

“BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN”

It's always a relief, when you recommend something to other people before you've had the chance to try it out yourself, to find that it's not just OK, but really good. For me, this has happened more than I could possibly have expected, with the 'Pilgrim Journeys' Lent booklets.

Some of the reflections touched on familiar ideas, but put them so succinctly and thoughtfully that I will keep coming back to them. Others teased out ideas that were new to me, in ways that I've found hugely fruitful.

Particularly hard-hitting for me was Day 6 (page 21 in the booklet), reflecting on the second of Jesus's sayings in Matthew Chapter 5, which are known as the Beatitudes. Jesus said *'Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.'* This is what the booklet says:-

'Blessed are those who mourn' is a word for every Christian, not just a comfort to the bereaved. There is a huge paradox here which is meant to make us think. Happiness ('Blessed') is next to sorrow. Grief is set in the context of hope.

We live in a world full of suffering and loss. To mourn is to be courageous. We dare to open our eyes and ears and hearts to the suffering around us and the pain within us.

To grieve in this way is only possible because of God's love and God's hope – otherwise the pain and suffering would overwhelm us. Jesus offers us the only way to live well: to open our eyes to suffering yet hold that pain within God's greater love and joy.

I had never thought about mourning that way before. Like most of us, I've seen – and to some extent experienced for myself – the courage it takes when we are bereaved, to fully face the loss. We keep busy to protect ourselves, or think about other things, and sometimes that's the only way we have of coping. But, when we are ready, there comes a time when we need to let what has happened sink in, and, yes, that does take courage.

But what hit me even harder is how I tend to protect myself from the suffering and loss in the wider world. I turn over the page of the newspaper or change the TV channel or block out the words on the radio. I don't let it get to me.

So it is potentially life-changing to hear Jesus say that it is *'blessed'* to actually face these things, and to realise that because I am held by God's unconditional love, I can take the risk of daring to look the world – with all its griefs and sorrows and disappointments and heartbreaks – directly in the eye. I can let it sink in. I can feel it, without it overwhelming me.

And then, of course, I might be able to respond. But let's not get ahead of ourselves. Sometimes doing something (as in *'Can I do anything?'* which well-meaning friends often say to grieving people) can be a way of defending ourselves against feeling too deeply, by taking a form of control.

So, for now, I'm going to focus on the mourning. Not a bad thing to do as Holy Week approaches. Jesus carries all the sins and sorrows of an aching world, and we do right to sit at the foot of the cross and weep. Weep over the mess that Brexit has become. Weep over the horror of terrorist atrocities and natural disasters, the tragedy of human inhumanity, the way democracy seems to be descending into bone-headed partisanship, and the more immediate suffering of those close to us.

We can face all that, and, somehow, it won't overwhelm us. Because Easter is coming...

Andrew



Diocese of Canterbury
CHANGED LIVES @ CHANGING LIVES

| | | |
|-----------|------------------------|--------|
| inside... | Items of Interest | Page 2 |
| | Services and What's on | Page 3 |
| | Bits and Pieces | Page 4 |

Items of Interest

St Paul's Fellowship

In March we once again enjoyed musical entertainment from John Beetham. We had great fun joining in with the singing and musical accompaniment and were treated to a beautiful impromptu solo from Maureen!

On 18 April we will enjoy a Beetle Drive organised by Barbara Betteridge. Definitely one of our regular highlights! If you haven't experienced the fun and frenzy of a Beetle Drive you should come along!

We shall also be taking final payment of just £5 for our outing to Great Comp Gardens on 16 May.

St Paul's Fellowship Group always welcomes new members, so why not invite friends or neighbours along? Guests can attend for just £1 per session. Our annual membership fee remains at £10.

For more information please contact Ann Lewis on 07713192369 Gill Stenson on 01622 752643 or Margaret Hawkes on 01622 763365

The Fellowship Planning Team



Deanery Prayer for April

A copy of the Prayer Focus can be found at the back of the church.

OUTLOOK

Celebrating faith and life in East Kent
Copies of the Spring 2019
Outlook Magazine can be found at the back of the church.



A copy of the MSP News can be found at the back of the church.

St Paul's Church



will be holding a short Holy Week service at
Maidstone Care Centre
on Thursday, 18th April at 3pm

Please speak to Jenny at Church if you would like to come along to this Service. She would be pleased to have your company.



Friday 5 April
7.30 pm - 9.00 pm

We have decided to hold a craft evening in the small hall. From May the group will be held on the second Friday of each month in the large hall. Please come along and enjoy a time to chat, drink coffee/tea and spend time doing your own craft.

Please speak to **Anne Gillespie**.

Meet...

Hello! My name is Chris and I'm a fairly new member of St. Paul's (compared to many).

I love music. When I was 12 we moved from Wimbledon to New Malden in Surrey. We didn't have room in our new house for the piano, so my parents bought my sister and I a guitar each. I loved the fact that I could write down the words to my favourite songs, work out the chords, play them on my guitar and sing. Nowadays, I enjoy singing with the Rochester Singers choir and still play the guitar.

I also love animals, particularly cats. For me a house is not a home without a cat. We have a strict house rule; 'Cats are not to be disturbed', even if they're sitting where you want to sit, on important documents, or on wrapping paper that you're just about to use.

I've been married to Gerry for nearly 44 years, have two children and three lovely grandchildren. My mum, Joan, is in the process of moving from Surrey to a retirement flat in Maidstone at the age of 93. Mum joined the WRAF during the war which made her an amazing, strong woman. She will be joining us at St. Paul's, so I hope you will all welcome her as much as I've felt welcomed by you.



Coffee & Chat

Waterstones' Coffee Shop
Fremlin Walk at 10.30 am
as follows:

Thursday 11 April
Thursday 9 May
Thursday 13 June

Everyone is welcome. Please come along and join us. If you want to know more about our get-togethers, please speak to **Jenny Clifton** at Church.

Holiday Club - Cancelled

Many thanks to all those who volunteered to help this year. Please keep Capt. Graham Nunn in your prayers.

Services at St Paul's for April

| Date & Day | Time | Service |
|--|--------------------------------|--|
|  APR SUN 7 <i>Fifth Sunday of Lent</i> | 8.45 am 10.30 am 6.30 pm | Holy Communion (sung) Café Worship Sung Evensong |
|  APR SUN 14 <i>Palm Sunday</i> | 8.45 am 10.30 am | Holy Communion (said) All-Age Worship (with Communion) |
|  APR WED 17 <i>Holy Wednesday</i> | 9.30 am | Mid-Week Holy Communion |
|  APR THURS 18 <i>Maundy Thursday</i> | 7.30 pm | Holy Communion and Stripping of the Altar |
|  APR FRI 19 <i>Good Friday</i> | 2.00 pm | Meditation |
|  APR SUN 21 <i>Easter Day</i> | 8.45 am 10.30 am | Easter Communion All-Age Worship |
|  APR SUN 28 <i>Second Sunday of Easter</i> | 8.45 am 10.30 am 6.00 pm | Holy Communion (said) All-Age Worship (with Communion) Breathe |

What's on

| | | |
|------------------------|---|---|
| Wednesday 3 April | 10.30 am | Mother & Toddler Easter Service |
| Friday 5 April | 7.30 - 9.30 pm | Crafts - (small hall) |
| Thursday 11 April | 10.30 am | Coffee & Chat - Waterstones' Coffee Shop |
| Thursday 18 April | 2.30 pm | Fellowship - Beetle Drive - Barbara Betteridge |
| Thursday 18 April | 3.00 pm | Holy Week service - Maidstone Care Centre |
| Friday 19 April | 10.20 am | Good Friday Walk of Witness - St Francis Church |
| Saturday 27 April | 9.30 - 12.30 pm | Plain Chyp's - St Martin's Maidstone |
| Sunday 28 April | 12 noon | Annual Parish & Annual Parochial Church Meetings - in church |
| Monday 29 April | 7.30 pm | MLT Meeting |
| Sunday 5 May | 8.45 am 10.30 am 6.30 pm | Holy Communion (sung) Café Worship Sung Evensong |
| Wednesday 8 May | 9.30 am | Mid-Week Holy Communion |



Bits and Pieces

Annual Parish & Annual Parochial Church Meetings Sunday 28 April @ 12 noon in church

These meetings are held to elect the churchwardens and to conduct other parish business. The APCM is open to all members on the electoral roll.

If you wish to be entered on the new church electoral roll you must complete an application form and place it in the green envelope at the back of church by **Sunday 31 March**. The roll will then be closed to new applicants until after the APCM. The new electoral roll will be on display from the 3 April until the APCM, when any errors or omissions in the roll may be corrected.

At these meetings we will be electing

- Two churchwardens;
- One member to the Deanery Synod (2 year term of office);
- Six members to the Parochial Church Council.

Nomination forms for these posts will be available at the back of church from Wednesday 3 April.

The Trustees' Annual Report and Audited Accounts for 2018 will be available from 21 April. If you would like to receive these by email please make sure you have completed and returned the consent form which is available at the back of church.

Jenny Turner

PCC Secretary and Electoral Roll Officer

Eco Church

The PCC have agreed that St Paul's should pursue the measures required to initially register as an Eco Church and then to work through the online Survey about how we, as a church, are caring for God's earth in different areas of our church life and work. The answers we provide will collect points towards an Eco Church Award.

This will be an ongoing task so we are looking for one or two volunteers, who ideally have access to the Internet, to help Jenny take this process forward. If this is something you feel you would like to be involved in or if you would like more information, please speak to either **Andrew** or **Jenny**.

Sight Impairment

Awareness

Monday 13 May

7 pm until 9.30 pm

You are warmly invited to attend an interactive workshop on the issues faced by people with Low Vision, particularly when attending Church.

There will be opportunities to consider barriers and solutions, and undertake activities under simulation.

Please sign up at back of church.

For further details please contact **Ann Lewis** on 07713192369



Plain ChYPs is a training day for those leading ministry with children and young people's groups. It's an MOT of sorts for your youth and children's groups. Come along to meet fellow leaders, share best practice and steal the odd idea. Including: paperwork, behaviour, planning and purpose. Saturday 2 March, 9.30am – 12.30pm, Willesborough Church, Ashford. Book at: www.canterburydiocese.org/events/plain-chyps-3/

Who's Who at St Paul's

Priest-in-Charge

Revd Canon Andrew Sewell
01622 691926

Churchwardens

Mr Mark Turner
01622 206529

Mr Brian Beswick
01622 678315

Authorised Lay Ministers

Mrs Jenny Clifton
01622 761533

Mrs Gwyn McPherson
01622 674683

Parish Administrator

Mrs Tracey Pavan
01622 762370

Mon/Tues (9 am - 10.30 am)

Thurs (9 am - 11 am)

Fri (11.30 am - 1 pm)

admin@stpaulsmaidstone.org

Maidstone Bible Week 'Encountering God'

Monday 13 - Thursday 16 May
7.30 - 9.30 pm

The Life Church, Maidstone
Speakers: Dr Chris Sinkinson & Alistair McKitterick



Churches Together
in Maidstone



**Good Friday
Walk of
Witness**

Friday 19th, April, 2019

Arrive outside St Francis Church
at 10.20am
(126, Week St, Maidstone ME14 1RH)

Finish with worship
in Jubilee Square at 11.00am