



# St Paul's Church



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Dear All

When I started to gather my thoughts last week in preparation for preaching on Ash Wednesday, I thought at first that I was going to be focusing on the power of *pausing*. The lectionary passage was John 8.1-11, the story of the woman apparently caught in adultery and the Pharisees who spot an opportunity to catch Jesus out but rather than falling into their trap, Jesus drops to the ground and starts to write in the dirt, giving the religious leaders the time to think better of their snap judgement and murderous intentions. They appear to change their minds and slowly walk away.

So my initial thoughts were about the value of *stepping back*, giving yourself *time and space* to make better decisions. After all, what is Lent itself but a 40 day *pause* from our normal routines? But then, the more I thought about it, the more my ideas developed, and I began to see things differently. It's not that 'be more reflective' is bad advice, far from it, but being a Christian is so much more than benefitting from good advice or 'life hacks'. Of course we can probably all do with slowing down and making better decisions about our lives, but there's a danger in being seduced into thinking that our power to change lies exclusively in our own hands. So perhaps a better way to think about Lent is to see it as an opportunity to really listen to where **God** might be leading us rather than just a chance to reflect on the direction that **we'd** like to take. This might conceivably come about via our usual Lenten practice of doing without wine or chocolates or binge-watching box sets, but it may equally well not.

And so, without taking anything away from the penitential aspect of Lent (of course self-discipline which leads to solidarity with the suffering of Christ is a good thing), I urge you this Lenten season more than anything to **listen** patiently for God's call, however that happens for you. If giving up your favourite treats does help you to focus, then by all means go ahead, but if a walk in the park is more effective, why not try that instead? If you know that sitting in silence for a few minutes each day is what connects you best to God, then that's the right thing for you. The point is to get to your personal place of awareness and receptivity. One of my favourite expressions is 'pray as you can, not as you can't', and I think that Lent is the perfect time for us to deepen our own connection with God in whatever way works for each one of us. Don't be afraid to experiment!

Rev Anthea

## **FORTHCOMING SERVICES**

***All services are in church, zoom is available for some services.***

### **SUNDAY 18<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY – Lent 1**

10 am Experimental Sunday and Bubble Church (for congregation) – Rev Anthea/Gwyn

### **SUNDAY 25<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY – Lent 2**

10 am Holy Communion – Rev Anthea

### **SUNDAY 3<sup>rd</sup> MARCH – Lent 3**

10.30 am Café Worship – Gwyn

### **SUNDAY 10<sup>th</sup> MARCH – Mothers' Day**

10.30 am All-Age Worship – Rev Anthea

### **SUNDAY 17<sup>th</sup> MARCH – Lent 5**

9.15 am for 9.30 am - Bubble Church

10.30 am - LOVE NATURE - Rev Anthea, Jenny Clifton, talk by John Buckingham  
(very well respected ornithologist and ecologist)

## **EVENTS**

**FRIDAY 23<sup>rd</sup> FEBRUARY @ 7 pm**

Church Crafts

**THURSDAY 14<sup>th</sup> MARCH @ 2.30 pm**

Mothers' Union: Look Ahead

**SATURDAY 16<sup>th</sup> MARCH from 5.30 pm**

Quiz with Bangers & Mash Evening – Donations £5+

**THURSDAY 21<sup>st</sup> MARCH @ 2.30 pm**

Fellowship: Jacquie Grace Dandelion Time

## **FOOD BANK**

The next food bank delivery is Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> February.

## **PRAYER RESOURCE**

Prayer Resource

**week beginning Sunday, 18<sup>th</sup> February 2024**

*'God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.'* (Psalm 46: 1)

This week we give thanks for:

- Our journey through Lent, and may we welcome the Holy Spirit into our homes and our hearts.
- All that we have, and pray for those around the world who have lost everything.

Please pray:

- That this season of Lent may be a time of spiritual renewal and refreshment for each one of us, and that peace will reign in our lives and in the world.
- That all people learn the way of justice as the gap between rich and poor continues to widen.
- For countries around the world facing chronic food shortages due to extreme weather conditions, poor harvests, war and conflict.
- For God's protection for humanitarian workers doing such vital and constructive work with communities in desperate need of help and hope.
- For King Charles and his family as he copes with his illness and medical treatment.
- Our Church family, especially Edith, Pat, Alice, Jill, Trevor, Maureen, Sandra, Brenda and Elizabeth; and for Ruth, Meaghan and Linda.
- The future life of our Church beyond the interregnum, and for our acceptance of the inevitable changes.

**You may like to use this prayer during the week:**

***Lord, may Lent be a time of inward searching that makes me more able to look with compassion at the needs of the world. Amen.***