

Section News

26 MAY 2021

A large green decorative graphic consisting of three overlapping circles. Each circle contains a white outline of a circle, and the text "Reflection", "Notices", and "Bible Month" is centered within these white outlines.

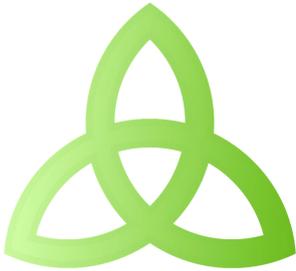
Reflection

Notices

Bible Month

Superintendent's Thoughts

IT'S A MYSTERY TO ME...



So begins a song by the group *Dire Straits* which was released in 1982. Whilst the song is about the life of a private investigator, there are two lines within the lyrics that resonate with me as I reflect on the mystery of the Trinity and the reading from John's gospel which is set for this Sunday:

"This is my investigation: it's not a public enquiry."

Despite the recent long months of "lockdown" encouraging limited contact in all aspects of life, there has been much of people's private lives revealed in the media in all its diversity. I have been pondering about the difference between it being "good to talk" and "washing one's laundry in public". Those of us who live with mental health issues know the value of talking to someone else in a safe, confidential setting. We can all recognise the damage that can be caused by sharing too much personal information into the public domain, where the originator no longer has much, if any, control over it.

Should we be surprised therefore that Nicodemus, who is described by John as being 'a Pharisee and a leader of the Jews', comes to Jesus by night? We can probably imagine what a storm would have been stirred up in the public spaces if Nicodemus had asked his questions in daylight and in public... Jesus' response is a challenging one – "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?"

Perhaps, Nicodemus was not enquiring as a leader of the Jews, but as a human being seeking to better understand the God he served in his role as a Pharisee? Perhaps he came at night so he could question and listen with a sense of freedom that he would not have found at other times? Perhaps, he wanted to hear from Jesus himself, an encounter that would have been frowned upon at best and could have caused some serious damage to Nicodemus' career.

Although the last verse of the passage is often quoted, the passage as a whole maintains its mysterious feel with the conversation about the need to be born "of water and the Spirit". These verses are still the subject of much dialogue and study. On the one hand, they are understood to say that one is only in a 'proper' relationship with God through Christ if one has been 'born again'. This understanding usually carries with it the identification of a specific spiritual encounter in which one was 'baptised with the Spirit'. There are other views about how to understand the passage, which include the recognition that the Greek original can be translated as 'you must go on being baptised in the Spirit'. This gives the sense that the Spirit's presence needs topping up on a daily basis as the believer makes use of God's gifts and graces in the work of the Kingdom.

Kenneth Grayston in his commentary on John's gospel writes this:

"... by virtue of his office [the Son of Man] has the power to confer birth from above on those who entrust themselves to him... The point is this: those who find life on earth unsatisfactory may hope for one of two things: *either* that God will reach down from heaven, relieve their distress and make a happy life possible on earth, *or* that the way will be disclosed to them whereby they can live the life of heaven where their human representative, the Son of Man, always exists. The Gospel is based on the second hope."

This is why the exploration of faith remains a mystery – it is, at its core, a private investigation.

Notices

Dates for the Diary

Week beginning	30 th May	6 th June	13 th June	20 th June
Sunday 4.00 pm <i>Reflection – a short 30-minute gathering using images, music and words led by Revd Rachel Borgars.</i> https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84235746908	✓	✓	✓	✓
Monday 7:30 pm <i>Discussion Group – originally called the ‘Hot Potatoes’ group, this is an opportunity to discuss current issues with some theology as part of the mix.</i> https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84961411119		✓		✓
Thursday 7:30pm <i>Circuit Bible Study – a more formal Bible study which usually meets monthly on the last Thursday in the month. During June we shall meet weekly following the Bible Month material.</i> https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88651459988	✓ Bible Month	✓ Bible Month	✓ Bible Month	✓ Bible Month
Friday 9:15 am <i>Prayer Group – an opportunity to pray together, bringing both joys and concerns in prayer.</i> https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82103846709	✓	✓	✓	✓

If you would like to join in with any of these gatherings via telephone, please do ring me on 01256 895878 and I will give you the details to dial in via any telephone. I do hope you will join us, even if you haven't felt Zoom is for you up until now!!



ADDITIONAL DATE

SUNDAY, MAY 30th 2021

There will be a service conducted via Zoom by the Baptist Church in Whitchurch this coming Sunday evening beginning at 7:00 p.m. The evening will include material from Shane Claiborne, who describes himself as “Author, activist, & recovering sinner. Building a new world in the shell of the old one.”

All are welcome to join in, the link is:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82250550163?pwd=RnlOMVdhYUN1MUI6ZCtUMTNldXBIZz09>
(Passcode: 864769)

The Bible Month book for 2021 is the Gospel of Mark.

During June – there will be a discussion group meeting on Thursday evenings to look at the study material for the following Sunday. The first meeting for this Bible Month group will be on June 3rd on Zoom (<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88651459988>)

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