

St Francis Weekly News for THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT 21st February 2021



This newsletter may have come to you by email or through your letterbox, if you received it on paper but are happy to receive an email in future please email deborah.lechmere@ntlworld.com If you know anybody else who would like this delivered or emailed please contact Deborah or Revd Janet: revdjanetwyer@outlook.com

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN ST FRANCIS CHURCH?

CHURCH REMAINS CLOSED FOR WORSHIP

In order to keep everyone safe the church remains closed for Sunday worship. However, we continue to broadcast the service via the St Francis YouTube channel.

If you would like assistance in respect of joining our YouTube channel or would like to talk about how you might receive Holy Communion please do not hesitate to get in touch with us.

WELCOME TO THE SEASON OF LENT



Our Ash Wednesday services heralded the beginning of Lent 2021 and as we enter into the forty days of preparation for the joy of Easter Day we do so still under the shadow of lockdown and the difficulties and struggles of living through a worldwide pandemic.

Lent is traditionally viewed as a time for being miserable – going without the nice things we enjoy, missing out on joyful worship, and putting up with all things church being rather sombre.

This is, without a doubt the last thing we need during such trying and testing times!

And actually this is the last thing we need at any time...

Yes, we pare things back to the minimum in the days preceding Easter, but that's simply to echo a couple of thousand years of tradition, and honouring the fact that in order to appreciate the good things that God had given us, we perhaps need to draw back a little on the non-essentials of life and savour the basic goodness that surrounds us day in and day out.

Lent is not about hardship, it's about finding joy in simply being with God, living simply and walking in companionship with Jesus into the wonderful Kingdom of peace that he has opened up for us.

So please, do not force yourself into giving up something just for the sake of it being Lent – that completely defeats the object!

The object of Lent is to draw us back to Jesus and his message of God's love for us – going through the motions will never do that.

Better then to get into a right relationship with God through prayer, reading holy scripture and finding other ways to enter into God's presence.

So, a little suggestion, if the ancient Christian practice of fasting and self-denial is not for you – try saying a prayer as you partake of that little



luxury you enjoy. It may open up a whole new perspective on Lenten discipline.

Revd Winnie & friends are doing their bit to help! They intend to watch over a basket of donated Goodies that can then be raffled off to help raise funds for

the maintenance of St Francis' Church Building. Why not help them and make this a part of your Lenten discipline?

The reality is that Lent has had a very bad press in recent years, and has come to very badly misunderstood.

LENTEN SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE

It has, over the years, become customary for churches to offer a formal course of study for people to follow as part of a Lenten discipline.

Because of current circumstances we have decided that we will not be running a group course but will instead offer individuals the opportunity for a one to one guided journey through Lent. If you would like to discover more of what might be available please contact either Revd Janet or Fr Tracy.

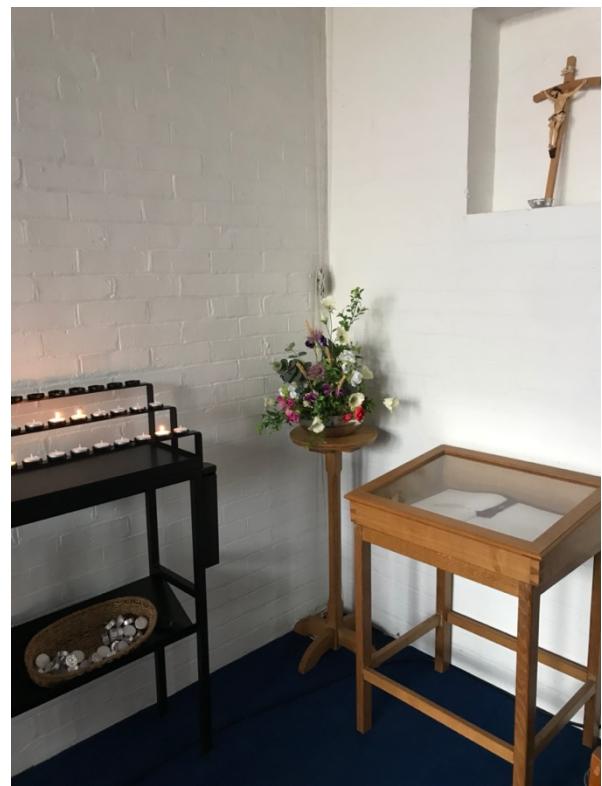


ST FRANCIS BOOK OF REMEBRANCE

There has for many years been a beautiful Book of Remembrance available in the church where the names of loved ones can be recorded as a permanent memorial.

Situated in the little chapel area by the altar, there is provision for memorial flowers and now, thanks to the generosity of Charles Farris Church Supplies we also have a lovely candle stand where prayer candles can be lit and left.

Please do remember that the church is open every weekday morning if you would like to come and take advantage of this lovely quiet space of prayer and remembrance.



CAN YOU PLEASE HELP?

A young woman member of our St Francis family is desperately in need of somewhere permanent to live.

Through no fault of her own she will be homeless at the end of February and so we are seeking out anyone who might be in a position to offer her a safe place of lodging.

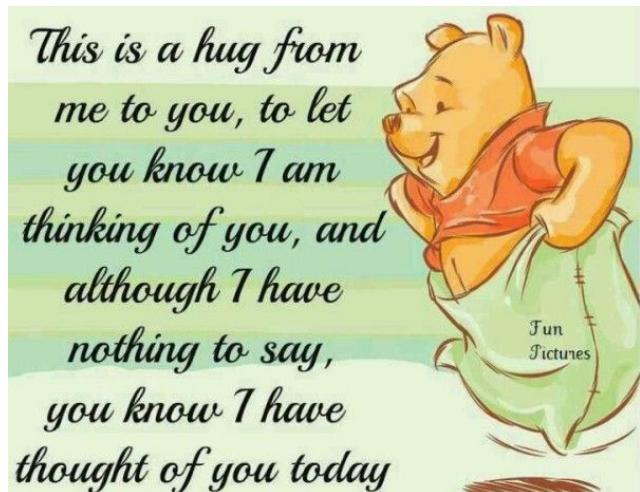
We can offer a small monthly payment for suitable accommodation.

We very obviously cannot disclose her personal circumstances here, but should you think you might be able to help, please contact Revd Janet, 07368 832294.

WOODSIDE HOUSE CARE HOME

At this present time life for the residents and staff of Woodside House is a little sad. The Lockdown restrictions that have been in place for nearly a year are still as difficult as ever, these pre spring months are gloomy and losing loved ones is dreadfully hard at the best of times, let alone in the midst of these current times.

So we send our love and prayers to everyone at Woodside House – please be assured you are nestled in our hearts here at St Francis and that you are not forgotten. We are so looking forward to when we can visit again – hopefully very soon. God bless you all.



Revd Winnie asked me to include this on his behalf – He said 'Sometimes words are not enough...'

GET CREATIVE!

If you have something that you would like us to consider for the newsletter please feel free to send via email revdjanetwyer@outlook.com or post a copy of your submission through the vicarage door. [Not the original please, we cannot guarantee its safe return]

WOULD YOU LIKE TO COMMIT TO BEING A MEMBER OF THE ST FRANCIS HEARTSEASE CHURCH FAMILY?

Everyone in the St Francis Heartsease Parish is a part of our church family, but over the next few weeks we will be looking to revising St Francis Church Electoral Roll.

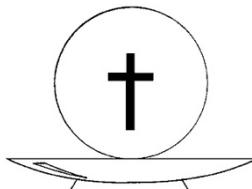
If you would like to formally become a part of the family and commit to all that entails, all you need to do is complete a simple form and return it to the Church Office.

We will be sending out forms in due course – but if you would like to know more, please get in touch.

WINTER LOCKDOWN

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE CHURCH IS NOT OPEN FOR SUNDAY WORSHIP.

However, the church is available for individual prayer every weekday 10.30am – 11.30am.



If you would like to spend some time in the church or would like to make enquiries about receiving Holy Communion please do feel free to contact:
Revd Janet – 07368 832294
or
Fr Tracy - 07834 845623

If you would like to join in with Sunday Worship we continue to broadcast via the St Francis YouTube channel. Just search for 'St Francis Heartsease YouTube'

HOME GROUP

Throughout Lent Jim Green will continue to offer folk the opportunity to get together via a Zoom Room every fortnight on a Wednesday evening.

The forthcoming dates are:

February 24
March 10, 24

Joining Jim and the group who meet regularly is an ideal opportunity to try something different as a way of observing Lent and deepening bonds of fellowship.

As ever the times are 7- 8pm, and the format is very simple: chat, catch up with each other, read a Bible passage, pray for each other.

Please email Jim for further details and he will be happy to make contact and pass on all you need to know, including the zoom link address. His email is as follows: jampiecrust@gmail.com

NEIGHBOURHOOD NOTICE BOARD

FREE... a well-used, but ok condition under worktop freezer and companion fridge [minus shelves and salad box]. Collection only, local area. If you are interested please leave a message on St Francis Admin answerphone: 01603 431259

If you have a notice you would like included under the noticeboard – please email your piece to revdjanetwyer@outlook.com or deborah.lechmere@ntlworld.com

PASTORAL CARE MATTERS

Please remember you are not alone, if you would like a chat or if you need some assistance of any kind, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

If you live on the Heartsease we are also able to offer help if you or someone you know needs support with emergency basic food provision.

Our contact details are as follows:

Revd Janet: 07368 832294

Fr Tracy: 07834 845623

24/7 Answerphone: 01603 431259
[checked daily]

There is also someone available in church weekday mornings if you would prefer to talk to someone face to face.



USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS

Childline: 0800 1111

Samaritans: 116 123

Domestic Violence Hotline: 0808 2000 247
[If you hear a neighbour in distress please do not hesitate to call this number or 999; you could save a life]

Mind: 0300 123 3393

Age UK: 0800 169 6565

Norfolk Assistance Scheme: 01603 223392

Heartsease Community Money Advice Centre: 07765 739987

THE CURATES'S CORNER

In 1560 and 1561, Queen Elizabeth I ordered that boards with the text of the Ten Commandments painted on them should be put up on the eastern wall of every church in England. This was reaffirmed by James I and was made Canon law, or added to the rules of the Church of England, in 1604. It was usual to add boards with the Lord's prayer and the Creed painted on them too, often these were painted directly on the wall. This is why in many old churches these texts can still be seen, even if on occasion they have been moved away from the altar; it is also why it is traditional to face the altar when saying the creed in a church service, even though, as here at St Francis, there is probably no board to read! This is most obvious in the cathedral, when the whole choir and congregation turn eastwards to recite the creed at evensong, even though the reason why is largely long forgotten.



hy the Ten Commandments, and what are they? Queen Elizabeth referred to them as 'God's Precepts', or, how we should order our lives in accordance with God's will. She would quite rightly have believed them a good place to start for the formation of a good, ordered and happy society.

They can be found in the bible at Exodus 20:2-17 and there is another version at Deuteronomy 5:7-21. They were believed to have been given to Moses by God on Mount Sinai; they are the bedrock of the laws of the people of Israel. Today it is common to think of them as a round-up of all the teachings of the great prophets.

What do the commandments say? Here's my rough guide. There is only one God and no other; do not worship anything else, such as idols and fast cars; don't blaspheme (so don't keep saying OMG); set

aside a sabbath day, keep it special and take a break; look after your parents; don't kill anybody; don't commit adultery; don't steal things; don't tell lies about people; and don't look sideways at other people's stuff and wish you could have it too.

Sounds reasonable to me! In Lent, we should be examining ourselves to think about lives and how we conduct ourselves. How many of 'God's Precepts' do we keep? If I'm honest, I can admit to having broken most of them at some point, and I'm sorry. That's probably true of all of us – if we were honest. So in Lent, we can try to do an ethical MoT check and see how we are doing, and try to do a little bit better.

Until quite recently, the commandments were said at the beginning of every service of Holy Communion in the Church of England. Since a prayer book revision in 1928, it has been common to recite the 'Summary of the Law' as said by Jesus at Matthew 22 (and Mark 12, Luke 20). This is in itself derived from Deuteronomy 6:4-5. The recitation of the Law was seen to be a vital form of self preparation, a reminder to people that they were about to approach the holy Lord.

Mostly though, the commandments and the Summary have been completely dropped from our services. This Lent at St Francis we are saying the Summary of the Law to help us with our self-examination This is derived from Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and Leviticus 19:18:

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God

is the only Lord. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.'

The second is this:

'Love your neighbour as yourself.'

There is no other commandment greater than these. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Amen. Lord, have mercy.

We hope this will be of help to you as we journey through Lent, travelling ever closer to Easter and the work of the cross. We should never think of God's holy precepts without recalling the cross of Christ suffered for our countless violations of His law and our need of His grace to make us as holy as He.

Every blessing

Fr Tracy

A WORD FROM THE VICAR

As we await the bright and beautiful colours of spring, this time of year can seem very black and white – and it can feel very lifeless and dreary.

However during the recent snowy white spell it was wonderful to venture out the door and hear children playing. Laughter and squeals of delight [or cold] brightened up the day, and I very much missed them when the snow disappeared and with it went the excited children's voices.

On venturing out the other day however, I was greeted with a similar hubbub of excited chatter.

The only thing is, this exuberant noise came from way above my head...

Looking up I was astonished to see an enormous flock of magpies, all of them excitedly calling to one another and seemingly having a wonderful time.

Hmmm, I thought to myself, don't they know about social distancing and the rules around gathering together in groups?

Undeterred by my presence far below them, they shouted and played and swooped from tree to tree with what seemed boundless joy.

As I was actually on my way to ring the 5pm bell and say Evening Prayers I had the sudden thought that in their uncomplicated creaturely way they were expressing a simple joyfulness in just being alive and a part of God's wonderful creation.

Their noisy revelling was an anthem of praise, and one that cheered me up no end. They may seem very black and white, but magpies are anything but dull and dreary – and how good is God that he gives us such wonders to behold!

Psalm 66: 1



May you see God's wonders all around you as we make our way toward spring. God bless you and yours.

Revd Janet

FOR OUR PRAYERS

We have been asked to pray for Woodside House Care Home who are finding these days to be particularly difficult. Please ask that they know that God's love is with them as they grieve the loss of a loved one and cope with all the current restrictions.

We pray too for those who are in need of prayer at this time: Lorna; Evie; Rodrigo; Huggy; Megan; Christine; Stephen C; Margaret T; David & Cynthia; Maegan; Tom; Riley & his mum and family; Jeanette, David & Grace; Paula.

We continue to pray for all those in our Church, friends and family who are managing long term health issues including Pete; Doreen; Rosemary; Sheila; John; Joy; Shirley; Fr Brian, Hazel;

We pray too for all NHS and NSFT Staff.

We remember with love Derek; Alberto & Georgina; Stephen Webster; Kevin Lemmon; and all those who have died in recent days and pray for their family and friends.

A PRAYER FOR THESE UNCERTAIN TIMES

God of compassion,
be close to those who are ill, afraid or feeling isolated. In their loneliness, be their consolation;
in their anxiety, be their hope;
in their darkness, be their light;
through him who suffered alone on the cross,
but reigns with you in glory,
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**The Church of St Francis
Heartsease**

Heavenly Father
We ask your blessing upon us.
Hold the Heartsease Community,
and all the world,
in your arms of love.
Be with us.
Give us your strength,
peace, and healing grace.
Watch over us,
protect us from harm;
and keep in safety
all those who care for the sick
and attend to our needs,
in Jesus name we pray.
Amen

PRAYERS FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

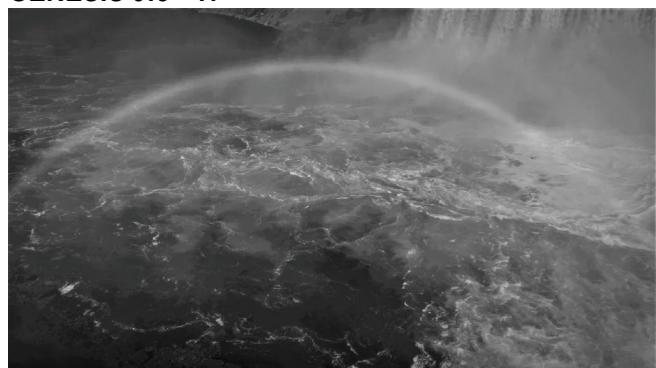
Almighty God,
whose Son Jesus Christ
fasted forty days in the wilderness,
and was tempted as we are, yet without sin:
give us grace to discipline ourselves
in obedience to your Spirit;
and, as you know our weakness,
so may we know your power to save;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen

Heavenly Father,
your Son battled with the powers of darkness,
and grew closer to you in the desert:
help us to use these days to grow in wisdom and
prayer
that we may witness to your saving love
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Lord God,
you have renewed us
with the living bread from heaven;
by it you nourish our faith, increase our hope,
and strengthen our love: teach us always to hunger
for him
who is the true and living bread,
and enable us to live by every word
that proceeds from out of your mouth;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

READINGS FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

GENESIS 9:8 - 17



Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, 'As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.' God said, 'This is the sign of the

covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.' God said to Noah, 'This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.'

PSALM 25:1 - 9

*Show me your ways,
Lord, teach me
your paths.
Guide me in your
truth and teach
me, for you are
God my Saviour,
and my hope is in
you all day long.*

Psalm 25:4-5

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul;
O my God, in you I trust; ♦
let me not be put to shame; let not my enemies
triumph over me.

Let none who look to you
be put to shame, ♦
but let the treacherous be shamed and frustrated.

Make me to know your ways, ♦
O Lord, and teach me your paths.

Lead me in your truth and teach me, ♦
for you are the God of my salvation;
for you have I hoped all the day long.

Remember, Lord,
your compassion and love, ♦
for they are from everlasting.

Remember not the sins of my youth
or my transgressions, ♦
but think on me in your goodness, O Lord,
according to your steadfast love.

Gracious and upright is the Lord; ♦
therefore shall he teach sinners in the way.

He will guide the humble in doing right ♦
and teach his way to the lowly.

All the paths of the Lord
are mercy and truth ♦
to those who keep his covenant and his
testimonies.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now,
and shall be for ever. Amen

1 PETER 3:18 - 22

For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight people, were saved through water.

And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.



MARK 1:9-15

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness for forty days,

tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.'



REFLECTION FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

"Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return, turn away from sin and be faithful to Christ "

Words from the Ash Wednesday liturgy that are said as a cross of ash is inscribed on the forehead of the penitent believer.

A stark reminder of our mortality, of our baptismal promises and that the Lenten journey ahead is a calling to look deep into ourselves and offer to God all that we find there.

Demanding days ahead then, but our readings for today set us on our Lenten way with a reminder that as we make our Lenten journey, God is with us.

God is with us, God holds us and loves us, frail and failing though we are

Genesis 9, nine chapters into the bible and humankind has already messed up, big time.

God has lost patience and swept away all but a handful of people and animals, but almost like a parent who regrets smacking a wayward child – God comforts Noah

I won't do that again, God says - I will put a bow in the sky turned down toward the earth as a sign of peace, and when I see it, I will remember my promise of love to you.

It's almost as if God looks at the mud and muck of devastation, and remembers Eden - the beauty of that first creation - and yearns for its return

Perhaps God looks at this ragged remnant of humanity and realises that this is it – humankind is as it is, and the relationship between them and God will always be one of hope-filled forgiveness

And whichever way you look at it, from thereon in begins the story of love between God and God's people

Because that is what it is, the Bible – it is the epic story of God's love for us. How else can we describe this relationship where God keeps coming back to humanity time and time again, even after humanity has turned away from God.

How else to describe this relationship in which God continues to make and keep promises to a rebellious and rejecting people who stubbornly resist God's ways again and again and again.

In this, our world of disobedience - alongside our almost casual acceptance that it should be so, it has become fashionable in some quarters to not only turn away from God, but to deny that our beautiful creator has any valid claim to the earth and its people

How can there be a God? Shout the atheists, the secularists, the humanists. How can there be an all-powerful loving God – just look at this world of misery and torment.

Just look at the suffering and need that surrounds us – where's your God in pandemics and famines and all the killing in the world...

Why doesn't God intervene, do something about it?

In truth, I suspect that every one of us has asked ourselves these questions or others like them at one point or other in our lives.

If we haven't struggled with them ourselves, we will certainly have been asked them by others who are curious to know how we Christians square our faith with what goes on in the world around us.

But these are age old questions and ones that thread through all the readings for this first Sunday in Lent.

We've already looked at Genesis and the aftermath of the flood; God's promises made in love to flawed

and failing humankind, So on to Psalm 25; a psalm of lament.

The psalmist is beset by fears and is calling desperately to God for help from the midst of trouble - and yet - he is convinced that God's way of love will ultimately prevail for those who follow God's ways.

And Peter, in his first letter to the early church, he sees suffering as an inevitability for those who seek to follow Christ; to go against the world is to invite hardship and pain. To embrace Christianity as a baptised follower of Jesus is to embrace suffering, by and for the world.

No answers as to why suffering - but there is a firm reassurance that God is in control, and that whatever we suffer Christ suffered it before - and for us.

As Peter says: "Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God"

Jesus suffered – simply that we might know God's love and forgiveness.

And so to Mark - his description of Jesus baptism and time in the wilderness sets the scene for all that is to come on the journey to Easter and offers us insight into God's purpose in sending Jesus among us.

Jesus did not need to be baptised by John, he had no sin to repent of. He was baptised to stand alongside us and call us into baptism – to show us that when we turn away from sin we can be made clean by God's Holy Spirit and that we too are God's precious children.

Jesus was not frightened by wild beasts nor was he taken in by Satan's temptations and promises – with his eyes and heart fixed solely on his Father in heaven, Jesus was able to live through his testing time of adversity – at one with the created world around him, finally tended by angels who brought him comfort.

A testimony to us that we should keep faithful to God and trust in God's providence when we find ourselves in wilderness times, when we encounter suffering, in any form.

Atheists point to the suffering world as proof that God does not exist.

We who believe in God don't point at those who are suffering, we get amongst them

It is our calling as Christians to be the wilderness angels who bring comfort to those going through times of adversity and suffering.

And if it us who are suffering – just like Jesus, we are expected to allow angels to tend to us, there is much grace to be found in allowing others to care for us.

'What is God doing about this suffering world?' God is right here with us and showing us what needs to be done.

That's what God is doing.

As we step out on our Lenten journey, we do so with God's assurance that he is with us every step

of the way, no matter how difficult the road might be.

God is with us.

These next forty days or so of Lent are all about reminding us to pay attention and listen; making sure that the noise and ways of the world do not divert us from God's path or deafen our ears to hearing what God has to say to us.

And if we are obedient to him in all things, there will come the day when we will hear him whisper: 'you are my child, my beloved, with you I am well pleased'

**Revd Janet
Vicar**



They had heard what John the Baptist had been saying, the people gathered by the river. He kept telling them: someone else is coming; someone more powerful; someone who will baptize with the Holy Spirit, not just with water. And then they saw him for themselves. Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee, and was baptized by John in the River Jordan, along with them. And just as he was coming up out of the water, Jesus saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, the Beloved; I am very pleased with you.'

And immediately the Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness. He was alone, absolutely alone, in the wilderness, and Satan tempted him for 40 days. There was no one else there, just the wild beasts and the angels. The angels waited on him.

When Jesus came out of the wilderness, he discovered that John had been arrested and put in prison. It wouldn't be easy, but Jesus knew what he had to do. So he began to proclaim the good news of God in Galilee.

'The time has come,' said Jesus. 'The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe in the good news.' Mark 1.9-15





Name _____

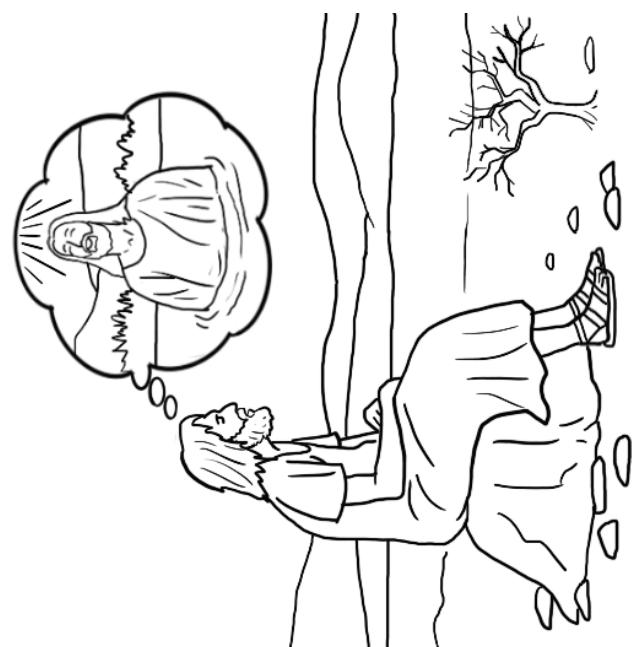
ROOTS Activity Sheet

21-27 February 2021
Lent 1



Mark 1.9-15

After his baptism by John, Jesus is sent into the wilderness by the Spirit, where he is tempted by Satan for 40 days.



God prepared Jesus to get through the wilderness.



Draw the things you might need to be ready to go into the wilderness.



God was making Jesus ready for what came next, when he was baptized by John in the river. Can you fit some of the key words from today's story into the word 'ready'?

r e a d y

you, beloved, water, baptism, Jordan



Make a list of all the qualities that make you who you are, inside the box.