

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

Newsletter for 14 February 2021 — The Sunday next before Lent

Dear Friends,

Welcome to our newsletter for the Sunday next before Lent when we hear the accounts of Elijah's ascent into heaven and of the transfiguration of Jesus. Please join us today for our online worship. The link to our **Youtube service** is here:

<https://youtu.be/Va4A3KVB0Ww>

Our service today includes an address by Howard Friend and a special recording of the Lord's Prayer by pupils from St David's School. The first lesson is read by Laura Casimir, the gospel by Belinda Speed-Andrews and the prayers are led by Nigel Walsh.

At 10.30am we will hold a **Zoom coffee** for 40 minutes including an opportunity to chat in groups. Please join us, if you can, for a catch up. The link to click is below.

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6602261392?
pwd=VzdOaU1XUFBjWk9jV0xvMDZWajZBQT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6602261392?pwd=VzdOaU1XUFBjWk9jV0xvMDZWajZBQT09)

Meeting ID: 660 226 1392 Passcode: 196651

At 4pm **Thrive** will continue on Zoom with time for learning, discussion and prayer today on the theme of the Five Love Languages. Please click here to join:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88685738289?
pwd=WEh1dINCY3NRQTICcXFjK2ZlejR0UT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88685738289?pwd=WEh1dINCY3NRQTICcXFjK2ZlejR0UT09)

Meeting ID: 886 8573 8289 Passcode: 159821

Ash Wednesday Service on Zoom

We will be holding a short Ash Wednesday service on Zoom at 7.30pm on Wednesday 17th February. Here is the link:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6602261392?
pwd=VzdOaU1XUFBjWk9jV0xvMDZWajZBQT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6602261392?pwd=VzdOaU1XUFBjWk9jV0xvMDZWajZBQT09)

Meeting ID: 660 226 1392 Passcode: 196651

There will be two hymns, readings and an address. If you would like to collect some ash I will make it available at the back of both churches today (Sunday) during times of Private Prayer and from St David's on Tuesday afternoon from 4.30 - 5.30pm. Otherwise please use your own ash from home or just make the sign of the cross on your forehead without ash. Do join us if you can so that we can mark the start of Lent together.

Lent Groups

Details of the three Lent group that will be running (plus others in the City Centre Churches) are listed below. We will publish Zoom links for them next week.

Church Opening Times for Private Prayer

Thursdays: 10.30-11.30am at St David's Church

Sundays: 9.30-10.30am at St David's Church

11am-12noon at St Michael's Church (with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament from 11.30am)

Covid-19 Safe for Private Prayer

These are the provisions we are making to keep you as safe as possible during Private Prayer.

Please avoid touching door handles.

Hand sanitizer must be used on entering and leaving church.

Please leave your name and contact details with Track and Trace.

We should 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.

Please take an 'I sat here' notice and leave it on your seat so that others who come later can sit elsewhere.

Please observe appropriate distancing from others at all times.

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.

Online Daily Prayers

Monday 15 February, 8pm Compline (Night Prayer) on St David's Facebook Page

Tuesday 16 February, 9.30am Zoom Morning Prayer. You are welcome to join using the code below which will come up as 'Thrive':

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88685738289?pwd=WEh1dINCY3NRQTICcXFjK2ZlejR0UT09>

Meeting ID: 886 8573 8289 Passcode: 159821

Tuesday 16 February, 6pm Vespers on the Friends of St Michael's Facebook Page

Wednesday 17 February, 9.30am Prayer Book Mattins on the St Michael's Facebook Page

Thursday 18 February, 9.30am, Morning Prayer, on St David's Facebook Page

Friday 19 February, 9.30am, Morning Prayer, on St David's Facebook Page

Food for vulnerable community housed at the Great Western Hotel

A big thank you for the generous donations of food that continue to arrive for our Tuesday packed suppers. The scheme is still set to continue until the end of March. We are well supplied with food at the moment and will ask when more donations are needed.

Traidcraft Stall & St Michael's Bountiful Table

Unfortunately we are not able to run our regular stalls in church during the current lockdown but we hope to keep them going through orders. Richard Featherstone is happy to take orders through his email address:

r.w.featherstone@gmail.com

these will be available for collection from the vicarage porch or elsewhere.

Richard is also able to supply catalogues giving a full range of Traidcraft items.

You can support St Michael's Virtual Bountiful Table by ordering baked goods from Elizabeth Hughes through her phone 01392 259878 or by Stephanie Aplin by email stephaniecaplin@yahoo.co.uk These will be for collection, rather than delivery to church.

Thank you for your generosity in supporting these stalls.

Men's Breakfast

The Men's Breakfast and Parish Lunch have been casualties of the restriction over the past year. But some of us thought we would try and run a Men's Breakfast on Zoom and will give this a try on Saturday 20th February at 9am. I will post a link here next week. It's 'cook your own', I'm afraid, but it will be great to see anyone who would like to join us! Here is the link:

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

Meeting ID: 660 226 1392 Passcode: 196651

Magazine

The magazine for February is available through our websites and there are paper copies in our churches too. Thank you to our magnificent editorial team for producing another bumper edition, and to all our contributors.

Green Team

Clive Wilson and I put up the first seven nestboxes in St David's churchyard last week. Please see my letter in the magazine about our request for nestboxes for St David's Churchyard. We have room for a few more if you would like to make or donate one!

Lent Course - in partnership with Churches Together Central Exeter

These Are Our Stories: Lent in a Pandemic Year

Hosted by St David's Church Exeter on Tuesday afternoons 2pm on Zoom

23rd February to 23rd March

This five week Lent course is based on the pandemic stories of five people from across Devon and will encourage each of us to tell our own stories and reflect on where our faith fits into the experience of the past 12 months. The teaching is based on the work of a theological reflection group of clergy and lay people from across Devon thinking about Covid-19. The sessions use videos, worksheets with a bible passage for discussion, and illustrations, each week focussing on a different story and theme, with plenty of space for our own thoughts and feelings and discernment of God's activity in our lives.

The Course is also available on:

Monday afternoons 2.00pm, 22nd Feb to 22nd March

Hosted by St James' Church, Exeter, Contact fr.steveturner@icloud.com

Tuesday evenings 7.45pm, 23rd Feb to 23rd March

Hosted by the Parish of Central Exeter, Contact sheila.pite@cooptel.net

Wednesday mornings 9.45am, 24th Feb to 24 March

Hosted by the Parish of Central Exeter. Contact sheila.pite@cooptel.net

Clewer Initiative Lent Group - Women in the shadows

Hosted by Belinda Speed-Andrews on Tuesday evenings from 23rd February.

Worldwide women and girls account for 71% of the 40.3 million people living in modern slavery. In the UK it is harder to gather exact numbers, but we know that in 2018 a third of cases reported to the UK modern slavery helpline related to female victims. To help shine a light on the suffering of marginalised women the Clewer Initiative has launched Women in the Shadows, a new lent course for churches community groups and individuals.

Women in the shadows is a new five-week course for lent focusing on the different ways women and girls are exploited in the UK today. During the course you will discover how women are drawn into modern slavery and exploitative situations and what life can be like for them once they are rescued from exploitation including the many challenges they face as they recover from trauma. You will also find out more about sexual exploitation Labour exploitation and County lines and how to recognise signs of modern slavery. Please click on this link (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7iXsZeGHFuM>) to see the trailer for this course. The course is predominantly about women but I would encourage men to join as this is a problem for all of us, men and women. I do hope you feel you are able to join us for this online course this Lent.

The course consists of five short films and a devotional booklet. The films include haunting survivor stories with insightful contributions from frontline experts and campaigners.

The devotional booklet was written by colleagues in the Clewer network who are all deeply committed to combating modern slavery in their dioceses. Through

Bible study reflections and prayer we will explore what the Bible says about social injustice, exploitation, and God's heart for the poor. The devotional booklet will also encourage you to reflect on how we can take action to help vulnerable women in our communities.

Persecution and the Early Church

Professor Oliver Nicholson will be hosting and leading a series of three Zoom Talk-Discussions on Thursday March 4th, 11th and 18th from 7 to 8pm. Please find full details in the magazine. I will publish the Zoom code here nearer the time.

Phone Networks & local Walks with a friend

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, or would just like to talk, please let me know at nigel.guthrie1@gmail.com or by ringing me on 01392 660226 or Ash on 07855305519. At our recent PCC it was suggested that there might be church members who would appreciate going for a local walk with someone else from church. If you would like a hand organising that for yourself or for someone else please have a word with one of the clergy (as above) or with Howard Friend (07733739453).

Your Prayers are asked for...

Ch

In the Parish Cycle of Prayer this week please pray for the Dales and Barton Place Nursing Homes in our parish - for all the residents and for the staff, giving thanks for the wonderful care which is provided.

A Prayer during Covid 19

Loving God, at this time of crisis

when so many are suffering, we pray for our nation and our world.

Give our leaders wisdom, our Health Service strength, our people hope.

Lead us through these parched and difficult days to the fresh springs of joy and comfort that we find in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Please also pray for:

people here, and around the world, suffering from Covid-19, and those who are feeling anxious, isolated or afraid;

our Government, local and national, in the difficult decisions they must make and implement, our emergency services, those carrying out the vaccination programme;

the people of Myanmar, Belarus and Russia, and elsewhere, whose freedom of speech is denied;

for mental health doctors and nurses and counsellors;

those working in care homes, hospices and hospitals - giving thanks for their commitment and courage;

those who are facing unemployment or economic hardship;

give thanks for all those engaged in environmental protection and recovery projects around the world.

May God bless you and those you care for,

Nigel Guthrie

Order of Service for the Sunday before Lent, 14 February 2021

Welcome to worship in the parish of St David and St Michael, Exeter on this Second Sunday before Lent.

When his disciples saw Jesus transfigured on the mountain and standing with Moses and Elijah, their eyes were opened. This wasn't just the itinerant preacher from Nazareth that most people saw, but a person who had a unique place in God's purposes. We are challenged by the account of Jesus' transfiguration to look at how we see the world. Can we see at least some of the possibilities that God sees for ourselves and for those around us. Are we willing to be changed into the likeness of the Christ who loves without limit?

Opening Prayer

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayers of Penitence

When Christ appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

So let us confess our sins that mar his image in us.

Your unfailing kindness, O Lord, is in the heavens,

And your faithfulness reaches to the clouds:

Lord have mercy, Lord, have mercy.

Your righteousness is like the strong mountains,

And your justice as the great deep:

Christ, have mercy. Christ have mercy

For with you is the well of life:

And in your light shall we see light:

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

The priest pronounces the absolution.

**Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent,
have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Collect

**Almighty Father, whose Son was revealed in majesty
before he suffered death on the cross:
give us grace to perceive his glory,
that we may be strengthened to suffer with him
and 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.**

First Reading – 2 Kings 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 Reading – 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.

Address by Howard Friend for the Sunday before Lent

Mention 'Chariots of Fire' and most of us will think of that Film. The Vangelis sound track and the runners striding out along the sea shore.

(By the way – hope you enjoyed the clip. We had fun filming it – on our allotment. Incredibly we only had one take!)

Those heroic young men: Harold Abrahams fighting Oxbridge anti-Semitism. Eric Liddle, the Christian Missionary who wouldn't compete on Sundays - both winning Olympic golds against all the odds. Stirring stuff. I've always liked Eric Liddle's description of his sport: Do you remember that bit? 'God made me fast, and when I run I feel his pleasure'. Unlike most of us who when we run - feel out of breath!

The Film title, I understand, was taken from the Blake poem which with Parry's music and Elgar's orchestration is commonly known as Jerusalem:

Bring me my bow....

Bring my arrows...

Bring me my Chariot of Fire

Which in turn comes straight from the second book of Kings

- our scripture reading today.

This is a story not of individual Golds – but rather a sort of relay race with the emphasis on handing over the baton.

Great drama: Elijah disappearing into the clouds in his Chariot of Fire witnessed by his protege Elisha, who thereby qualifies for a double portion of his Spirit. And immediately proves his worth by parting the waters of the Jordon with the cloak just as Elijah had done before. (That bit immediately follows where our reading left off.)

I'm tempted to call it : A Steep Yearning Curve!

But on a serious note. This extraordinary story of 'The Light Fantastic' has made me think about how we pass on to the next generation what we know about God – or what we presume to know of him. I'm going to use the word mentoring to

describe this one to one transmission (And we're not talking viruses here – for a change)

Mentoring - It's been on my mind a lot recently. (And I realise that the modern use of the word often implies a less didactic and more 'getting alongside' role for the mentor) than is implied in this story - which in a way suits my point.

Did you notice how Elijah was trying to get rid of Elisha as he did his valedictory tour. I'm going to Bethel Elisha -you stay here. Nope - I'm coming with you. And so on several more times.

Elijah had probably been mentoring Elisha for some considerable time – and he just wanted a break. I well remember that feeling with

Medical Students, who I enjoyed having with me for the most part.

But sometimes, perhaps at the end of a busy week, just wanting them - out of there -with their constant questioning - so I could just finish the job and get home.

And here's the point. Most of the success of being a Mentor is in just allowing the person to be there with you, and to give them time, discuss things with them. Be available to them. They will learn from you as you go about your business: The good - and the not so good.

Elisha learned that God's spirit is what a Prophet needs – and a double portion at that. Job done! The baton is handed over – or in this case the cloak.

In our Gospel reading – I suggest that Jesus was doing a similar thing with his disciples. (Except the R number is 3 – and later on 12 – if you get my meaning - those of you who are preoccupied with your breakfast or the cricket – rewind and work it out)

Jesus allowed a select trio to be with him - in this case up a mountain - for this extraordinary Transfiguration experience.

What's going on here? Well I'm not sure I know the complete answer to that - but here's my take. I think the Gospel writer wants

to emphasise the authority and continuity of the Divine presence - in Jesus. The Old Covenant heavyweights are there: Moses the lawgiver, Elijah the Prophet – in conversation with Jesus we assume - giving advice maybe?

And then for the second time we hear the celestial words of affirmation first heard at Jesus's Baptism. This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him

Proof positive to the disciples then that this Jesus, whom they are following, is authentic, is the real deal. And - blinding them with light.

So then – what does this all mean for us.

Elijah mentored Elisha – took Elisha along with him, taught him all he knew – made sure he saw The Chariot of Fire and had a double portion of his Spirit.

Jesus took his disciples along with him on a journey of spiritual discovery – made sure they saw the full glory of his transfigured self – which was preparation, I'm sure, for the time when he showed them his crucified self. Helped them understand the mystery of his resurrected self.

Today's Epistle – 2 Corinthians talks, helpfully I think about all believers being indwelt by the Light of Christ – chapter 2 v 4 'God has made his light shine in our hearts.'

You might reasonably say at this point:

Well – just at the moment - I can barely keep my flame alight – let alone pass it on to others. Life has been hard recently. Yes - this past year has been hard going for a lot of us.

Chariots of Fire / Dazzling Transfigurations just don't cut it. Many of us can't handle that sort of imagery at present.

And do you know -I think a flickering candle-light type faith right now is more authentic – certainly more realistic.

So if the light God is shining in your heart is like that –it's OK - don't worry. And - don't be afraid to pass on to others that - this is how it is.

There are many in our families, amongst our friends and neighbours who are struggling too – with no light at all to guide them. We would do well get alongside them and start a conversation.

It's quite likely many of you are already doing just this without making a fuss about it : with your children and grandchildren and in other ways.

Remember this is not a Race for individual Gold – but rather a relay where we hand the baton on.

Closing Prayer and Blessing

**Assist us, gracious Lord, as we listen to the voice of your Son;
that as we now meet him under a veil,
so we may come to the vision of his glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**The peace of God which passes all understanding
Keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God,
And of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord;
and the blessing of God almighty, the Father,
the Son and the Holy Spirit be upon us and remain
with us always. Amen.**

Do join us next week for our services on Youtube and Facebook!