



2023
CHURCHES
TOGETHER
LENT BOOKLET

*Praying & Living The Kingdom
Empowered by the Holy Spirit*

Dear Reader

This Lent Reflection Booklet is a collaboration initiated by Churches Together in Poole.

This year each reading explores the work of the Holy Spirit in and through Scripture. We pray that this will enable you to encounter Jesus through the Spirit as you take time to read, reflect and pray during Lent.

There are no readings for Sundays - this is to leave room for you to catch up if you need to or to Sabbath!

The contributions come from a wide and varied group of people, both lay and ordained and we'd like to acknowledge and thank each person for their thoughts and written words - it couldn't have happened without you!

Also, a huge thank you to Fern at Prama Care who formatted this booklet and made sure it got printed!

May Lent be a precious time of being in God's presence.

Blessings.

FEBRUARY 22

Gen 1:1-3

As we begin Lent today, our Bible reading takes us to the very beginning of the scriptures. This was the passage read by the astronauts of Apollo 8 to people on earth as they orbited the moon on Christmas Eve 1968, probably the most widely heard Bible reading in history up to then. Whatever we think about the details of creation, 'big bang' etc, the first four words of scripture remind us that God is the source of all that is.

The passage introduces us to the creative rhythm "God said ... and there was ...". As we begin Lent today, reflecting on our fallen nature, I cannot help but think about how different are our human words. All too often we say something and then we either forget or do the opposite. We have indeed sinned in thought, word and deed, as we sometimes say in confession.

When Jesus referred to Genesis 1 (eg in Matthew 19), he recognised the difference between our wonderful Creator God and we His sinful creatures. But Jesus was happy to be known as 'friend of sinners', let's thank God for that.

Rev. David Price, St John's



Yesterday many of us were marked with a cross of ash and reminded of our own earthly mortality.. We hear echoes of this today as the writer of Genesis beautifully tells the creation of mankind from the dust of the earth. It is God who breathes life into this body, the breath of God is the breath of life itself.

God not only gave us physical life but he also calls us to a spiritual life. In John 20 when Jesus appears to the disciples we are told He breathed on them and they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Jesus breathing His presence into His people, enabling them to take His presence, His mission and His ministry into the world. His people then represent Him as His body in the words of St Paul.

So this Lent what does it mean for us to represent Christ to the world around us? Perhaps today ponder on this question and reflect on how the Holy Spirit has changed you and in what ways he might also be calling you to change.

Lucy Holt, St James Poole

FEBRUARY 24

Ex 35:30-35

What does the word “worship” mean to you? Is it singing hymns in church, or does it mainly involve sacraments such as communion? Or is worship a bigger concept than that for you?

And what about “ministry”? Is ministry about service in the church, leading worship, prayer and preaching, or do you see ministry as a bigger category?

In our passage today Moses commends two craftsmen for their skills in artistic crafts, woodwork, embroidery and design. But he goes even further, saying that their work demonstrates that they are filled with the spirit of God and his wisdom.

How does God see what you do in your day to day life or all the skills that you have accumulated as the years have gone by? Is it possible that in God’s eyes, these can also be an expression of his spirit at work within you?

Would it be possible in this lent season to focus on some of our day to day activities and offer them to God as genuine worship and ministry?

Matt Simpson, Lytchett Minster Parish Church and St Dunstan’s Upton

FEBRUARY 25

Isaiah 61:1-4

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
To proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.”
“Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

(Luke 4:18 – 20)

Jesus is proclaiming He is the Messiah - that the King is here, His kingdom in breaking in; - ALREADY BURSTING UPON THE OLD WORLD!

And that this new kingdom shall collide with the old – with the Law: with the way things have always been done. We find Him saying in a variety of ways – parables, comparisons, metaphors, illustrations - that the new kingdom cannot be contained in the ways of the old – new wine will fizz, pop and burst out of old wineskins. I wonder today whether we let Jesus be like this to us or whether we prefer to contain Him within old predictable expectations?

Rev. Sally Taylor- Part Time Pioneer Curate at St Michael's Hamworthy and St Gabriel's Turlin Moor

As Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, who brings me great joy."

(Matthew 3:16-17 NLT)

I was once a swimming teacher and coach. One of the first things we were told on the training course and has remained with me is to affirm or praise the swimmer for what they are doing well BEFORE saying what they need to correct.

Before Jesus began His ministry, right before He faced temptation God let Jesus know, and let us know how delighted He was with His Son. God affirms three things that all of us need to hear from those near and dear to us:

- his relationship with Jesus: "This is my... Son!"
- his love for Jesus: "my beloved Son."
- his joy in Jesus: "my... Son, who brings me great joy."

If Jesus needed this affirmation, how much more won't those around us need it as well?

Deacon Gill Judge

FEBRUARY 28

John 20:11-23

I was contemplating a change in career and was embarrassed when an older Christian asked me, "What is God saying to you about this?" - I hadn't even thought of asking, let alone listened for an answer.

Jesus calls Himself the Good Shepherd - laying down His life for His sheep, who knew the Shepherd's voice. How do we hear His voice when many other voices call for our attention?

A friend was asking God these questions; she was reminded of her tumble drier which she thought had broken, then discovered that accumulated fluff of previous weeks had blocked the system.

Like her I found I had 'fluff' that needed clearing out. I've discovered that to hear God's voice it really helps to ask Him questions:

"What does this promise mean?", "How do You see this person?"

We find He speaks in different ways - scripture, of course - but impressions, images, the natural world, other people.... there are endless possibilities. But the promise is for all: " My sheep hear my voice"

Hilary Hockley, Reconnect Missional Community

MARCH 1

Acts 1:1-8

What are you waiting for?

One of Jesus' last instructions to his disciples was simply to wait. Jesus must've known what was to come, the persecution, the crowds, the disagreements, the uproar. He didn't tell them to prepare to fight or protest. He told them to wait, 'wait for the gift my Father has promised' (v4), the Holy Spirit. Why? So they would be filled with power to do his work 'in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth' (v8). Waiting isn't passive, it's an intentional choice to stop, be still, and give room for God to move. Exodus 14:14 says, 'The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still' - it's a choice.

How good are you at spending time and choosing to wait? Life moves quickly. Doesn't it feel like there's more and more fighting for your attention, trying to pull you in?! But God has to come first. Wait for the Holy Spirit. Listen to His voice. Be filled with His power. And see what God does.

Will Triffitt, NWDY Poole Hub Leader

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter and the other apostles receive the Holy Spirit in a dramatic moment. There's a crowd of people around them – local Jews and visitors to Jerusalem – and Peter seizes the moment to preach the gospel. In our passage of a mere eight verses, he rounds off his explanation of the life of Jesus and encapsulates the essence of what his listeners need to know. Jesus is “both Lord and Messiah”, God has raised him to life, he is “exalted to the right hand of God” and he has received the Holy Spirit from God and poured it out on the disciples on this day. Peter's audience responds with, “what shall we do?”. Peter finds the best possible reply: repent, be baptised and receive the gift of forgiveness. And finishes with the news that this gift is available to all, whoever they are. We learn later that 3,000 people were baptised that day. Let's pray that when we have an opportunity to tell others the good news of Jesus Christ and the forgiveness that is freely available to us all, we will find the words as Peter did.

Mrs Renny Gye

MARCH 3

Ex 19:16-18

In college, I remember studying for an Old Testament exam, which was likely to include a passage describing a theophany. This is an event where the manifestation of God occurs in an observable way... where God reveals his presence to meet with his people.

In today's reading, we have a violent storm, and in the Bible a storm is often a symbol of the awesome presence and power of God. The cloud and darkness, the thunder and lightning, and the earthquake and fire, all manifested the greatness of God and even produced a holy fear in the hearts of the people. God was about to teach his people his law, and "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7).

The combination of witnessing the storm, and keeping their distance from Sinai, couldn't help but impress the people with God's majestic holiness. Similarly, when we meet God for worship, how do we set aside the preoccupations of our everyday lives? This Lent, how can we continue to prepare our hearts and minds ready to meet with God?

Rev. Mike Trotman, St Peter's Parkstone

Exodus 20 sees Moses return from Mt Sinai with a message from God: The Ten Commandments.

Having witnessed first hand the power and voice of God as he spoke to Moses, the people were terrified to think what God was capable of. They were struggling to let go of their past and embrace the changes God had in store for them.

They said to Moses, “Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die.”(v19)

Is this how you respond to God: needing an intermediary to speak on your behalf?

Do you struggle to trust in the promises of God to provide for your needs whatever should happen?

Do not be afraid! Jesus promised us an intermediary to be with us always: (John 14:26) “the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

Lynn Bowerman, St Clement’s Church

The passage today reminds us that God's glory is a visible manifestation of his presence with his people. At Christmas time, God showed himself to us in the form of a human being, Jesus Christ, who came to save us from our sin. During Lent we are waiting for God to show his glory to us once again through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Are you waiting in expectation for Easter Day?

In the Chronicles of Narnia: *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*, a talking beaver shares this promise:

*Wrong will be right, when Aslan comes in sight,
At the sound of his roar, sorrows will be no more,
When he bares his teeth, winter meets its death,
And when he shakes his mane, we shall have spring
again.*

As we prepare for Easter day let's remember that the Lion of Judah is with us and God's glory will shine, by His Holy Spirit in each of us, just as much today as it did in Genesis.

Sharon Prior, Director of PACE

MARCH 7

Numbers 11:29

So many of the prophets were puzzled to have been called. In some cases, their past behaviours might seem to have counted against them, in others, their age. There seems no pattern or sense to God's choice that we can discern. But what we do see as a common feature is openness and acceptance of God's will.

The "Prayer of Unknowing" by Thomas Merton begins; "My God I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me". Perhaps we can all relate to such a sentiment. He continues; "but I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you...and I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it".

As we pray and participate in the building of God's kingdom, let our prayer be one of self-offering; trusting that God's plan for me, with His Spirit within me, will unfold just as it should, taking me to where I need to be.



Michael Antram, Headteacher St. Edwards

Whilst fire doesn't occupy a central role in worship these days it does stand as a powerful metaphor for the presence of God's glory. Fire is a chemical reaction in which combustion releases energy in the form of heat and light. The glory of God is not just something for us to stand in awe at, but it also serves to energise us for the work of the Kingdom in which we are 'set on fire' to bring heat and light into the world; through the warmth of Jesus's love and by the light of Christ that overcomes all darkness.

But despite humanity's long familiarity with fire, science still does not fully understand it: exactly how and why things combust the way they do is still open to question. In other words, there is mystery in fire. How does God's glory set us 'on fire' for his Kingdom? Perhaps that must also remain a mystery, known only to the Holy Spirit, the one who has the spark needed to 'combust' our sacrifices of praise.

Rev. Robyn Golden-Hann

Assistant Curate, Branksome St Aldhelm's

Imagine it: you are sitting there with the other followers of Jesus, relatively few in number and all the events of Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension still raw. All of a sudden the whole house is filled with wind. Not a gentle breeze, but the kind of force that stings your eyes and drowns out every other sound. You look around and with the wind there's what looks like fire, rushing though the house, and as it reaches each person a tongue of fire separates and rests on each person, rests on you. But it's not the kind of fire that burns, there's no destruction, just power and energy.

The presence of God is tangible. In the briefest of moments you are reminded of the stories of the Old Testament, of the breath of God being like a wind, of the burning bush that wasn't consumed, of the pillar of fire that led the Israelites. All stories of God's presence with and guidance of his people. What do you feel, and how will you respond?

Rev. Dr Kate Eaton-Wells, Curate Holy Angels Lilliput

MARCH 10

Eph 2:19-22

These verses form the climax of a section beginning in verse 11. It started with two groups of people who referred to each other by rude names. By the time we get to today's verses, they are joined together by the power of the cross to become the dwelling place of God!

Most Christians want to 'live by the Spirit'. We tend to focus on how to do that individually, but these verses emphasise the corporate nature of God's people as a home for the Holy Spirit. Put another way: Without unity we will never fully experience being a home for His Spirit!

What should we do with this? If we want to see the Holy Spirit working in our lives and in our town, then we need to care about unity. Is there another Christian in your church or your community that you don't relate to? Can you think of any ways to build bridges with them? It is only by being knit together that we will be a temple of the Holy Spirit.

Gez Jones, Poole Christian Fellowship

MARCH 11

1 Cor 3:16

Do you not realise that you are a temple of God with the Spirit of God living in you?

We are coming to the end of the second week of our Lenten effort and are faced here with a profound verse. The main question was whether it concerned the whole church of Corinth, which was the temple where the Holy Spirit dwelt or each individual, whose body was that temple.

Potentially, both are true with an all-present and powerful divinity, we know anything is possible. With regard to our work, fasting and repentance during the next few weeks, this verse concerns us, as single souls and should challenge and encourage us.

If the Spirit lives in us, we must make it our aim to keep this bodily temple in as good shape; physically, mentally and spiritually, as we can. But we are heartened that our meagre body given life by God is worthy of His presence in us - holding us, strengthening us, protecting and providing for us.

Nick Johnson, St Mary's RC Church

MARCH 13

1 Cor 6:19

When we allow ourselves to be loved by Jesus, we become a temple in which God dwells. He created us perfectly as He intended. Perhaps we find it tricky to look at our bodies and consider ourselves 'fearfully and wonderfully made' but that is exactly what this verse reminds us. When Jesus hung from the cross it was a human body in which he died, the perfect sacrifice for all sin.

What we do with our bodies matters to God, so all the things we do with them are meant to worship Him. Our bodies are created to be temples of the Spirit, that God can live in us and call us to be part of His salvation plan. He doesn't ask us to do this by ourselves, but the Holy Spirit fills us, His temples, that we can be in relationship with Him. The Creator of everything personally made each of us exactly as he intended, and sent his Spirit to live in us, that we can know his love for us. What privilege!

Rev. Dan Washbrook, Curate Christ Church Creekmoor

MARCH 14

John 14:16-17

16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

And I will ask and He will give! These words of Jesus surely are words of comfort! Jesus had lived an amazing life with his disciples and he knew he had to prepare them for his departure. It was all deeply emotional but also deeply practical and full of hope!

Jesus was going to leave them but he promised that he would send His Holy Spirit who would always guide them. We too can find this comforting. Whatever we are going through, good or bad we can take Jesus at His word and know that by His Spirit he is there for us – we only have to ask and He will give!

**Rev. Canon Janice Audibert, Vicar Christ Church
Creekmoor**

MARCH 15

1 Pet 2:9

In Exodus 19 the Israelites are called God's "treasured possession". But this is only true if they will "obey his voice and keep his covenant". Our verse in 1 Peter turns this round. We are given all of these wonderful titles first and given the job of "declaring his praises" afterwards. The promise no longer comes after the action, but before it! This is true spiritual rest.

A little later on, in the passage we read, "...declare the praises of Him who called you". We are first called by God. And when we are called, we must respond. And then we become his treasured possession. Will we listen out for, and then respond to, that call? Will we come out of the dark and into the light? Will we share with others what we have received?

As the chorus of the hymn says:

Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?

I have heard you calling in the night.

I will go, Lord, if you lead me.

I will hold your people in my heart.

Justin Coldstream, St Luke's, Parkstone

MARCH 16

Phil 2:7

As we prepare the altar for the eucharist, the priest may say this prayer:

*By this water and this wine,
May we share the divinity of Christ,
Who humbled himself to share our humanity.*

It's quite a claim – that in the eucharist we enter into a most unequal covenant with God. We share in divinity because Jesus shared our humanity.

The words of the prayer come to mind as we reflect today on this verse from Paul's Letter to the Philippians

*....but [Jesus] emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness. (Philippians 2:7)*

Jesus shared our humanity by taking on the form of a slave. What a topsy turvy way of redeeming the human race. Yet we see this inversion in all aspects of the gospel: being last to be first; being poor to become rich; being broken-hearted to become whole.

Today we are reminded that we become fully human through a more silent form of service. Through taking on the form of a slave to serve God and others.

Rev. Sally Bedborough, Associate St. Peter's Parkstone

MARCH 17

Heb 2:7-9

As we look around the world today, we may wonder if anyone is in charge. What has happened?..... wars, natural disasters..... all around us. As we write this we are witnessing the aftermath of the Turkish/Syrian earthquake and the approach of the first anniversary of the war in Ukraine

Jesus was crowned with glory and honour and He is in charge, He was given authority, all things are subject to Him. This includes the present war in Ukraine and the earthquakes in Turkey and Syria. Also subject to Him are our personal worries, burdens, addictions and even our death.

In Hebrews chapter 2 Jesus represents the whole of the human race, Tom Wright says “For the moment, we should simply celebrate the fact, which is central to all Christianity, that in Jesus God has already dealt with death on our behalf, and is already ruling the world as its rightful Lord.” (Tom Wright ‘Hebrews for Everyone.’ Page 17 (SPCK 2003))

So we can therefore Trust and Hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Reg and Jenny Baldock,
Retired Clergy (Reg) and
LLM in Hamworthy Parish**



MARCH 18

John 16:7

“I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.”

John 16:7

Letting go of a loved one, the touch and way we know and love one another, is always a loss.

But Jesus explains that his leaving benefits us. Unless the human and therefore limited persona of God leaves, the Holy Spirit of God cannot dwell among, and within us.

Jesus taught humanity how to see, know and have a close relationship with God.

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit deepens this with comfort, guidance, prayer; the still small voice that, if we listen, will keep us on the Kingdom path.

What a blessing and joy to know love as a human being, and yet more so to know God’s empowering love and guidance in the depth of our souls.

Lord, may your Spirit guide us always.

**Rev. Penny Draper, St. George's Church,
Oakdale**

Pic: St. George’s Garden of Remembrance



MARCH 20

John 1:14

John 1:14 speaks of Jesus' coming, the Word becoming flesh and dwelling among us. We might think that this sort of reading is one for Christmas, but in Lent we are faced with the reality of what this coming to dwell among us truly means in its fullness: his coming to suffer and die, that we might be saved.

He came to dwell among us to participate in our humanity that we might participate in his divinity, our humanity includes our weakness, our suffering, our struggling, our loneliness, our abandonment, all the scorn and horror that we heaped upon him on the Cross.

All so that this side to our human experience might be transfigured in the glory of the Resurrection. As our Lenten journey deepens, let us bring our own personal experience of humanity before the Cross and lay it before him and ask for the fullness of grace to pour forth from the wound in his side.

Fr. James Barber, Roman Catholic Church St. Mary's

Ezekiel 43 presents a powerful vision of God's glory returning to the temple. As we read this chapter during Lent, I reflect that in the person of Jesus, "the glory of the Lord" really did "enter the temple" – on two feet. Here, Ezekiel witnesses the glory of God approaching from the east; he writes "the presence of the Lord" fills the temple with glory. As Christians, we recognise Christ as the true temple of God; the place where God's presence dwells fully.

For Ezekiel, the design of the temple is intended to make Israel ashamed of its sins; "Let them consider its perfection" the voice says to him. By living a perfect life free of sin, and by dying on the cross, Christ makes a mockery of our sin. Our self-seeking behaviour has defiled God's image here on earth, yet through his death and resurrection, Christ opened the way for God's presence to dwell within us. The cross stands as a message - a perfect design that shames our sin and calls us to repent and turn our hearts towards God. Only by doing this are we able to experience the fullness of his glory in our lives.

David Reed, Hamworthy Church

MARCH 22

Matt 3:11

“I baptise you with WaterHe will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire”

These are the words of John the Baptist as he baptises Jesus. The baptism that John had offered people was a kind of washing away of sins after repentance, a long held a Jewish ritual.

But here is something different! John recognises that the sinless Jesus will offer a new sort of baptism.

The promise of the Holy Spirit echoes a key prophecy of Ezekiel (Chapter 11 v19-20). It is a new level of righteous that we are unable to achieve on our own as human beings but may do so with the inspiration and enabling of God through the Holy Spirit.

“I will give them a new heart, and put a new spirit within them.... ”

says the prophet.

There is also the promise of fire, here the fire of the final judgement of God. We, will be held accountable for our actions or for our failure to act when we should have done.

Help us Lord to know the gift of the Holy Spirit and it's purifying power in lives lived to your glory .

Viv Robertson (LLM) Hamworthy

MARCH 23

John 3:5

Thoughts on John 3.5

Jesus, You once said,
“People need a new beginning,
People need to start again,
must become like little children,
If Gods Kingdom they would gain!”
That place where love is key,
Where we know our need of thee,
“I will be mother hen” (You said),
You offer warmth and food and shelter,
You give us every breath,
And You Yourself become our daily bread!
For life itself is made for You,
And all depend upon You,
And so we say,
“Our Father,
Your Kingdom come,
We receive Your invitation”,
And accept Your gracious promise,
That if like children we’ll become,
Then even now we may begin,
To enter in
That very special Kingdom
The realm of heavens King.
Colin Amey.

Johnathan Martin, Buckland Road Baptist Church

MARCH 24

John 14:26

How we all long to be guided by God.

In John 14 v 26 Jesus tells His closest followers that when He has left them the Holy Spirit will 1. Teach them and 2. Remind them of things that Jesus has already said to them. To this end, the disciples were blessed with having had a personal and human relationship with Jesus and together were able to reflect on the words that He had spoken to them.

Today, we are blessed with the written word of God.

We should endeavour to make time to listen and learn what the Holy Spirit would teach us through scripture, inner conviction, and our spiritual teachers and pray that He will gently remind us of those teachings so that daily we can live within the will of our Heavenly Father.

And remember....

We can only be 'taught' if we both listen and make ourselves 'teachable'.

We can only be 'reminded' of things that we have already been taught.

Gill Payne, Poole Food Bank+ Manager, Jimmy's, St James' Church Centre

MARCH 25

John 15:26

“When the Helper comes... He’ll remind you of everything about me” (John 15:26)

Which word for the Holy Spirit works best for you from the list in the amazing “Amplified Bible”: Helper, Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor-Counsellor, Strengthener, Standby, Divine Encourager?

Picture 1: you are welcoming people at church; someone comes in, angry and in pain.

-Holy Spirit please remind me how to love them as Jesus does.

-With His help, I can say hello, offer them a drink, sit down and listen.

Picture 2: you get to the check-out, and the server looks so weary and fed up.

-Holy Spirit please remind me how to pray for them as Jesus does.

-With His help, I can ask God to bless them, smile, thank them for being there

Picture 3: you get home, and your loved one is sick again.

-Holy Spirit please remind me that You are here as you always will be.

-With His help, I can keep going, keep believing, keep speaking hope.

Come Holy Spirit, wherever we are, whoever we’re with!

Alistair Doxat-Purser, CEO, Faithworks

MARCH 27

Gal 5:22-23

When we surrender our lives to God, He fills us with the Holy Spirit to guide, protect and empower us until Jesus returns.

The “Fruit of the Spirit” which Paul talks about refers to the qualities within that Spirit that God will grow in the life of a faithful Christian who believes in the power of what Jesus did on the cross.

These qualities are not produced by works or by trying but rather by the Spirit working through the believer’s faith.



John Ainsworth, Churches Together in Poole

MARCH 28

Luke 3:22

What beautiful words to reflect on today, Jesus rises from the water after His baptism, the holy Spirit falls on Him and His heavenly Father affirms Him with the words, “You are my son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased”. I wonder how many people long to hear those words spoken over them, “You are my son... you are my daughter, in whom I am well pleased”?

So many of us live with the wounds of words that have crushed us but God has another narrative for us. Through Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit, we too can hear our Heavenly Father’s words of affirmation and promise spoken over us.

Take a moment to look at the word cloud below. Sit with the word that resonates with you today, write it on a post-it note and put it where you can see it. Allow the truth of God’s word to soak into your heart and mind.



Rev. Christine Brooks, Vicar, St. Philip's West Howe

MARCH 29

Rom 15:13

When composing a text message I sometimes find it hinting that I am old-fashioned! It highlights certain words and suggests I replace them with an emoji such as 👍 instead of 'great' or 🎉 instead of 'birthday'.

There is, however, one replacement that I refuse to use. The first emoji suggested for 'hope' is 🙏 and we can all fall into a hope like that - we cross our fingers and hope something might happen. But for those of us who know the 'God of Hope' we can look at things from a different perspective.

Our hope, as Paul reminds us, is the connection to a presence and a power that is gifted to us by the Holy Spirit. It is by the Spirit that we have hope, a hope that the glory of God's kingdom will be revealed in the fullness of time and will bring us a blessing of peace and joy, now and into eternity.

We can all claim this hope anytime, through prayer and praise, and so let us use 🙏 as our hope emoji to declare this.

**Rev. Stephen Partridge, Vicar St. Mary's Lytchett
Matravers**

MARCH 30

Isa 11:22

On Sundays, in between ablutions and breakfast, I listen to the Radio 4 Sunday programme (other radio channels are available).

One recent discussion proposed that since the human concentration span is decreasing, sermons should be shorter. Listeners being given a pithy nugget to take away and chew on rather than a boulder. The Revd Alycia Timmis was challenged to deliver a 30 second homily. She delivered the following.

‘The Gospel of Luke is punctuated by Angels, Angels at the beginning, Angels in the middle, Angels at the end, each time their message is concise and clear ‘Do not be afraid’, Jesus’ first words in Luke’s Gospel are the same angelic mantra, ‘Do not be afraid’ This is the heart of the Christian message, we have nothing to fear. God is with us always. Be not afraid AMEN’

Succinct indeed! Reminding us that ‘fear’ of the Lord is best translated as awe and respect because as Jesus has shown us, there is nothing in God to be afraid of.

Rev. Declan McConville – Lead Chaplain, University Hospitals Dorset

MARCH 31

Judges 3:10-14

Ever feel like you're stuck in a rut? We all know how it feels to repeat the same old mistakes. If we know Jesus, we know we're permanently made right with God because of his death on the cross, but sometimes we wonder how we'll break free from the seemingly endless cycle of living life God's way for a bit and then blowing it again.

In the book of Judges, we see the people of God stuck in the same cycle and in today's short excerpt the only hope we see is when God the Holy Spirit gets hold of a person and leads them to break the cycle, at least for a while (in Othniel's case – 40 years of peace!).

Praying for the Kingdom of God to come means asking God to fill us with his Spirit so we can Live the Kingdom life, empowered by his love and break free from the cycles of destruction, apathy, temptation, or anything else that holds us back. So let's do that! On a daily basis!



Dave Pegg, Schools Work Leader for PACE

APRIL 1

Rom 8:26

“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.”

I find this verse to be an amazing comfort because I am so often unsure of how to pray. When I see the aftermath of an earthquake on my screen, when a parishioner is grieving the loss of their beloved spouse, when a parent expresses deep concern for a child who is not making good choices, I feel helpless and wordless.

But it occurs to me in my silence, weakness, helplessness, in my lack that I begin to encounter God as the One who speaks, who listens, who comforts, who is my strength and my refuge. I find myself leaning on the One who has experienced sadness and grief, and knowing that He understands. That having it all sorted is not the point.

The important thing is being with Jesus - and allowing the Spirit of God to minister to me and those I hold before Him and to understand my unsaid words.

Rev. Tessa Nisbet, Rector Hamworthy Parish

APRIL 3

Matt 12:31-33

“Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.” (NIV)

Jesus’s words here have caused anxiety for some who fear that the way home to God is full of trapdoors. They worry about ending up in an eternal hell through a single wrong thought.

Jesus has performed a miracle for a man who could not talk or see - but the jealous elite propose a conspiracy theory: Jesus is in league with demons, and gets his spiritual power from them!

He is warning everyone, not of a trapdoor to hell, but the long road to a personal living hell that begins with persistent lying and misrepresentation of the facts – especially about ourselves.

Addiction support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) insist on complete and thoroughgoing personal honesty as the beginning of recovery. If you are reading this Lent booklet, it is likely that you put some value on honesty already. How can you become more transparent, more truthful? Is there a friend or a community that you are part of – or could find – that would help you with this?

Rev. James Taylor, Healthcare Chaplain

APRIL 4

Luke 24:45-49

I love a good movie. Sadly, not everyone agrees with me what a good movie is. For some it's a classic, like Casablanca. Some like thrillers. Some like horror. Not me. The movies I love have superheroes. Pure escapism. The runaway success of Marvel has created the most successful movie franchise of all time. They're not all good though. Some are awful. But I always see them through for one reason; the end credit trailer, a short scene at the end of the credits where the Director sets up the audience for the next movie. The next stage. The next adventure.

Perhaps we see that in this reading. The story of the crucifixion and resurrection is complete. Jesus now brings "His end credit scene" They thought the story was over and then, unexpectedly, Jesus appears. Just think.. people are meeting with God outside of the temple. Not only talking to God directly, but talking to a God who wants to eat with them, to live with them, be a part of their everyday lives. This is revolutionary. A total change in the relationship between God and humans and a start to a whole new adventure!

Steve Robinson, CEO of Prama

APRIL 5

John 3:6-8

John 1:7

Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.

The Bible often describes our human nature using the term "flesh." This is the exact opposite of the Spirit, which is from God (John 1:33). This is the reason that a rebirth is necessary.

The phrase "born again" has become a cliché, so it means very little to most people. However, the difference between the flesh and the Spirit is the reason why rebirth is necessary. Those who are part of "the flesh" are totally incapable of unconditional loving, obeying, or knowing God. A sinful human nature makes this impossible. In order to be reunited with God, a person has to have their nature changed. This cannot happen through normal means. It requires that a person be "born again," this time in the Spirit of God. This way, all surprising and unexpected things will be done through them by God's Spirit. Just like it happens with the wind. Can you imagine a church full of people like this?

Rev. Betto Viana, Poole Methodists

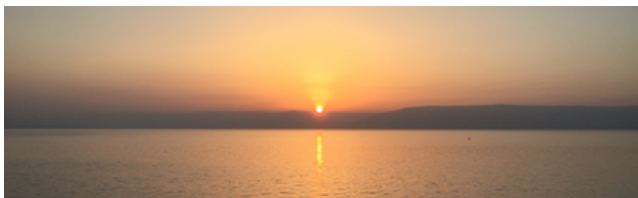
APRIL 6

Rom 8:2-6

Although I am not a morning person, one of the great joys of camping for me is stepping out of the tent first thing in a new morning and breathing in that wonderful clean fresh air.

In these verses, Paul contrasts a life governed by what he calls 'the law of sin and death' or 'the flesh' with a life led by the Spirit. The old law had failed to set people free, so God stepped in, literally, in the person of Jesus and with the outpouring of the Spirit. Here is the greatest of all promises, the death of Jesus and the power of the Spirit have brought the fresh air of freedom; freedom from sin and death. This freedom, is the antithesis of the constricting, claustrophobic 'law of sin and death'. The words 'spirit' and 'breath' share a common root in the greek word 'pneuma' so we can surely think of the new life and freedom of the Spirit as literally a breath of fresh air.

From law-restricted to Spirit-enabled, just like a morning filled with new light and lungfulls of fresh breath.



Canon Simon Evans, St.Thomas' Ensbury Park & Lead Chaplain Dorset Police.

APRIL 7

Rom 5:8

Romans 5:8 -

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this
While we were still sinners Christ died for us

Today is the day
Jesus stood
in your place.

YOUR NAME



Rob Sallis, St Mary's Church, Longfleet

APRIL 8

Luke 24:45-47

“How many times have I told you?!?” I wonder if like me you have used or heard those words being directed at you by a parent or relative? Sometimes we can hear things many times, but we still don’t understand. I’m told on average you need to see/hear be told something 6 times before you remember it. Sometimes, even when we understand, we still fail to act upon that understanding. In this passage we see Jesus opening the disciples’ minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He had already told them multiple times about his death and resurrection, yet only now, after the event does it seem they begin to catch glimpses of what he means. As we seek to both understand and live in the light of the events of Good Friday and Easter we need the Spirit to continually open our minds to see the amazing truth of Easter and it’s relevance to every aspect of our daily lives. And as we go out and attempt to share that message of hope and resurrection, we will also need to pray for Jesus to open the minds of others to hear that message for themselves.

**Rev. Lerys Campbell,
St Clements Poole**



APRIL 9

John 1:12

John 1:12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

In our language, a “right” is a moral or legal obligation to do or have something. In England, we are born with certain rights. We have the right to live. The right to privacy. The right to a fair trial and the right to believe in whichever religion we choose. These kind of rights can be depended upon and leveraged in court if and when we need them to be.

But the word translated “right” in John 1:12 isn’t really about all that. Jesus isn't offering people a new human “right”. The word would better be translated as “power of choice” or simply, liberty. It’s different to a right. We receive liberty from something. Liberty from an oppressive relationship, regime or religion. Liberty even from any harmful history and identity we might have given ourselves.

Easter then isn’t about acquiring some new right by believing in the resurrection. It is a new name on a new kind of certificate. A reminder that law itself isn’t big enough for God. For he alone takes a word, and turns it into flesh.

Rev. John Good, Pioneer Baptist Minister, Hamworthy

