? There is plenty of room!

Covid-19 Safe

These are the provisions we are making to keep worshippers as safe as possible.

We were reminded at our meeting with Bishop Robert this week that we should not mingle at the end of services. If you are buying something from Traidcraft or Bountiful Table please treat it like a small shop and just approach one at a time.

After consultation we have decided to encourage people to use both exits to get out of church rather than having a one-way system which doesn't work very well in our buildings. Please avoid touching door handles – Thank you.

Hand sanitizer must be used on entering and leaving church.

We should now wear face coverings in church. There are important exemptions which can be found at

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-08/COVID%2019%20advice%20on%20face%20coverings%20v3.0.pdf>

and which include those with a hearing impairment.

At St David's we are encouraging people to wear face coverings to come forward to receive Holy Communion and then to consume the host after moving away from the altar rail.

Seating will be distanced to approximately 2 metres. Please sit on the seats where service books are placed. Seating is also marked by white labels at St Michael's, with notices on the pews that should be kept clear.

Please observe appropriate distancing from others at all times.

Services should be 'no longer than necessary'; and congregational singing is still not permitted.

Toilet facilities will be available and please follow the instructions for use. *Please do not attend church if you are feeling ill or are shielding. Although we will do all we can to make the church safe you attend at your own risk.*

Help with Track and Trace on Sundays

We would really appreciate a few more volunteers to help take names and numbers at the beginning of services at St David's. What it entails is being in Church from 9.05am and taking everyone's details as they arrive (including those already in the building) and then going to your seat as the service starts. It would be good to share out the load over a month. Please speak to one of our churchwardens or to Sue Wilson if you would be willing to help.

Food for vulnerable community housed at the Great Western Hotel

A huge thank you for the help and donations that have already been offered towards making our Tuesday packed suppers. We got off to a great start on Tuesday delivering 32 suppers. If you would like to help make up the rolls at 5pm or provide small bags of crisps or individually wrapped chocolate bars towards this outreach work then please have a word with Phil and Moira Dale or Mary Quest, or me. This arrangement is likely to last until March and we may receive funding towards the food we provide.

Live Daily Prayers

Please join us, if you can, for our streamed prayer services during the week on our Facebook pages:

On 'St David's Church Exeter' page: Tuesday and Friday at 9am.

On 'Friends of St Michael's' page: Wednesday Mass at 10am.

Psalms Bible Study by Zoom

Our Psalms Bible Study continues on Zoom this week and will run on the following Tuesdays at 2pm: 20 October and 3 and 10th November. This Tuesday we will be looking at psalm 32. Here is the Zoom link to join in:

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/77746227015?pwd=eXRISW5FUFAvZ0hUTnlGYTJPS0djZz09>

Meeting ID: 777 4622 7015

Passcode: NdX2M9

Advent Fair, Saturday November 28th, 11am -2pm

We are hoping to run a Covid secure Advent Fair on November 28th and would like to appeal for some assistance. Volunteers are particularly wanted to help decorate the church with ivy and seasonal colour and to help on the day. Please have a word with Glynis if you would like to help with this.

Cleaning Elves and Fairies for St David's

Thank you to those who so kindly offered to help with cleaning at St David's. We very much appreciate those who give their time and energy to keeping the church so clean for us and other church users.

Annual Revision of the Electoral Roll

The Electoral Roll revision has now closed until the APCM but names can be added afterwards.

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

This important meeting in our church life has been set for Tuesday 27th October at 7.30pm in St David's Church. Please come along if you can. Nomination forms for churchwardens and PCC members are available in church. Please submit an activities report for your group as soon as you can to Helena Walker, our PCC secretary: pccsecretary@stdavidschurhexeter.org.uk

Please consider if God might be calling you to stand as Church Warden for the parish or Chapel Warden at St Michael's. Please and speak to Nigel, Glynis, Emma or Stephanie if you might be willing to stand or to explore what this means.

We do legally have to hold the meeting before the end of October so if government restrictions change and we can't hold the meeting in church arrangements will be made, and advertised, for a Zoom meeting which has been authorised as a back-up plan by Bishop Robert. If you would like to attend by Zoom here is the code:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6602261392?pwd=VzdOaU1XUFBjWk9jV0xvMDZWajZBQT09>

Meeting ID: 660 226 1392

Passcode: 196651

Shoeboxes for Moldova

For many years we have, as a church, been supporting CREE (Christian Response to Eastern Europe) by sending Christmas Shoe Boxes to Moldova. We are doing it again this year. Our boxes need to be in church by the morning of Sunday November 29th for transport to Moldova.

For further information about box preparation can be found at:

www.cr2ee.org.uk

Please ring Ann Watts 01392 276948 for further information and look out for stories in the November magazine!

Reopening of Churches for public worship – a continuing process

Our churches are currently open for one midweek communion and one Sunday communion. We are keeping this under review in accordance with national and diocesan guidelines. Thank you for keeping this process in your prayers.

The PCC has now agreed a Risk Assessment process to allow our buildings to be used by a small number of trusted groups. The Risk Assessment is available for scrutiny on the St David's Website.

Traidcraft Stall

Richard Featherstone will be taking Traidcraft orders this Sunday (18th) for delivery on October 25th. Many thanks for supporting Fair Trade producers.

Magazine

The October magazine is available for collection and through our websites. Thank you to our contributors, our editorial team and to those who distribute the magazine.

Phone Networks

Many of you have appreciated phone calls from other members of the church community. If would like to be phoned by someone and haven't had any contact please let me know at nigel.guthrie1@gmail.com

or by ringing me on 01392 660226 or Ash on 07855305519.

Your Prayers are asked for...

Charles Argall, Janine, Charles Speed-Andrews, Maggs Bedford, Nicky Jarman and her husband Tim and their family, Jacqueline and her family, Joy and her family, Claude and Gillian Harbord, Elizabeth Hewitt, Anne Smith, Grace Tointon, Pam Smith and her family, James and Katy Tyler, Andrew Wakley, Rosemary Willcox, Dale, David and Beryl.

Please remember Pam Stephens and Maurice Wright who have died recently and the teacher, Samuel Paty, murdered in France. May they rest in the peace of Christ.

In the Parish Cycle of Prayer we pray for World Mission week, Goodwill Village, International students living in the parish

Please also pray for:

those not able to return to church and all who are worshipping with us at home;

all peoples suffering violence and conflict, including in Nagorno Karabakh

those areas and countries suffering most from Covid-19, and those who are feeling anxious or afraid;

our Government, local and national, in the difficult decisions they have to make and implement, our police service

those working in care homes and hospitals

those who are facing unemployment or economic hardship;

A Prayer for use during the Covid outbreak

Loving God, your Son Jesus Christ came that we might have life and have it abundantly;

pour out your blessing upon our nation;

where there is illness, bring your healing touch;

where there is fear, strengthen us with the knowledge of your presence;

*where there is uncertainty, build us up in faith;
where there is denial, lead us into truth;
where there is discord, may we know the harmony of your love;
this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.*

May God keep you in peace and good health, Nigel Guthrie

Collect, Readings and Address for Sunday 18th October

St David's Service will be live streamed on our Facebook page

Collect

Almighty God,
you called Luke the physician,
whose praise is in the gospel,
to be an evangelist and physician of the soul:
by the grace of the Spirit
and through the wholesome medicine of the gospel,
give your Church the same love and power to heal;
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 Reading – Acts 16: 6-12a

They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. When they had come opposite Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them; so, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. During the night Paul had a vision: there stood a man of Macedonia pleading with him and saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.' When he had seen the vision, we immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia, being convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them. We set sail from Troas and took a straight course to Samothrace, the following day to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony.

Gospel Reading – Luke 10: 1-9

After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. He said to them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest. Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, "Peace to this house!" And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the labourer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there, and say to them, "The kingdom of God has come near to you."

An Address by Ash Leighton Plom, 18 October 2020

Jehovah Rapha, O Lord our healer, as we remember St. Luke, a doctor and evangelist, heal us, we pray, and fill us with your Spirit, that we may be moved into ministry to others, bringing healing, wholeness, and life, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Good morning, everyone! How are we? I'm not so good, actually. I went to the Dr. the other day: I said, "Doctor, Doctor, I think I swallowed a pillow." The Doctor said, "How do you feel?" I said, "A little down in the mouth"...

Look, sometimes, that's how it is: life just keeps thwarting you. And that's what I want to talk about today. Life, so it seemed, kept thwarting St. Paul and his companions in our reading from Acts.

They keep trying to go to this place or that place to share the gospel, but they keep getting thwarted. The start of the reading finds Paul and his companions (Silas and Timothy) travelling "throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia". 'Throughout' is a big word. Phrygia and Galatia are big places. They're basically most of the middle of what is now Turkey. If you can visualise the country of Turkey, there are some long, thin provinces around the coasts, and Phrygia and Galatia are in the middle, the interior of the country.

One of my favourite stories is from Phrygia: The Gordian Knot. Have you heard of it? It's sometimes used as an analogy for an impossible problem... Legend has it that this knot was so tightly entangled that it was impossible to unfasten. A prophecy had declared that anyone who could undo the Gordian knot was destined to conquer a great empire. And so generals, mathematicians, philosophers, politicians, all sorts came and tried to undo this knot, but to no avail. It's just too tangled and, well, knotty.

And then Alexander the Great Arrives. They tell him this oracle, that whoever undoes the Gordian knot will conquer a great empire... So, Alexander thinks for a moment, and then he just draws his sword and *Shlock!*, he cuts the Gordian knot in two. That's one way to solve a knotty problem!

But Paul and Silas and Timothy, in our reading from Acts, don't experience that kind of immediate breakthrough. On the contrary. the scripture has them working hard for the Lord, in this harsh, arid region... Picture it: hot summers, cold winters, it's high up, sparse, crops don't easily grow there... Envision something a bit like Dartmoor, but really hot and dry...

We know from elsewhere in Acts and from Paul's epistles that Paul and Silas and Timothy travel this area from town to town. So it's a slog. A hard, demanding slog. On Sabbaths they go to the synagogue to speak. And notice this word "they" at this point: Paul, Silas, and Timothy, named just earlier in Acts. So, on Sabbaths they go to the synagogue to speak, and on other days, to the market, to tell anyone who'll listen to the Good News about Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and ascension.

Paul explains Bible history, from Exodus to the Incarnation. He explains that Jesus is the heir of David: he quotes from the Old Testament to show that Jesus is the promised Messiah who brings forgiveness for sins, and he proclaims the facts of Jesus' death and resurrection and ascension...

Some of his hearers believe and become Christians, but some reject and persecute them, and so they're driven from town to town, Paul, Silas, and Timothy...But they labour on, in this slog, travelling from place to place, preaching this message.

But even after all this sweaty labour, remember they're kept from going where they wanted to go. It says they're kept from preaching the word in the province of Asia. And I should make clear that the province of Asia is not the continent of Asia. The province of Asia, in 1st Century Roman terms is again just part of what is now Turkey, namely the western end: Izmir, Ephesus, Bodrum, Marmaris, across the Aegean Sea from Greece.

So, Paul, Silas, and Timothy come from Phrygia and Galatia in the middle, inland, they try to go west, but are stopped, and so they turn north to Mysia, and again, as they're about to try east into Bithynia, along the 'top' of Turkey, along the Black Sea coast, again they're prevented from going where they want to go.

Now, all the Scripture says is that the Holy Spirit keeps them from preaching in the province of Asia, in the west of what's now Turkey, and the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to enter Bithynia, in the East.

Two tries to get to places they'd planned to go, two no-goes, scripturally straight from the Lord.

Sometimes that's what life is: one attempt after another to go forwards, only to be blocked or turned aside. Imagine their frustration! I imagine they must have been frustrated. And... in the end, the only route open to them is north west, over the sea to Macedonia, into Europe. Not where they had planned on going.

But it was where God had planned on them going. I'll say that again: they ended up exactly where God had planned on them going. They came to the border of Mysia, and during the night Paul has this vision of a Macedonian standing and begging him, "Come over to us and help us." And so after Paul had seen the vision, he and his companions leave at once for Macedonia, as God had called them to preach the gospel there.

Now, notice that here in the reading "they" changes to "we" and "them" to "us" at this point, and that's why it's the set reading for St Luke's day. Acts is traditionally credited to Luke, mentioned for example in Paul's letter to the Colossians as a physician and beloved companion. And this is the moment when Acts goes from a second-hand history which Luke wrote down from other people's accounts given to him, to where it becomes his first-hand travel account, where the writer himself steps into the narrative, oh so subtly, as one of the companions of Paul.

So, if Paul, and Silas, and Timothy hadn't been kept from going to the province of Asia or along the north coast to Bithynia, possibly they'd have never met Luke. And we wouldn't have the Book of Acts. We wouldn't have Luke's Gospel. We wouldn't have the parable of the Good Samaritan – that's unique to Luke's Gospel. We wouldn't have the parable of the Prodigal Son – that's unique to Luke, too. We wouldn't have all the material Luke and Acts gives us that the other Gospels chose not to include...

What I'm saying is that God was in the delays, so that Paul, Silas and Timothy could make their appointment with St Luke, that they didn't even know they had!

So I take some comfort from this reading today. Sometimes, it feels like you're being stopped from going here or there, doing this or that. This whole year, really, and I think it's likely to get tighter over winter, we've been restricted in what we can do, where, and with who.

But I want to suggest to you today, that you can trust that wherever you end up, keep following the Spirit, keep listening for God's call, and wherever you go and whatever you do, even if it isn't what you had planned or hoped for: this is where God planned for you to be.

Just before I was ordained, I went on a Zoom retreat, as some of you will have read in the parish magazine, copies available here in church or on our website if you haven't got yours yet. And on this retreat, the facilitator reminded us powerfully that even if this isn't the start to curacy me and my colleagues had hoped for, God knew it in advance, chose us for these parishes at this time.

Likewise, God has chosen you for this moment. It's not what any of us had planned, but it's where he's put us, where he's called us to. So let's use it for his glory. Let's listen for his voice, follow his Spirit, help one another however we can, call each other, volunteer for things if you can, and get praying!

And just as God blessed Paul, and Silas, and Timothy, and Luke – and through them, blessed us, just as God blessed them in their redirecting, he is going to bless you in your redirecting as well.

So, may we be people who stop, and turn, when the Spirit says stop. May we be people who dream dreams and see visions like Paul and respond to God's call, because the harvest is plentiful and we are all of us here needed as labourers. And so may we know that he is with us wherever we are, today, this month, this autumn, this winter, he is blessing and guiding us. Amen.

Closing Prayer

Lord God, the source of truth and love,
keep us faithful to the apostles' teaching and fellowship,
united in prayer and the breaking of bread,
and one in joy and simplicity of heart,
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

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