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9<sup>th</sup> February 2024

Dear all,

*Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Isaiah 58:6-7*

Lent is nearly upon us – it begins on Wednesday with the festival of Ash Wednesday and there follows 40 days of preparation for Easter. Preparation which is traditionally penitential and abstemious. But I sometimes struggle with what we have made Lent and wonder if we are missing the spiritual gift of the season as it was originally designed. It is of course not biblical but traditional and so for many Christians it just doesn't feature in their calendar. However, I think it has enormous potential for blessing in the same way that anticipating an event makes it so much richer than if it was an out of the blue surprise. But what is the anticipation or preparation that would enrich such a powerful celebration as Easter?

Traditionally it has been fasting, giving up a certain food, or giving up eating between certain hours altogether. But why? Is it that denial of something makes finally receiving that thing so much sweeter? Is it that beating ourselves up and wallowing in our failings for 40 days makes the wonder of God's forgiveness more powerful?

Personally I think not, instead I think fasting can be a physical marker of an inward commitment to turn ourselves towards God for 40 days. To make a deliberate choice to enrich our relationship with God, to make God the focus. To concentrate on our faith for a set period and in doing so we find that the wonder and joy of Easter Day are that much more meaningful - that much richer.

The question is, what does that commitment look like for you? Is it a fast so that every time you long for that which is denied you are reminded to pray? Is it reading a book about God so that you learn more about who God is? Is it choosing to share one act of kindness every day so that you spend 40 days sharing God's love? Whatever way is right for you it needs to come from the motivation of wanting to draw closer to God through the act. The verses from Isaiah which I quoted above remind us that the way God longs for us to come forward in worship is by loving our neighbour – loving in the sense of tackling injustice and oppression – not just being kind. Loving in the sense of being sacrificial with what we have – not just what we can spare. Loving in the sense of working at relationships that may not be easy – not just hiding from them.

Lent is a challenge, not in a physical sense although it might be that too, but a spiritual challenge of facing up to how we know God, love God and respond to God's love in our lives. I invite you to embrace this challenge this Lent in whatever way meets where you are currently at with God. And may God meet with you in power and enrich you by the time we all arrive at the cross on Easter weekend.

### News and Upcoming Events

**Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> February – Sing! Community Choir Winter Concert – 7.30pm** at Netherhall School in Cambridge. An uplifting evening of music and songs to banish the winter blues! Tickets are £8 with all proceeds going to Cambridge City Food Bank. Book tickets here: <https://singcommunitychoir.co.uk/sing-winter-concert-glow/>

**Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> February – Ash Wednesday Service 12noon at St Philip's** On this special day at the start of Lent our usual Mid Week service will be a special service for Ash Wednesday with the imposition of ashes.

**Wednesday evenings in Lent – starting 21<sup>st</sup> February – Lent Book Club.** Starting at 7pm each Wednesday of Lent we will be hosting a book club, in church, based on the book Tarry Awhile: Wisdom from Black Spirituality for People of Faith by Selina Stone. The themes of this book link perfectly with our current Discerning Together process and our

desire to take time to listen to God's prompting. If you'd like to join us just let me know and we can work out how many copies of the book we will need to purchase!

**Sundays in Lent – starting 18<sup>th</sup> February – Bring & Share Lent Lunches.** We are hoping that many will stay for lunch after a brief cuppa at the end of church. We will sit down to a buffet style meal with time to allow everyone to get to know someone else better, whether you have been at St Philip's for years, weeks or days. Why not make this your Lent "thing".

**\*A plea for boxes please\*** In the near future we will need to box up Hilary Jolly's book collection, if you have any spare cardboard boxes please bring them to church.

**Faith Empowered Course** designed to equip local lay leaders in evangelism. A course for those with an innate gift for communicating the Christian faith - the Diocese would like to invest in and nurture that gift. This course is fully funded and includes two 24-hour residentials, with five online learning sessions. Speak to Ruth if this notice has grabbed your attention and you want to know more!

**Friday 1<sup>st</sup> March - World Day of Prayer** beginning at 10.30am St Paul's Church, Hills Road Cambridge. This year's service has been written by the women of Palestine and the speaker will be Revd Chris Rose of the Amos Trust.

**Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> March - Cambridge Half Marathon** Jon Rudge is running in aid of Romsey Mill, if you'd like to sponsor him this is the link: <https://www.justgiving.com/page/jonathan-rudge>

**Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> March - 10am-1pm - Ridley Hall Taster Day** If you have even tiny stirrings of curiosity about ministry in any capacity in the church Ridley is hosting a day to come and see what they do, explore the college, and learn about the different theological pathways for academic study, or for lay or ordained ministry training. All are welcome. More information: <https://www.ridley.cam.ac.uk/open-days>

**Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> March – 6-8.15pm The Faraday Institute will be holding a reception for Christians in the scientific community at Christ Church, Cambridge.** There will be drinks and a hot buffet from 6pm, followed by a short talk by Prof. Rebecca Fitzgerald. It is an ideal opportunity to meet and get to know other Christians in the scientific community. Attendance is free, but registration is essential: <https://faraday.institute/Cambridgereception>

**Friday 15<sup>th</sup> March – Bible Society Spring Supper** The evening includes a meal of delicious home-made soup and a dessert, this time we will welcome Dr Alison Gary, Director of Studies; Tutor in Old Testament Language, Literature and Theology, Westminster College, Cambridge. Please email penny.flynn@gmail.com if you hope to attend in person or online - payment of £7 on the door for supper, in cash please. Further donations welcome.

#### **Eco-Bite – our new green “nugget” each week:**

We are looking to install a water butt and a compost bin in our church garden but rather than buy new would much rather find “pre loved” items. Do you or anyone you know have suitable receptacles? If so please get in touch with the leader of our Green Team Bea Ridley: [bea.g.ridley@gmail.com](mailto:bea.g.ridley@gmail.com)

#### **Last Week's sermon**

If you want to catch up on any sermons: [sermons.stphilipchurch.org.uk](https://sermons.stphilipchurch.org.uk)

#### **This Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> February**

**10.30am – Holy Communion with Explorers** – This week Mike will be leading us through 2 Peter 1:16-18 & Mark 9:2-9

If you can't attend church in person you can always use this Zoom link:

meeting ID: 976 3739 9129 and Passcode: 330714

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/97637399129?pwd=TGhKWwXOcWF1S242aVhrWDJdUkxZz09>

#### **Prayers**

If any of you have specific prayers you would like us to include in this newsletter do please get in touch.

**Judi Griffiths** Judi is in hospital with heart issues, she will be having a pacemaker fitted today please pray for God's healing, protection and peace to surround and fill both Judi and Jim.

**Lee Giddings** Lee will be going in for surgery to receive a stent for his heart. Please pray for Lee and Tracee as they wait for the date of this operation to come through and that it will help with all Lee's heart problems.

**Hilary Jolly** Hilary's memorial service will take place on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> February, 4.30pm at St Philip's Church.

**Ed Jenkins**, Ed's memorial service will be held on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> February, 4.30pm at St Philip's Church. As per Ed's wishes he will be buried in Wales.

**Please also pray for our Mission Partner this month:**



**Concrete Rose** – The vision of Concrete Rose is to see every young person living life to the full with the foundations and opportunities to flourish. Primarily we support those who are 16-23 and lack sufficient family support including care leavers, those at risk of homelessness, those estranged from family, unaccompanied asylum seekers, and young parents. And aim, through supported lodgings and student mentoring to provide support that enables these young people to step into a better future.

**Regular Weekly events to join:**

**Friday 12noon Lunchtime Bible Club** A relaxed look at the bible passage/s for the upcoming Sunday. Bring along a packed lunch and explore scripture whilst eating lunch together.

**Wednesday 12noon Reflective Holy Communion** A quiet time to help find space and peace in the middle of the week.

**Monday & Friday 8.30pm – Compline on zoom**

Meeting ID: 836 5965 9953

Passcode: 749968

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83659659953?pwd=btP5AjGMu1s-dE\\_2W9T0MMFqnnPKSS.1](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83659659953?pwd=btP5AjGMu1s-dE_2W9T0MMFqnnPKSS.1)

**Wednesday 10.30-12noon & Friday 1.30-3.00 – Wednesday & Friday Friends**

**Both are "Warm Spaces" with Tea/coffee, cake/biscuits and chat** Just turn up if you'd like to join us for a cuppa/read the paper/do some of the jigsaw/knit/colour/sit quietly watching the world go by.

**Wednesdays 7.00-7.30pm - Weekly Prayers on zoom: -**

Meeting ID: 852 1105 2733 Password: 397987

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85211052733?pwd=OE52bm9NS1RtQVQ0ZytTc0xBZnVsUT09>

**Saturdays 8.15am - Morning Bible Discussion and Prayer on zoom:**

Meeting ID: 143 338 655 Password: 824271

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/143338655?pwd=L1JJTFZJNU9EaFZjaUFjQzVlalpMZz09>

With love and prayers

Ruth

Need to unsubscribe? Email Bekki: [bekki@theclarks.biz](mailto:bekki@theclarks.biz)