



Connection

Sunday 21st February 2021
First Sunday of Lent



View from a Vicarage

Greetings and welcome to another edition of the Bredon Hill Connection!

As I write this article, the weather has taken a decided change for the milder but wetter, perhaps a sure sign that Spring is starting to push its way into our midst. In fact given the large number of snowdrops, crocuses and now even daffodils that I see as I do a daily walk I am sure this is the case.

And this last week we have moved into the penitential season of Lent. I hope that you enjoyed your pancakes on Shrove Tuesday and are now finding ways to spend some time marking this special time in the Churches year, as we journey towards Holy Week and Easter.

I have once again elected to give up chocolate, which has been my annual tradition for over 25 years, but with every year I wonder about whether this is actually a good way to honour Lent. For although I do still find the sacrifice helpful in helping me reflect on what it means to do without something I enjoy, I am not sure that it does really enhance my spiritual development or deepen my faith to any great degree.

So, this year, I have decided to engage with a six-week study course produced by the United Society Partners in the Gospel (USPG), the Anglican mission agency that partners churches and communities worldwide in God's mission to enliven faith, strength relationships, unlock potential and champion justice. The agency founded in 1701 will, I am sure, be familiar to many of us, and I certainly grew up as a child, saving some pennies from my pocket money and putting them into a handmade box they provided each year, based on a particular theme.

Today the agency is obviously more sophisticated, but as a charity, and as a mission activity, their aims are much the same as they were over 40 years ago. Their theme this year is “*For Such a Time as This*”, and focuses on the way that as a people occupying this wonderful planet we call earth, we have moved away from the beauty of its Creation, and now live in a world facing crisis because of how humanity has used, or misused, its resources. Through the biblical narrative of salvation, the course will aim to challenge participants to consider how we may all play our part in the redemption and re-Creation of this beautiful planet.

Were it not for Covid and the pandemic, I am sure that environmental issues and climate change would be at the top of both governmental and Church agendas, and indeed this is something you will be hearing a lot more about as the Church of England, and this Diocese of Worcester, seeks to become Net Zero Carbon by 2030.

Therefore, I am going to use this time during Lent to reflect through the material provided by the USPG on how this not only applies to me as a Christian living and serving in a beautiful and abundant area of the world, whilst recognizing the plight of many across the world, who do not have the same opportunities or resources. To this end USPG are hoping that their course, and their activities, will encourage people to financially support their efforts; And if anyone would like to similarly follow their work and offer some financial donation their details can be found at USPG, 5 Trinity Street London, SE1 1DB or you can call on 020 7921 2200 or visit www.uspg.org/forsuchatime



Later in the year, I will be recommending that all churches commit one service to support Climate Sunday, when as church communities these issues can be explored as part of our collective worship.

However, if you would like to join a local Lent Study Course then may I remind you that each Wednesday evening at 7.00pm via Zoom, Canon Rev. Roger Spiller will be leading a Bredon Hill Study Group; And during the sessions, he will be taking us through a series of reflections and discussions on the topics of where God, Science, Individuals, Society and Church is during this time of world pandemic and to consider what the implications are for our faith and lives within it.

Please do think about whether this is something that you can commit to and if you are able to join, then please contact Alison Khan and she will send you a Zoom invitation to the session.

Further details on the course were circulated with last week's edition of Connection, along with some of the other activities and services we will be looking to hold during Lent and Holy Week. Obviously, these details are very much subject to any updates we receive from the government next week on the proposed national roadmap out of the Lockdown restrictions. To this end the Bredon Hill Forum will be meeting on 25 February to review any such updates and consider the implications on how this may affect on our return to Communal Worship.

In the meantime, may I take this opportunity to wish you a very blessed Lent, and please do not hesitate to get in touch with me if you wish to discuss any aspect of ministry.

May God grant you His peace and His love in the weeks ahead.

Allison

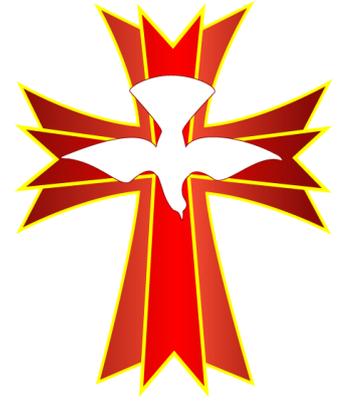
Vicar of Eckington, Defford with Besford and Associate Priest for the churches of the Bredon Hill Group

Service of Holy Communion for the First Sunday of Lent

Collect

Heavenly Father,
your Son battled with the powers of darkness,
and grew closer to you in the desert:
help us to use these days to grow in wisdom and prayer
that we may witness to your saving love
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen



Genesis 9: 8-17

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, “Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

Mark 1: 9-15

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.” And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him. Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

Post Communion Prayer

Lord God,
you have renewed us with the living bread from heaven;
by it you nourish our faith,
increase our hope,
and strengthen our love:
teach us always to hunger for him who is the true and living bread,
and enable us to live by every word
that proceeds from out of your mouth;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

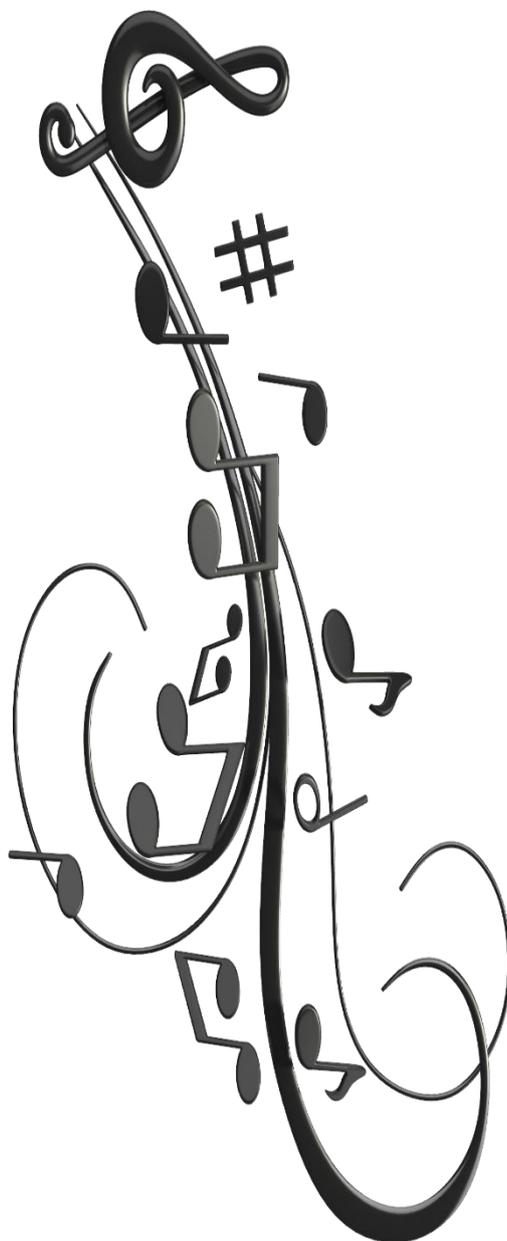
Amen



Wait for the Lord, his day is near
Wait for the Lord, be strong take heart
Prepare the way for the Lord
Make a straight path for Him
The Glory of the Lord shall be revealed
All the Earth will see the Lord
Rejoice in the Lord always
He is at Hand
Joy and gladness for all who seek the Lord

Hymn

- 1 I sing the almighty power of God,
that made the mountains rise,
that spread the flowing seas abroad,
and built the lofty skies.
- 2 I sing the wisdom that ordained
the sun to rule the day;
the moon shines full at his command,
and all the stars obey.
- 3 I sing the goodness of the Lord,
that filled the earth with food;
he formed the creatures with his word,
and then pronounced them good.
- 4 Creatures, as numerous as they be,
are subject to his care;
there's not a place where we can flee
but God is present there.
- 5 Lord, how thy wonders are displayed
where'er I turn mine eye,
if I survey the ground I tread,
or gaze upon the sky.
- 6 God's hand is my perpetual guard,
he guides me with his eye;
why should I then forget the Lord,
whose love is ever nigh?



Reflection for Sunday 21st February by Phil Airdrie

There are some particularly significant moments in biblical history, and today's readings take us to two of the biggest. The passage from Genesis reminds us of the time of Noah, where it is as if God pressed the 'reset' button on mankind, only allowing those eight people floating in the ark along with the animals and birds to survive. It is difficult to imagine how desperately God must have despaired of human society at that time, to act in such a devastating and destructive way. It is therefore a great encouragement to us that in our reading today, God promises never to repeat the same feat of frightening power and, in a way, shows the lighter side of God's character, by creating the rainbow to remind him and us, of his promise. We may know something of the scientific principles making up a rainbow but who doesn't get excited when we see that rainbow of colours in the sky? A few weeks ago, as the water levels rose around the county, some might have felt it time to give God a gentle reminder!



Our gospel reading in Mark perhaps shows us God dealing with a similar problem to that in the time of Noah. There is no dramatic physical destruction, but this time an appeal to the hearts and minds of the people. After about four hundred years without a biblically recorded prophet, on to the stage steps John the Baptist. And what a role this man was to take! The priests, Levites, scribes and Pharisees – or God's so-called representatives – had peddled their own version of access to God a bit like the way the tourist industry develops around an attraction today. The Jews had become a rudderless generation adrift without a moral compass. John announced to the world a sea change in the relationship of God with his people, prophesied generations before, by the very presence of Jesus. At the moment of Jesus's baptism by John, God reveals himself like a dove, confirming and endorsing Jesus's authority here on earth. The new covenant of a personal relationship with God had begun.

Becoming a Christian is relatively simple. Living the Christian life is more complex and is a case of, the more you know, the more you realise you don't know. This week sees the start of Lent. Immediately after his baptism, Jesus took himself away on his own for forty days to commune with God, to examine himself and prepare for God's service. This is what Lent can be for us, not just the simplistic 'what are you giving up for Lent: cakes, chocolate?' The church calendar suggests this period of self-examination in the run up to Easter. It may involve a degree of fasting and moderation but these actions are not reserved just for Lent.

It was forty days before Noah dared open the hatch on the ark and forty days that Jesus was alone in the desert. Let's hope we make use of *our* next forty days in a wise fashion.

Prayers for Sunday 21st February 2021 by Revd Catherine Lack



Research has repeatedly shown how certain groups of people are often prayed for in church; while others almost never get a mention. There is nothing wrong, in fact there is everything right, about praying for: the sick, those who

care for them, those in education, prisoners, the homeless, victims of natural or human-generated disasters (earthquakes, famines) and so on. But how often do we pray for sportspeople, those who work in advertising, Bank Managers, journalists...? So today I thought we would spend some time praying for those who need our prayers, but aren't often mentioned in prayers, in addition to those in particular need at this time. We will keep silence between each – to remember our own concerns.

Let us pray: for our world and for our church.

Lord, we pray for those on whom our world depends. We remember all who influence others, including journalists, those who manage our money, and all those who work behind the scenes that we don't hear about or know about. In a moment of silence we remember all those whom we don't normally pray for, particularly remembering sportspeople wondering about their futures, those caught up in scandals...

Lord in your mercy.

Hear our prayer.

Let us pray for leaders in every field of life, those who have to make decisions which may be unpopular. We remember those involved in advertising, those in the travel industry, all who work in IT, those in industries we rarely think about... At this time we pray particularly for young people pondering their future.

Lord in your mercy.

Hear our prayer

Let us pray for the peoples of the world. And as well as those currently in the news: Hong Kong, Yemen, we pray for the Central African Republic, at war for at least the last 17 years. We remember the people of Kyrgyzstan, who have never known peace. We pray for those who work tirelessly behind the scenes for peace...

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

We pray for all who suffer. We remember particularly those suffering from COVID and its aftermath; and all those who have had medical procedures postponed because of COVID, and those who are too nervous to go to the doctor. We pray for our nurses, our doctors, our hospital porters and cleaners, the administrators who do such an important job to ensure our hospitals function as well as they can... We pray for all those involved in work to help our wellbeing. For the work of Samaritans, Victim Support, Mental health charities...

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Finally, let us remember in our hearts all who are dear to us – family, friends, people we hear about and care about... Those who make the news and those who don't. Lord, make us aware that you care about each & every one of us, however much or little we can contribute to making your world a better place.

Merciful Father

Accept our prayers...

Requests for Prayers

If there is someone or something that you would like to pray for please email us at eckingtonvicarage@hotmail.com



Please continue to pray for the ill and isolated, frontline, hospital and medical staff and for all those who are in any kind of need. Pray for those who have been appointed Area Deans as well as everyone who will form part of the leadership team in the new deaneries.

Those who are sick: We pray for all those who are sick everywhere and for those who have asked for our prayers and for their carers, Roy and Margaret Putnam, Christopher Frith, Edward Bunn, Brian Bolam, Wendy Dufty and Yvonne Seward.

We continue to pray for: Percy and Sharon Blizzard, Jackie Pickford, Clive Hunt

Those in residential care: Sheila Bigland-Gibbons, Barbara Milton, Rita Sheppy

We pray for those who have died everywhere: For those who we know and their families and for those whose anniversary of death falls at this time - Eileen Fincher, Stephen Jeenes, Michael Donnelly, Ronnie Compton, Captain Anthony Greenwood, Betty Kirkpatrick, Margaret Sutton, Liz Gough, Don Dufty

World Day of Prayer – 5th March 2021



World Day of Prayer is an international, inter-church organisation which enables us to hear the thoughts of women from all parts of the world; their hopes, concerns and prayers. This year's service has been prepared by the Christian Women of the Republic of Vanuatu located in the South Pacific Ocean.

Usually, congregations would be able to gather together to celebrate the service that the women of Vanuatu have prepared. With our churches closed currently, a recording of the service has been created so that you join with churches around the globe on this special day in your own home.

If you have access to the internet the recording can be emailed to you; if you don't; then you can dial in by telephone to hear it being played. Contact Angie Godsell 01684 772469 or angie.godsell@btinternet.com if you would like a service booklet delivered to you, giving your name and address. If you would like to either receive the link to the service or dial in, then please contact Alison Khan on 07984 748059 and let her know.

PERSHORE BENEFICE GIFT BAG INITIATIVE FOR NHS STAFF:

Details of this initiative were included in the Connection last week. Just a reminder that please can we have your completed bags as soon as possible and by no later than **Saturday 27 February**.

In Eckington, items can be left in the blue box in the porch of Oakmere (the home of Colin and Stella Reeves), a bungalow in the lay-by opposite the shop. Elsewhere, please phone Sara Speed on 01386 710776 to arrange collection from your home.





Church Services during Lockdown

Peter Hayes will be leading Morning Prayer via Zoom this Sunday at 10.30am. So, if you would like to join us for worship and fellowship, please contact Alison Khan (email acbhteam@gmail.com or telephone 07984 748059) and she will send you an invitation.

All of the information regarding Lent and Holy Week is now in a separate document which was sent out last week.



We need you!

Holy Trinity, Eckington will be accepting donations for Pershore Foodbank on Wednesdays and Fridays between 10am-3pm Any non-perishable food is welcomed but they are particularly asking for:

- Instant mash
- Tinned carrots
- Tinned oranges
- fruit juice
- UHT Milk

Thank you!

Additional Resources during Lockdown

Even though we are inviting everyone to join our weekly Zoom service at 10.30 on Sunday morning, please be aware that the Freephone Daily Hope programmes of worship services and prayers are still available by ringing 0800 804 8044. This includes a Church of England weekly service (select option 6) and traditional Morning/Evening Prayer (select option 7). This service will not cost the caller anything and provides worship material for those looking for additional services and prayer.

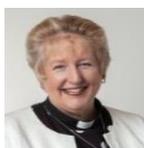


A free phonenumber of hymns, reflections and prayers



News from the Diocese

Prayers and diocesan news can be found at www.cofe-worcester.org.uk



Reverend Allison Davies

Vicar of Eckington, Defford with Besford and Associate Priest for the churches of the Bredon Hill Group

