

St James's Church, Biddenham

All Saints Church, Kempston

Virtual Church News

31 January 2021

4th Sunday of Epiphany

Candlemas

Presentation of Christ in the Temple



Sheep in Great Denham

Welcome to Virtual Church News. Hard copies will be circulated to those without access to email/social media. If you know of anyone without email who you think would benefit from a hard copy, please email stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com or call Jacqui on 356993.

A Reading for the Week

John 8:1-11

¹ while Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. ² Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him and he sat down and began to teach them. ³ The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, ⁴ they said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. ⁵ Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" ⁶ They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. ⁷ When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." ⁸ And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. ⁹ When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. ¹⁰ Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" ¹¹ She said, "No one, sir." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again."

Discovery Group

This bible study group meets via Zoom on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of the month at 8pm.

Everyone is welcome to join the group. For further details, contact john.c.lambert@gmail.com

Services in Church

I know that this has been a very difficult time you, and I find it very sad that we have not been able to meet together for Public worship. Given the current circumstances, and the dangers posed by the new strain of COVID 19, it is felt that we should continue our worship online for the time being. Although we are legally able to open, we have been encouraged by Bedford Borough Council, and supported by the senior clergy in the decision to remain closed (as a high proportion of other parishes have chosen to do). Please contact me if you would like a chat over anything at all. My numbers are 01234 328452 and 07805879537. God bless

Eric

Message from Rev Eric Lomax

I used to teach in a particularly challenging school in Yorkshire. Many of the children there came from very difficult backgrounds. A large proportion of them came from abusive homes and many were classified as being socially disadvantaged. I taught religious studies, so it was my job to teach young people about the colour and value and meaning of religious faith. I taught about the world's six major religions: Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, Sikhism, Buddhism, and of course my own faith, Christianity.

Many of the children were very reactionary about religion of all kinds, though often their criticisms would be based purely on the very idea of God himself. The real question that they were asking is where is this God of love?

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Message from Rev Eric Lomax *continued*

How could God allow the suffering in my family or in the wider world? It always reminds me of the song from Oliver the musical when the child cries out 'where is love does it fall from the Sky above?' Of course, the words are not the words of the author, Charles Dickens, but it must have reflected his sentiment when he looked out at the suffering and poverty of children in Victorian London.

When teaching these young people, it was always hard resisting the opportunity to give an answer. In fact 1 Peter 3:15 states; 'Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.'

Invariably I would say to them, 'I understand what you're saying, but what kind of God do you not believe in?'

You see, my understanding of God, and indeed what I believe to be the right Christian understanding of God, is not the kind of God that has always been presented by the church; the oppressive bully God, the God who intimidates the weak, or instils in people unbearable guilt, or marginalises the outsider, the weak, or the poor, who pushes people to the margins because of gender or sexuality. That is not the kind of God that I believe in.

The God of the Bible shows himself to be somewhat different to all these views of God. We find in the Bible a God who comes to us not as an all-powerful tyrant, but as a child, and who throws himself at the mercy of human cruelty and prejudice. In our world, he becomes as weak and as vulnerable as us, and suffers a cruel death on the cross in solidarity with the rest of us who experience the pain of reality. One great Theologian, who himself was martyred at the hands of the Nazis in 1944, wrote that the Bible directs us to a God who has been pushed out of the world

and onto the cross. He stated that in this world where so many people suffer, 'only a suffering God can help,' because he experiences that vulnerability alongside us. He loves us whoever we are, and whatever we have done, and he stands there alongside us in our human experiences.

I love this Bible reading in John's Gospel because it shines a light on the cruelty of bad religion and bad faith. Jesus meets a woman who is encountering terrible cruelty from religious people, and he takes her side against them. Because he loves her, he puts himself between her and the people who are about to kill her. That is the kind of God that ultimately the Bible directs us to.

Would this kind of God make more sense to the children I used to teach?

About eighteen months ago, one of my students contacted me. She is called Hannah. 'Is that Mr Lomax?' She asked.

'Yes, it is, and the name is Eric.' I said.

'This is Hannah, I was in your tutor group at Market Weighton,' she said, 'Do you remember me?'

'I do,' I answered, 'how can I help you.'

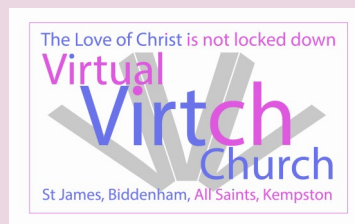
'My dad has just died,' she said, 'will you pray for me?'

'Of course I will.'

God Bless, Eric

Virtch (Online Church)

Zoom services are held at 11am on Sunday and 6pm on Wednesday. Simply go to Zoom and enter meeting ID 998 074 6039.



Please pray with me

Dear God and Father,
in these circumstances we face,
it is so difficult to believe.

Give us courage to stay faithful.

We thank you that you love us,
and you are always at our side, whatever happens.

Amen



Church Services etc. on TV/Radio

If you don't have access to the internet, try tuning in to the following:

Sunday 31 January

- 8.10am on BBC Radio 4 - Sunday Worship. Belfast, a City shaped by the Sea.
- 1.15pm on BBC 1 - Songs of Praise. Gospel Singer of the Year Semi-Final.
- 3.00pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong from St Paul's Cathedral, London.

Wednesday 3 February

- 3.30pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong from Truro Cathedral.

Bible Story

Luke Chapter 2 verses 22-40

Jesus is presented in the Temple

The time came for Mary and Joseph to do what the law of Moses taught about being made pure. They took Jesus to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. It is written in the law of the Lord: "Give every firstborn male to the Lord." Mary and Joseph also went to offer a sacrifice, as the law of the Lord says: "You must sacrifice two doves or two young pigeons."

Simeon sees Jesus

A man named Simeon lived in Jerusalem. He was a good man and very religious. He was waiting for the time when God would help Israel. The Holy Spirit was in him. The Holy Spirit told Simeon that he would not die before he saw the Christ promised by the Lord. The Spirit led Simeon to the Temple. Mary and Joseph brought the baby Jesus to the Temple to do what the law said they must do. Then Simeon took the baby in his arms and thanked God: "Now, Lord, you can let me, your servant, die in peace as you said. I have seen your Salvation with my own eyes. You prepared him before all people. He is a light for the non-Jewish people to see. He will bring honour to your people, the Israelites.

Jesus' father and mother were amazed at what Simeon had said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, "Many in Israel will fall and many will rise because of this child. He will be a sign from God that many people will not accept. The things they think in secret will be made known. And the things that will happen will make your heart sad, too."

Anna sees Jesus

Anna, a prophetess, was there at the Temple. She was from the family of Phanuel in the tribe of Asher.

For the Children (& young at heart!)

Today our reading is all about the Presentation of Christ which was when Jesus was presented in the temple (see left). Mary and Joseph knew that Jesus was sent from God and all they had read in scripture about the Messiah said he was coming to rescue the Jewish people. But Simeon revealed God's much bigger plan - that Jesus had been sent to be a saviour for all people!

Activities

God promised Simeon that he would see the Saviour before he died. Once Anna had seen Jesus she couldn't stop telling people about Him. Why not test your own looking and telling skills!

Lay a range of items from around your house on a tray or table, Give everyone 1 minute to memorise as many objects as they can. Then cover them over with a towel and remove one item (making sure nobody can see what you have removed). See who can be first to work out which item is missing. Take it in turns to remove an item and see who can get the most points.

Play a game of i-spy with items around you.

Song

Tidal wave

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hWfYpF40i8U>

Prayer

Dear God, thank you for the story of Jesus being presented in the temple and the people he met there. Thank you for Simeon who reminds us that you keep your promises and that you sent Jesus to be a Saviour for all people. We pray for all our friends and family who don't yet know you as their Saviour. We pray that they would come to know you as their Saviour and friend. Amen.

Resources from Together at Home.

For more free resources visit tath.co.uk.

Bible story continued...

Anna was very old. She had once been married for seven years. Then her husband died and she lived alone. She was now 84 years old. Anna never left the Temple. She worshipped God by going without food and praying day and night. She was standing there at that time, thanking God. She talked about Jesus to all who were waiting for God to free Jerusalem.

Joseph and Mary return home

Joseph and Mary finished doing everything that the law of the Lord commanded. Then they went home to Nazareth, their own town in Galilee. The little child began to grow up. He became stronger and wiser, and God's blessings were with him.

Suggested Music for this week

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mDFtgQKBqv4>

King of glory, King of peace

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikj7CiC7v0U>

Purify my heart

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7qCdr5FEXic>

Love divine, all loves excelling

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=igs3mNsppsI>

Lord, the light of your love is shining

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rce9UHYZwl4>



Prayer Group

Join our prayer group at 8pm on the 1st/3rd Thursdays of the month via Zoom. Everyone welcome.

Contact us for login details or if you have any prayer requests.



Rev Eric Lomax Contact Details

Tel: 01234 328452

Mob: 07805 879537

Email: Rev.ejlomax@gmail.com

Daily Hope

Music, prayers, reflections and full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a free telephone line. **0800 804 8044** Available 24 hours a day.



A free phone line of hymns, reflections and prayers

Bedford Foodbank

Sadly we have decided we cannot currently continue to collect items for the Foodbank in the St James's Church porch, as it is too much of a risk to those who then take the items on to the Foodbank.

At this time we would ask that you make donations at the supermarket or by way of a financial donation. Further details can be found on their website: <https://bedford.foodbank.org.uk/>



Community Support Groups

Do you need support? We can help with shopping and companionship (via regular phone calls). Can you volunteer to help? Let us know if you are DBS checked (for any organisation). It doesn't matter if you aren't, we still need your help, but safeguarding is important!

Biddenham:

If you need support, ring 01234 815393 (daytime only) or email help@biddenham.org.uk with your name/phone number/address.

If you can volunteer, please email help@biddenham.org.uk

Kempston:

If you need support or can volunteer to help, contact:

Rev Eric Lomax: 328452 or 07805 879537

Alison/Brenda Walker: 851597

Alan/Anita Lowe: 857212 or 07751 659695