

February 21st 2021 St. Luke's News

My last teaching post was at a Church of England high school in Stoke-on-Trent, where I spent fourteen very happy years, teaching French and R.E. It was by no means a little Christian “ghetto,” and we had a wonderful variety of faiths and backgrounds among the pupils, though the ethos was definitely Christian. A good number of the staff were Christians, though from various denominational backgrounds. One of my colleagues had a poster on her classroom wall. The words on it were “Be patient with me. God hasn’t finished with me yet.” That is quite an important truth - while we’re still alive, trying our best to live out our faith, God is still working in and with us. It may not feel much like that at the moment, when our lives are restricted, we can’t have face-to-face contact with our families/fellow-Christians, or do the basic, ordinary things that represent normality for us, both as human beings and as Christians. The natural world is a reminder of the life and creativity of God, and it’s a delight to see all the signs of Spring - lambs, catkins, bulbs shooting up in the garden, and many other things.

However, without becoming over-introspective, we need to keep a check on our spiritual development if we are to survive the stresses and strains of Covid 19, with vaccinations, tests, anxiety about ourselves and others. The bottom line is, God loves us and hears our prayers. He also knows the future, and will be with us in every circumstance.

A quotation from Psalms Now, Psalm 40:-

‘I searched long and shouted loud for God.
It finally paid off. He responded.
He reached into my pathetic emptiness,
and planted objective and purpose.
Now I feel like singing;
there is genuine meaning in my life.....
I know that God will never cease to love me.’

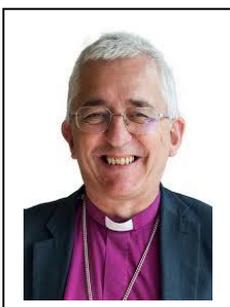


During this unusual time, may we all grow in our faith in Jesus our Saviour and Lord, in dependence on our loving Father, and in the strength of the Spirit, working in us.

Every blessing, Noreen



Trevor has **been** busy again!
Keep a look-out for this couple around the village – you never know where they’ll pop up!



This Lent Bishop Michael invites us to **‘Making Space for Reflection’**:

“In the last 12 months we have absorbed and adjusted to a lot of new experiences and challenges. Many of us have upskilled, particularly with areas of technology that help us to be in touch remotely, and many of us have found the constant demand of adapting exhausting. This Lent I am inviting you to take some time each week to reflect, to process some of the events and developments of the last year, to notice God at work through these times and to connect some of that experience with the Bible and the deep questions of faith. I hope that you will find this time helpful, refreshing and that it will deepen your discipleship as we continue our journey as people of hope through these turbulent times.”

Making Space for Reflection Lent Course

Week One: Belonging in Community

If you had drawn a diagram at the beginning of 2020 of the communities you are part of, how those communities gather and what they mean to you, it would no doubt be at least a bit different to the one you would draw today, at the start of Lent 2021. For many people new communities have formed during the past year with support networks forming in local areas, less opportunity to see friends and family and the limited ways in which we have been able to gather physically as church.

Suggested Bible Passages to reflect on:

Mark 14. 22-25

²² While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body." ²³ Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it. ²⁴ "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them. ²⁵ "Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

Acts 2.43-47:

⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Further passages:

- Exodus 20.1-17
- Ruth 1 (or the whole book!)
- Luke 15.11-32
- Romans 12.1-13 (or 1-22)

Questions for reflection:

How does thinking about questions of belonging make you feel? Why do you think that is?

Where are you still part of local rather than networked communities? To what extent do you interact with people who you haven't chosen to form friendships with?

What are the big themes at the heart of this issue? How does the Bible speak to you about those themes?

What is the key question or challenge for you? How does the Bible help you form the question and explore some responses to it?

Further resources:

- How have communities responded to Covid: <https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2020/06/01/the-community-response-to-coronavirus-covid-19/>
- Volunteering during lockdown: <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering/i-want-to-volunteer/volunteering-coronavirus>