



St Paul's Church



Photo by Zac Durant on Unsplash

Dear all

I won't be joining you in church this Sunday as I've been invited to preach at St. Philip's church which is in our deanery. I am preaching on the ten commandments from Exodus, as well as the part in John's Gospel where Jesus drives out the animal sellers and money changers from the temple. Preparing for this is helping me to think through how we understand the character of God and determine God's will for our lives.

God came down the mountain to give the ten commandments to Moses, having rescued the Israelites from slavery and journeyed with them into the desert. God gives them these rules to help them establish themselves as a holy nation. This is not an attempt at spoiling their fun but rather the good gifts of a generous God, determined to stop this fledgling nation unleashing destructive powers that will bind them at least as much as the slavery from which they have just been released.

Fifteen hundred years later by the time of Jesus, the Hebrews are well established, and their religious leaders have become obsessed with the letter of the law - outward appearances of purity and ritual - but Jesus judges them to have hardened hearts. He reinterprets Mosaic Law to show us what's really important. He doesn't care too much about handwashing or staying away from lepers, he eats with all sorts of sinners, consorts with dodgy women and works on the Sabbath. What he does get really angry about is people exploiting or abusing others, and we can see this when he turns over the tables of the money changers and drives out the people selling animals for sacrifice in the temple.

And all of this makes me wonder how we make the moral judgements that we do today. Of course we have Scripture to guide us but we live in a very different world now to the world of Moses or even Jesus. We have to take what we believe to be the underlying biblical principles and apply them to our modern lives. For example, I read in the Church Times this week about a Christian yoga teacher receiving hate mail from other Christians who believe that she is promoting an ungodly discipline (because of its origins in ancient India and links to Hinduism). And this is just one example. Christians often disagree with each other about the 'right' things to believe or do. It feels as though the national Church has a very turbulent time ahead as we navigate some very contentious issues (safeguarding failures, institutional racism and our approach to same sex blessings to name a few). My only hope is that we can all make space for one another in this, and treat each other with dignity and respect in the months and years ahead.

Rev Anthea

FORTHCOMING SERVICES

SUNDAY 3rd MARCH – Lent 3

10.30 am Café Worship – Gwyn

SUNDAY 10th MARCH – Mothers' Day

10.30 am All-Age Worship – Rev Anthea

SUNDAY 17th 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

THURSDAY 14th MARCH @ 2.30 pm

Mothers' Union: Look Ahead

SATURDAY 16th MARCH from 5.30 pm

Quiz with Bangers & Mash Evening – Donations £5+ (bring your own drinks)

THURSDAY 21st MARCH @ 2.30 pm

Fellowship: Jacquie Grace Dandelion Time

FRIDAY 22nd FEBRUARY @ 7 pm

Church Crafts

EASTER FLOWERS

Easter is an appropriate time to remember a loved one, relative or friend who has died. One way of doing this is to donate towards the annual cost of church flowers in their memory. During the Easter season a list will be on display in church giving the names of those in whose memory flowers have been donated.

If you would like to contribute in this way, please complete one of the forms at the back of church and hand to Charys by Palm Sunday 24th March. If anyone wishes to donate online or using the card machine, please record the donation as 'Flowers' on the 'Payments Form' next to the machine. *Thank you.*

FOOD BANK

The next food bank delivery is Friday 15th March.

PRAYER RESOURCE

week beginning Sunday 3rd March 2024

'Father God, thank you for the examples you have given in your word to help us pray.'

This week we give thanks:

- That God can bring change to our lives if we allow him to; let us put our trust in him and, in turn, help bring God's change to others.
- For our Church building: for all it offers to us and to those who use the premises; may we generously and respectfully care for it.

Please pray for:

- People displaced by conflict, climate change, disaster and poverty: ask God what we can do in response.
- World leaders, that they may show a renewed determination to work for peace and reconciliation.
- Churches around the world that bring deep and lasting transformation to all people, and are hope and beacons of light in a struggling world.
- All who are waiting for help, healing or comfort; pray for someone who particularly comes to your mind, and ask God to show you what you can do to help.
- Vulnerable countries and communities suffering from the impact of climate change; give thanks for the charities who are so committed to campaigning for help for the poorest people on this planet.
- Our Church family: especially Edith, Pat, Alice, Jill, Trevor, Maureen, Sandra, Brenda and Elizabeth; and for Ruth, Meaghan and Linda.
- Your time with God this Lent and place before him any worries or feelings you might be afraid to deal with.

You may like to use this prayer during the week:

Lord, help me to trust you more, and never to give up hope. Help me to put each disaster into your loving hands, while giving out your love for me to others, in whatever way I can. Amen.