

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

**The Sunday next before Lent
14th February**

Canticle A Song of God's Greatness

Bless the Lord, O my soul.

O Lord my God, how excellent is your greatness!

**You are clothed with majesty and honour,
wrapped in light as in a garment.**

**The sun knows the time for its setting
You make darkness that it may be night.**

**O Lord, how manifold are your works!
In wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.**

**When you send forth your spirit, they are created,
and you renew the face of the earth.**

**May the glory of the Lord endure for ever;
may the Lord rejoice in his works;**

**I will sing to the Lord as long as I live;
I will make music to my God while I have my being.**

Psalm 104.1,2,21b,22a,26,32,33,35

**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 Father,
whose Son was revealed in majesty
before he suffered death upon the cross:
give us grace to perceive his glory,
that we may be strengthened to suffer with him
and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

New Testament Reading

2 Corinthians 4.3-6

³Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. ⁶For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Psalms 50.1-6

¹The mighty one, God the LORD,
speaks and summons the earth
from the rising of the sun to its setting.

²**Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,
God shines forth.**

³Our God comes and does not keep silence,
before him is a devouring fire,
and a mighty tempest all around him.

⁴**He calls to the heavens above
and to the earth, that he may judge his people:**

⁵'Gather to me my faithful ones,
who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!'

⁶**The heavens declare his righteousness,
for God himself is judge.**

**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

Mark 9.2-9

²Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, ³and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. ⁴And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. ⁵Then Peter said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' ⁶He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. ⁷Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!' ⁸Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.

⁹As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

Sermon

Jesus is different; he makes things different **Transfiguration Sunday; Racial Justice Sunday; Valentine's Day.**

Be our living word O God, Father Son and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

I want to invite you to stand with me in front of a picture. It is a picture that speaks of the two themes of this day – the *transfiguration* – and racial justice Sunday. It is a picture that I bought in my early twenties, and it has hung on my wall ever since. I was not then a Christian: it would be another fifteen years until I was baptised. But I knew even then that the man at the centre of this picture was important to me.



It is a profound, but joyful picture; a picture of Jesus gathered with his followers. Here is God's kingdom; and looking at it, you, and I, are standing on the edge, seeing it from a doorway, perhaps.

You are right to be thinking that this is a picture of the last supper. But it is more than that: the painter has brought the essence of the **transfiguration** into the picture, as much, even, as the last supper. The transfiguration, the story we just heard from Mark's gospel, is the point where the disciples suddenly see for sure that they are dealing with someone who is different.

In this picture, as in the transfiguration Jesus seems transformed in front of his close friends and disciples: he is different; the light of heaven – we call it **glory** – pours onto Jesus, clothes and all. I love how the artist has taken Jesus' clothes, 'dazzling white, such as no-one on earth could bleach them' and chosen to make them an extraordinary, vivid red. I wonder why?

We see that Jesus' attention is on the things of heaven, even while his feet rest on earth. He is connected to God, confident to marshal God's kingdom in this world. Even

the room where we see him feels as if it is becoming God's kingdom, because he is in charge of it.

Jesus is different, the picture seems to say; and he makes things different.

And I think that's why I chose it to be – it turned out – my lifelong companion of faith: so that I could wonder, daily, at how he is different, and how he makes things different. But I think I chose it because this picture held another truth, too, although I didn't fully understand that at the time. For it reminds us that Jesus' world was totally different from ours. Like Jesus' community, the people in this picture live in a culture untouched by Western life; their clothes, home, furniture, and musical instruments are different from what I see in my home.

Why was that important to me? After a childhood growing up in a small village on the north edge of Lichfield diocese, a place where everyone was white, I was starting adult life in Birmingham. And in Birmingham, I met people of colour from many heritages: beautiful, gentle, hopeful people, some with clear Christian vocations and all so obviously made in the image of God. In getting to know them, attending to them, and learning their stories, I discovered that every one of them had to navigate life with the baggage of racism loaded on their back. I heard, too, the way white people sometimes spoke to, or about, them. And I wondered where the kingdom of God was in that. This poster represented my instincts that the kingdom of God would never be fully present in England until this nation had repaired those broken relationships.

Many British churches mark 14th February as Racial Justice Sunday. We mark this because we are Christians in a country – and even sometimes a church – which has spent centuries decimating the cultures and bodies of many nations and races. It is a shocking history, one which most of us who are able to would rather turn away from. But it is one that lives on, and it can mark the everyday lives of people of colour today. The woman in the hijab who was barked at outside my house. The young black pastor who thought maybe he would be wise to carry a knife when he walked to his pastoral visits. And the black kid who came round to my house and thought this couldn't possibly be Jesus, because she'd never seen Jesus look like her.

That baggage is real, and it counts. It distorts the world and our relationships and even ourselves. It is a burden first and foremost on the people who happen to have black or brown skin, but it fractures us all; our relationships and ourselves.

Let us return to the picture.

I wonder how it speaks to you in this moment? You stand at the edge of this room, looking in. Jesus is raising this great bowl – bread? Or wine? We don't know – to heaven. God's kingdom is here; and we stand on the edge of it. We know from the gospels that we are invited to enter the kingdom. What would you feel, if you stood on the threshold of this particular room?

I don't know what that would make you aware of, but it is at this point I am aware

of my own whiteness. White, black, it shouldn't matter, but it does – because of history. Should I enter? Would I be welcome? What would the other people here make of me if I did? Would they see me, or would they see the history of my people represented by my skin colour? Would they want me to enter, or wish that I would go away and leave them in peace?



Of course, what makes the difference is Jesus. He invites me; and if I knock, he will allow me to enter: 'for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened' (*Matthew 7.8*) But I think too that Jesus will expect me to acknowledge those he has already gathered; those whose spirit may be even more battered by this world than mine is. Reconciliation in the kingdom of God will not be to blithely settle together free from the past. There will be recognition, and naming of the burdens. God's kingdom will be peace, not a truce. The burdens, fears and pains of the heart will be lifted through attention to each others' stories and not ignoring them. It will be a place of love, not merely tolerance. I wonder how you picture God's kingdom? And I wonder what questions you think Jesus would ask you, as he invited you to enter? What work would he ask you to do so that the kingdom with you in it, would remain be a place of peace. Without Jesus, it would be challenging work indeed; but this picture reminds us that Jesus is at the centre of God's kingdom, making that work possible, hopeful, desirable, and worthwhile. This is my picture of faith. I have stood on the edge of this room for 30 years. I hope, in standing there with me today, you find the space to ask your own questions about justice, about Jesus, and about God's kingdom in your life. Amen.

Simon Foster

Image:

JESUS MAFA. The Lord's Supper, from Art in the Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN.

<http://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=48272>

[retrieved February 3, 2021].

Original source: <http://www.librairie-emmanuel.fr>

(contact page: <https://www.librairie-emmanuel.fr/contact>).

FOR YOUR PRAYERS

ST MICHAEL

Those newly in need of prayer

Chris Kirk, Matthew Martel, Norah and Arthur Palin, Alan Thompson and Alison Knight

Those in continuing special need of prayer:

Sam Bassett, Mark Berry, Elizabeth Chapman, Chris Clayton, Dorothy Clayton, Jo Cobb, Dottie Collins, Alison Cox-Toplis, Martin Dewes, Chris Dickerson, Colin Eastwood, David Edge, Robert Harris, Robert McAllester-Jones, Marielouise Oliver, Arthur Palin, Nick Rutter, Anthony Staples aged 7, John Tipper, Sheila Vaughan, Judith Watson, Renee Wellings, Peter and Anne Whatson, Felicity Woodfield, Jamie, Gary and Denise, Julian & Wendy,

Those who have died

Dave Edge, John Stuart

FOR YOUR PRAYERS

ST JOHN

Those in continuing special need of prayer:

Pat Crowe, Jo Hearn, Ann Kinson, Allan Law

Post Communion Prayer

Holy God,
we see your glory in the face of Jesus Christ:
may we who are partakers at his table
reflect his life in word and deed,
that all the world may know his power to change and save.
This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

CHURCH NOTICES

RECTOR'S RETIREMENT

I have written to Bishop Michael to tell him that I intend to retire at the end of April. My last Sunday will be the Sunday after Easter. I very much hope that we will be back in church by Easter Sunday and so will be able to say farewell in person. Diana and I have enjoyed being part of the church at St Michael's and St John's but it is now time to open a new chapter in our lives. We are moving to South Somerset.

Simon Baker, Rector

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

ASH WEDNESDAY ZOOM SERVICE, Wednesday 17th February, 6pm

Everyone is welcome to join our Ash Wednesday Zoom Service which will be a helpful and meaningful way to engage with this important moment to mark the beginning of Lent. The service will focus on reflection and prayer, taking the first steps on our journey with Christ towards Jerusalem and the cross.

Waiting Open from 5.30pm

Service begins 6:00pm

Join Ash Wednesday Service

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89941748197?pwd=UFNTRGhFUVOzcitFaHZabEIWSWIZZz09>

“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 starting on **Wednesday 24 February 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.

MU Members.

Our MU subs are due, this year they are £ 26. Could you pay by cheque please, made payable to St. Michael's MU. Thank you *Lynn*

CHURCH ARMY COLLECTION.

We had intended to collect for the Church Army on Sunday 21st February but that will not be possible due to the covid situation. If you would like to donate please go on to the Church Army website and click on the yellow donate box.

Thank you

CHRISTIAN AID CO-ORDINATOR

Many of you may have known that Rowan Hawksworth was our church co-ordinator for the yearly Christian Aid Collection. We no longer do a street collection; we now collect at the May Family Praise service. It requires someone to liaise with the Lichfield organiser to make sure we get the envelopes, count the money and pay it into the designated Christian Aid account. You will get help with the money counting. If you feel you could do this once a year in May would you contact me on 251863 or email brendaliptrot@outlook.com.

Thank you *Brenda Liptrot*.

CHURCHES TOGETHER ENABLING COMMITTEE

I have resigned, due to health reasons, from being St Michael's representative on the Enabling Committee. St Michael's has always played a major role in Churches Together Lichfield and it would be good if someone could take my place. It involves attending about 5 meetings a year and keeping the church aware of events we might want to be involved in. If you would like to know more please contact me on 251863 or email brendaliptrot@outlook.com.

Thank you *Brenda Liptrot*.

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

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

email: phoenixcounselling2@gmail.com

Mobile: 07415517663

Best wishes, Rhoda Wharton

PARISH DIARY

Sunday 14th February: Lent -1

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

Monday 15th February

All day	OFFICE CLOSED	
8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom

Tuesday 16th February

All Day	OFFICE CLOSED	
8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom
1:00p,	Interment of Ashes: John Stuart	St Michael's

Wednesday 17th February

All Day	OFFICE CLOSED	
8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom
6:00pm	Ash Wednesday Service	Zoom

Thursday 18th February

All day	OFFICE COSED	
8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom

Friday 19th February

All Day	OFFICE CLOSED	
8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom

Saturday 20th February

Sunday 21st February: Lent 1

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