



The Good Shepherd

Four Marks

Parish Magazine May 2021



The Gospel

Jesus did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many to bring you to God.

(The Holy Bible)



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Other Ministries at The Good Shepherd

Rev. Howard Wright leads the Discipleship (with Val Lucas) and Mission ministries; TBA: Prayer ministry; Chris McGrath: Worship ministry; Rev. Jonathan Rooke: Pastoral ministry.

The Vicar's Letter

We are starting a new teaching series making our way through John's Gospel. During the pandemic, it has been important to stay close to the Bible and with the texts we're given that reveal God to us.

The pandemic has impacted us all individually, our mental and physical well-being has been affected with the isolation we have felt from family and friends. And much as many of us have been protected by our rural isolation and/or financial security, it has still impacted us all. We have found ourselves with less patience or more anxious, and many of us have lost people we love. How do we move forwards?

As a church family we have struggled with cohesion; communication has been so tough during this disconnected time. We are currently mid-process, led by our PCC Strategy Team, wrestling with what "church" will look like on exiting lock-down, including facing changes with the opportunity of welcoming in Medstead as partners with us. How are we to move forwards?

As a society we face challenges, not least economic, and these will exacerbate existing tensions, one of the key ones being "difference". How will we live together with others? Especially when those others are different from us, with different values, class, religions, wealth, ethnicity, genders, and sexualities. How are we to move forward as a society and as a church, particularly when the church has not always been a safe place for debates about these differences?

John's account of Jesus' life was written some years after the earlier accounts by Mark, Matthew, and Luke, and it has a different take on the story. The first three Gospels present the facts and immediate implication: Jesus is the Messiah and Saviour-King of the whole world, we must turn to him, follow him, and be saved. John's account presents even more evidence for belief in Jesus, especially highlighting Jesus' divinity. But John also stretches us to a further response than the earlier Gospels. There was a heightened expectation during the writing of the first Gospels that Jesus' return was soon. John, writing later, and as people began to realise that we are in this for the long haul, emphasises both the uniqueness of Jesus and the uniqueness of his call to live, and continue living, in light and love.

This living in love is a tough calling, some of us are not easy to love, but John, and more importantly, Jesus, calls us to live in God's love, sharing this love with others – even, and perhaps especially, with those who are different to us.

I would encourage you over the coming days and weeks to read and re-read through John's account – you may even want to read it along with John's letters or comparing it with one of the other Gospels. If reading is not your thing, find a recording of it being read, online or via a CD – talk to me if you struggle to find access. Either way, do listen and hear the God who calls us forwards.

Yours

The Church of the Good Shepherd Strategy

Our mission as a church is to respond to God's love, and we do this by growing deeper in God and larger in mission; but the world has changed drastically over the past year. As we anticipate more change to come, we're starting to think about how we can best fulfil our mission in this new context.

Church is called to be family, so we really want to hear from you - We're inviting you to a conversation about your experience and thoughts in different areas of our church mission. You can take part via a few options:

- On Zoom on Sunday 25th April at 3pm, Wednesday 28th April at 7.30pm and Tuesday 4th May at 7.30pm
- By an online questionnaire (until the 9th May)
- By a written questionnaire on paper (please get in touch to request a copy)

Zoom links and the online questionnaire are available here: <https://goodshepherdfourmarks.org.uk/resources/strategy-update/>

(There will also be opportunities for the younger members of our church family to be involved.)

For now, please pray. You might like to use this short prayer:

"Father God, thank you for your faithfulness to us so far. Please guide us now and fill us with wisdom. Show us how we can grow deeper in you and larger in mission, and give us the courage to follow wherever you may lead us."

Submitted by Lorna Littlewood for the PCC team: Lorna, Andy Walters, Pip Hughes and Abi Mezullo.

Youth and Children's Ministry

COGS Kids

We continue to learn about "God's Great Big Story" – learning the whole story of the Old Testament, in Kids Church videos. This month we are learning about the exile and returning to re-build the temple. The children have impressed us all so far with remembering actions to tell the whole story of the Old Testament! (Creation – Fall - Flood, Promise, Family, Egypt, Slavery, Freedom ... could you continue the story?)

Once a month, instead of a pre-recorded video we meet for a Kids Church Family Service, at which we take part in activities to learn and respond to the story as a whole family. We've also been keeping in touch via weekly "News Time" Zoom meetings, at which we often play a short game and all share our news from the week.



Collective Worship for our local primary school continues via pre-recorded weekly videos, which have recently been made in collaboration with the Parish of the Resurrection, so that the same videos can also be sent to primary schools in Alton. You can find the videos (and the Kids Church videos) via the children's page of our church website <https://goodshepherdfour-marks.org.uk/online-church/children/>.



COGS Youth

We continue to follow the teaching series with the youth via short weekly videos shared on social media, for which we've had a variety of faces and voices sharing thoughts and wisdom on the Bible teaching.



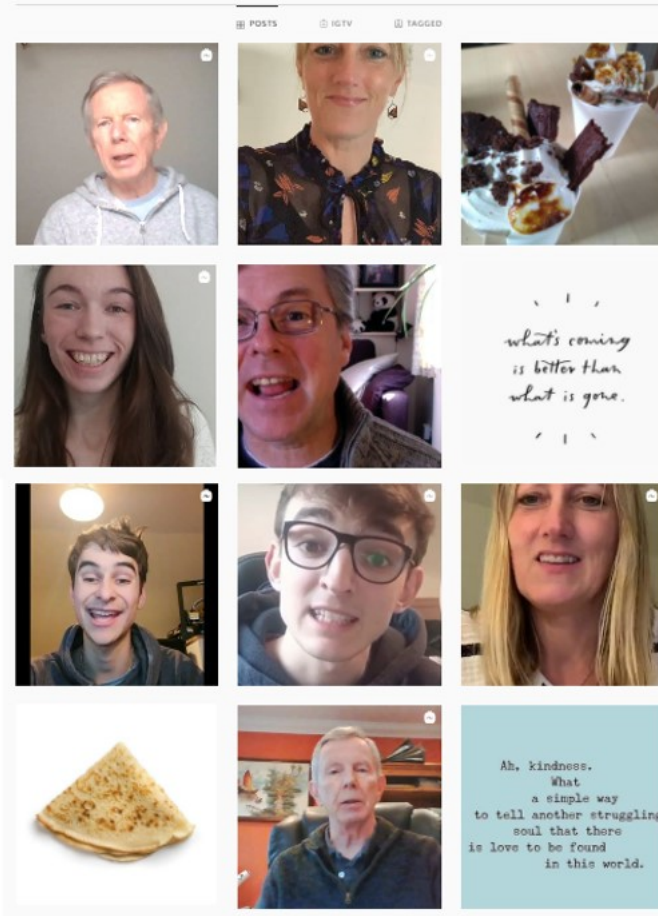
During Lent our youth were challenged to an "Acts of Kindness Challenge" with suggestions for acts of kindness each week posted on social media.

Zoom fatigue has plagued many of us, but we've been able to meet for a few Zoom meetings (such as using our pre-delivered kits to



cook pancakes together on Shrove Tuesday) and our Youth Team have been making some plans for opportunities to meet in groups now that restrictions are beginning to lift, starting with a picnic during the school Easter Holidays.

Recent research has suggested that



the majority of church youth groups have lost over a third of their young people through the pandemic, and although it hasn't been possible to maintain our previous activities, we are so grateful to our youth team who have made it possible to keep in touch with everyone who attended our youth groups before the pandemic.

Do get in touch with Lorna if you're interested in joining the team as we look to develop our youth work as we see restrictions lifting and more becoming possible.

The Community Cupboard, and the Easter Trail



An Excerpt from John Wesley's Journal Entry for Wednesday, May 24, 1738

In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.

I began to pray with all my might for those who had in a more especial manner despitefully used me and persecuted me. I then testified openly to all there what I now first felt in my heart.

Jesus Christ

The author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:3



Family Ministry

Messy Church Delivered

Continues each month, this term is themed all around gifts:



The Theme for April was all about Easter and the gift hope, with over 30 families receiving a pack.



For May and June, we will be looking at connections and how we connect and communicate with God and with each other.



Each family bag includes a craft, a game and a prayer activity alongside an

invite to join in our Zoom café on the second Sunday each month at 2pm.

Dates for May Messy Church delivered:

19th April Registration opens via Eventbrite.

6th May Packs delivered.

9th May Zoom café 9th.

Check the website or join our Facebook group (click below or search COGS Messy Church... at home) for all the latest updates.

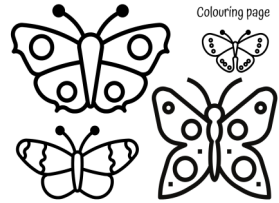
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2324513037620944>

COGS Messy church is growing and help is needed as lockdown eases and we begin to plan for what comes next ... speak to Jane if you would like to know more.

COGS Tots

meet online one Tuesday each month

Caterpillars and butterflies featured a lot in April's packs, all about the promise of new life.



Upcoming dates:

11th May and 8th June.

Similar to our Messy church packs but more suitable for younger family members, bags each month contain a game, a craft, a prayer idea and a story or song plus an invitation to join in Tots time on Zoom on the Tuesday afternoon at 2pm.

More information and details of how to register each month can be found on our website.



Butterfly, butterfly, flutter around,
Butterfly, butterfly, touch the ground,
Butterfly, butterfly, fly so free,
Butterfly, butterfly, land on me!
Butterfly, butterfly, reach the sky,
Butterfly, butterfly, say good-bye!

Support groups for new parents and families with young children

These are peer support groups for new parents. We currently have two groups: families with younger babies (0-12 months), and families with older babies or more than one baby / toddler. Both groups meet weekly on a Monday morning.

Do get in touch with Jane if you would like to know more or would like to be involved in our Young family ministry as we begin to plan what this might look like as lockdown eases.

Community Cupboard – saving food from going to waste and serving the community

Four Marks and Medstead community Cupboard operates from the Church of the Good Shepherd every Thursday afternoon from 3.45pm - 4.15pm. Come along and save a bag of food from going to waste.



Mission of the Month



Flying for Life for 75 years

Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) was born out of the ashes of WWII when a handful of RAF men dreamed of using aviation to help those living in the most isolated places. Founded in 1945, MAF's early assets were the vision, passion and determination of a handful of pioneers, who shared a love of aviation and strong Christian faith.

After rallying funds for MAF's first aircraft in 1948 – a Miles Gemini – Flight Lieutenant Stuart King and former Squadron Leader Jack Hemmings began a six-month mission to explore how aircraft could assist the work of humanitarian missions dotted across Africa.



With little more than a map, compass and wartime RAF experience, they encountered hazardous terrain, blistering heat and unimaginable needs. The pair pioneered a way for humanitarian aviation to spread across the globe.

Since establishing its first mission base in Sudan in 1950, MAF has faced turmoil, hostility and rapid change in Africa, yet has continued to expand to meet growing needs around the world.

Now operating 131 light aircraft in 26 developing countries from Bangladesh to Ecuador, Haiti to Papua New Guinea, MAF delivers life-saving aid, humanitarian personnel and disaster relief to some of the poorest and most inaccessible communities on earth.

Over the last 75 years, MAF has constantly advanced the scope of its operation by modernising its aircraft, equipping its staff and improving its capabilities to become a global leader in humanitarian aviation.

Today MAF is the world's largest humanitarian airline flying to more remote destinations than the top three commercial airlines combined. Every four minutes, an MAF aircraft takes off or lands somewhere in the world.



MAF's 75th Virtual Events - Yesterday, Today and Forever

Last year, MAF celebrated 75 years of our life-changing mission to bring help, hope and healing to some of the most isolated people in the world. Catch up with a series of three virtual events that were broadcast live at the end of November 2020 on <https://www.maf-uk.org/75>.

Above and Beyond

Above and Beyond recalls MAF's first tentative steps and goes on to tell our story throughout the decades up to the present day. It's a lively account of MAF that honours the past while looking to the future. We believe it will help readers gain an even greater understanding of the reach and diversity of our life-saving work, which has touched so many thousands of lives.

The book can be ordered on <https://www.maf-uk.org/aboveandbeyond>.

[Submitted by Bob Moore on behalf of the mission giving committee.]

Integrity is found where men and women live their lives in a pattern of consistency. It is a pattern that functions the same basic way in church and out of church. It is a life that is open before God. It is a life in which all that is done is done as to the Lord. It is a life lived by principle, not expediency; by humility before God, not defiance. It is a life lived under the tutelage of conscience that is held captive by the Word of God.

Coram Deo ... translated from Latin, "in the presence, or before the face, of God."

That's the big idea. Next to this idea our other goals and ambitions become mere trifles. [Source: R. C. Sproul]

Mr Johnson's Easter Message to the Country

Mr Boris Johnson said, "I know that for many people that means chocolate eggs and the Easter bunny and hot cross buns and all the rest of it and I will certainly be joining in. But let's not lose sight of the fact that this is Christianity's most important festival.

"And that, while churches are open, the ongoing Coronavirus restrictions mean that once again it won't be possible for many Christians to mark Easter in the way that they would like.

"But if there's one thing British Christians have shown us this year it's that Jesus Christ is "the way, and the truth, and the life" not just today but every day. His teachings, and the message of his death and resurrection, permeate through every aspect of daily life.

"That's why I've lost count of the number of church leaders and congregations that have stepped up to support us all in these very challenging times.

"Millions of Good Samaritans, each of them showing what loving thy neighbour as thyself really looks like in 21st century Britain. And having done all that during the darkest days of the pandemic, churches across the UK are now helping us light the path out of it by opening their doors as vaccination centres. It's really, very moving to see it.

"This has been a very tough 12 months. But, as ever, the arrival of Easter brings with it new hope. And, this year more than ever, it brings the promise of brighter days ahead for us all.

"So stay safe, keep following the rules, and have a very happy Easter."

Sir Keir Starmer's Easter Message to the Country

Sir Keir Starmer, the Labour leader, paid tribute to the Christian community for its work supporting others during the coronavirus pandemic. Sir Keir Starmer said he was "in awe" of their efforts over the past 12 months.

"The Christian community has always been there for the marginalised and for those that need support and help, but over the last year that has shone through so strong and so visible for everybody to see," he said. "Whether that's work in churches with food banks, I've seen so many in our churches supplying food to those that need it in our communities.

“Whether it’s vaccine centres in our church or just the pure volunteering and looking out for people within our communities.

“Thank you for everything you’ve done during this pandemic. Thank you for all that support and community spirit.”

He added: “I know Easter is a special time for Christians. It’s a time for hope and renewal. And, as we come out of this pandemic, I think those values will be so important to us as a nation.”

[Source: <https://www.englishcathedrals.co.uk>]

Easter Season Holiday@Home

It has been our custom on Mothering Sunday at The Good Shepherd to present all ladies of the Church with a flowering *primula* plant. This is a reminder of the time when those in service were given the Sunday off to visit their mothers and take them flowers. As we were not able to hold services, we were able to extend the presentation of flowers to our H@H lady guests.

Due to the restrictions in place to restrict the Covid spread, once more COGS had not been able to hold the Easter Holiday@ Home event in person.

You may remember we had a Christmas Holiday@Home @Home, by delivering a bag of goodies to our Guests. We repeated the exercise for Easter presenting them with a bag containing an Easter egg, a message from the Vicar, Howard, and an Easter card from the H@H Team. It also contained two quizzes, button flower craft, and some wild flower seeds.

Our Helpers delivered 91 bags across the local villages as well as 29 eggs to Belford House Care Home.

We also presented a Swiss Cheese plant to Westlands Care Home as there were too many dietary constraints that needed to be resolved regarding chocolate.

As at Christmas, we found the greatest gift we could give was a socially-distanced visit, especially as we found some of our guests had had no contact for some time.

The Good Shepherd would like to acknowledge the financial support from East Hampshire District Council that assisted in the provision of these ventures.

[Submitted by Frank Maloney on behalf of the team.]

Church is back in the building and is still available online.

Latest: Refer to the website for the latest details. The in-Church service attendance must be booked.

The on-line 9.30am Service is available from 6pm on the Friday before, the Coffee on Zoom at 11am, the 7pm Service, COGS Kids Online, Messy Church at Home, Alpha Online, and COGS on YouTube. Church is open daily for prayer.

Morning Prayer & Compline: David Bush, d.l.bush@mac.com

Giving to The Good Shepherd

This can be done via the "Donate" button on the Church website.



Small Groups

For further information contact Val Lucas, the ministry leader for small groups (01420-561139).

Prayer Chain

If you have any urgent requests for prayer through the Prayer Chain, please email Matt Senior, or Howard Wright (howardwright.cogs@gmail.com, 01420-563344).

Pastoral Care

If you would like to hear from a member of the Team or you know of someone who would, please contact the team leaders, Debbie Norgate (84534) or Gilly Cobb (544404), or Howard Wright (01420-563344) or Matt Senior.

Resource Sharing Network (RSN)

The Resource Sharing Network (RSN) will accept and circulate requests from the Church Family – for themselves or for family / friends. Money is not to be part of requests. Email cogs.rsn@gmail.com to go on the circulation.



Thy Kingdom Come Prayer Journal

In the time between Ascension Day and Pentecost, Thy Kingdom Come is a gift to refresh our faith, especially if we felt isolated from our community or our Church during this difficult time.

Each day there are a few things to read, a prayer to offer and then an invitation for you to make your own reflections on what it means to follow in the way of Christ. You don't have to write anything down, but you may find it helpful. Don't worry if this isn't you. Just ask God to help you see clearly how you can follow Jesus and who you can help.

In these days of hopeful waiting and praying between Ascension and Pentecost, may we all be renewed by the Spirit; made new in Christ.

Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York

[<https://www.thykingdomcome.global>]

Praying a Novena

A Novena is nine days of prayer that usually encourages us to pray with a particular intention. Praying for other people is known as a prayer of intercession.

Our nine days of prayer open and close with reflections for Ascension Day and Pentecost Sunday to help you prepare and give thanks to God.

[<https://www.thykingdomcome.global>]

Thy Kingdom Come Prayer

Almighty God, your ascended Son has sent us into the world to preach the good news of your kingdom.

Inspire us with your Spirit and fill our hearts with the fire of your love, that all who hear your Word may be drawn to you, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Interesting Intercessions

Friday 14th May 10-12:30pm. An online workshop for those who already lead "the prayers of the people" or who'd like to learn to lead intercessions in church. Led – on Zoom – by the Revd Sally Dakin. Reference: sally.dakin@winchester.anglican.org



Dear friends, I hope that you are all well and surviving lockdown. It has not been an easy year for any of us, but I am grateful for a kind and loving Father God who is our strong tower. I have gone back to this truth again and again this year, each time being blessed and reassured as I run to Jesus and rely on him as my strong tower, my refuge and my strength. Thank you God.

Urgent Appeal

In the last few months the South African variant of the coronavirus has killed many people in Malawi and continues to do so. I could share many heart-rendering stories and photographs to show how overwhelmed the hospitals are right now, or I could tell you that one £70 cylinder of oxygen lasts only as an 8 hour lifeline for one person.

However, I just want to keep it simple and in Jesus' name ask for your help. Please read the 'OXYGEN FOR LIFE' appeal from Starfish Malawi ... and if you can help in any small way I would be so grateful.

Thank you. Love, hugs and prayers, Ali xx
ali.beckett60@gmail.com

Address England: 87 Winchester Road, Four Marks, GU34 5HS

The Oxygen of Life Appeal

The second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in Malawi is now mercifully declining but there are still approx. 10,000 people needing medical care. They are still suffering from the disease either in hospital, other health centres or at home and they may need access to oxygen over the coming days and weeks.

Starfish Malawi have already responded to this situation by setting up the Fighting Covid Fund, to enable us to help supply some of these urgent needs to Salima District Hospital and to our Hope Clinic. Starfish are committed to helping assist the more general healthcare needs of the community in Salima, by using part of this fund to supply medicines and medical supplies to Hope Clinic in Ngolowindo. In addition to this, Starfish plan to launch an education programme to underline the importance of everyone being vaccinated.

If you would like to help us provide more equipment in the fight against Covid-9 in Malawi, please donate to this appeal, we would be extremely grateful:

- www.justgiving.com/campaign/fightingfundformalawi
- By BACS transfer to our bank: CAF Bank, Sort Code 40-52-40, Account number 00018762

Many thanks for your support!

The South African variant has become more dominant and is now severely affecting the healthcare provision in the country.

Oxygen supplies are running very low, with some hospitals only having a few cylinders left. In addition, the oxygen concentrators that take normal air and filter it, to just supply oxygen to patients, are in short supply as many are not working and in need of repair. PPE supplies are also urgently needed.

With the current financial support for this fund, we have already secured four oxygen concentrators and four hospital grade pulse oximeters, plus some other medical supplies, which will be flown out to Malawi in the next few weeks. This will help to meet this urgent need. However, we would love to supply more of this equipment to help the situation plus deliver PPE supplies.

It is important to note that apart from these concentrators assisting Covid patients, they are also needed to assist in normal healthcare needs, such as for providing oxygen to women during childbirth.



The Archbishop of Canterbury's Easter Sermon 2021

Death is the greatest and most devastating liar. The lie that the final breath is the end, that there is nothing more. The lie that we will always be separated from those we have loved, ultimately losing those we love for ever.

We all know the finality of the death of a friend or family member. When something special happens our instinct is immediately to tell them, to call them. Then we remember. They're not here. Of course death matters. It is brutal, terrible and cruel. But it lies when it claims to be the final word.

Easter calls time on the lie. The women in Mark's gospel had believed the lie – going to the tomb to anoint a dead body. Yet all their fears were based on a false assumption about the power of death and an inadequate understanding of the power of God.

Instead right there in the grave were signs of resurrection. The action of God was revealed through angels who greeted them, reassured them, and told them that Jesus of Nazareth had been raised.

This news changes everything - overwhelming every assumption about the way the world works. Mark tells us that "they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them!". Well they might! Their whole understanding of things was changed.

The truth sets us free. Lies bind us, enslave us. And no lie binds more tightly than the lies of death. If death is telling the truth, then we may as well live for ourselves. Then the last year is yet another cruel period of history taking from us those we loved, ending lives cruelly and tragically.

But because Jesus who was dead is alive, death is a liar. The truth of Christ is the reality, we have certain hope and a changed future. We will be reunited with those we love. We are offered forgiveness and freedom to live God's new life as a gift – to be taken or ignored.

How can we respond? We live in a new world in which everything is changed by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That has been true for this country for over 1,500 years. It cannot be ignored or forgotten. Not to respond is to respond.

For each of us. We can receive this new reality. Jesus, crucified and risen, is alive today and brings life and hope. The joy and purpose he gave to the disciples is exactly the same as is offered to us today. We are each and all invited to accept that new reality, welcoming the living dynamic presence of God into our lives - allowing the one who conquers the greatest lie to give us the greatest life. I urge you to take this offer of life today with a simple prayer, "Jesus Christ, with all my doubts and all my failings and wrongs, I want you to rule in my life". Simple, almost banal, transforming.

For the church. We can then live with the risen Christ, doing what he calls us to do. The disciples not only have private hope but hope for the world. That is why the church gets involved with resisting injustice, treasuring our world, tending the needy – it's why Christians throughout the centuries have lived with compassion and love for all who are excluded and marginalised. They breathed the oxygen of hope through the resurrection of the crucified God. The church exists to be Jesus Christ to the world.

To the world. As the resurrection bursts out of the tomb and floods the world so the church must go out with that torrent of good news and love, transformed, celebrating and declaring in word and deed the truth that death is a liar and that life is offered to all. In this country, in this world we have a choice over the next few years. We can go on as before Covid, where the most powerful and the richest gain and so many fall behind. We have seen where that left us. Or we can go with the flooding life and purpose of the resurrection of Jesus, which changes all things, and choose a better future for all. The overwhelming generosity of God to us should inspire the same by us, in everything from private acts of love and charity to international aid generously maintained. We have received overwhelmingly, so let us give generously.

Death deceives. Christ is the truth, for He is risen indeed. Let our lives change. Let the Alleluias ring.

Remember Whose you are and Whom you serve. Provoke yourself by recollection, and your affection for God will increase tenfold; your imagination will not be starved any longer, but will be quick and enthusiastic, and your hope will be inexpressibly bright.

Oswald Chambers.

How To ... Share Your Faith in Jesus

Start with you – and with Jesus

I keep becoming convinced Jesus is the ultimate significant person. He really is the unique centre of the Church, without whom we can neither do or say anything worthwhile as Christians. I am constantly surprised by how people's lives are transformed when they encounter him. I keep getting converted to the fact that Jesus is good news.

Be playful

In Mark's Gospel, Jesus draws a large crowd as he shares about the vagaries of being a sower – an experience they would have all been aware of, directly or indirectly. Jesus was a terrific storyteller, sowing ideas, thoughts, riddles and mystery within everyday life. He made people think more, rather than telling them what to think.

Playfulness can be a good approach. When I worked in the City, I would return to work on a Monday and occasionally throw out the comment, "You won't believe what happened to me this weekend ...". In an open plan office there was always someone who took the bait!

Ask questions

We do not have to have the answer to everything – what a relief! We can develop questioning that arouses curiosity, and emotional and intellectual searching, with a keen ear to listen to what people really think and believe. So learn to ask questions: What do you believe in? What do you consider to be true, beautiful or valuable? Do you think religion and atheism are often toxic?

Have you ever genuinely asked someone what would it take for them to consider following the way of Jesus Christ? Sharing faith is both a personal and corporate endeavour, but questions may be more important initially than answers.

Tell stories

Telling stories is a favourite pastime of mine. I admit I am boring or completely left field at times, but you have to learn your craft somewhere and with someone! Most people who share their faith find stories convenient vehicles for imparting knowledge and faith. Most world religions advocate engaging in this process.

I was drinking coffee with a colleague one afternoon when he said, "When I hear the word story I think it is something that has just been

made up.” Stimulated by the caffeine perhaps, I quipped back, “Story is often the safest vehicle to convey truth.” Eugene Peterson says stories are “verbal acts of hospitality”. I agree: stories allow people to enter on their own terms.

When I have focused discerningly on aspects of the Bible’s big story, people of all faiths and none genuinely seem more receptive. At the centre of each person’s worldview is a mosaic of stories and the only way to dislodge some untrue or life-limiting stories is to replace them with better ones. As Tom Wright suggests, where better to look than in the biblical narratives of Jesus?

Be a witness

We are called to be witnesses, to give testimony to God’s ongoing work in our lives. The early church saw and spoke of God at work and their lives being changed, both personally and in how they related to wider society. They did not have all the answers, there were discrepancies and confusion, but there was an effusion of hope. Their faith in Jesus changed how they treated the living, the dead and their enemies. It is hard to make sense of it from an analytical point of view, especially as people made such incredible sacrifices for others and got nothing material in return.

Ultimately, sharing our faith is letting others know that we have each encountered a living God who brings pardon from guilt, freedom from life-dominating appetites, a more selfless perspective, prayers of forgiveness offered for enemies and a life of fullness. The witness has discovered that the secret of life is not grabbing what you can and holding on with clenched fists but opening our hands and losing our life for Jesus’ sake and the gospel. It is as we give ourselves away that we find ourselves and, most importantly, discover the power and peace of the Lord Jesus Christ. He ultimately is his own witness. Maranatha.

[Source: Paul Thaxter, Church Mission Society. <https://churchmission society.org>]

Only when our greatest love is God – a love that we cannot lose even in death – can we face all things with peace. Grief is not to be eliminated but seasoned and buoyed up with love and hope.

John Piper.

The Gospel

The gospel is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed – a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.” Romans 1:16-17.

Several different terms are used throughout the New Testament to define and explain the term, “Gospel” – the glad tidings of the whole message of salvation through Christ; the news of who Jesus is, what He has done and all He has provided and is available through simple faith.

1. The gospel of Jesus Christ.

The good news about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Mark 1:1

2. The gospel of God’s Son. God, whom I [Paul] serve in my spirit in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers. Romans 1:9

3. The gospel of the kingdom.

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom [the rule and reign of Jesus in believer’s hearts], and healing every disease and illness among the people. Matthew 4:23

4. The gospel of the grace of God.

I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace. Acts 20:24

5. The gospel of peace.

Stand firm then ... with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. Ephesians 6:15

6. Paul’s gospel.

Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God’s word is not chained. 2 Timothy 2:8.

Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, he was buried, he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, he appeared to Cephas and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me [Paul] also. 1 Corinthians 15: 4-7.

Faiths and Sects, a Short Summary

The Christian Gospel

God reveals Himself in many ways; including in creation, in the prophets and apostles, and supremely in Jesus Christ.

- God became a man in Jesus Christ.
- He lived the perfect life that we couldn't live.
- He died on the cross the death for sin for which we should die.
- Three days later he rose from the grave, so proving that he is the son of God.
- He offers forgiveness of sins – past, present and future sins (Hebrews chapters 9, 10) – and eternal life to all those who repent and believe.

Those who do:

- become children of God (John 1:12),
 - have sins forgiven; but not forgetting to turn to God when you do (1 John 1:9),
 - have prayers answered (Mark 11:24),
 - a new spirit and power to live a transformed life (2 Cor 5:17),
 - and have no need to fear death (Hebrews 2:9),
 - and find proof in relationship with God because Jesus is alive.
-

Christian Science

Mary Baker (later Eddie) founded the Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston in 1879. It is a set of beliefs and practices belonging to the metaphysical family of new religious movements.

Christian Science claims that God is not a creator who is personal, good and distinct from his creation – but a principle, the principle of impersonal mind. Man is not material (the nothingness of matter) but spiritual, and God is all in all. All is Infinite Mind, there is no substance or reality to the physical world – all evil, sin, sickness and death are mere illusions of the mortal mind. And sickness is an illusion that can be corrected by prayer alone.

Christian Scientists claim that the Bible must be interpreted through the higher and final revelation of Mary Baker rather than being divinely inspired.

[Source: various.]

Three One-Word Prayers When You're Feeling Impatient

Instead of being frustrated about a delay or interruption, invite God to fill the time, by Bob Hostetler.

Waiting can be hard, excruciating even. Such moments try our patience and test our sanctification. But waiting can be good for us, particularly if we learn to pray in those moments. Instead of asking God to speed up time or make the wait "go away," try praying a one-word prayer:

1) Use

The next time you find yourself in a "waiting room" of some kind, instead of scrolling through emails or playing a game on the phone, try turning your thoughts to God and asking Him to use the wait for His purposes. The results can be astounding. He may answer some other prayer. He may prompt you to close your eyes, slow your heart rate and enjoy a few minutes of peace. He may use moments of waiting to steer you away from danger or make you right on time for a surprising opportunity.

2) Fill

While you wait: in line, on hold, in traffic; ask God to fill those moments with His presence. It could be music. Maybe petitions for the needs of those around you or something else of His kind, providential, even miraculous choosing.

3) Re-direct

When I'm approaching a traffic jam in the car, my map app will sometimes suggest an alternate route that ends up saving time and frustration. That sort of thing can happen anytime we face a delay or detour. Pray just one word to God: re-direct. Allow Him to suggest alternate thoughts, routes and actions that can redeem the wait in wonderful ways. It might be an unexpected gift idea, a thoughtful way to reach out to a co-worker or even a long-neglected habit you want to restart.

That's it – just three words. Keep them in mind and pray them the next time you're faced with an interruption or delay. They can turn waiting into a wonder of beauty and blessing, prayer and possibility.

[Source: <https://www.guideposts.org>]

True faith means holding nothing back. It means putting every hope in God's fidelity to His Promises." Francis Chan.

Jesus gives us hope because He keeps us company, has a vision and knows the way we should go. Max Lucado.

Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification

The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) is a document created and agreed to by the Catholic Church's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) and the Lutheran World Federation in 1999 as a result of extensive ecumenical dialogue.

It states that the churches now share "a common understanding of our justification by God's grace through faith in Christ."

To the parties involved, this essentially resolves the 500-year-old conflict over the nature of justification which was at the root of the Protestant Reformation.

Along with our Roman Catholic and Lutheran brothers and sisters, Anglicans give thanks to God for this notable step forward. We pray that this great event of the signing of the Joint Declaration may be a gift to the whole Church of God.

Yours sincerely, The Secretary General of the Anglican Communion,
October 25, 1999.

The World Methodist Council adopted the Declaration on 18 July 2006.

The World Communion of Reformed Churches (representing the 80 million members of Congregational, Presbyterian, Reformed, United, Uniting, and Waldensian churches), also adopted the Declaration.

[Sources for this historic document and for further reading:

<https://en.wikipedia.org>

<https://www.lutheranworld.org>

<https://www.anglicannews.org/news/1999>]

What gives me the most hope every day is God's grace; knowing that his grace is going to give me the strength for whatever I face, knowing that nothing is a surprise to God.

Rick Warren.

Adult Cycling Course Afternoon in Alton

Bike Maintenance Advice also available

Saturday 12th June, 2021, 2- 4pm, Amery Hill School, Alton, GU34 2BE



Cycle Alton is putting on an afternoon of cycling courses for adults grouped by ability in the rear car park of the school and on local roads, as appropriate.

2 hr class @ £20 per person. Please discuss your abilities and book direct with Darren from Pedal Power on pedalpowertraining@gmail.com or call 02392 290474.

The End of the Marcos Dictatorship in the Philippines

When the EDSA Revolution (named after the connecting boulevard between the presidential palace and the military headquarters) broke out in February, 1986, the EDSA filled up with as many as two million people. The military was uncertain about what to do.

The people were fraternizing with the soldiers, particularly where the confrontation could be the most direct – all along EDSA. Troops loyal to Marcos were largely thwarted by the spontaneous popular outpouring. For four days this standoff continued during which time people all along EDSA and throughout the country were praying. Not one crime was reported in Manila during those four days.

The tension peaked during a flight of attack helicopters headed toward rebel positions commanded by officers such as Generals Isleta and Ramos. Isleta told me that he had been praying Psalm 91 during this time which promises God's protection, such as: "You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day" (Psalm 91:5).

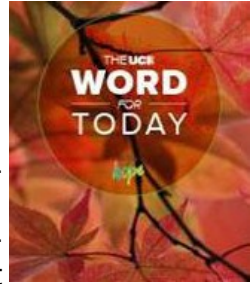
Five minutes later, the helicopters put down without attacking, effectively ending the last possibility of civil war. Isleta said later learned that Ramos had been praying the same Psalm at the very same time.

[Source: <https://www.forerunner.com>]

The Assurance of Salvation

“I give them eternal life.”

John 10:28



Your salvation isn't guaranteed by your performance – but by Christ's performance at the cross. Yes, you'll have moments you're proud of and moments you're ashamed of. But as long as your trust is in Christ, you're saved, and you'll go to heaven.

Jesus said: “I give them eternal life, and they shall never lose it or perish throughout the ages. [To all eternity they shall never by any means be destroyed – Amplified Bible.] And no one is able to snatch them out of My hand.”

Even more, God stakes His claim on us. “He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. (2 Corinthians 1:22). You have done something similar: engraved your name on a valued ring, etched your identity on a tool or iPad. Stamping declares ownership. Through His Spirit, God stamps us. Would-be takers are repelled by the presence of His name. Satan is driven back by the declaration: Hands off. This redeemed child is mine!

Where there's no assurance of salvation, there's no peace. No peace means no joy. And no joy results in fear-based lives. Grace creates a confident soul who declares, “I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day” (2 Timothy 1:12). Your boarding pass for the flight to heaven is secure: “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life (1 John 5:13).

It's not about your hold on God – but His hold on you!

Bible in a Year:

Deuteronomy 16-18, Mark 13:1-20



Copies of The Word for Today are available from www.ucb.co.uk

A Prayer for The Church of the Good Shepherd's Future Strategy

Father God, thank you for your faithfulness to us so far. Please guide us now and fill us with wisdom. Show us how we can grow deeper in you and larger in mission, and give us the courage to follow wherever you may lead us.

Amen.

A Prayer of Respect for the Late Prince Philip

Give rest, we pray, to your servant Philip who, having served his Queen and Country, has passed from this life, full of years yet strong in spirit.

As we give thanks for his life, as Prince and husband, as Consort and family man, we pray that all that he has done may continue to bear fruit in the lives of individuals and the life of this nation, to your honour and glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. Jude 20, 21.

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