

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

Newsletter for Sunday 8 August 2021 – Trinity 10

Dear Friends,

Welcome to our newsletter.

We apologise if we are unable to live stream the St David's service today.

Following our recent PCC meeting we are keeping all Covid precautions in place for the time being. This will be reviewed by our Standing Committee in the second half of August. The Bishop of London, who is heading up the church response has said "We all must exercise personal responsibility and carefully manage the risks from Covid-19. As Christians, called to love our neighbour as ourselves, we must also exercise collective responsibility and continue to take appropriate precautions to protect others."

So, our existing Covid precautions (outlined below) will continue for the time being – sadly with no congregational singing. Face coverings will not be a legal requirement but continue to be recommended (except for those exempt, of course). In the meantime, thank you for helping to keep everyone as well as we can be during this time of continued uncertainty.

Our services today are:

9.30am Parish Communion (may be live streamed on St David's Exeter Facebook page) with celebrant and preacher, David James

11am Mass at St Michael's with celebrant and preacher, Nigel Mason

Services in church and online this week

Thursday 12 August, 10.30 Holy Communion at St David's Church

Sunday 15 August – Trinity 11 – The Blessed Virgin Mary

9.30am Parish Communion at St David's for Trinity 11 with celebrant and preacher, David James (live streamed on St David's Exeter Facebook page)

11am Mass at St Michael's for The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, with celebrant and preacher, Robin Eastoe

4pm Thrive is on a summer break

Covid-19 Safe for Public Worship

Please avoid touching door handles – Thank you.

Hand sanitizer must be used on entering and leaving church.

Please wear a face covering in church unless you are exempt.

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.

At St Michael's the priest will distribute Holy Communion to people in their seats.

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.

Services should be 'no longer than necessary'; and there will be no congregational singing indoors.

Toilet facilities will be available and please follow the instructions for use.

Please avoid mingling inside church before or after services.

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.

Food for the Vulnerably housed in Exeter

Working through St Petrocks we are providing 16 packed suppers each week for people who are in transitional accommodation at the Crescent. Thank you to the small team which has convened to buy and make them. We don't need any additional support at the moment as there is a significant amount in our 'Soup Evening' kitty which can fund this for the time being.

Time for Quiet Reflection

Belinda will be leading the next time of corporate Silent Reflection on Friday 20 August at 5.30pm in person and on Zoom. Please email her for further details and joining link at bspeedandrews@gmail.com

Help with Churchwarden tasks

Often Churchwardens pick up tasks which could be done by others. We have already had some kind offers but there are a number of jobs which we will advertise in the coming weeks.

Would you be willing to help with one of these, please, even if you can't do every week?

Opening and closing the church on Sunday (weekly)

Clearing the churchyard on Sunday mornings before the service (equipment provided). Thank you!

August Open Church at St David's

We plan to open St David's Church from 11am -12noon on Saturdays during August. Please have a word with Glynis if you would be willing to help staff one of these occasions so that we can have the church open and perhaps have a small stall, too.

Refugee and Migrant Concern

Several people in our congregations have expressed their concern about how the proposed Nationality and Borders Bill will affect the rights and prospects of those seeking asylum in this country. If you are concerned and would like to learn more about the arguments you could visit the Refugee Council website refugeecouncil.org.uk

The humane and fair treatment of those who are 'strangers in the land' is a theme which goes back to Old Testament times and should certainly concern us now as political, economic and climate change pressures add to the reasons for people to move around the world. I have added a prayer below which you might like to use.

Men's Breakfast

We have booked the next Men's Breakfast for Saturday August 21st at 10am at the Farmers' Union. We may have to be on two separate tables depending on numbers on the day.

The next 5 years - who are we and where are we going?

Belinda is leading us in a group study based on the book 'A Future that's bigger than the past' (<https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B07YNTLDKB/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?encoding=UTF8&btkr=1>) as we think and discern what God is calling us to for the next 5 years.

If you are interested in joining in the conversation please do email her directly at bspeedandrews@gmail.com

The dates for the meetings at 7.30pm are: Thursday 26 August, Thursday 23 September and Thursday 14 October, before a parish meeting with Archdeacon Andrew Beane on Saturday October 16th. It would be good to have as many people as possible from both churches at that meeting when Andrew will outline possibilities for the future organisation of ministry in Exeter city and listen to our hopes and plans.

Heritage Open Days at St Michael's

We are planning these days for Saturday 11th September from 9am until 6pm and Open Church on Sunday 12th afternoon with Cream Teas. We plan to run a bookstall at these days so please hold on to your books so that they can be sold in aid of church! We can store them in church if it would help.

Parish Magazine – New Leaves

Please pick up your magazine for July & August. Thank you to our magazine team and distributors.

Green Team

Survey on travel to St David's Church

St David's Church is seeking to encourage the most sustainable forms of transport where possible. We hope to achieve Eco church status. This survey will help identify better ways of travelling to church. Car parking near the church is already difficult and unlikely to improve, so we need to consider and seek other solutions.

Please help by completing the survey (which takes about one minute) online at: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/TJY7SHP>

Paper forms are also available in church. The Survey will run until 15th August. Best wishes, Clive

The Green Team are planning an event focussed on the environment, with lunch of locally sourced food, for 11th September 2021. Please keep the date!

The team would like to invite volunteers to staff stalls at the event especially for 'home and handicrafts' and 'harvest'. Tickets for the local produce lunch will be available in the second half of August. If you have green photos of local wildlife and plants or environmental projects that could be part of display on the day please send them to Neil: mrpragnell@gmail.com

Phone Networks

Many of you appreciate 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. Nigel is on annual leave this week.

St Michael's services and prayers

If you would like to access the services details and prayer list for St Michael's please contact Oliver Nicholson at virtualsaintmichaels@gmail.com and he can add you to their weekly mailing.

Your Prayers are asked for...

Please remember those who have died recently including:

James Tyler, Dorothy Guthrie

In the Parish Cycle of Prayer: Hotels and Bed and Breakfast accommodation in the parish

Please also pray for:

those held captive in modern forms of slavery in this country and around the world; for our own continued awareness of their plight;

those who have lost homes and loved ones in the floods in Germany and western Europe and in China;

the people of Afghanistan;

the humane and fair treatment of migrants and refugees arriving in this country;

the worldwide vaccination programme, giving thanks for all those who have enabled a rapid roll-out in this country;

school leavers and those seeking direction and employment at this time;

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

those suffering from Covid around the world; for those anxious about the lifting of restrictions and for wisdom for those making arrangements for worship;

May God bless you and those you care for,

Nigel Guthrie

Prayers and Readings for Trinity 10, 8 August 2021

Collect

Let your merciful ears, O Lord,

be open to the prayers of your humble servants;

and that they may obtain their petitions

make them to ask such things as shall please you;

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 – Ephesians 4: 25 – 5: 2

So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbours, for we are members of one another. Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil. Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labour and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Gospel Reading – John 6: 35, 41-51

Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.’

Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, ‘I am the bread that came down from heaven.’ They were saying, ‘Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, “I have come down from heaven”?’ Jesus answered them, ‘Do not complain among yourselves. No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, “And they shall all be taught by God.” Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.’

Address for 8 August 2021 by David James

‘Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another,
as God in Christ has forgiven you.’

A couple of Sundays ago Ash was leading a Thrive session

about the letter of James (an excellent introduction to it, by the way, still available through our Facebook page), and one of the questions he asked us to think about was how do we show other people that we are Christians. What evidence is there we could point to?

The sentence I've just quoted from the Ephesian letter we've heard this morning gives, I think, the heart of the answer to Ash's question. And as though to hammer the point home it's there too embedded in the prayer Jesus gave us to say every time we come before God: 'Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.'

This, then, is the crucial demonstration of our Christian faith - 'Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.' 'Forgive them, Father, for they don't know what they're doing', says Jesus even as the soldiers pierce his body with nails to fix him to his cross. 'I have come not to condemn the world but to save it', we hear him saying in John's Gospel and it is a marker of all Christian martyrs - they're witnesses (which is what the word means) to faith because they die with forgiveness not hatred in their hearts, like Stephen, the very first of them. Open to the Spirit, they are given grace to let go of human animosity and offer themselves wholly to God.

The other day there was a picture on the front page of the paper of a young woman called Em Sheldon. I'd never heard of her, but evidently she's well-known in the world of Instagram influencers. And she was there on the front page because she had received so much online abuse through the medium that she decided to speak out about it.

'People hate influencers', she said, 'They are so angry at us making money. It could be something crazy like me just walking my dog. People are just so angry.'

‘We fight like hell’, said another influencer, ‘And if you don’t fight like hell, you’re not going to have a country any more.’ That was Donald Trump speaking to a crowd just hours before they invaded Congress to try and prevent President Biden being sworn in.

There’s a great deal of anger in the world; the question is where does it come from. What provokes it? The photo of Em Sheldon appeared on July 14th - in France that’s Bastille Day, the occasion when the infamous Paris prison was stormed in 1789 as a symbol of all that was wrong, oppressive and exploitative about the regime that had ruled the country for generations. Anger provoked by a sense of injustice and a desire to right wrongs is, I think, the kind of anger that the writer to the Ephesians - quite probably Paul - has in mind when he says, ‘Be angry but do not sin’. Anger caused by horror of trading in human slaves was certainly what animated the three abolitionist campaigners we remembered just over a week ago - William Wilberforce, Olauda Equiano and Thomas Clarkson.

Yes, this letter is saying, be angry about inhumanity to others, about cruelty, about discrimination, about exploitation of people, about the abuse of power or the devastation of the environment, but take care the anger doesn’t come from bad motives - as in the case of Em Sheldon, from people who are simply envious or jealous or spiteful. There is anger that is self-serving and anger that is community-serving and it’s important to know the difference. Anger which is channelled towards a positive outcome is useful and works to the common good.

The difficult anger most of us experience, though, usually comes from personal hurts; and the remedy for that, says the Ephesian letter is to forgive. Forgiveness is about letting go

the desire to hurt someone back, to damage them as they have wounded us.

The word the NT uses for forgiving is a word that's linked with the idea of letting go. To forgive someone for what they've done lets them go. It frees us too - from the need for revenge, or pay-back. And it's seldom a one-off business. Forgiveness can take a long time if the hurt is very deep, and it's part of a whole process whereby we become enabled to let the one who has hurt us go. We then find that we too have then been freed to move on, to leave resentment behind and to make something positive of the anger that is at the root of it.

This isn't easy, which is why, when it happens, it is such a powerful witness. So how do we reach that kind of attitude of heart and mind - or at least try to?

The way to become at the least a more forgiving person is shown us by what we hear in today's gospel reading from St John. This is part of a long speech by Jesus which includes one of the important 'I am' sayings: 'I am the bread of life' (6.48). St John doesn't give an account of the Last Supper in his gospel, but far from that meaning he doesn't think it's important, what he gives us instead is a profound meditation on the deep significance of the Eucharist for Christians.

From this we learn that to share in the Eucharist, to eat the physical bread and drink the actual wine is to open ourselves up to the work of the Holy Spirit who is sent by Jesus. If we are to become more forgiving like him we need to become more open to him and allow him to become literally and spiritually part of us.

This is why, in answer to Ash's question 'how do we show we are a Christian?', Nigel, our Vicar, said, 'By coming to worship.' And he might have added, 'Especially the

Eucharist.’ This sacrament offers us real food and real drink to help us cope with real life. ‘We become what we worship’, Bishop Robert once said, ‘because we worship what we love.’ We will only become more like Jesus by placing him at the centre of our worship. And nowhere is he more central or more present than in the Eucharist in which the gift of his sacrificial love is offered by him to be shared with us.

A lovely Benedictine nun, commenting on the importance of worship in Benedict’s Rule says, ‘Prayer has to bring beauty, substance, and structure to our otherwise chaotic and superficial lives or it is not long before life itself becomes chaotic and superficial.’ Of all prayer the Eucharist brings us closest to Christ because it renews our communion with him and all that he is, as well as with each other.

As a result of a chance remark at the men’s breakfast recently I let slip that Ruth and I were about to celebrate our Golden Wedding anniversary. The consequence of that is that you all now know we celebrated it last weekend. At the heart of that celebration, as for most celebrations in life, was a meal. To sit and eat and drink together as a family was the best thing we could think of to do. It is a profoundly human way of drawing us together, both marking and cementing relationships. A shared meal not only symbolises community it creates it. Like most families ours is a very disparate group of people, all at different stages in their lives, but here around the table we were drawn together by love and became one.

A shared meal is not just a sign of our belonging together it becomes the reality. The Eucharist works just like that. The outward and visible signs of bread and wine shared together become the reality of our communion with Christ and each other. This is how we become Christ-like; this is how we learn to forgive and live like him.

Closing Prayer

**God of our pilgrimage,
you have willed that the gate of mercy
should stand open for those who trust in you:
look upon us with your favour
that we who follow the path of your will
may never wander from the way of life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Do join us next week for our services in church and online!