

**St John's Church @ Home**

**Reflections & Prayers for the Second Sunday before Lent**

**7<sup>th</sup> February 2021**



This Sunday, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, the lectionary prescribes for us, once again, the beautiful prologue from John's gospel as our Gospel reading. It seems as if it was only yesterday that we heard those profound words being read at Christmas. But, last week, the final vestiges of our Christmas decorations were packed away, as Candlemas revealed itself to be the pivotal point between Bethlehem and Calvary. As our focus turns once more from the crib to the cross, the Evangelist's words are uttered and received again, perhaps to remind us that Christ is not a seasonal figure, he is not packed away in the loft with the crib, but he remains among us as our living Lord - The Word made flesh.

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## Readings for this Sunday

These are this week's readings from the lectionary, which you may like to look up in your Bibles at home.

Proverbs 8: 1, 22-31

Psalm 104: 26 - end

Colossians 1: 15-20

**John 1: 1-14**

### The Word of God

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

John 1:1-14

## Reflecting on the Word - by Emma Bresslaw

The opening of John's Gospel echoes the opening words of the Bible in the first chapter of Genesis. The word of God is shown to be a creative force like no other. When God speaks, things happen – "Let there be light" and light filled the darkness. When God speaks, he reflects upon his creation – "God saw that it was good." His words are effective and are all powerful. God created humankind and the Old Testament tells us over and over again that God desires to have a loving relationship with us. His steadfast love will endure for ever, he will hold us close like a mother, he will shelter us under his wing and protect us. But how are we to engage in this relationship? What is the shared language, the vocabulary with which we can draw close to our Creator and seek to understand the fullness of life which he wishes us to enjoy? John tells us that this common tongue is the Word, Jesus is the channel of communication by which we can begin the process of knowing God. We are spoken to by the Word made flesh, God in recognisable human form speaking words that we can understand and empathise with if we will but open our ears to their meaning and allow ourselves to respond to their intent.

John's words have no regard for our sense of chronology: the linear, two-dimensional time-line upon which we mentally hang historic events, attempting to make sense of our world by a naïve comprehension of cause and effect and evolution. The Word was in the beginning; it was there in the chaos before Creation; it was through it that all things came into being; it dwelt among us as the incarnate Christ and through the lives of all the saints who have gone before; it lives among us now as the life force of every living organism and it is there in the incomprehensible vastness of an eternity which we sometimes dare to imagine. The Word cannot be confined to a tense – it is past, it is future, it is present.

The Word that is God makes things happen and accomplishes that which it says. Our own humble utterances of syllables contain no such power. More often than not they are quite empty, mere exhalations that decorate the air into which they are released. Our words often fail us, they fail to convey the meaning we intend, they do not make things happen because we fail to follow them through with the required action that they promise. If we ourselves fail to be as good as our word then our words are devalued and are rendered ineffective, un-creative.

Our consolation is that the living Word of God never fails and it continues to transform us and sustain us. When we were able to take Communion, we called upon the healing power of that Word every time we were about to share in the bread and wine, "Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed". As disciples of Christ, we pray that God's Word will grow within us, that we shall indeed be as good as our word. Like students in a language lab', we are striving to learn the words that will enable us to communicate with each other in God's language which speaks of justice, equity, equality and love. When our words begin to speak God's Word then they too will have a chance of making things happen.

Amen

"A word is dead  
When it is said,  
Some say.  
I say it just  
Begins to live  
That day."

Emily Dickinson

## Prayers

*As we come to our time of prayer, perhaps light a candle and spend a few minutes in quiet meditation.....*

As you settle into this time of prayer, I invite you to create space and silence for God's Word to fill your mind and heart. Listen in the silence, be still within it, pay attention to the quietness, to your steady breathing and remove all the obstacles and clutter from your mind. Breathe out slowly. Allow yourself to simply be, for this is the heart and essence of prayer, a letting go and enabling God to look upon you as a loving Father. Remain still for a few minutes, rest in a quiet pool of calm serenity and simply allow yourself to be. Ask for nothing. It is enough that you desire to draw close to God. Let peace still your cares and God's love enfold you in its warm embrace.

*We continue by praying for others, in our intercessions,*

Blessed are you, Lord God, Creator of all life.  
We thank you because we are wonderfully made.  
You have given us the gift of communication,  
eyes to see, ears to hear and lips to speak.  
Teach us not only to speak to you but to listen,  
to be quiet in your presence  
and know that you are God

*Silence*

We pray for all who listen to you in prayer  
that they may speak to us of your word.  
We ask your blessing upon the leaders of our churches,  
for Archbishops Justin and Stephen,  
for our Bishops in this Diocese, Alan, Michael and Richard,  
for all who preach and open up your ancient word  
that it may speak to us in our world today.

*Silence*

Guide the leaders of the nations  
in the ways of justice and peace.  
Keep our ears open to the cry of the poor and the oppressed;  
let us always be sensitive to the needs of others.  
We pray for relief agencies  
and all who are working to relieve suffering  
and, especially at this time,  
for global generosity and equity in the distribution of the Covid vaccine  
among all nations, rich and poor.

*Silence*

We remember before you all whose voices are unheard,  
people who feel unwanted or neglected.  
We pray for the lonely,  
especially the elderly and vulnerable  
who have had to shield themselves and be isolated for so long.  
We hold before you Lord, all who are sick or suffering,  
all those who will cry out today in pain or confusion,  
that they may know your healing presence in their lives,  
your comfort in their time of distress.

*Silence*

We rejoice that you hear us when we pray and offer us eternal life.  
We ask you blessing upon our loved ones now departed.  
May they know the peace and glory of your kingdom.

*Silence*

**Merciful Father,  
accept our prayers, for the sake of your Son,  
our saviour, Jesus Christ.  
Amen**

(Based on prayers in "Prayers of Intercessions" by David Adam © 2007 David Adam)

*As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:*

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come - your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins,  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and forever.

**Amen**

### **Parish Prayers for the week ahead**

#### **In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer:**

Sunday	The Anglican Church of Burundi
Monday	The Diocese of Saint Andrews, Dunkeld & Dunblane – The Scottish Episcopal Church
Tuesday	The Anglican Missionary District – Igreja – The Anglican Episcopal Church of Brazil
Wednesday	The Diocese of Angola – The Anglican Church of Southern Africa

Thursday	The Diocese of Ankole – The Church of the Province of Uganda
Friday	The Diocese of North Ankole – The Church of the Province of Uganda
Saturday	The Diocese of Northwest Ankole – The Church of the Province of Uganda

**In our Diocesan Cycle of Prayer:**

Sunday	Parish of Tingrith (Deanery of Ampthill and Shefford)
Monday	Parish of Westoning (Deanery of Ampthill and Shefford)
Tuesday	Parish of Woburn (Deanery of Ampthill and Shefford)
Wednesday	Parish of Woburn Sands (Deanery of Ampthill and Shefford)
Thursday	Parish of Chipping Barnet (St John the Baptist, Chipping Barnet; St Mark, Barnet Vale; St Stephen, Bells Hill; & St Peter, Arkley) (Deanery of Barnet)
Friday	Parish of East Barnet, St Mary's (Deanery of Barnet)
Saturday	Parish of Elstree and Borehamwood (Deanery of Barnet)

For the homes and families in:

Sunday	Mons Close, Nairn Close
Monday	Netherfield Road, Newton Close
Tuesday	Oak Way, Oakfield Road
Wednesday	Oakhurst Avenue, Oakley Road
Thursday	Paddock Wood, Parva Close
Friday	Pendennis Court, Pennycroft
Saturday	Piggottshill Lane

**The Sick:**

Amy, Claire, Sue, Christine, Hermione, Karen, Enid, Chris, Sophie and all whose names are entered on our St Luke's Cell Prayer List.

**For the recently deceased:**

Peter Redsell, Diana Turner, Patricia Tollworthy, Susan Eastwood, Sheila Burley, Jo Young.

**On their year's mind:**

Muriel Must, Thomas Reynard, Harry Fisher, Basil Dodd, Barbara Chaning-Pearce, Ronald Moss, Harry Inman, Neil Buick.

[A reminder... of this phone service:](#)

Daily Hope – dial 0800 804 8044 for prayer, reflection, music and worship services from the Church of England. A weekly service is available from 9 am every Sunday.

[Church at home:](#)

We are delighted to produce each week these printed papers. If you would prefer not to receive these papers each week, please let Julie in the parish office know. If you are aware of others in the parish who would also value the opportunity to worship at home in this way, do please contact a member of the Ministry team or Julie (Parish Office Tel: 01582 712776).