

Deeds not words

Tuesday 6 February marked 100 years since the first women in Britain won the vote. The many and varied women who fought for suffrage, the suffragists and suffragettes, did not limit themselves to simply arguing for the vote. They were social reformers in many areas, and their wide ranging and enormous influence is still with us today. The church did not always have an easy relationship with women's suffrage, and some churches actually became a target for radical suffragette action. Many, however, are rightly proud of their links to the women who have made such a difference to our society.

Lady Frances Balfour



Lady Frances Balfour was one of the highest ranking members of the British aristocracy to assume a leadership role in the women's suffrage movement. As a non-violent suffragist, she was opposed to the militant actions of the Women's Social and Political Union, the suffragettes. She was president of the National Society for Women's Suffrage from 1896 to 1914. Frances was strongly committed to Crown Court and instrumental in raising the funds necessary to build the Crown Court Church of Scotland in Covent Garden.

Edith Cavell



The argument for suffrage required women to show they could master their emotions and make rational political decisions. Edith Cavell was one of the first British women to be celebrated for her 'stiff upper lip'. Instrumental in saving the lives of hundreds of soldiers, she also helped to smuggle them home. After her undercover resistance work was discovered by the German secret police, Edith was tried for treason, found guilty, and shot at dawn by a firing squad in Brussels on October 12 1915. She is buried in Norwich Cathedral.

Emmeline and Sylvia Pankhurst



St Luke's Weaste, Greater Manchester, was the place where Emmeline Goulden would become Pankhurst, marrying Richard Marsden Pankhurst in December 1879. In 1903, five years after her husband died, Emmeline founded the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), an all women suffrage advocacy organisation dedicated to 'deeds, not words'. She was widely criticised for her militant tactics, and her daughter Sylvia was even more radical, but her work is recognised as a crucial element in achieving women's suffrage in Britain.



Dear Friends,

What is most familiar to you?

Most of the time we like to live and work within our comfort zone. We like to do things with which we are familiar. Change can be unsettling and difficult. Winston Churchill is supposed to have said, "To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often."

I have a suggestion for the ongoing part of Lent. The suggestion is that each of us seeks to shake ourselves up a little and to do something which takes us beyond what we are used to.

In church that might mean attending a service you don't normally attend, preferably in addition to what you normally do rather than instead. So often we simply don't know what goes on at the services we don't go to and we don't know the people who habitually frequent them, so why not give it a try?

Secondly (and possibly more controversially) why not try sitting in a different position in the building. We all get very used to the view from where we sit and that isn't a bad thing, but sometimes if we move around we see things differently. It is amazing how different things can seem from different viewpoints. There are some people who deliberately move around a bit so why not join in. We are after all a pilgrim people! If people do this it may be you find someone sitting where you usually sit. This is OK!!!

At home doing something differently might arise out of some of the actions in the Lent Course. It might come from deciding to take up a new activity, even if only for a little while. It might be varying the route you take to somewhere you go regularly.

Our regular routines offer us a framework of normality and regularity and routine are not bad things, but allowing ourselves to be stirred up a little at times can be a positive experience.

We worship a God of whom both these verses are true

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. *Hebrews 13.8*
and

I am about to do a new thing *Isaiah 43.19*

Priscilla

(National Churches Trust)

Aspects of life at St Faith and St Laurence

Morning prayer – is normally said Monday to Thursday and Saturday at 8.15 am in the Lady Chapel. We use Common Worship Daily Prayer, all are welcome to come and join in.

Reflections A chance to meet together over a cuppa and reflect on the Gospel reading for the previous Sunday. A group meets on Mondays from 1.45-3pm Venues are listed in the Programme of the month.

Task Groups – The church has a number of task groups enabling areas of church life. These are listed in the magazine with the contact details of the chairs. If you would like to be a part of a groups please contact the relevant chair or Priscilla. All are welcome to join.

Stay and Play meets on Thursday between 9.30 and 11am in the Hall to give a chance for people with young children to meet and the children to play. All are welcome. Cost £1.50 per family.

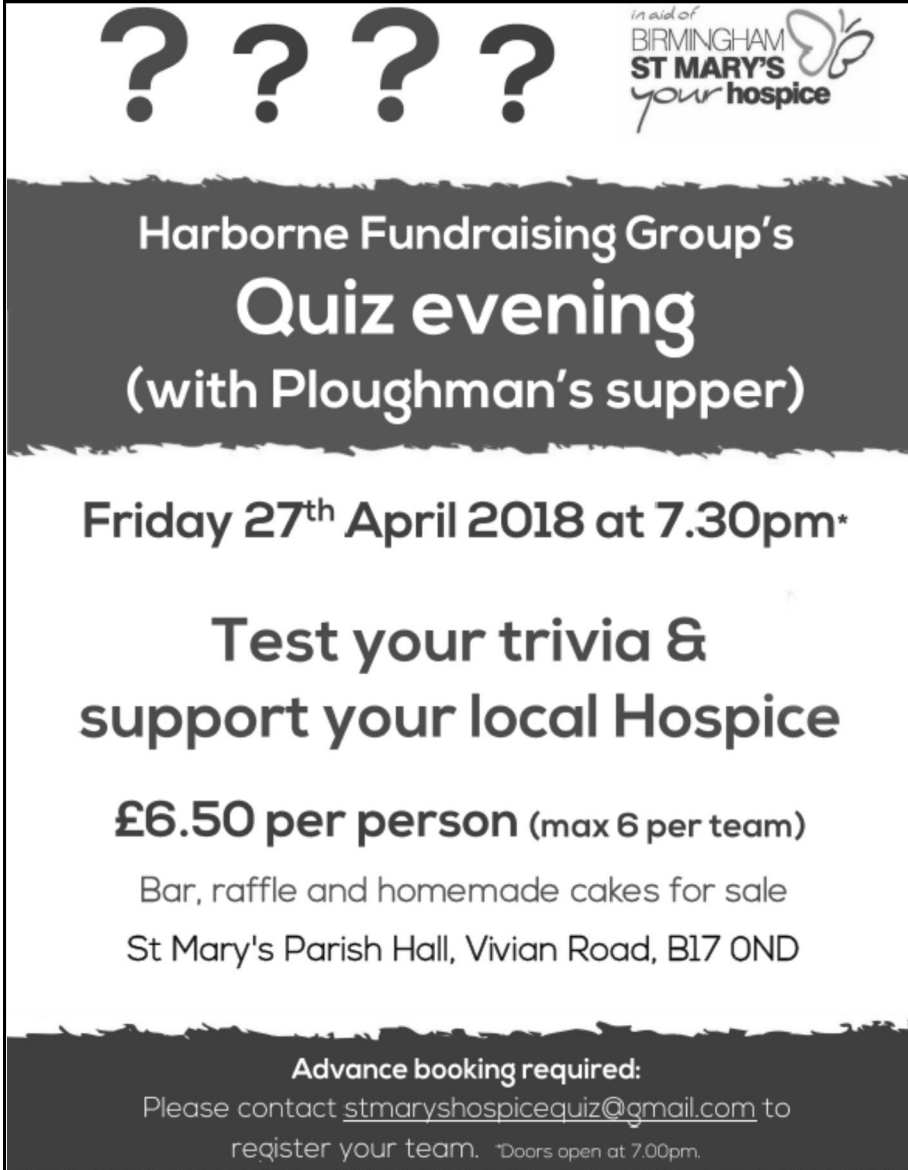
Sunday Club meets on the first, third and fourth Sundays of each month except during the holidays. We hold an extra Sunday Club on days when there is a baptism. All are welcome to join in hearing and experiencing a Bible Story and learning together about what it means for our daily lives.

Messy Church takes place on the first Saturday of each month, most months. A chance for children and parents/ carers to have an informal time of worship, and discovering about a Bible story through song, craft, listening, cooking and so much more. Dates are published in advance and all are welcome to come along.

Planned Giving helps people make giving regular. You decide how much you can afford to give. You can join the envelope scheme weekly or monthly or pay by Standing Order or annually by cheque. Income tax payers are asked to Gift Aid their giving, so the Church can reclaim the tax on their donations at no extra cost to the donors. For details, contact Jackie Taylor or Brenda Stott

Call in for Coffee time together over a cuppa on a Wednesday morning from 10.30 -12.00. if needed we can arrange for someone to collect you and then take you home. Please ring Pauline Sitford (427 7005). If you are passing, do call in, or bring a friend, all are welcome.

We support **Recycling**. We have a special collection on the first Sunday of every month when we collect ALUMINIUM cans and foil which can be sold and the money raised is donated to our Mission Partners in Chile (through USPG) We also have envelopes for recycling mobile phones again supporting USPG. Pauline Sitford (427 7005).



The poster features a dark background with white text. At the top left, there are four large question marks. To their right is the logo for 'in aid of BIRMINGHAM ST MARY'S your hospice', which includes a stylized butterfly icon. The main text is centered and reads: 'Harborne Fundraising Group's Quiz evening (with Ploughman's supper)'. Below this, the date and time are given: 'Friday 27th April 2018 at 7.30pm*'. The next line says 'Test your trivia & support your local Hospice'. The price is listed as '£6.50 per person (max 6 per team)'. Below that, it says 'Bar, raffle and homemade cakes for sale' and 'St Mary's Parish Hall, Vivian Road, B17 0ND'. At the bottom, it states 'Advance booking required:' followed by the contact email 'stmaryshospicequiz@gmail.com' and the instruction 'register your team. *Doors open at 7.00pm.'

It is Quiz time again, to raise money for St Mary's Hospice. The evening is very enjoyable with a ploughman's supper included. Last year the first two teams were from St Faith and St Laurence! I do hope we can follow up on that success and support this great cause again.

If anyone would like tickets, please speak to me at church, or phone me on 427 2450 or email me. **Julia Reid.**

LENT

Lent is not for the faint-hearted

Lent is not for the faint-hearted
It demands that we, like Thomas,
put our hand into the side of the crucified Christ.

Lent is a journey towards the cross,
a journey of enlightenment:
from wilderness to feast,
from desert to oasis.
It's an attempt to identify with the powerless
and suffering in the world.

Lent is not tidy.
The days grow longer,
the ground thaws, there's mud and dirt everywhere
and the windows need cleaning.

Lent is a journey.
So at the end of Lent
we should expect to find ourselves
somewhere different from where we started.

Lent can be an opportunity
To explore what is the nature
of the promised Kingdom of God on earth
that we long for;
a time to discern
how we are called to work for it.

No, Lent is not for the faint-hearted!

The Iona Community

Home Communion We have a team of lay people trained and able to bring Home Communion usually on a monthly basis. This is for those who are unable to come to church long term. If the situation is more temporary for example after an operation you can also receive communion, usually from Priscilla. In either case please contact Priscilla.

Traidcraft

Traidcraft sells a range of fairly traded food, cards, clothes and accessories. We use Traidcraft tea and coffee and everything we buy helps fight poverty and supports our church. You can order seasonal gifts through the church at Christmas time when catalogues will be available. Any questions, please ask Ruth Jeavons or Bronwen Jones.

'easyfundraising'

Next time you shop online, think of St Faith and St Laurence and raise free donations with 3,000+ retailers:
<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/stfaithandstlaurence>

Women's Fellowship meets on the first Monday of the month from March to December. Meetings are held in the Committee Room 7.30 for 8pm. We have talks on a variety of subjects. See Programme of the Month for details.

Prayer Ministry Team

Prayer ministry is offered during the 10am Communion on Sundays. People can receive prayer for themselves or for any situation that is important to them. It takes place in the Lady Chapel during the distribution of communion.

Service with no name

This takes place on the first Thursday in the month in church at 7.30pm.

Foodbank

We collect food for the Quinton and Oldbury Foodbank. There is a box in church and food can be placed there at any time. The list of things that are needed is in church and in the hall. Food is distributed from St Boniface Church on Wednesdays and Paul and Barney's place on Fridays. Vouchers are required to receive food.

Choir and Music.

Choir Practice takes place weekly, normally on Thursdays 6-7pm. Anyone interested in singing in the choir should contact Simon Palmer, Organist & Choirmaster. (Contact details on page cover) We also like to encourage instrumentalists to perform in church, either in services or in concerts.



LENT

Lent at St Faith and St Laurence

Promises! Promises!

For Lent this year, we will be focussing on the set readings for the Sunday Morning from the Old Testament. Each of these focusses in a different way on promises God made, to Noah, to Abraham, to God's people through Moses etc etc.

There will be two groups, one the regular Reflections group which meets on a Monday afternoon 1.45-3pm and one on Thursday evening 7.30-9pm which will meet in the Lady Chapel. There will also be a booklet for the whole of Lent enabling people to do some reflecting at home. It would be good however if people did come along to one or other of the groups if possible. If you can only attend for an occasional session that is fine.

The broad outline of what we will be doing is set out below

Week beginning

4th March	3 rd of Lent	Exodus 20.1-17
	God's promise through the law	
11th March	Mothering Sunday	Exodus 2.1-10
	God's promise in a birth	
		(and Luke 233-35)
18th March	5th of Lent	Jeremiah 31.31-34
	God's promise of New Covenant	

As we look at the Old Testament promises we will be seeking to relate them to the promises we find in the New Testament and in Jesus. We will also be looking at what that means we might do as individuals or a church community in response.

Do come along if you possibly can. All are welcome whether you have ever been to something like this or not.

Priscilla

Hurrah for the Cathedrals



A new report commending England's 42 Anglican cathedrals for their continued importance as places of worship, their wider community work and their commitment to promoting local economic growth has been published by the Department for Communities and Local Government. The report, "Cathedrals and their communities", is the culmination of a year-long tour which saw the Minister for Faith, Lord Bourne visit all of England's 42 Anglican cathedrals, to better understand their continued importance both to local communities and wider society. The report highlights cathedrals as diverse churches that are not only important sacred centres of worship but also places of valued social support and community and interfaith engagement. Lord Bourne said: "There is no better time to remind ourselves of the strong role cathedrals play in our national life than at Christmas, as worshippers gather in naves across the country to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. This year-long tour has given me a real understanding of how the innovation and vibrancy displayed by cathedral staff and their congregations is ensuring that these important churches continue to play a crucial role at the heart of local communities now and for centuries to come."

Never mind the preacher - what about the listener!

One of the great preachers of the 18th century, George Whitfield, once preached a sermon at Christ Church, Spitalfields in London on Luke 8.18, "Take heed, therefore, on how you hear." He not only advised his listeners to pay careful attention when listening to sermons, but he also gave a list of practical points on how they should hear

- Hear sincerely, with a humble heart
- Hear diligently, as listening to a royal proclamation
- Hear humbly, with due deference to the preacher as God's gift to the church.
- Hear impartially, by not having favourites
- Hear obediently, as God may be speaking to you
- Hear prayerfully, particularly that God will endue the minister with power.

In summary he said "Take heed, you careless and curious...how you hear."

Chris Price

An egg with no Easter?



Cadbury appears to have reversed a decision to remove the word 'Easter' from the name of its annual egg hunt for children. This year's event, which is run in partnership with the National Trust, has been advertised on merchandise in supermarkets as the Cadbury Easter Egg Hunt. The chocolate maker, now owned by Mondelez International, was criticised

last year by public figures including the Prime Minister for referring to the family activity simply as the Cadbury Egg Hunt.

Last April, Theresa May condemned the decision to drop the word Easter from the egg search as "absolutely ridiculous", while Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu accused the firm of spitting on the grave of its Christian founder, John Cadbury. A Cadbury spokesperson later said: "We have used the word Easter in our marketing and communications for over 100 years and continue to do so in our current Easter campaign and National Trust partnership. Each year, we review our campaign materials and Easter products and make changes to keep them fresh and exciting and reflect what we know our consumers want. Part of this includes the naming of our Easter Egg hunt as the Cadbury Easter Egg Hunt – something we know is important to our consumers."

HOST'S Lent Appeal



As we approach a time of joyful celebration in the Church calendar we ask if you might consider doing something for international relations...making a small but significant contribution towards greater



understanding worldwide.

HOST's mission is to give a welcome to international students in British homes for friendship and cultural exchange. Our volunteer hosts can offer hospitality for one day (daytime only) or three days and two nights at the weekend. We operate all year round and would very much welcome more volunteer hosts to join us.

More information can be found on our website: www.hostuk.org

Or email us on: info@hostuk.org Or telephone us on: **020 7739 6292**



Brenda Stott

Brenda has been involved with administering giving through the systems of covenants, pledges and Gift Aid from 1995 until now. After long and sterling service she has decided it is time to finish this particular area of church service. So I would like on my own behalf, and that of the PCC to thank her for all that she has done to keep the wheels moving smoothly.

To all of you.

Without your giving the church would not survive. The Church receives no State Aid except where we can apply for grants for buildings projects, for example the Hall Roof or repairs to the tower. Some of the grants are charitable foundations, some departments of Government. In order to keep the church going, and to pay our Diocesan Share which enables the diocese to pay priests throughout the diocese from the common pot we rely on your generosity. So thank you.

Two small points.

If you have not yet joined the Parish Giving Scheme, (a scheme which reduces the administration of Gift Aid and speeds up cash flow at no cost to you) then please consider doing so. Please see Geoff or Priscilla for a pack.

If you need a letter in relation to your planned giving to enable you to fill in your Tax return, please contact Jackie Taylor.

Geoff and Judith Bennett

Geoff and Judith have been organising the Christian Aid collection for the last 20 years. They are now passing that responsibility on to George Reeves (of which more elsewhere in the magazine). Many thanks are due to them for all their hard work over the years and to George for taking it on.

80th Anniversary

We celebrated our 80th Anniversary in style, with a number of events through the year. Many people contributed wonderfully and on behalf of the PCC, I would like to thank them all. The planning group, the Socials Task Group and the Choir especially spent many hours planning, practising and organising, and Peter Stokes' booklets have been very well received. Everyone however contributed in some way, so thanks are also due to all.

Priscilla

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

The meeting to elect churchwardens and the APCM will be held on **Tuesday 10th April at 7.30pm** in church.

Timeline for APCM 2018

Approval of Accounts at PCC	13 th March
Notices up re electoral roll revision	17 th March
Boards up for elections	25 th March
Reports to Gill Hubble for Collation of Annual Report	18th March
Electoral roll closes	31 st March
Electoral roll displayed in church	1 st April
Official notices for APCM	25 th March
Reports available in church	1 st April
APCM	10 th April

Elections

For the avoidance of doubt currently the PCC looks like this
 2015-2018 Julia Reid, Ruth Jeavons, (2 vacancies)
 2016-2019 David Arkell, Peter Thomson, (2 vacancies)
 2017-2020 Perumal Anandakumar, Geoff Bennett, Natika Hamilton, Ian Longbottom,
 Deanery Synod Alan Jones, Pauline Sitford, Chris Terry, Gill Hubble
 There will this year be elections for
4 people to serve on the PCC for a three year term 2017-2020
4 extra people to fill casual vacancies, i.e. vacancies not filled in previous meetings.

Those standing down are all eligible to stand again

Priscilla, Vicky, Sally, Bronwen and Malcolm are all ex officio on PCC

Please note the date for reports for the APCM to be with Gill.

Please get these in in good time. Gill is not in a position to rush around chasing people but is prepared to collate the report. Task Groups and organisations are all invited to put reports in. They do not have to be long, but should give a flavour of the life of that group over the year.



I am our new Christian Aid co-ordinator, and am looking forward to raising money for this great cause. It is assumed that all who helped with the House-to-House collections last year will continue to do so, but if anyone is unable to continue then please let me know. If anyone who has not helped before would like to do so, get in touch – it's my first time too!

I can be contacted in church or at gla.reeves@gmail.com

Timetable for Collection

8th May: Material for collectors available in church
 13th May: Beginning of Christian Aid week
 28th May: All collection rounds to be returned by this date.
 29th May: Counting of collection and banking.

George Reeves

CHURCHWOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP



Our 2018 programme will start on Monday, 5th March at 7.45pm prompt. We begin the year with 2 of our members showing pictures of their recent holidays - Wendy to New Zealand at Christmastime, and myself to New York last September.

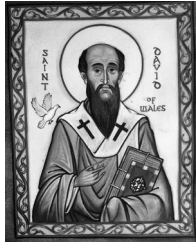
The Fellowship meets on the first Monday of the month in the Committee Room (although April's meeting will be on the 2nd Monday because of the Easter Bank Holiday). If any lady would be interested in coming along to any of the meetings you will be made very welcome. There is a full programme for the year on the Notice Board in the main Hall.

We are a very friendly group, so please do come and give us a try, there will be tea/coffee and biscuits to follow the talks.

Helen Hayward. (Chairperson)

COVER STORY

This month's cover is sponsored by Edna Rouse in memory of Alan, whose birthday was on St. David's Day, March 1st.



St. Davids Cathedral is set on a spectacular Pembrokeshire peninsula, jutting out into the Atlantic upon the site of an earlier sixth-century monastery built by St David, the patron saint of Wales. The cathedral has been a site of pilgrimage and worship for more than 800 years. Today this splendid building erected to the glory of God remains a vibrant, living church offering a place of peace for prayer and devotion.

The present cathedral was begun sometime between 1180 and 1182 and is the culmination of centuries of rebuilding and expansion. Constructed in the Transitional Norman style using fine-grained, purple Cambrian sandstone, it has survived both the collapse of its tower and an earthquake in the 13th century, although today the floor slopes noticeably, the arcades veer from the vertical, and the east and west ends of the building differ in height by about four metres! St Davids Cathedral as we see it today, has been extended and altered over the centuries by many individuals, but its appearance was probably most influenced by Bishop Gower in the 14th century, and later, in the 19th century, by the renowned architect, Sir George Gilbert Scott, who undertook a significant restoration of the fabric of the building.

In the 20th century, the ruinous St Mary's Hall was restored for use as a parish hall and in the 21st century the restoration of the cloisters has made a very significant impact on the appearance of the Cathedral.

The Cathedral's foundations are still shifting, albeit minutely, but it remains a solid and lasting testament to the glory of God, enthralling and inspiring the many thousands of people who visit it each year.

If you wish to sponsor a cover on a future magazine, please get in touch.



HOLY WEEK and EASTER

- 25th March Palm Sunday**
 8am Holy Communion with blessing and distribution of Palm Crosses.
 10am Family Communion and Sunday Club with blessing and distribution of Palm Crosses.
 6.30pm Evensong with blessing and distribution of Palm Crosses.
- 26th March Monday**
 7.30pm Night Prayer in the Lady Chapel – In my Father's house.
 (I am the Good Shepherd)
- 27th March Tuesday**
 7.30pm Night Prayer in the Lady Chapel – Today with me in paradise.
 (I am the resurrection and the life)
- 28th March Wednesday**
 11am Holy Communion
 7.30pm Night Prayer in the Lady Chapel – I am with you always.
 (I am the light of the world)
- 29th March Maundy Thursday**
 7.30pm Eucharist with Hand-washing followed by a quiet vigil.
- 30th March Good Friday**
 10.30am Churches Together worship on Harborne High Street.
 (This will be preceded by a Walk which is still in the planning stages, but may begin from St Faith and St Laurence. More information will be given as it becomes available)
 12.30pm The Good Friday Story (The story of Holy Week told with children and young people especially in mind)
 1pm Hot Cross buns and soup in the Hall.
 2pm Last Hour at the Cross, readings hymns and meditations focussing on Jesus' words from the cross.
 7.30pm Music for Good Friday with the joint choirs of St Peter's and ourselves. Probably at St Faith and St Laurence. To be confirmed.
- 31st March Holy Saturday**
 7.30pm Vigil Service
- 1st April EASTER DAY**
 8am Holy Communion
 10am Family Celebration Communion for Easter Morning
 6.30pm Evensong

Touch wood

All we can try and do on Good Friday I think, is simply touch the wood of the cross. All we can understand are fragments of the cross, splinters of this earth-shattering event. We can't hold on to what was happening there; we can only 'touch wood.'

When I was first in Jerusalem, early one Sunday morning, I was going through the narrow passages of the suk on my way to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Those little passages had been thronged with people the previous day, teeming with life. But here, on this quiet Sunday morning no-one was around, though the dirt and the mess of the previous day littered the passageways. Then I came across a donkey and its owner. The donkey was being loaded up with sacks increasingly full of rubbish as its owner swept up the mess. Where the donkey had already been, the passage was swept and clean, ready for the day; where the donkey had yet to go, the floor was still a terrible mess of waste paper and foodstuffs and dust and grime. As I looked at the donkey, standing there patiently weighed down by its burden, I could only think of the verse from John's gospel: 'Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.' Only here, the donkey of God, taking away, cleaning up, the mess of the world.

It's all been done for us. That's what Good Friday is about. We don't have to earn our way into the Kingdom, to persuade God by our acts of charity that we're in credit and deserve one of the best seats. It's all been done for us. There's no stairway to heaven we have to climb laboriously one good deed after another. The gates are already open. The trouble is, it's easier to measure progress in the Christian life by what we do, rather than by what we have received. But what we have received is in fact total grace. Grace in its pure, uncut form; undeserved, unconditional, inexhaustible.

But this pure, unexpected grace is given to us by desperate means. The cross is a place of tragedy and chaos. It's where God goes into meltdown. We can't tidy this up into a neat theory of atonement.

We can't begin to hold on to such an event; all we can do is touch wood. Touch the edge of the cross and maybe find one or two splinters that make sense. May I suggest a couple of splinters.

Jesus said, poignantly, 'I'm thirsty.' He'd been hanging there between heaven and earth, hauling his battered body up on the nails, agonising as it was, because his lungs were filling with fluid and he just had to breathe, whatever the pain. Dying was hard and bitter work. He was desperately thirsty. So also is our world.



Holy Baptism

February 11 Henry Joseph Roman Griffiths

Holy Matrimony

February 16 Bobby Jay Capper and Mykela Jade Preston

FACTS AND FIGURES

Week Beginning	Communicants	Loose Plate £	Planned Giving £	Gift Aid £
Jan 21	76	80.82	56.00	375.05
Jan 28	84	86.48	122.67	510.00
Feb 4	75	50.56	152.31	40.00
Feb 11	28	98.96	485.40	65.00
Standing Orders			975.00	21.42
Parish Giving			1300.00	295.00

Straplines

Serenity is not freedom from the storm, but peace within it.

Shared joy is double joy; shared sorrow is half a sorrow. *(Swedish proverb)*

Theirs is an endless road, a hopeless maze, who seek goods before they seek for God. *(Bernard of Clairvaux)*

There is no limit to what can be accomplished if it doesn't matter who gets the credit.

Bishop's Comment: Letters in Lent

Will the Christian season of Lent become as well known publicly as the month of Ramadan?

Those who belong to Church may have a weekly Bible study group, be part of a Lent project connected with a good cause, or renew their devotions in Eucharist and personal prayer. Some will fast, though probably not in the stringent pattern of our Muslim neighbours. The Church of England has promoted a #LiveLent offer with a daily reflection and action. In creating space in our usual routine for forty days we can ask God to show us how to be closer in our relationship with him through Jesus Christ, in the expectation that the Holy Spirit will inspire us for greater maturity. What will you do to let Jesus Christ make a difference in and through you this Lent?

While spending time with clergy colleagues in groups recently I have been reading the opening lines of a letter to Christians in the city of Colossae. The apostle Paul is personal, encouraging and visionary. He writes of faith, love, hope and fruitfulness in the world. Communicating by hand writing has been overtaken by email, texting, WhatsApp, Instagram and other digital media, with less time to reflect on themes or shape ideas. We have come a long way from the weekly letter home and the airmail letter card from overseas. My mother has just handed me 10 years' of such correspondence from my own childhood!

There is so little of exchange of letters today that I want to commit in Lent to a fresh pattern of writing to those who like St Paul I cannot be with (except perhaps by Skype) in the hope that I will appreciate them more, stimulate ideas and faith and gain greater insight into their lives and mine. There is the benefit too of pausing peacefully with pen and paper keeping the added discipline of leaving the 'ping' of instant mail and messages in the next room.

Christians are cautioned against displaying their fasting, but all spiritual exercise is intended to bear fruit. I pray that you will have a holy and joyful Lent and that the world will be blessed by more and more confident Christians.

+David Birmingham

Several years ago, I went on a pilgrimage across the Sinai desert, sleeping in the open at night - freezing cold but amazed at the stars - and walking in the heat of the day with our companionable Bedouin and their resentful camels. We were warned to keep drinking water, and also to keep an eye on each other to see if we were getting grumpy, because that was one of the first signs of dehydration. As we walked, I began musing on the fact that in many ways our society in the West is grumpy. People easily get angry and cross with each other. Is that, I wondered, because our society is spiritually dehydrated? We lack the water of life, having turned our back on the spiritual riches Christ offers, preferring the transient drink of consumerism and the stale bread of our addiction to ourselves? Aren't we desperately short, in western society, of the spiritual water Jesus spoke of with the woman at the well?

There on the cross was Jesus, thirsting for water, thirsting also for us - as we thirst for him, without knowing it. The water we need, the water Christ offers, is such that those who drink it will never be thirsty again. It'll be a spring of water within us, bubbling up to eternal life. The one who offers this water is dying of thirst - and so are we in our culture. But we, thirsty people, can tell other thirsty people where we've found water.

The other splinter I offer as we 'touch wood', the wood of the cross, is that dreadful cry of Jesus recorded in Mark, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' Yes, he was quoting from psalm 22, and that psalm is ultimately one of confidence in God. But those words were surely torn from his soul as the very words that expressed his terrible experience at that time. How that cry must have pierced Mary's heart. He was alone, utterly deserted, crying into an empty sky. He had given away his mother (to John), and now the Father had died on him as well.

That's where this splinter fits back into the cross. Our whole tragic world, with all its brokenness and sorrow, is a kind of crucifix, a sharing in the pain in the heart of God. The world a crucifix. The cross is a sign of the presence of Christ at all times and in all places in a world both glorious and brutal. Our response can only be to 'touch wood', the wood of the cross, and to stay close to the One who stays close to us. The arms of the cross are stretched out to welcome us home, whatever state we're in, whatever's happening to us. 'He opened wide his arms for us on the cross.' We know now that we are never shut out. Jesus went into that darkness for us, and drank that poisoned cup to the dregs, refusing to compromise the way of love, until he could say 'It is finished.'

Peter Stokes

St George's Day Dinner



The Socials Task Group are organising a St George's Day dinner for Saturday, 21st April. We have invited a special guest speaker from Fisher House for this event. Fisher House is a "Home Away From Home" at which military patients can stay while they are receiving treatment at the hospital. Their families can also stay at the house when they are visiting them.

We hope our guest will be Dave Watson who became a triple amputee from injuries received in Afganistan. Dave is a good friend of Prince Harry and won medals at the Invictus Games in 2017. Tickets will be available in March.

Socials Task Group.

Warm Welcome Homestays

Please allow me to take this opportunity to introduce my organisation to you. We are Warm Welcome Homestays and we connect international English language students with welcoming hosts across Birmingham, providing an extra income source for our hosts. We are a Birmingham based organisation and love all things Brum. Our students are aged 18+ and are usually attending British Council accredited language courses at schools and colleges in Birmingham. Most students are preparing for entrance to University at either under or post graduate level. Students typically stay with their host for 12 weeks but it can be as short as two weeks. It depends on the course they have chosen.

Do you think this would be something that might interest your community?

You can find out more about us here:

<http://www.warm-welcome.co.uk/host-resources.html>

LENT APPEAL

The Mission Task Group feel we would like a fresh approach, to encourage us to look carefully at our Lenten giving in terms of our whole time, talents and income and possibly giving up something in order to use that money to support something important. It might be something of our own choice, but we would like to invite you to support the work of Colin and Audrey Gibson working in Lebanon on our behalf. They do completely rely on supporters like us.

Thu	15	9.30 am	Stay and Play	Hall
		6.00 pm	Choir Practice	Church
		7.30 pm	Lent Reflections	Lady Chapel
SUN 18 FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT-PASSION SUNDAY				
		8.00 am	Holy Communion <i>Jeremiah 31.31-34; Hebrews 5.5-10; John 12.20-33</i>	
		10.00 am	Family Communion <i>Readings as at 8am</i>	
		6.30 pm	Evensong <i>Psalms 34.1-10; Exodus 7.8-24; Luke 22.1-13</i>	
Mon	19	1.45 pm	Lent Reflections	143 Balden Road
Wed	21	10.30 am	Call in for Coffee	Committee Room
		11.00 am	Holy Communion <i>Daniel 3.14-20, 24-25, 28; John 8.31-42</i>	Lady Chapel
Thu	22	9.30 am	Stay and Play	Hall
		6.00 pm	Choir Practice	Church
		7.30 pm	Lent Reflections	Lady Chapel
SUN 25 PALM SUNDAY				
		8.00 am	Holy Communion <i>Mark 11; Isaiah 50.4-9a; Philippians 2.5-11; Mark 15</i>	
		10.00 am	Family Communion <i>Mark 11; Isaiah 50.4-9a; Philippians 2.5-11; Mark 14.1-end of 15</i>	
		6.30 pm	Evensong <i>Psalms 69.1-20; Isaiah 5.1-7; Mark 12.1-12</i>	
Mon	26	1.45 pm	Lent Reflections	143 Balden Road
		7.30 pm	Night Prayer	Lady Chapel
Tue	27	7.30 pm	Night Prayer	Lady Chapel
Wed	28	10.30 am	Call in for Coffee	Committee Room
		11.00 am	Holy Communion <i>Isaiah 50.4-9a; John 13.21-32</i>	Lady Chapel
		7.30 pm	Night Prayer	Lady Chapel
Thu	29	9.30 am	Stay and Play	Hall
		6.00 pm	Choir Practice	Church
		7.30 pm	Eucharist with hand-washing and vigil	Church
Fri	30	GOOD FRIDAY (See page 7)		
Sat	31	7.30 pm	Easter Vigil	Church

PROGRAMME FOR MARCH

Thu	1	9.30 am	Stay and Play	Hall
		6.00 pm	Choir Practice	Church
		7.00 pm	Deanery Synod	
		7.30 pm	Lent Reflections	Lady Chapel
Fri	2	1.45 pm	World Women's Day of Prayer	St Peter's
Sat	3	10.30 am	Messy Church	Hall
SUN 4 THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT				
		8.00 am	Holy Communion <i>Exodus 20.1-17; 1 Corinthians 1.18-25; John 2.13-22</i>	
		10.00 am	Family Communion <i>Readings as at 8am</i>	
		6.30 pm	Evensong <i>Psalms 11</i> <i>Exodus 5.1-6.1; Philippians 3.4b-14</i>	
Mon	5	1.45 pm	Lent Reflections	143 Balden Road
		7.45 pm	Women's Fellowship	Committee Room
Tue	6	7.30 pm	FGP Task Group	
Wed	7	10.30 am	Call in for Coffee	Committee Room
		11.00 am	Holy Communion <i>Deuteronomy 4.5-9; Matthew 5.17-19</i>	Lady Chapel
Thu	8	9.30 am	Stay and Play	Hall
		6.00 pm	Choir Practice	Church
		7.30 pm	Lent Reflections	Lady Chapel
SUN 11 FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT –MOTHERING SUNDAY				
		8.00 am	Holy Communion <i>Exodus 2.1-10; 2 Corinthians 1.3-7; Luke 2.33-35</i>	
		10.00 am	Morning Praise	
		6.30 pm	Sung Eucharist <i>Readings as at 8 am</i>	
Mon	12	1.45 pm	Lent Reflections	143 Balden Road
		6.00 pm	Beaver Pack visiting Church	
Tue	13	7.15 pm	PCC Meeting	Committee Room
Wed	14	10.30 am	Call in for Coffee	Committee Room
		11.00 am	Holy Communion <i>Isaiah 49.8-15; John 5.17-30</i>	Lady Chapel

Prayer of the month

As I write this, we have just reached the end of Children's Mental Health Week and are looking towards World Mental Health Week in May. Mental health is a hot topic at the moment with many people coming out and openly talking about mental health issues to help remove the taboo that comes with these illnesses. I, myself, have just been diagnosed with severe depression and I find myself apologising for my diagnosis and feeling like "a fraud" when there are people, some of whom are in my immediate family, who are suffering from "real" illnesses such as cancer. People are often embarrassed and don't seek help which is why it is vital that mental health is treated with the same level of care and compassion as physical conditions. I am lucky that I have a wonderful support network of family and friends without whom I don't think I would even be able to get out of bed some mornings. For this month's prayer I want to share one that speaks to me in my current situation and, hopefully, will speak to others too.

Vicky Miller (Lay Reader)

Tender God,
Your gentle and kind-hearted love waits for us in the darkness and shields us from the light when it feels too overwhelming.
We remember today all those who live in the depths of depression, despair or at the mercy of mental illness.
Continue to cherish us all when we find it so difficult to cherish ourselves.
Enable us to discover companions of compassion who will abide with us, as you abide in all things and in all places where the heart and mind aches for peace and a place of rest from the storm.
We ask this in the name of our brother and friend, Jesus Christ.
Amen.