

Dear all,



OULTON BROAD TEAM MINISTRY
ST. LUKE'S - ST. MARK'S - ST. MICHAEL'S

It was great to be back in St. Mark's for Holy Communion on Sunday 12th, and we look forward to worshipping in St. Luke's and St. Michael's in these next days. You're welcome to join us for Holy Communion at 9am, which will be at St. Luke's on Sunday 19th July and St. Michael's on Sunday 26th July. The Sunday worship via Zoom continues but will start at the slightly later time of 10.45am, followed by online Communion at Midday.

As we continue our journey towards a more 'normal' pattern of life and worship, there are a few tasks that we must not neglect if we are to continue to greater spiritual and emotional health. They are lament, thanksgiving and restoration/renewal.

Lament – in these past months, very few communities have been unaffected by loss, illness and death. Fear and anxiety have been so much more prevalent than usual. Some, within our Church families, have mourned the passing of loved ones during this season (the bereavement journey is terribly tough at any time but undoubtedly accentuated by the isolation of lockdown), and we've all experienced loss to some degree. Loss is a part of life and it is healthy to acknowledge it. The Bible is very permission-giving in that respect; more than half of the Psalms are psalms of lament. These Psalms can give words to our pains and frustrations and remind us that it is ok to express hurts and questions to God. To pray in such a way doesn't mean that we lack faith in God's goodness and deliverance, it just means that we're being honest when we're in the darker places. Lament can be an essential part of the journey towards renewed hope and deeper understanding. Have you given time for lament? Do you need to make more time for it?

Thanksgiving – the emergence of the Thursday 'Clap for carers' was a significant experience both nationally and locally. It helped us to celebrate 'unsung heroes' and to forge new relationships with our neighbours. As well as binding communities together, thanksgiving is also important for us as individuals, reminding us of God's goodness every day and helping us to live in gratitude. Living in thankfulness for gifts that we might otherwise take for granted, gives shape to our inner lives and binds us to God in new ways. What are you thankful for today? What have you been thankful for these past months?

Restoration/Renewal – As we name the unexpected gifts of this crisis, as well as its challenges, celebrating the rediscovery of some important ways of life and the resurgence of neighbourliness, we journey towards restoration, and then beyond it to renewal. It is certainly true that God can and does bring good out of even the most challenging of circumstances and, dare I say, even the Covid-19 crisis he is using for good. And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28) What will restoration and renewal look like for us individually and corporately? Can you turn those thoughts into a prayer?

A Prayer for the World and for Our Country Reopening

Protect us, Lord, and be with us especially those of us most vulnerable during this coronavirus crisis.

Move us to reach out in love to our neighbours near and far. So that the humble may be exalted, the hungry filled with good things.

Grant us the courage not to rush back to our old ways, but to rebuild our world together, creating foundations of justice, with equality and peace for all.
Amen.

(Catherine Gorman/CAFOD)



An August Mini-retreat in Your Own Home – Wed 12 August & Fri 21 August. An opportunity from the Diocese to take proper time out, time to be still, to settle deeply into God's presence, time also to reflect a little on the extraordinary past few months and to look forward with hope to a new future. Twenty places are available on each of two days (12 & 21 Aug). Each day will be led (virtually, of course!) by the Revd Canon Susanna Gunner.

United Breaks Out – As I look back on my Christian journey, many of the most profound experiences of God that I have had, were connected in some way to the New Wine movement. New Wine seeks to mobilise churches and individuals to experience God's reality and to be agents of transformation. The New Wine Summer gatherings have, since they began in 1989, been an opportunity for great teaching, worship and encountering God. This year, the 'United' summer gathering moves online, which means that you don't need to camp on a rainy showground, all you need is an internet connection (or a borrowed one!). 'United Breaks Out' runs from 30th July to 3rd August and you can dip into as much or as little as you like. Here's what they say about some of the content:

Our main programme includes a mix of celebrations, worship, Bible teaching, TED-style talks, sofa sessions, live webinars and more. We'll cover key issues that matter today: grief, loss & lament; the power of the Holy Spirit; race; preparing for a new world; mental health & wellbeing; parenting; prayer; apologetics; and creation care. / Our Kids are becoming Space Cadets! There'll be songs, challenges, stories, teaching & gunge. Plus, we're launching our brand new Augmented Reality App - with stories, games, prayer and worship to help kids encounter God in new ways. / For 11-18s, LUMINOSITY will bring breakfast devotions & chat, challenges, evening celebrations, high-energy worship & seminars covering mental health & anxiety, evangelism, calling, leadership, social media & the world we could create. Contact St. Mark's Parish Office if you'd like a full copy of the 'United Breaks Out' programme.

Open Doors – Please remember that we are continuing to open our churches for personal prayer as we move forward! Feel free to drop by if you would like to take a few moments of quiet reflection. The days and times are as follows:

St. Mark's: Monday and Thursdays, 10—11am

St. Michael's: Tuesdays and Fridays, 2—3pm

St. Luke's: Sundays, 2—3pm

Some Notes about Public Worship – Our plan is to reopen our buildings for worship slowly and steadily. We will gradually increase the number of services that take place inside whilst continuing online worship. If you are able to take part in online worship, you may wish to defer your return to the building in order to ensure that there is sufficient space for those who don't have internet access, but this is not essential. Face coverings are not compulsory at public worship although the Church of England is currently considering our position in the light of the Government's recent announcement about face coverings in shops. Further information may follow. In the meantime, without such mitigation, we will aim for 2m distancing within our buildings at all times. We will keep a list of the names of those who attend worship, should we need to supply information to NHS 'Track and Trace', and this list will be destroyed after 21 days. If you are over 70, there is no ban on you attending public worship but please be aware that the Government still advises that those within the older age brackets continue to stay at home as much as possible.

Prayer for the Nation—Hello everyone! As you are probably aware a group of us have been zooming through a Bible study based in the book of Daniel. We have now completed this and it has left our group with a nudge from God that we need to be praying for our Nation at this time. We have therefore decided to commit to a 40 day season of prayer with a weekly meeting to discuss and pray into God's leading. If you would like to join in with this you would be most welcome.

We shall meet every Wednesday at 7.00pm, the ID number is 533 181 156 and you can also join up on the phone if you wish. There is a booklet which guides our prayers called Your Nation Needs You, if you let me, Harry or Debbie know we can get one to you, they cost £3. It would be lovely to see you if you can make it.—Gillie

A Question from Mike Aldred—Although social distancing is being eased, will BISHOPS still have to remain two MITRES apart?!

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." Proverbs 3:5-6

Love and prayer,

Helen

REVISED SERVICE TIMES

Now that public worship is resuming we will be slightly tweaking the start times for the following services:

Zoom Sunday Worship—10:45am

Midweek Communion (in Church and on Zoom/Facebook Live)—9:30am

WORSHIP SERVICES INFO AND TIMES

Sunday

Holy Communion in Church—9:00am

July 19th at St. Luke's

July 26th at St. Michael's

Zoom Morning Worship—10:45am

ID—588 877 574

By Phone—Dial 0203 481 5240 enter the above ID when prompted followed by the # key

Sunday Holy Communion on Zoom—12:00pm

ID—588 877 574

By Phone—Dial 0203 481 5240 enter the above ID when prompted followed by the # key

Wednesday

Midweek Communion—9:30am

22nd July—Facebook Live & St. Mark's

OPEN PRAYER

St. Mark's: Monday and Thursdays, 10—11am

St. Michael's: Tuesdays and Fridays, 2—3pm

St. Luke's: Sundays, 2—3pm

Home Communion—Is available upon request providing that appropriate social distancing can be observed. Please contact St. Mark's Parish Office on 01502 514774 and we'll arrange this for you.

SUNDAY HYMNS: Bless the Lord (10,000 Reasons); Build My Life; Blessed Be Your Name

MONDAY
27 JULY
Jeremiah 13:1-11
Psalm 82 or
Deuteronomy
32:18-21
Matthew 13:31-35

TUESDAY
28 JULY
Jeremiah 14:17-end
Psalm 79:8-end
Matthew 13:36-43

WEDNESDAY
29 JULY
Jeremiah 15:10.
16-end
Psalm 59:1-4. 18-end
Matthew 13:44-46

THURSDAY
30 JULY
Jeremiah 18:1-6
Psalm 146:1-5
Matthew 13:47-53

FRIDAY
31 JULY
Jeremiah 26:1-9
Psalm 69:4-10
Matthew 13:54-end

SATURDAY
1 AUGUST
Jeremiah
26:11-16. 24
Psalm 69:14-20
Matthew 14:1-12

REFLECTION

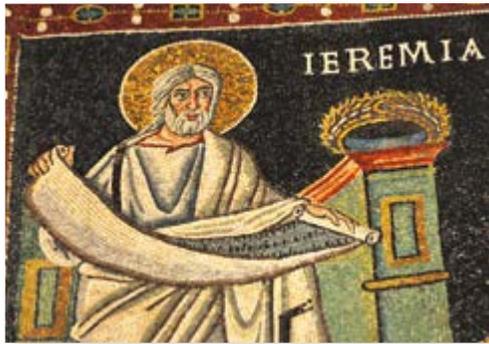
There is significant danger in speaking against the current easy opinion, and Jeremiah experiences it in this week's readings. The readings from the Hebrew scriptures (or the Old Testament) this week move between God's lament at the faithlessness of the people of Judah and Jeremiah's lament at the danger he is in for trying to speak prophetic words from God.

That double lament is important in a time when many people are lamenting the loss of species and habitat and are warning of the huge risk of climate change, and yet those prophets in our midst – including some very young women – are ridiculed and in some places openly persecuted.

Jeremiah gives a public sermon calling for change, or else destruction will come, but the religious authorities and the ordinary people can't bear to hear it and want to put him to death. The loincloth is meant to cling to the body as Judah is meant to cling to God, but it is "ruined... good for nothing" because the people refuse to hear God, stubbornly following their own will and going after other gods to serve and worship.

PRAYER

God of those who cry out in warning,
 help us to put aside our fears
 and listen for your voice in their words.
 Bless those who see with clarity how we must change
 to become your faithful people once again.



Jeremiah holding one of his scrolls, in the Byzantine basilica of St Vitale in Ravenna, Italy

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THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

PART XXIV – JEREMIAH – A BOOK ABOUT DESPAIR AND CONSOLATION

Richard Greatrex continues our book-by-book series about the Bible.

Born out of a national tragedy so devastating that it resonates throughout the rest of scripture – Jerusalem fallen, the first Temple destroyed, the Davidic monarchy crushed and a majority of Judah exiled – the prophecies of Jeremiah swirl with both despair over a people who have abandoned their God and hope that the one God will remain faithful and will, in time, draw them out of the abyss.

Jeremiah's prophetic life covers forty momentous years in ancient Middle Eastern history, beginning in 626 BC, during the reign of Josiah, and continuing until shortly after the destruction of the Temple in 587 BC. His book is a sprawling compilation, the second longest in the Hebrew Bible, swinging back and forth through the fall of the Assyrian empire, the rise of Babylon under a Chaldean dynasty and the God-defying misrule of a succession of ever weaker Davidic kings that eventually results in Judah losing its political independence, its ruling family, its elites and its artisans to become a petty Babylonian province.

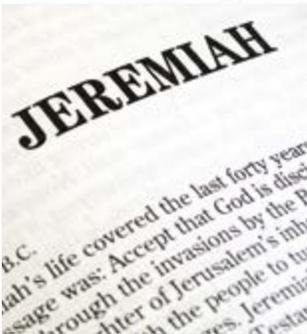
As Judah piles apostasy upon apostasy, rejects God's message and persecutes Jeremiah, God's messenger, so Jeremiah prophesies ever more trenchantly, not only that they will face humiliating punishment at the hands of God's agent, Nebuchadrezzar, but that the covenant is being torn up and the nation's dearest possessions, the Temple and the Davidic monarchy, will be sundered. Yet chapters thirty to thirty-three, at the book's heart, detailing Judah's blackest hours, are also known as the "oracles of consolation", offering continual strands of hope: God will not abandon the chosen people; this present, shattering, punishment is not final.

The Hebrew text of Jeremiah is substantially longer than, and in a different order from the Greek edition found in the Septuagint, indicating that compiling the prophet's pronouncements, along with details of his life, was slow and complex. However, despite its aura of intricacy and despair, Jeremiah's fearsome fidelity to God's message shines through. God will not abandon the chosen ones; redemption is always possible.

LIVE the WORD

SUSTAINING YOU THROUGH THE WEEK

Edited by Caroline Hodgson and Heather Smith



Seventh week after Trinity

Monday 27 July to Saturday 1 August 2020

WEEK

A grounded God

Gillian Cooper *reflects on* Genesis 28:10-19a

Jacob does not deserve to meet God at the place he comes to call Bethel, House of God. He has cheated his brother Esau out of the status and blessing that are the right of the eldest. Now he is running away, afraid to face the consequences of his behaviour. But as he sleeps on the ground, a ladder appears, with angels going up and down. And then there is the voice of God, not, as we might expect, at the top of the ladder, but right down on the ground, next to Jacob. The voice speaks a remarkable message. Despite everything, Jacob will inherit the promise made to his father and grandfather. He will carry forward the destiny of God's people. He is the chosen one, guaranteed God's presence with him always.

God does not always use the deserving. God does not choose the more generous, more deserving Esau. Sometimes God stands beside the least likely people and calls them to be agents of God's purpose in the world. That is good news for all of us.

And by the way, Old Testament angels do not have wings. That is how they can be entertained unawares. And they need a ladder to get from heaven to earth. ☺



Generous God, you are always ready to overlook our weaknesses, and forgive our failings. Help us to believe in your calling, that, undeserving as we are, we may be ready to fulfil in the world the purpose to which you call us. Amen.

Christian writers and thinkers

part II –
Karen Armstrong

by Caroline Hodgson

Born in 1944 in Worcestershire, Karen Armstrong has written two books about her experience of being a religious sister. The first, *Through the Narrow Gate*, describes the time she spent in a convent, while *The Spiral Staircase* describes her subsequent spiritual awakening.

Since leaving religious life she has gone on to lecture and teach,

and has written over twenty books on faith and the major religions, studying what Islam, Judaism and Christianity have in common and how faith has shaped world history. For example, in *A History of God*, she traces the evolution of the three major monotheistic traditions, along with Buddhism and Hinduism, from their beginnings up to the present day. In her introduction she describes the book as a history of “the human idea of God”.

Famously, Armstrong has said that: “Religion is not about accepting twenty impossible propositions before breakfast, but about doing things that change you. It is a moral aesthetic, an ethical alchemy. If you behave in a certain way, you will be transformed.” ☺

Margaret of Antioch

Margaret of Antioch is commemorated on Monday in the Common Worship lectionary. Julian Smith looks at this remarkable woman.

Margaret of Antioch, Marina in the Eastern Church, was one of the most venerated saints of the Middle Ages. Although her experience was a common one during the centuries of the Church's persecution, it has been much elaborated to encourage the faithful in their trials.

Margaret dedicated her life and virginity to Christ and suffered martyrdom for rejecting the advances of a pagan prefect at Antioch. Legend has it that the devil appeared to Margaret in the guise of a dragon who swallowed her, but then spat her out unharmed. Hence Margaret is the patron of pregnant women and childbirth. She is one of a group of saints known as the Holy Helpers and spoke to and inspired Joan of Arc.

Margaret reminds us that we each have stories to tell of our journeys of faith and that in the sharing of them we can encourage others in their pilgrimage. ☺

“ Alone with none but thee, my God, I journey on my way.
What need I fear when thou art near, O king of night and day?

St Columba (AD 521-597), Irish abbot and missionary evangelist to Scotland

Name

19-25 July 2020

Colouring time

Jesus tells us that the master told his servants not to pull out the weeds until the harvest was taken in.

