

The United Benefice of St Michael  
Lichfield and St John, Wall

**Third Sunday of Lent  
7th March**

**Canticle - A Song of Wisdom**

**Send Wisdom forth from your holy heavens;  
from the throne of your glory send what is pleasing to you.**

O God of our ancestors and Lord of mercy,  
you have made all things by your word.

By your wisdom you have formed us  
to have dominion over the creatures you have made;

To rule the world in holiness and righteousness  
and to pronounce judgement in uprightness of soul.

Give us the Wisdom that sits by your throne;  
do not reject us from among your servants,

For we are your servants,  
with little understanding of judgement and laws.

Even one who is perfect among us  
will be regarded as nothing  
without the wisdom that comes from you.

With you is Wisdom, she who knows your works,  
and was present when you made the world.

She understands what is pleasing in your sight  
and what is right according to your commandments.

Send her forth from the holy heavens,  
from the throne of your glory send her.

That she may labour at our side  
and that we may learn what is pleasing to you.

For she knows and understands all things,  
she will guide us wisely in our actions  
and guard us with her glory.

*Wisdom 9.1-5a,5c-6,9-11*

**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.**

## **Collect**

Almighty God,  
whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain,  
and entered not into glory before he was crucified:  
mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross,  
may find it none other than the way of life and peace;  
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.**

## **Old Testament Reading**

### **Exodus 20.1-17**

<sup>1</sup>Then God spoke all these words:

<sup>2</sup>I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; <sup>3</sup>you shall have no other gods before me.

<sup>4</sup>You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

<sup>5</sup>You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, <sup>6</sup>but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

<sup>7</sup>You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

<sup>8</sup>Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. <sup>9</sup>Six days you shall labour and do all your work. <sup>10</sup>But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work – you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. <sup>11</sup>For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.

<sup>12</sup>Honour your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

<sup>13</sup>You shall not murder.

<sup>14</sup>You shall not commit adultery.

<sup>15</sup>You shall not steal.

<sup>16</sup>You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

<sup>17</sup>You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.

## **Psalm 19.7-end**

**<sup>7</sup> The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul;  
the decrees of the LORD are sure, making wise the simple;**

<sup>8</sup> the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;  
the commandment of the LORD is clear, enlightening the eyes;

**<sup>9</sup> the fear of the LORD is pure, enduring for ever;  
the ordinances of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.**

<sup>10</sup> More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold;  
sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb.

**<sup>11</sup> Moreover by them is your servant warned;  
in keeping them there is great reward.**

<sup>12</sup> But who can detect their errors?  
Clear me from hidden faults.

**<sup>13</sup> Keep back your servant also from the insolent;  
do not let them have dominion over me.  
Then I shall be blameless,  
and innocent of great transgression.**

<sup>14</sup> Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart  
be acceptable to you,  
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

**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.**

## **Gospel Reading** **John 2.13-22**

<sup>13</sup>The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup>In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money-changers seated at their tables. <sup>15</sup>Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. <sup>16</sup>He told those who were selling the doves, 'Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a market-place!' <sup>17</sup>His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.' <sup>18</sup>The Jews then said to him, 'What sign can you show us for doing this?' <sup>19</sup>Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' <sup>20</sup>They then said, 'This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?' <sup>21</sup>But he was speaking of the temple of his body. <sup>22</sup>After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

## Sermon

### **The Lockdown commandments**

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*I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; 20:3 you shall have no other gods before me. 20:4 You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 20:5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, 20:6 but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.*

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Do you ever try and see how many of the ten commandments you can remember? Maybe you had all ten drilled into you at an early age. Or maybe you find the last six or seven easy to recall and the first two or three a bit more confusing. You shall have no gods before me and you shall not make for yourselves idols- I can never remember whether that's 1 commandment or 2 separate ones. Perhaps because, unlike the later commandments about murder, adultery and stealing, these seem to come from a different world. In the ancient world, there were gods to choose from and different peoples named and honoured gods in different ways. The Jews were unusual for their belief in one God: Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. (Deut 6:4) One God, who claims, in today's passage, to be a jealous God. A God who commands us not to put other gods first, or to make idols for ourselves. Well so far so good with keeping the commandments! I don't believe in any other gods and I have never bowed to a golden calf, or worshipped the form of anything on the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth. So, two out of two so far! Our other reading today is John's account of Jesus overturning the tables in the Temple. This passage seems, instinctively, to have something in common with Moses receiving the ten commandments. Perhaps they are both moments in the life of a community when something was revealed to the people, when even those who already worshipped the one God were shown some of the ways in which they had lost sight of God. The ways in which they gradually put other gods first and focussed their attention on idols. No doubt the cattle and sheep sellers, the dove sellers and the money changers in the Temple would have assessed themselves as two out of two for the first couple of commandments. They were in the Temple and so were almost certain to be law observing Jews. But to the onlooker it might seem that they had lost their way a bit. Certainly, Jesus seemed to think so. This incident is often referred to as Jesus cleansing the temple – purifying it from those who were making it something it was not meant to be. Those who were putting profit ahead of worship, those who had lost sight of what the temple was really for. They hadn't built a golden calf or an idol for people to bow before. But they do seem to have developed a system through which you could buy favour with God; through which you could be made righteous. Through which you were being invited to put your hope in something other than the One God.

It's much easier to spot the ways in which people have wandered from faithfulness to God when those people are in a different place and culture and time. Much harder to notice all those things that we put our hope in that aren't God.

We have been through, and are in, an extraordinary time in this country and in the world. We have had challenges of restrictions, illness, loss, isolation, separation' - and for many of us believing in the promises of God, the Good News of Jesus and the resurrection hope has been essential to keep going.

But how do we notice when we have also hedged our bets on other gods? When we have constructed idols and then worshipped them?

How many times have you heard the word *normal* in the last year?

"I can't wait to get back to normal". "When things are back to normal we'll be able to..."

"I want my normal life back". And then of course our questions about the new normal: "what will the new normal be like? Is this the new normal now, or is it going to change into something else? Will things ever seem normal again?"

As though normality - being normal - is the goal of our existence. As though the ideas of normal we have constructed should be pursued above everything else.

As though this bit of life is merely a disruption to be endured.

As though life is suspended until normality returns. As though God's kingdom is out of sight until we can see it again in more normal times.

I do not think any of the first disciples recognised in Jesus someone normal, and so chose to follow him. Quite the opposite.

And I do not think seeking normality is the same as seeking the kingdom of God.

The kingdom is not just for the good times, when the kids are in school and the shops and the pubs are open. It is for all times. And even in the midst of a pandemic, the kingdom of God is amongst us, it is in our midst.

But even in the places where it is named and celebrated, it is surprisingly easy to lose sight of the kingdom of God.

I wonder what you have learnt during lockdown? Maybe it's something you already knew that has become really clear, or maybe you have seen your community differently, learnt something new about what people are like, what matters to you, what's important.

One of the things we have noticed together as Christians we probably did already know but now see even more clearly: that our church is not the building but the people gathered around Jesus.

In your church community, like in mine, you have no doubt seen new gifts emerge this year. New ways of praying, connecting and serving that have been born out of the challenges we face.

These are testing times. And perhaps one of the greatest tests we face is how we seek the kingdom with the new revelations of this time. How we respond to things that before we saw dimly, but now can see clearly. What are we going to make of the choice we are presented with? Will we struggle to go back to something that no longer exists anyway, with all its flaws and familiarity; Or will we, together, seek a renewed church. Humbler, simpler, bolder. Focussed on seeking the Kingdom of God and joining with others to offer signs of the kingdom to a broken world.

Familiarity can get in the way of focussing on the kingdom. Do you think other people who went to worship in the Temple were offended by the traders and money changers in the Temple? Or had the sight of them and their practice had become so familiar, that it felt normal and there seemed no reason to question it?

What in our Christian life together have we stopped noticing, that Jesus might overturn? What in the familiarity of our patterns of worship, our use of buildings and the culture of our communities are we so keen to get back to that we are not stopping to ask is it because they are normal, or because they are truly a sign of the kingdom of God?

If we read Exodus, we can see why God instructed the people to have no other gods before the Lord their God, and not to make idols. They seem like good commandments for people in a society where many gods were worshipped and who were known to build golden calves.

But they are good commandments for us too. Even in a time of crisis, even in a global pandemic they remind us not to seek our salvation in anything other than the Lord our God. Not in normality. Not in rushing back to the patterns of church we remember. Not in our desperate longing for the familiar. These things may well be good things, but they are not ultimately, our hope and our salvation. We find that only in the God made known to us in Jesus and in the kingdom which is already in our midst. Amen.

Dr Lindsey Hall

**FOR YOUR PRAYERS**

**ST MICHAEL**

***Those newly in need of prayer***

Phillip Goodwin, Sam Bassett,

***Those in continuing special need of prayer:***

Mark Berry, Elizabeth Chapman, Chris Clayton, Dorothy Clayton, Jo Cobb, Dottie Collins, Alison Cox-Toplis, Martin Dewes, Chris Dickerson, Colin Eastwood, Robert Harris, Chris Kirk, Alison Knight, Robert McAllester-Jones, Matthew Martel, Marielouise Oliver Norah and Arthur Palin, Nick Rutter, Anthony Staples aged 7, John Tipper, Sheila Vaughan, Judith Watson, Renee Wellings, Peter and Anne Whatson, Felicity Woodfield, Jamie,

***Those who have died***

Alan Thompson, Dave Edge

**FOR YOUR PRAYERS**

**ST JOHN**

***Those in continuing special need of prayer:***

Pat Crowe, Jo Hearn, Ann Kinson, Allan Law

**Post Communion Prayer**

Merciful Lord,

grant your people grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil,

and with pure hearts and minds to follow you, the only God;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen**

# CHURCH NOTICES

## SERVICES FOR LENT, HOLY WEEK AND EASTER

Our services for the remaining Sundays of Lent and then Holy Week and Easter itself will follow a rather different pattern from usual and the details are set out below. As things stand, with the progress being made to remove restrictions and give more freedom of movement and meeting, we intend to worship together in church again on Easter Sunday and then each Sunday after that. That will be more than we managed last year! Because a number of people, who would not be able to come to church, have been able to join in worship and fellowship at services on Zoom we will continue with some services entirely on Zoom and some services will be live streamed on Zoom so that people can join in at home.

### **Mothing Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> March**

8.00am BCP Holy Communion on Zoom

10.00am Service on Zoom

Family Praise online

### **Passion Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> March**

8.00am BCP Holy Communion on Zoom

10.00am Service on Zoom. This will be led from St Michael's church and is an opportunity to see how live streaming of services might work in the future. Please log on for this service as usual and do not come to the church.

### **Palm Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> March**

8.00am BCP Holy Communion on Zoom

10.00am Palm Sunday Service

A service of hymns, readings and prayers with a brief address ***outside in the churchyard at St Michael's***. All are welcome but we will need to maintain social distancing. A one-off order of service will be printed and palm crosses distributed.

6.00pm Palm Sunday Service on Zoom.

### **Holy Week Compline**

9.00pm on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Good Friday. Compline is traditionally the last service of the day and this year we are offering the service at a later time.

### **Maundy Thursday**

6.00pm Commemoration of the Last Supper on Zoom.

This service will include an agape meal. We invite everyone who joins this service to prepare something to eat and drink together in fellowship and to remember the last meal Jesus had with his disciples. ***This service will not be Holy Communion.***

### **Good Friday**

2.00pm Good Friday Service for the Last Hour on Zoom.

This service will take place at the time of the last hour that Jesus was on the cross and will a service of music, readings and address focussing on his Passion.

## **Walk through Good Friday Experience at St Michael's.**

During the day St Michael's church will be open for prayer and a walk-through reflection on the crucifixion.

### **Easter Sunday**

6.00am Dawn Service in church.

The service will start in the churchyard with the lighting of the Easter candle and hymn singing. The service will continue in church using one set of seats.

8.00am BCP in church.

10.00am Service of Holy Communion at St Michael's.

This service will be live streamed on a zoom link using the Sunday service link we have used each Sunday.

10.00am Service of Holy Communion at St John's.

### **Easter 2**

8.00am Holy Communion at St Michael's

10.00am Holy Communion at St Michael's

This will be the final service conducted by Rev Preb Simon Baker. Please notify the parish office if you wish to attend so that we have a good idea of numbers. This service will be live streamed on Zoom.

10.00am Holy Communion at St John's.

Family Praise online

### **"Love – Our World"**

#### **All Age Churchyard Trail for Lent and Easter**

Suitable for all ages, in the churchyard there are five "stations" - laminated A4 sheets. They offer a simple framework for your own reflections, and offer a set prayer on each theme. They are located in the Easter Garden by the Cross, and by the empty tomb; on the compost bins; on a bench outside church; on a bench in the lower churchyard. If able, you may wish to use them as an opportunity for reflection and prayer on your daily walk. If you're not able to get there for any reason they are available on the website, and you may be able to imagine the setting! *Linda*

### **BIBLE STUDY IN LENT**

We will be starting a new series of Bible Studies on the Wednesdays of Lent continuing on **Wednesday 10th March until Wednesday 31st March.**

Each session will be on Zoom at 10.30am.

This year the gospel that we are mainly reading at our Sunday services is the Gospel of Mark. Our Lent Bible Study will focus on **The Passion of Jesus in Mark's Gospel.**

Jesus's death and resurrection lies at the very heart of our Christian faith and has done so from the very beginning. These sessions will give us an opportunity to focus on the passion story and its meaning for us in a way that we are not often able to do.

The zoom link will be sent out each week with the links for our services. There will also be a sheet with the Bible text and questions to think about available to download from our website. Everyone is invited to join these sessions.

## **THANK YOU**

I have been so grateful for the support of so many church members during the last difficult year.

Living alone with no relatives nearby I would have been such a burden on my wonderful, very busy neighbours. You have phoned, offered and done shopping for me, collected prescriptions, delivered magazines and the weekly newsletter for and to me, baked and delivered a wonderful Christmas surprise.

Hopefully the end of isolation is in sight, but not for 2 or 3 months.

Thank you all so much,

*Pauline Sale.*

## **CAKES FOR PATHWAY**

Mothers' Union are making cakes to give to the Pathway Project and you are invited to add your support by baking one too. Cakes need to be delivered to Elizabeth Allen (304938); June Frayn (264920) or Ted Green (262342) by Sunday 7th March so they can be taken to Pathway on Monday 8th. Ted has freezer space if required for cakes made earlier. Elizabeth will collect cakes if anyone is unable to deliver. Please let her know. Thank you on behalf of the Pathway Project.

## **CHURCH FLOWERS**

I am looking for someone to take on the weekly flower rota. You don't need to be a flower arranger to do this job. I usually put up a list in church of dates when we need flowers, and arrangers are responsible for a two week slot. People are very good at signing up but sometimes need encouragement and we can always do with new people. Reminding people the week before they are on duty endures the church always looks good for Sunday. Anne Lingwood is responsible for organising the major festivals. Please let me know if you can help.

Many thanks

Diana

## **WALK FOR WATER.**

Many of you will remember Imogen, who sang with Girls' Choir from the age of nine until she went to college a couple of years ago. She has sent me this message and asked me if I can publicise it through the church. "This Lent I'm taking on the Walk for Water Challenge. I'll be walking 10,000 steps a day for 40 days to raise money for CAFOD's work around the world. Watching the amazing key workers do wonders throughout this tough pandemic, I want to make sure that I do what I can to help struggling communities. I know these are hard times but anything you can spare for this cause would be really greatly appreciated. My website is: <https://walk.cafod.org.uk/fundraising/imogens-walk-for-water>" Our official charity in this area is Water Aid, which we support at Harvest, but you may want to thank Imogen for her years of service by making a small donation. Many thanks. *Ted Green*

**COUNSELLING** One result of this 3rd lockdown starting will be increased pressures on all of us, and many people are feeling anxious and depressed and are coping with a lot of extra stress and loss.

Phoenix Counselling Service is a small charity which for 5 years, has been providing counselling to adults living in Burntwood, Lichfield and the surrounding areas, who are not able to access counselling via the NHS and who cannot afford private counselling. Professionally trained counsellors provide a safe, confidential space to talk about your thoughts and feelings, and work through problems that you might be facing in your life.

At present all the counselling is online or by telephone although we will offer face to face sessions when restrictions permit.

Contact details: [www.phoenixcounselling-service.co.uk](http://www.phoenixcounselling-service.co.uk)

email: [phoenixcounselling2@gmail.com](mailto:phoenixcounselling2@gmail.com)

Mobile: 07415517663

Best wishes, Rhoda Wharton

**THE FOODBANK** is always happy to receive gifts of

- Tinned meat and fish
- Tinned fruit and vegetables, soup and beans
- Rice pudding and custard
- Instant coffee, tea, sugar, long life milk and fruit juice
- Packets of cereals, biscuits and snacks
- Pasta, rice and pasta sauce
- Jam

Items should be **at least 3 months in date** or the Foodbank is not allowed to issue them.

**Donations of food** can be left at **51, Lime Grove, Lichfield WS13 6ER**

*Maggie and David\_01543 255308*

**CHURCHES TOGETHER** [www.stmichaelmaryjohn.org.uk/churches-together.html](http://www.stmichaelmaryjohn.org.uk/churches-together.html)

### **LEAVING GIFT FOR SIMON AND DIANA**

We are starting a collection to buy Simon and Diana a leaving gift from everyone here at St Michael's church. This is obviously trickier than usual as we are not currently in church to receive donations and need to minimise the handling of cash. If you would like to contribute you can pay your donation straight into the church bank account which would be very helpful.

Lloyds Bank

Account Name – PCC of St Michael and St Mary Lichfield

Account Number – 00114488

Sort Code – 30-95-04

Reference – **RETIREMENT**

**(This is really important as we need to distinguish between this and other donations)**

If you would prefer to post your donations somewhere, please deliver them to:-

Sue Jones

or

Lyn Shiel

38 Bracken Close

1 Aspen Close

Lichfield WS14 9RU

Lichfield WS 13 6FE

Angie is currently working from home with the exception of Thursday's when she is in the church office, so if you prefer to use the church post box, please ensure that you drop your donation off by 11am on a Thursday.

Many thanks,

*Sue and Lyn* Churchwardens

## **PARISH DIARY**

### **Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> March: Lent 3**

8:00am	Holy Communion	Zoom
10:00am	Sunday Service	Zoom

### **Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March**

8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom
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### **Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> March**

8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom
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### **Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> March**

8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom
10:30am	Bible Study	Zoom

### **Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> March**

All day **OFFICE COSED**

8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom
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### **Friday 12<sup>th</sup> March**

8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom
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### **Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> March**

10.00am	Churchyard Working Party – St Michael's Tree Planting	
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### **Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> March: Lent 4/ Mothering Sunday**

8:00am	Holy Communion	Zoom
10:00am	Sunday Service	Zoom