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Some hints about prayer this Lent

Prayer is instinctive for human beings, even those who don't regard themselves as religious. You are standing at a bus stop in the wind and the rain, thinking 'I do hope the bus will come soon'. It's an inner yearning. It defies logic: either the bus is coming or it isn't. But we all do it. It's instinctive and it's the raw material of prayer. Hoping for something better is basic. Like all instincts, it needs to be trained.

To whom do we pray? What you pray and the way you do it will be shaped by your view of God. Christian prayers are fashioned by what we know of Jesus and what He taught about prayer.

We pray by invitation. Again and again, Jesus encouraged his com-

panions to pray. A couple of his parables on the subject have been misinterpreted as instructions to persuade a resistant God to do what we want. Have a look at Luke 18, verses 1-8, about a widow whose perseverance finally persuaded an unwilling judge to rule in her favour. The lesson is that God is not like that! Similarly, an unwelcome neighbour who persistently calls for help in the middle of the night gets what he wants (Luke 11.5-13). The lesson? If tenacious lobbying can overcome human unwillingness, how much more our gracious God will heed his children's cry.

Pushing at an open door. Jesus is already praying for us. So when we start to pray, we step on to an already moving staircase. Sometimes prayer seems tougher than it need

be. Jesus invited us to be linked to him, in the way an inexperienced bullock is yoked to a mature ox. Have a look at Matthew 11, 28-29, which concludes "for my yoke is easy and my burden is light". When Marion Bartoli unexpectedly won the 2013 Women's Wimbledon final, she said "I believe if you put all your heart and effort into everything you are doing, then God is there to help you."

Is your prayer on the right lines? Try adding "for Christ's sake" at the end. "Please let my marrow win the Gardening Club competition"? No. "Not my will but yours" is the key. So when praying, don't give God instructions, just report for duty.

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Services

Sundays

11.00am Sung Eucharist

"Sunday Supplement" the children's activity takes place every Sunday in the sacristy during the service

Weekday Services

Said Eucharist

Tuesday 7.30pm

Wednesday 9.30am

Friday 7.30am

Saints' & Holy Days

**Sunday 31st January The Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Candlemas)
11.00am Parish Mass and procession**

**Wednesday 10th February Ash Wednesday
9.30am Said Mass with imposition of Ashes
7.30pm Sung Mass with Imposition of Ashes**

Clergy Day off: Fr. Guy is off duty on Monday but don't hesitate to call him in emergencies.

The Vicar is usually available in the Vicarage, 85 Dartmouth Park Road, from 8:00pm until 9:00pm on Tuesdays for the purpose of interviews, arranging Baptisms, reading of Banns and Weddings etc. he is also available to hear confessions then or by appointment.

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Children too trusting of online world

The number of children who believe everything they find on Google and social media sites has doubled, according to a recent Ofcom study.

Eight-to-15 year olds may be 'digital natives' (children who have grown up with the internet) but they often lack the 'online nous' needed when deciding if what they see is true or impartial, Ofcom says. Hence, almost a fifth of 12 to 15 year olds believe that all information returned by a search engine such as Google or Bing must be true, and only a third of them were able to identify paid-for adverts.

The study also found that children turn to YouTube for 'true and accurate' information about what is going on in the world. Less than half of the children were aware that advertising is the main source of income for the site, and that therefore video bloggers are often paid to favourably mention products or services.

Attacks on Kenya Christians on the increase

Release International has charted a 'worrying' increase in attacks against Christians in Kenya, as Al-Shabaab militants seek to infiltrate the country. So says Paul Robinson of Release International, which supports persecuted Christians around the world.

A recent fact-finding visit by Release recorded increasing attacks against churches by Islamist gunmen based in Somalia, who are affiliated to al-Qaeda. There are also disturbing signs of hard-line intolerance towards Muslims who change their religion.

Now Release has also called for prayer for Hassan Ali, a recent convert to Christianity, who has had to leave his home for fear of being murdered by his relatives.

According to Hassan, his in-laws were among a group of men armed with knives who came to his door in Witu, Lamu County, demanding to see him. He escaped through a

window when he heard the visitors questioning his wife about her faith.

His wife and their children, aged seven and four, have been taken back to live with her relatives. Her parents are reportedly insisting the children attend a madrassa (Islamic school).

Hassan was raised as a Muslim but became a Christian about ten months ago.

Attacks against churches in this Christian majority country are increasing. In the last few months Islamist extremists set fire to two church buildings in Tiribe near Mombasa. Pastor Mutuku of Faith Victory Church says his congregation now meet in a tent.

Pastor Nyawa, whose Holistic Church was also burned, says his remaining members are now forced to meet outside, under police protection, but are contending

with heavy rains and flooding.

Release International is urging the Kenyan government to do all it can to step up security. Release says: 'Muslim leaders must take urgent steps to counter the radicalisation of their youth.'

Last April, al-Shabaab attacked a predominately Christian college in north-east Kenya, killing 150. The terrorist group became notorious after attacking the Westgate shopping Mall in Nairobi in September 2013, killing at least 67 people.

The Kenyan government has sent troops to Somalia, where al-Shabaab is based, and has raided mosques in Kenya to counter the growing radicalisation.

Through its international network of missions Release International serves persecuted Christians in more than 30 countries around the world.

Celebrating the Queen's 90th Birthday ± special book

The Queen has served the country and Commonwealth for more than 60 years. From 10-12 June 2016 her 90th birthday will be celebrated.

To mark the unique occasion, HOPE, Bible Society and the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity are publishing a 'very special', 64-page book focusing on the Queen's Christian faith as a tribute to her life of service.

The Servant Queen - and the King She Serves is a beautifully illustrated short book, which uses the Queen's own words to draw

out the central role of her trust in Jesus Christ, offering an inspiring, multi-faceted insight into a life well-lived for others.

In her 2014 Christmas broadcast the Queen described Jesus Christ as 'an anchor in my life' and a 'role-model'. It is the most recent of many public references the Queen has made to her Christian faith.

Advance orders for The Servant Queen have already reached more than 60,000 with Anglican dioceses and denominations ordering copies to give away.

Giving up for Lent

At the end of the vicar's pre-Lent sermon he suggested, as an example to the rest of the community, that the congregation should worship in an unheated church for the whole of Lent. As they made their way into the chill Sunday air the vicar addressed one member of the congregation, asking what she had decided to give up for Lent. "Church," she replied firmly.

Recent report on religion and belief in Britain 'seriously misguided'

A recent report led by Baroness Butler-Sloss which said that Britain is no longer a Christian country has been criticised by cabinet ministers who said it was 'seriously misguided', and by the Church of England which claimed it appeared to have been 'hijacked' by humanists.

The report into religion and belief in Britain, calls for a 'new settlement' for religion because the religious landscape has been 'transformed' by a growth in non-Christian religions and numbers of people with no religion.

In response, a spokesperson for the Church of England said: "We welcome the call in this report for greater religious literacy and the highlighting of the scale of social action by the Church – as well as its recommendation that where a religious organisation is best placed to deliver a social good, it should not be disadvantaged.

"We also welcome the acknowledgement that the establishment of the Church of England has helped the integration of non-Christian perspectives in British society and helped them to make their voices heard in the public sphere. The Church of England, through its dioceses, parishes and at national level has been at the forefront of work to increase understanding between the different faiths.

"We are however disappointed that the report misunderstands the role of Church of England schools in providing a rounded education to more than a million pupils from all backgrounds as part of our

commitment to the common good. If there is a significant problem with our schools it is that many of them are so popular that they are oversubscribed and not every parent who wants to can send their children to one.

"The report also misunderstands collective worship in schools. We believe that if the law on collective worship were repealed schools would risk losing this vital element of shaping a community that reflects the full breadth of human experience. We know, for example, that the response of many schools to the horror of the Paris attacks will have been in the context of collective worship.

"The report is dominated by the old fashioned view that traditional religion is declining in importance and that non-adherence to a religion is the same as humanism or secularism."

After recent "overwhelming public support for the Church of England over the Lord's Prayer cinema advert, it is important to remember that most public opinion is strongly opposed to the marginalisation of Christianity."

To read a blog by Nigel Genders, Church of England Chief Education Officer see <http://cofecommstumblr.com/post/134520796697/church-schools-make-a-diff..>

Read more: Christian Today 7/12/15

Read more: The Telegraph 7/12/15

Where are people getting married these days?

In the year 2000, some 270,000 couples were married in England and Wales. Almost half these weddings took place in a Registry Office (47%), and over a third (36%) in a church, with a sixth (17%) taking place in an Approved Premise.

But the dislike of people marrying in Registry Offices in the 21st century has grown hugely, while the popularity of Approved Premises has boomed, so that in 2015, when some 280,000 couples married, only 5% took place in a Registry Office and over two-thirds (68%) in an Approved Premise. A quarter (27%) still took place in a church.

The number of people marrying in a church (including all denominations) has dropped from 97,000 in 2000 to 75,000 in 2015, a decline of 22%, which is rather larger than the 16% decline in numbers attending church in those two years. This presumably means that some couples, about 6,000 in 2015, preferred their wedding in an Approved Premise rather than a church.

The trend is likely to be true in other denominations. More and more Christians are marrying non-Christians, which means that passing on the faith to their children will become more difficult and could provide a tension point within the marriage.

Don't die

The vicar announced: 'I am sure that you will not wish to overwork our visiting priest while I am on holiday, and will keep funerals to a minimum.'

“Dear Friends...”

From the Vicars Desk

It hardly seems possible that we are only a few days away from Lent as Christmas seems only yesterday! Yet Ash Wednesday is only a couple of weeks away as I write so it really is time to be thinking about how we will keep this important season.

Life is about constant change, though we may not like it it is a fact, without change we die. Our bodies are continually renewed as we live out each day and all around us is changing as well. If we are to thrive and prosper in this environment we constantly need to be renewing ourselves, and that includes our spiritual life. So Lent is a great time to step back and review things as well as trying to do something new.

As usual we shall be giving out our Lent Extra Booklets in the coming few days so that we can all go on a journey together looking at a brief passage of scripture each day and thinking about its meaning for us. If you are anything like me its very easy to put the booklet on one side and forget about it, so this year I am going to make a concerted effort to look at it each day rather than have to do a large catch up exercise every so often! May be you are far more organised than I am, but if not lets all try to give just that few minutes each day to grow in our understanding of scripture and faith.

Then we shall having a Lent Group meeting in the Vicarage on Thursday evenings at 8.00pm. This year we shall be once again using one of the Pilgrim study courses, this time on the Eucharist. Pilgrim is the Church of England study

programme which comes with introductions from senior church figures helping to set the scene for each discussion. As it happens this module was put together by Simon Jones who is currently a University Chaplain in Oxford and has just been appointed Canon Liturgist to the Diocese of Chichester. Not long after I came to the parish we had a link with a parish in St Albans where Simon was a young man in the choir. He was and is an able musician and on one occasion that they came to sing they performed a piece composed by him. He subsequently was a parish assistant at All Hallows before going to University and again was here on a number of occasions. So it will be good to use some material by someone we know.

How we use Lent will be different for all of us, perhaps it will be trying to come to a weekday Mass, spend a little more time in prayer or even being more regular in Sunday attendance. Whatever it is we do need to use this season to deepen faith and grow in our love for God seeking to offer him worship and adoration in all that we do and say.

Whatever we do if we take Lent seriously we will arrive at Holy Week and Easter renewed and reinvigorated in our faith. So lets all try to make this Lent a real time for growth in our parish.

Your Parish Priest

All the lonely old people °

A silent epidemic is sweeping our land – the loneliness of old people trapped at home. With many families living at a distance from each other, and technology removing the need for face-to-face encounters (to collect pensions, etc) there are hundreds of thousands of older people who can get through an entire week hardly speaking to a soul.

Is there anything that we might do to help some of the lonely old people who live near our church? There is a scheme in the Highlands where a number of volunteers agree to each ring several older people each morning, just to make contact. ‘Morning Call’ has been praised by the medical authorities as well as the older folk, who call it a lifeline. As one lady explained: “Knowing that I would be receiving a phone call from a Morning Call volunteer gave me a reason to get out of bed ... the calls have become a much looked-forward to event.”

So here is an idea: would there be any volunteers in our church who would agree to each make one or two phone calls a day, to local elderly people who would otherwise go all day without speaking to anyone? The phone call would be just to wish them good morning, and to make sure they are all right. If so, perhaps we could start, in a very small way, some sort of scheme to help our lonely local old folk. If such a scheme interests you, please contact Fr Guy.

Church Heritage Record boosted by Heritage Lottery Fund grant

The Church of England, through its Church Heritage project, has been awarded a £9,900 Sharing Heritage grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to catalogue, digitise and promote the Canon Clarke Collection which contains information on over 11,000 Anglican and Roman Catholic churches in England.

Julie Patenaude, Church Heritage Project Officer at the Church Buildings Division of The Church of England (CCB) said, "Canon Clarke began his journey documenting our churches at the age of 15. The collection is a testament to his passion for these buildings and their treasures as much as an important twentieth century record of their condition."

The Canon Clarke Collection holds 31 notebooks, 19 boxes of supplementary background material for his books on 18th century church buildings, the unpublished text of a book on Victorian church

restoration and notes on demolished and desecrated churches in London and an unpublished biography of the Victorian architect, Henry Woodyer. The collection also holds card indexes of notes on churches dated between 1800 and 1830, and 20, 000 postcards of churches.

The project, to begin in April 2016, will recruit 8 volunteers including two archiving students to work alongside the C of E Record Centre in Bermondsey to digitise the collection, make content available on the Church Heritage Record, develop guided tours based on Clarke's footsteps, and host a learning event to engage the public with the collection and church buildings.

Julie Patenaude said, "Canon Clarke made entries only for churches which he had actually seen and his fascination was with post-Reformation architecture, both new buildings and alterations to existing churches. His

acute judgement, underpinned by meticulous research amongst published material and original sources meant he was able to identify and record the architects of many Georgian and Victorian churches and furnishings, information which cannot be found in any single place elsewhere."

Janet Gough, Director of the CCB said, "The task ahead for our volunteers is exciting, learning new skills and having the opportunity to work at close quarters to such an historically important collection will be an honour."

CALM software will be used to provide the metadata required to catalogue the collection, a new scanner which can scan notebooks will be purchased, and once digitised the collection will be re-packaged in acid-free boxes to enable researchers' access to the collection without fear of damaging it. Online access will be via <https://facultyonline.churchofengland.org/about-the-church-heritage-record>

29th Feb. Oswald - the saint for Leap Year

There is a saint for Leap Year: St Oswald of Worcester, who died on 29th February 992. His family story was extraordinary, and full of some surprising 'leaps', all by itself. It provides a tantalising glimpse of what happened to at least one of those pagan Viking warriors who settled in Anglo-Saxon Britain.

For Oswald's great-uncle had come to England c 865, as part of the 'Great Heathen Army' of Viking invaders. But his son, Oswald's uncle, Oda, forsook paganism, and not only converted to Chris-

tianity, but actually ended up as Archbishop of Canterbury. From there, Oda was in a position to help his nephew, Oswald, which he did.

Oda sent young Oswald to be educated at the abbey of Fleury, then a great centre of learning. There Oswald absorbed the Benedictine ideals which would guide his later life and work. Back in England, he became bishop of Worcester in 961, and with the support of King Edgar, eagerly joined in major reforms of the Anglo-Saxon church. In 972 Oswald was made Archbishop of York, and seems to have taken

a great interest in renewing the church in the Danelaw. He founded Ramsey Abbey, which became one of the great Fenland monasteries.

Oswald was a popular Archbishop, who was in the habit of washing the feet of the poor every day in Lent. On the 29th February 992 he had just completed this service at Worcester, when he collapsed and died. Later Oswald and his successor at Worcester, Wulfstan came to be the two chief saints of Worcester. You can see them together, for instance, flanking the tomb of King John before the high altar of the cathedral.

The story behind the Hymn - 'He who would valiant be'

He who would valiant be
'Gainst all disaster,
Let him in constancy
Follow the Master.
There's no discouragement
Shall make him once relent
His first avowed intent
To be a pilgrim.

Who so beset him round
With dismal stories,
Do but themselves confound -
His strength the more is.
No foes shall stay his might,
Though he with giants fight:
He will make good his right
To be a pilgrim.

Since, Lord, thou dost defend
Us with thy Spirit,
We know we at the end
Shall life inherit.
Then fancies flee away!
I'll fear not what men say,
I'll labour night and day
To be a pilgrim.

By John Bunyan (1628-88)

John Bunyan wrote these words while a prisoner in Bedford jail. They appeared as a poem in his great work, *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

Shrove Tuesday ± Pancake Day ± 9th February

It's odd, really, that confessing one's sins to God should ever have involved making pancakes. And yet the beginning of Lent brings us both – Shrove Tuesday is Pancake Day, and is followed by Ash Wednesday, and so Lent begins.

In centuries gone by, the pancakes were made to use up the milk and eggs before the fasting of Lent. More recently, many readers will

He would have been astonished to learn that his poem would ever go on to become a well-loved hymn.

What was Bunyan doing in jail? He had got caught up in the religious/political tensions of the times, and suffered for it.

John Bunyan was born in 1628, only a few years after the Pilgrim Fathers fled England for America, and religious freedom. Those were troubled times in England, with great tensions between King Charles and the Royalists, who were Catholic and believed in the divine right of kings, and the Parliament, as represented by Cromwell and the Roundheads.

Bunyan had been brought up a Roundhead, and even became a soldier for a while in Cromwell's army. When another soldier died in his place, Bunyan was stricken with grief, and went on to become a committed Christian.

After the Restoration of the monarchy and the Established Church in 1660, Bunyan was viewed with suspicion as a Puritan sympathiser.

have childhood memories of the wonder of watching our mothers break an egg, mix it with milk and flour – and out of that gooey mess, to produce a light and delicious pancake.

These days more and more of us buy pancake mix, or even ready-made pancakes. It seems we prefer the certainty of ending up with pancakes - to the risk of having made nothing BUT a mess of the

He was ordered to stop preaching in public, but refused. He was convicted and altogether spent 12 years in prison. They turned out to be the most fruitful years of his life, for he took up the pen, and in the end reached far more people than he could ever have done by preaching locally.

The poem appears in *Pilgrim's Progress* at the point where Christiana and her four sons meet and help Mr Valiant-for-Truth on the road. They wash his wounds, give him food and drink, and learn his story. Mr Valiant-for-Truth was on his way from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. He relates the obstacles and battles along the way, and then launches into 'He who would valiant be...'

The poem/hymn has been praised as 'calculated to inspire the most doubtful spirit; the most disconsolate soul and to rekindle the fire of zeal and enthusiasm for the pilgrim journey.' ... it was born out of Bunyan's own struggle... to be a pilgrim.' And it is the same faith, in the same Lord, and the same journey, that keeps millions of Christians in the Persecuted Church of today strong and looking forward... to the Celestial City!

kitchen.

In many parishes they used to hold pancake races on the day. Why anyone would want to run around a field while holding a pancake is not clear, but in Olney, Bucks, they have held a pancake race almost every year since 1445.

Mary Tudor ± the first Queen of England

Mary Tudor, the first undisputed Queen of England to reign in her own right, was born on 18 February 500 years ago.

The daughter of Henry VIII and Catharine of Aragon, she reigned for five years and after her death was known as Bloody Mary, because of her execution of hundreds of Protestant leaders in a bid to turn England back to Roman Catholicism following the death of her half-brother Edward, an ultra-Protestant.

The first of these martyrs was the printer of the “Matthews-Tyndale Bible”; also executed was the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, who was primarily responsible for the printing

of the Great Bible, as well as bishops Ridley and Latimer.

During her reign from 1553, Mary thwarted a bid to put Lady Jane Grey on the throne and then crushed a rebellion led by Sir Thomas Wyatt. To help her restore Roman Catholicism in England, she married Philip of Spain.

This marriage was not a success, however, and she was childless – after several false pregnancies she died of what is believed to be uterine or ovarian cancer. Her husband showed little long-term interest in her or in England, except to drag it into a conflict with France that cost it the area around Calais, its last toehold in France. As a result the country became disillusioned with her and was ready for a re-

turn to Protestantism when she was succeeded by her half-sister Elizabeth I, daughter of Henry and Anne Boleyn.

Mary’s body was interred in Westminster Abbey, and when Elizabeth died, in 1603, she was buried next to her. With Elizabeth’s backing, the radical Protestant John Foxe tracked down the stories of those killed under Mary and published them in his Book of Martyrs, which was enthusiastically received and widely read.

Sick

During a church service my young niece had to go outside, as she did not feel well. She returned a few minutes later and admitted: ‘I have been a little sick. But it doesn’t matter, there’s a box at the door marked ‘for the sick’.

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Suffering? God knows why

“...Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them – do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? (Luke 13: 4)

It can be earthquakes... floods... terrorism, or – as in the case here - unexpected deaths resulting, first from the killing of innocent people by the Roman governor Pontius Pilate, and secondly from a natural disaster. Like Jesus’ disciples, we tend to ask WHY? Our Lord’s answer to his questioners does not lessen our distress at calamities here on earth. But we are not completely shocked.

For Scripture teaches us that adversity is firmly built into our Christian understanding of how the world works.

1. We are all living in a fallen world.
2. We are all living in a temporary home.
3. We are all living on borrowed

Our present world-order is not as originally created. Basically we became a race of rebels, fallen from our custodianship over creation – so bringing both ourselves and the creation itself into the frustration of ‘bondage to decay’ (Romans 8:18-23). Even the ground was to be affected (Genesis 3:17,18).

2. We are all living in a temporary home. In the face of a natural fatal disaster (Luke 13:4,5), Jesus said that those killed were no more ‘guilty’ to die, than anyone else. All will die one day. But his words give the warning: One day it will be your turn. Indeed, let us run to the aid of those who suffer - but tragedy reminds us all that centre stage is not this life; by repentance we must prepare ourselves at any moment for the next!

time. Jesus went on to speak of a fruitless fig tree (Luke 13: 6-9). Should it be cut down? No, Give it a year’s reprieve. The lesson is clear. If some people are cut off in a matter of seconds, those left should humbly consider how they will use the life that has been spared to them. This leads to a final truth:

4. We are all living as debtors to love. People hung on Jesus’ words because they knew that He had solid answers for this world’s sorrows. Indeed He was the answer, for at the Cross we meet the love of the suffering God himself. One prayer must be that out of the experience of suffering, there will be some who see this, and respond.

Jesus encouraged his followers to look further ahead – to eternal realities. “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” John 16.33

Remembering Galileo ± and how the earth revolves

Galileo Galilei found himself at the centre of controversy 400 years ago this month, when he was ordered by the Catholic Church on 26 Feb 1616 to abandon his opinion that the Earth and planets revolve around the sun. He was banned from holding the opinion, promoting it, or teaching it.

Highly respected as a scientist, Galileo has been called the father of observational astronomy, of modern physics and of science generally. But the Church at the time feared that his championing of heliocentrism and Copernicanism cast doubt by implication on the authority of Scripture. Galileo himself argued for a non-literal interpretation of Holy Scripture to

solve the “problem”.

Galileo was born in 1564 near Pisa, then part of the Duchy of Florence. The first of six children of a famous lutenist, he started studying medicine but became fascinated by mathematics and became Professor of Mathematics at Pisa in 1589, then moved to a similar position at Padua in 1592.

In 1609, Galileo heard about the invention of the telescope in Holland. Without having seen one, he built a superior version and made many astronomical discoveries, including mountains and valleys on the surface of the moon, sunspots, the four largest moons of the planet Jupiter and the phases of the

planet Venus.

In 1632, he was again condemned for heresy after his book *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems* was published. Galileo was summoned to appear before the Inquisition, was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment – later reduced to permanent house arrest at his villa in Arcetri, south of Florence. He was also forced to publicly withdraw his support for Copernican theory.

Galileo died in 1642. In 1758, the Church lifted the ban on most works supporting Copernican theory, and by 1835 dropped its opposition to heliocentrism altogether.

'He gave us eyes to see them' - The Church Font

Last month we stood at the doorway of a church in West Yorkshire. Open the door of that church or any church and the first thing to greet our eyes is the font. It marks the beginning of Christian life in the church. Many fonts have fine carvings of the seven sacraments that nourish the Christian. Others are octagonal in shape: a reminder of Noah and his seven family members saved in the ark from the Flood.

This month's font is a symbol of the ship sailing the seas of life. It is in St George's Church, Anstey, in Hertfordshire. Around the font are carved mermen - mythical, pagan creatures that belong to a pre-Christian age which the newly baptised is called on to renounce. When it was carved in the 11th-12th centuries, baptism occurred within eight days of birth. Babies would be immersed three times into the waters of the font: dying to the old life symbolised by the

mermen, and rising to new life, to be clothed in a white robe and given a lighted candle as a guide through life. They would then grow up in the church, moving from that west end through the upturned boat of the nave to the altar at the east end.

That movement is a sign of the pilgrimage we are all called to make. Like a journey on the seas of this world, we may sail through tranquil waters and peaceful days. There may be times when the skies are cloudy and the waters stormy.

Martin Luther, when he was faced by struggles like that in his life, would say the words 'I am baptised' to strengthen and reassure himself. 'I am baptised' we can say as we



travel in faith, knowing that there is always a light to guide and a goal that is sure and eternal.

All you need is love!

The Beatles' song 'All you need is love' is very fitting in this month, as we mark St Valentine's Day. If love is all we need, what does real love look like?

Paul describes it like this: 'Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.' (1 Corinthians 13: 4-8).

Love is unconditional:

The agenda of one bride on her wedding day was 'aisle-altar-hymn' (think about it!). Entering into love on the basis of changing the other person is dangerous! Paul talks about loving unconditionally, rooted in our experience of God's love through Christ for us: 'We love, because he first loved us.' (1 John 4:19).

Love is forgiving: According to the film *Love Story*, 'Love means never having to say you're sorry.' This is rarely true in our experience! According to Paul, love is saying you are sorry and hearing that you are

forgiven. Love 'keeps no record of wrongs' (5). We can only forgive as God forgives us, and who does so from the arms of Jesus stretched wide in love on the Cross.

Love is sacrificial: Paul describes love as not selfish or self-seeking, but selfless and self-sacrificial. It is a love that puts the needs of the other person first. Take the words from 1 Corinthians and instead of the word love, substitute your own name. Now substitute the word Jesus. This is the Jesus who is available to you to make your love for others grow that will bring true Valentine's joy!

Hymns and Readings

February 7th Sunday next before Lent

Readings Exodus 34: 29-end

Psalm 99

2 Corinthians 3: 12-4: 2

Luke 9: 28-36

Hymns 147 'Tis good Lord to be here
Be still for the presence of the Lord
494 Christ is the worlds true light
389 Jesus these eyes have never seen

Sidesperson: Mark Williams

Readers: Jenny Kauntze, Stephen Nicoll

Intercessions: Nicky Pittam

February 10th Ash Wednesday

Readings Joel 2: 1-2 & 12-17

Psalm 51

2 Corinthians 5: 20b-6: 10

Matthew 6: 1-6 & 16-21

Hymns 67 Forty days and forty nights
425 O love how deep how broad how high
70 Lord Jesus think on me
76 Take up thy cross

Sidesperson: Bill Saunders

Readers: Joe McKenzie, Lucy Boyd

Intercessions: Carol Kenning

February 14th Lent 1

Readings Deuteronomy 26: 1-11

Psalm 91

Romans 10: 8b-13

Luke 4: 1-13

Hymns 67 Forty days and forty nights
291 Jesu the very thought of thee
65 Christian dost thou see them
393 Lead us heavenly father lead us

Sidesperson: Elizabeth Oyedemi

Readers: Rob Nesbitt, Denise Sealy

Intercessions: Ian MacGregor

February 21st Lent 2

Readings: Genesis 15: 1-12 & 17-18

Psalm: 27

Philippians #: 17- 4:1

Luke 13: 31-end

Hymns 63 All ye who seek a comfort
359 Fight the good fight
401 Lights abode celestial salem
73 My God I love thee not because

Sidesperson: Monica Sarpong

Readers: Ruth Godwin, Nick Bethune

Intercessions: Lucy Boyd

February 28th Lent 3

Readings Isaiah 55: 1-9

Psalm 63

1 Corinthians 10: 1-13

Luke 13: 1-9

Hymns 414 O for a closer walk with God
282 Faithful shepherd feed me
376 I head the voice of Jesus say
368 Guide me O thou great redeemer

Sidesperson: Nick Bethune

Readers: Nicky Pittam, Mark Williams

Intercessions: Bill Saunders

Lent : Stay watchful; expect much!

“A cloud as small as a man’s hand is rising from the sea”
(1 Kings 18:44)

In all history was there ever a more colourful prophet than Elijah? In the power of God, he halted the deadly drift to Baal-worship in a single day. Earlier he had pronounced upon the land a divine judgment of three and a half years of drought. Now that dry period was about to end.

1. Confidence in God’s power. Praying people need to know that they are called and sent, no matter the set-backs. Elijah tells King Ahab, “Rain is coming!” But the skies looked like brass. That’s real confidence!

2. Watchfulness for God’s signals. The prophet now prays – for the promised rain. He sends for his weather-watching aide: “How is it looking, now?” The report comes back - “It’s a beautiful sunny day out there!” Elijah prays on. Christian colleagues – can we do the same, when the work – or future prospects- looks limited and unpromising? To pray is to stay alert to what GOD may do!

3. Involvement in God’s actions. A seventh time the aide returns. The weather? “Er, blazing sun actually.... well, except for one tiny cloud!” But that’s enough for Elijah. “Into your chariot!” he orders Ahab, “and ride before the rain stops you!”

The skies go black, the wind rises.... and the drought is over. See Elijah, caught up in the excitement as he runs ahead of Ahab – on a seventeen mile stretch to Jezreel - in the drenching, refreshing rain of God. Did he have to do that? No, but he wanted to be involved up to the last! Read James 5:17,18; Elijah was no super-hero. He was like any one of us.

Allow your Lent to be a time of watchful expectation!

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For your prayers

PRAYER CALENDAR FOR MONTH OF FEBRUARY 2016

7th Churchill Road
14th College Lane
21st Croftdown Road
28th Dartmouth Park Avenue

SAINTS & HOLY DAYS

1st St Brigid
3rd St Anskar
4th Gilbert of Sempringham
7th Sunday next before Lent
10th Ash Wednesday

14th Lent 1
15th St Sigfrid
17th Janani Luwum
21st Lent 2
23rd St Polycarp
28th Lent 3

Sign

Outside a New York Convalescent Home
there is a sign: 'For the sick and tired of the
Episcopal Church...'