

## A Journey to the Cross... or a Journey to Liberation?

The season of Lent this year feels like a season of **two** journeys. In our worship and our bible readings, it's the spiritual 'Journey to the Cross' we're asked to take every year. But this year, with the fast-paced roll out of the vaccinations and with the exciting prospect of lockdown restrictions easing (albeit in gradual stages), there's a sense of travelling on a 'Journey to Liberation' too. We're all looking forward being 'socially liberated' from isolation and being able to visit our much-missed family and friends. We're all looking forward to being able to gather again in worship as a church family. That really will be a joyous day.



But is our personal 'Journey to Liberation' *just* about coming out of *social*/lockdown? Could it also be about coming out of *spiritual*/lockdown too? Is this a chance to *spiritually* 'liberate' (or shift) the focus of our faith and our perspective from our locked-down-isolated selves and onto loving and serving those around us.

As my old Vicar (Michael Ridley) would say... "This is deep stuff!"

I hope this bible reading and meditation where Jesus predicts his death will help.

### Reflection on Matthew 20.17-19

*We are travelling towards Jerusalem, to the city of the Cross and Resurrection. To a place of rejection, mockery and death, towards struggle, and conflict with authority. You know that authority usually makes itself felt; it likes to maintain its own greatness. If you want to be great you should become a servant. Only then will you grow into the Kingdom of God. The Son of Man came not to be waited upon but to pour out his life in the service of many people.*

### Meditation

*When we move the focus of our lives from our own needs to the needs of others, a liberation is achieved. A force is set free inside us that can transform lives. That force is genuine love, and for those who receive it, unmistakable. When we want possessions, people or knowledge, just for ourselves, we block the flow of love and compassion in the world and everyone suffers as a result.*

David O'Malley SDB, *Prayers to Start my Day*, Bolton: Don Bosco Publications, 2014. Used with permission

During this season of Lent, I pray your personal Journey to the Cross is also a Journey to Liberation too.

*with every blessing,* Karen

## Temporary Closure of our Church

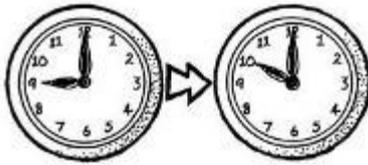
Due to the significant rise in Covid infection rates locally and our third national lockdown, we feel we must prioritise the health and safety of all our church members and close our church building temporarily.

Our worship will continue with a weekly online Sunday service and postings on our Facebook page. Our church fellowship will continue by various means, but it needs your help. Please continue to offer mutual support and prayer for each other through phone calls and messages – whatever you feel able to do. Despite the rising infection rates and despite the lockdown, God's love continues to be at work *within us, through us and in all we do.*

Please keep safe and well during the coming weeks and I look forward to when we can gather again in church as soon as it feels safe to do so.

Rev Karen Brady  
Colin Keam & Rosemary Lunt Churchwardens

## DON'T FORGET TO PUT YOUR CLOCKS FORWARD ON SUNDAY 28th MARCH



## CONGRATULATIONS

to  
Tom & Una Booth  
who celebrate their  
Wedding Anniversary  
on  
26th March 2020

## Why not contact a lonely neighbour?

The public have been urged to write letters to their lonely neighbours, as the Government has announced a £7.5million cash injection for community-boosting activities. It is hoped that people will "reach out virtually and help combat loneliness", says Robert Jenrick, the Communities Secretary. This could be done either by "picking up the phone or writing a letter." He urges, "Let's all do what we can to connect with our older neighbours, in a Covid-secure way, so they feel less alone and know how valuable they are to their communities at this time." The charity Age UK has said it reckons there to be about 1.4million older people in England who are "chronically lonely."

## Peace

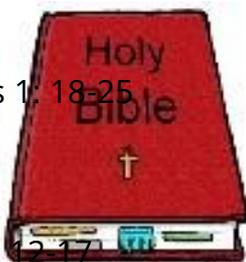
After a very long and boring sermon the parishioners glumly filed out of the church past the minister. Towards the end of the queue was a thoughtful person who always commented on the sermons. "Vicar, today your sermon reminded me of the peace and love of God." The vicar was thrilled. "Nobody has ever said anything like that about my preaching before. Tell me why." The man sighed. "Because it endured forever."



## BIBLE READINGS FOR MARCH

7th March

1 Corinthians 1: 18-25  
John 2: 13-22



21st March

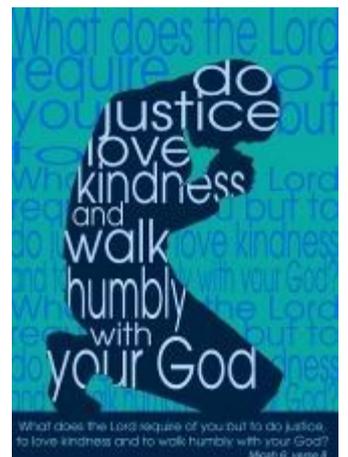
Hebrews 5: 5-10  
John 12: 20-33

14th March

Colossians 3: 12-17  
John 19: 25-27

28th March

Mark 11: 1-11  
Psalm 118: 1-2, 19-29



## BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

### March Birthdays



Congratulations Stephanie Ashley, Lizzy Ratcliffe and George Done who celebrate their birthdays on March 1st, to Ria Lawton who celebrates her birthday on 2nd March, to Lydia Aylett who celebrates her birthday on March 9th, to Joan Clare who celebrates her birthday on 15th March to Liz Adams who celebrates her birthday on March 26th and to Barbara Houghton who celebrates her birthday on March 30th.



Perhaps he's heard that we're losing our churchwarden



### Bishop

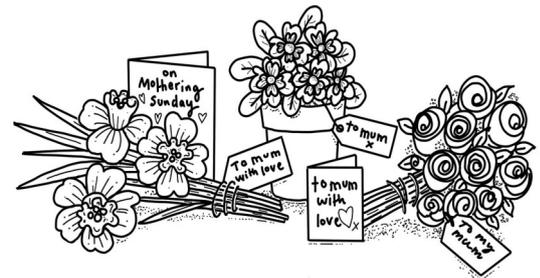
A little girl told her mother, "We went to a confirmation service at the cathedral and I saw the bishop. Now I know what a crook looks like!"

## PALM SUNDAY, Jesus at the gates of Jerusalem

Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday, when the Church remembers how Jesus arrived at the gates of Jerusalem just a few days before the Passover was due to be held. He was the Messiah come to His own people in their capital city, and yet He came in humility, riding on a young donkey, not in triumph, riding on a war-horse. As Jesus entered the city, the crowds gave Him a rapturous welcome, throwing palm fronds into His path. They knew his reputation as a healer, and welcomed Him. But sadly, the welcome was short-lived and shallow, for Jerusalem would soon reject her Messiah, and put Him to death. On this day churches worldwide will distribute little crosses made from palm fronds in memory of Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem.



Don't forget that Mothering Sunday is on **Sunday 14th March**. So please remember all the mothers in your prayers on this day.



## How Sunday became a Christian day of rest

It was 1700 years ago, on 7<sup>th</sup> March 321, that the Roman Emperor Constantine 1 (Constantine the Great), who had converted to Christianity, decreed that Sunday should be a day of rest throughout the Empire. This was a change from normal Roman Empire practice, which was to regard Sunday as just another work-day – something the UK seems to be reverting to. But Constantine's civil decree made Sunday a day of rest from labour. It said: "All judges and city people and craftsmen shall rest upon the venerable day of the sun." This was not intended to replace the Jewish Sabbath, which starts at sunset on Friday and continues to sunset on Saturday. Such Jewish observance was regarded by most Christians as being bound to the old law instead of the Spirit, and so was resisted. Christians backed the Sunday rest because it was the day on which Jesus had risen from the dead and the Holy Spirit had come – despite possible doubts about the phrase "day of the sun". Christians meeting for worship on Sunday in fact dates back to the Acts of the Apostles, and it is mentioned historically about 115AD. Actual practice varies across the world and through the years.



## Wear your daffodil and unite in memory

Marie Curie, the UK's leading end-of-life care charity will this year celebrate their 35<sup>th</sup> annual Great Daffodil Appeal, which is held every March across the UK. The money raised from this appeal enables the charity to continue their vital work providing care and support to people living with a terminal illness and their families.



The coronavirus continues to have a devastating effect on Marie Curie's fundraising, as activities up and down the country have had to be cancelled. However, there's still lots of ways people can get involved, with things like the Step into Spring Challenge in March where people walk 10,000 steps a day, they can host a virtual collection or buy and wear one of the charity's iconic daffodils in memory of a loved one.

This year will be even more special as the charity encourages the nation to **come together to reflect, grieve and remember** for a National Day of Reflection. Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2021 will mark one year since the UK first went into a nationwide lockdown and Marie Curie is inviting the nation to unite and remember those who died and show support and solidarity for those who have been bereaved. The charity knows how important it is for people to grieve and the emotional and psychological impact of not being able to say goodbye properly and grieving in isolation can have.

Due to the pandemic, Marie Curie won't have their normal collections on the street, so donations are more important than ever. To support the Great Daffodil Appeal, you can donate at [www.mariecurie.org.uk/daffodil](http://www.mariecurie.org.uk/daffodil) or you can buy your daffodil pin in store at a number of high street stores including Superdrug or Savers.

## 25<sup>th</sup> March: Lady Day or The Annunciation

This beautiful event (Luke 1:26-38) took place in Nazareth, when Mary is already betrothed to Joseph. The Archangel Gabriel comes to Mary, greets her as highly favoured, tells her not to be afraid, that she will bear a son Jesus, and that her elderly cousin Elizabeth is already pregnant (with John the Baptist). The church calendar is never quite as neat as some would like it. To celebrate the Annunciation on 25<sup>th</sup> March does indeed place the conception of Jesus exactly nine months from His birth on 25<sup>th</sup> December, but the latter part of March almost inevitably falls during Lent. But the birth and death of Jesus are intrinsically linked - He was born to die, and thus fulfil God's purposes. The Annunciation is a significant date in the Christian calendar - it is one of the most frequent depicted in Christian art. Gabriel's gracious strength and Mary's humble dignity have inspired many artists. Certainly, Mary's response to the angel has for centuries been an example of good faith in practice - humility, enquiry of God, and trusting acceptance in His will for her life.

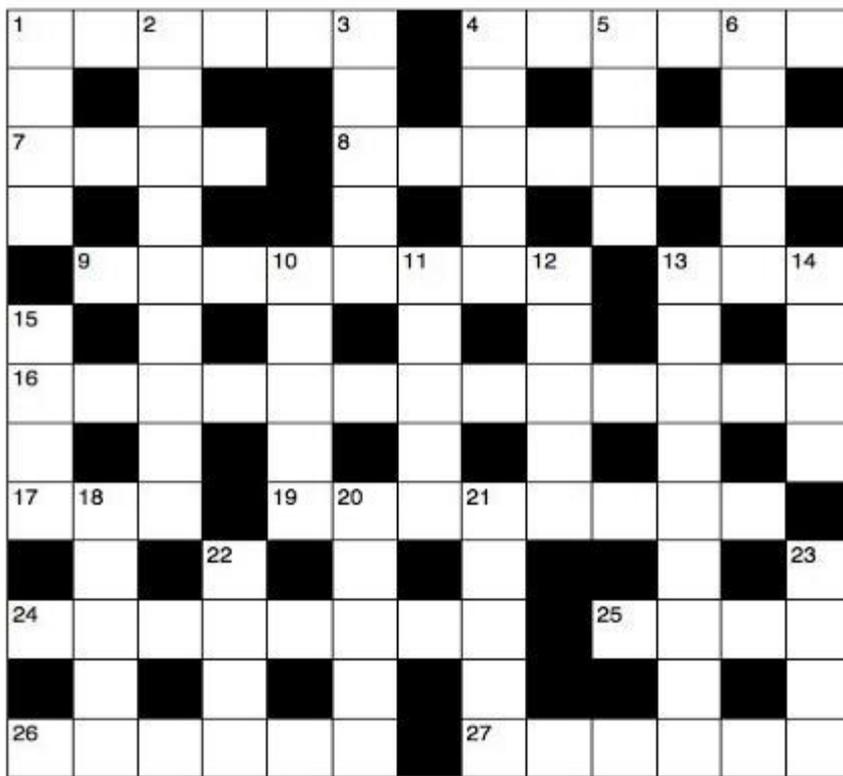
### Dear Father God,

In this month, when we especially think about mothers, we thank you for the families and friends you have given us. You know how hard it has been to have been separated over these past months, how much we have missed and longed for their hugs, their physical presence and fellowship.

As we hold on to the hope of overcoming the pandemic, help us to be strengthened by the power of the love we receive - and to strengthen others by the love we give. May we know that, wherever we are, whatever our circumstances, we and our loved ones are held safe and connected by your unfailing love for us, revealed in Jesus - who is alive - and from whom nothing, no pandemic, no man-made turmoil, absolutely nothing and no-one can separate us, when we put our trust in Him.

Thank you, Father, that we belong to your family. Thank you for the love and security we have in you.  
In Jesus' name, Amen.

*By Daphne Kitching*



**CROSSWORD CHALLENGE**

See how you get on with this crossword. There is no prize, but whoever gets it back to the Editor by March 22nd will be entered on a Roll of Honour in the next edition of *Growing Together*.

**Across**

- 1 The earth is one (6)
- 4 'On a hill far away stood an old — cross' (6)
- 7 'I am the — vine and my Father is the gardener' (John 15:1) (4)
- 8 The Caesar who was Roman Emperor at the time of Jesus' birth (Luke 2:1) (8)
- 9 'Your — should be the same as that of Christ Jesus' (Philippians 2:5) (8)
- 13 Jesus said that no one would put a lighted lamp under this (Luke 8:16) (3)
- 16 Involvement (1 Corinthians 10:16) (13)
- 17 Armed conflict (2 Chronicles 15:19) (3)
- 19 Where the Gaderene pigs were feeding (Mark 5:11) (8)
- 24 What jeering youths called Elisha on the road to Bethel (2 Kings 2:23) (8)
- 25 The Venerable — , eighth-century Jarrow ecclesiastical scholar (4)
- 26 8 Across issued a decree that this should take place (Luke 2:1) (6)
- 27 Come into prominence (Deuteronomy 13:13) (6)

**Down**

- 1 Where some of the seed scattered by the sower fell (Matthew 13:4) (4)
- 2 Sexually immoral person whom God will judge (Hebrews 13:4) (9)
- 3 Gospel leaflet (5)
- 4 Physical state of the boy brought to Jesus for healing (Mark 9:18)
- 5 Tugs (anag.) (4)
- 6 To put forth (5)
- 10 Nationality associated with St Patrick (5)
- 11 Leader of the descendants of Kohath (1 Chronicles 15:5) (5)
- 12 'After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping — heel' (Genesis 25:26) (5)
- 13 At Dothan the Lord struck the Arameans with — at Elisha's request (2 Kings 6:18) (9)
- 14 'Peter, before the cock crows today, you will — three times that you know me' (Luke 22:34) (4)
- 15 Spit out (Psalm 59:7) (4)
- 18 'When I — , I am still with you' (Psalm 139:18) (5)
- 20 Concepts (Acts 17:20) (5)
- 21 Thyatira's dealer in purple cloth (Acts 16:14) (5)
- 22 Does (anag.) (4)
- 23 The second set of seven cows in Pharaoh's dream were this (Genesis 41:19) (4)



February  
Crossword answer

**ROLL OF HONOUR**

Two people got the crossword answer to me and they were  
**Wendy Sefton  
&  
Jim & Shelagh Goffin**

### An unexpected side effect of lockdown.

I have become a Youtuber, Student Paramedics from several Universities had asked me to do a webinar based on my Book, a Guide Through the Maze of ECGs.( heart rhythms). Having done the recording and put it on Youtube as 'a beginners guide to ECGs', in the first 6 days it has had 800+ views, Ambulance UK magazine now have it on their website and only yesterday the Florence Nursing website have asked to place it on their website with 4000 members.

<https://youtu.be/ljnBqAXratg>

All this in the same month I received a letter about my state pension. Proving you are never too old to make a difference.

**Steve Evans MBE**

### A year of coronavirus

The Queen recently spoke for the whole country when she said that many are, "tinged with sadness. Some (are) mourning the loss of those dear to them and other missing friends and family members, distanced for safety. When all they really want ... is a simple hug or a squeeze of the hand." We may have become accustomed to wearing face masks in public, keeping our distance from others, cutting out social gatherings, and attending church services online, but 'no touching' seems the cruellest of punishments.

As one vicar friend of mine said, the Church has had to learn a lot from lockdown: "That Zoom is no substitute for meeting together, sharing warmth, laughter, tears – and drinking from the same cup. We have a commonality in Christ, whoever we are. Christianity is more 'us' than 'me'. "Also, we cannot ignore those who will bear considerable cost arising from the pandemic.

People have lost loved ones, businesses, confidence, jobs. It is vital that the church becomes a place of hope – not glib, clichéd words – but solid hope drawn from Scripture and made real in action. The church could become a real hub of the local community. "But we have to rethink much of what we do and how we say things. The money has all but gone now and the church has to refocus on how it attracts people, what it says in plain English, how it presents itself and provides a warm welcome to those who haven't a clue what Christianity is.... and all this on a very tight budget!" He's got to be right. And some of us could begin to apply some of his ideas right now, even before the pandemic is under control. As a direct consequence of lockdown, many of us have much more money in the bank than we bargained for. We could send a substantial sum to our local church, and some to an overseas charity, to make some of those ambitions come true. With time on our hands, we could earmark an hour or two for emailing or phoning those in our address book who live alone. We could buy extra supplies for a food bank on our next visit to the supermarket. And we must ask God to make our church more comprehensible to those who consider themselves outsiders.

### Movement over mind?

Exercise can be just as effective as mindfulness when it comes to reducing your stress and anxiety. Such is the conclusion of a recent study at Cambridge University. Mindfulness is a form of meditation which involves focussing your thoughts and sensations, and it has become popular in recent years. But now Cambridge University experts say that it should not be assumed that meditation will always have a positive impact. Instead, people can reap mental benefits from physical exercise. As one doctor said: "The main message here is, don't assume mindfulness will work. We have much more evidence for the mental and physical benefits of physical exercise." Last year it was found that people who exercised for 30 to 60 minutes at a time, for two to six hours a week, recorded the fewest days of poor mental health per month.

### Depressed doggie?

Is your pet depressed? Seriously. It seems that more and more pets are developing mental health problems, according to some research by Compare the Market. Certainly insurance claims for pets being treated for mental health problems have gone up by 50 per cent. In the past year alone, insurers have paid out more than £750,000 for dogs with depression, cats with anxiety and similar ailments. In fact, treating your pet for a mental health complaint has become so commonplace that even eight of the 10 cheapest pet insurers now offer such cover.

## How to stop stress getting the better of you

With the third lockdown, too many of us are facing a torrent of stress over job insecurity, home schooling, isolation, illness, or all of the above! Stress makes us want to eat badly, exercise less and drink more. It also has a profound effect on our immune system. While brief or 'acute' stress can spur us on to some specific achievement, the opposite is true of 'chronic' stress, which does only damage. It suppresses our immune system, making us more susceptible to bugs. That is why a stressful event can leave you feeling run down, or trigger a bad cold, shingles, or asthma. So how do we give our immune systems some help during this crisis? Eat well. A balanced diet includes at least all six plant-based food groups: fruit, vegetables, wholegrains, legume, nuts and seeds. Exercise every day: regular moderate exercise helps your immune system. Get enough sleep. It has been called "the foundation of the immune system." Avoid caffeine in the afternoon and keep devices, laptops or screens away from you for an hour before bedtime. Instead, stretch and relax, and consider a hot shower or bath. Finally, don't be mean to yourself. Practise some self-compassion. Give yourself some private time, forget perfectionism, and accept that 'sometimes half-good is good enough.' Be kind to yourself - because even that will help your immune system.



Give me a sense of humour,  
Lord,  
Give me the grace to see a  
joke,  
To get some humour out of  
life,  
And pass it on to other folk.

SIDESMEN: The only people  
in the parish who don't  
know the seating capacity  
of a pew



## Recipe Corner

### Chocolate Chip Scones

#### Ingredients

75g Chilled butter in small cube  
350g Self raising flour  
30g caster sugar  
150ml chocolate milk

15 tsp baking powder  
75g chocolate chips  
2 eggs beaten

Preheat oven to 220 c or fan 200c/ Gas 7

Grease a large baking sheet. Put flour and baking powder into large chilled mixing bowl. Add cubes of butter and rub in until it looks like fine breadcrumbs. Add sugar and chocolate chips. Pour 100ml of the chocolate milk and all but 4 tablespoons of the beaten egg into the flour mix.

Mix together with a blunt instrument to a soft, but not too sticky dough adding a little more chocolate milk if needed to mop up and dry the mixture still in the bowl.

Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface and gather together, roll out and form into a rectangle around 2cm deep. Cut out as many scones as possible and lay on the baking tray, spaced apart.

Gather the trimmings and repeat.

Brush the tops with the reserved eggs and bake for around 10 minutes or until risen and golden brown.

Please try this recipe. This recipe has been done by Tim Nickson, one of our congregation members.

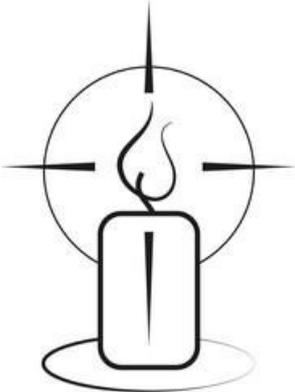
## Your help is needed?

We need your help? Superdrug is donating money to Marie Curie Cancer Care. They are turning empty blister packs into money, so for every kilo donated they get they will donate £1. So all we want from you is, to donate your empty medicine blister packs. For now please keep them, and when we are back in church please bring along with you and can put them in box which will be at the back of church. So keep saving please.





March  
2021



A  
time  
to  
reflect

LENT



## INFORMATION

### Vicar

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### Churchwardens

Colin Keam 01928 576293

Rosemary Lunt 01928 569863

e-mail: [warden@runcornstmichaels.org.uk](mailto:warden@runcornstmichaels.org.uk)

If you want to book  
a wedding, baptism or funeral  
please phone this number  
**07722470940**  
and ask for Robbie



## Please Pray



Please remember the following people in your prayers  
throughout this month.

José Colley

Liz Adams

Graham & Nicola Aylett

Norah Gamon

Also please remember in your prayers  
anyone that you know  
who has had or has got Coronavirus.

If you would like us to pray for someone close to you  
please let the Vicar know. Or if you would like the Pas-  
toral Care Team to visit someone at home don't hesi-  
tate to let them know.

....and the recently bereaved, especially any  
families known to you

Bridget Carmichael

Ronald Elliott

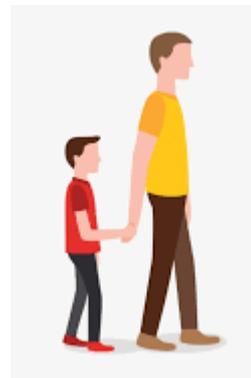
Stanley Sefton

Noreen Yule

James McGuire

Christine Austin

## Your daily walk should be a sacred ritual



Under lockdown, millions of us who rarely walked around our immediate locality are now well acquainted with every nearby driveway, every crack in the pavement, and every pothole in the road. We have developed views on our neighbours' gardens, on their oddly coloured garage doors, and on their dogs, children and cars. If we go out at the same time every day, we may even be saying hello to the same people we don't know every day. For many of us, that daily walk has become the high point of our day. After all, it is one of the few liberties we have left. Some of us go early, to enjoy the relative peace and quiet. Some of us go midday, to at least see other people, even if we can't talk to them. Others of us opt for dusk, the dark comfort of a street with lit houses and stars in the sky. Whatever time you most enjoy, make sure you do make the time to go for your walk. Your mental and physical fitness can only improve!