

## Virtual Church News

7 February 2021

2nd Sunday before Lent

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](mailto:stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com) or call Jacqui on 356993.

### A Reading for the Week

#### John 1:1-14

<sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was with God in the beginning. <sup>3</sup>Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. <sup>4</sup>In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. <sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome<sup>lel</sup> it.

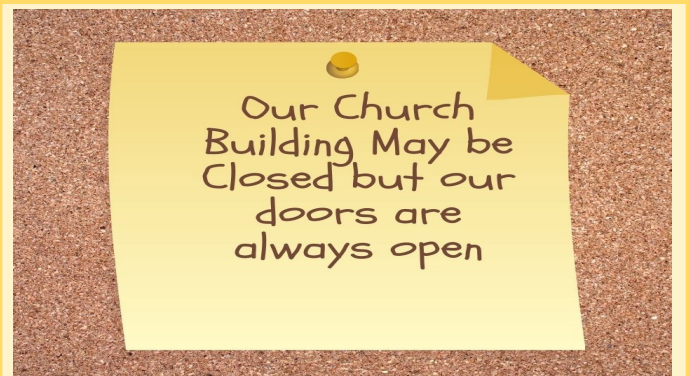
<sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. <sup>8</sup>He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

<sup>9</sup>The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup>He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. <sup>11</sup>He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. <sup>12</sup>Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— <sup>13</sup>children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

<sup>14</sup>The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

### Discovery Group

The Discovery Bible Study Group is not currently meeting. If you are interested in joining a bible study group please contact John Lambert by email at [john.c.lambert@gmail.com](mailto:john.c.lambert@gmail.com)



### Services in Church

There are currently no services in church at the moment due to the Covid restrictions. We will resume services in church when we consider it safe to do so. If you need support during this time, please contact Rev Eric Lomax (contact details on back page) or email [stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com](mailto:stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com).

### Message from Rev Eric Lomax

When I was training in Durham I used to go regularly to Durham Prison to work with the Chaplains there. Part of Durham prison was (and still is) a category A women's prison where the majority of people in there were serving life sentences for murder. Some of the most notorious women of the time were imprisoned there and I spent a significant amount of time chatting to them. Prison is a terrible place and I remember seeing the room (cell) occupied by one woman who had spent all of her energy making it look personal and warm, while still the bars showed behind the window. I seldom talked about people's crimes to prisoners, but from time to time they brought it up, sometimes (though not always) declaring their innocence.

With one person, a woman in her early thirties, there was no such claim of innocence. She had murdered her boyfriend and, gently, she told me why. If there was truth in that, then it was understandable. *continued on next page*

## Message from Rev Eric Lomax *continued*

I am not a police officer, a judge, or the member of a jury, so I had no reason to doubt what she said.

She did, however, say this to me; 'My real prison is guilt, but I cannot turn back the clock, or change what happened.' Even if everything else was a lie, what she said there is the truth. What is past is past and there is nothing we can do about anything we have done. The trouble is that our past actions, the accompanying guilt, and indeed, the judgement of others, is the prison cell that so often presents the healing of our future.

Today's reading takes the story of Jesus right back beyond anything that we have known or experienced. It begins before everything that we celebrate or regret. It begins before the poor woman I mentioned committed her crime. It takes us far beyond Christmas, the ancient prophets, and the story of creation; 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.'

It echoes the very first words of the Bible 'In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth.' (Genesis 1:1)

In no uncertain terms, this reading in the fourth Gospel tells us that in the first ubiquitous life-giving word that God speaks, at the beginning of all things, Jesus himself was destined to live and breathe in our history. He is the light that shines at the beginning of history (Genesis 1:3), and ultimately, he is the light that shines in our spiritual darkness and no darkness can stand against it. This Word of light and hope and love ultimately became flesh and lived among us.

Often we associate our judicial system with our ideas and perceptions of divine justice. I have listened to so many sermons where this view is mirrored. I find it sad that, just like the woman I recall in prison, the message of religion has served to place bars of guilt and shame around people.

I remember a friend of mine, years ago, a Roman Catholic Monsignor, Michael Buckley, saying to me; 'You Anglicans are obsessed with buildings and structures, and we Catholics are obsessed with guilt. Really it is all about grace.'

What did he mean by this? He meant that the story we tell about the nature of God has nothing to do with who God actually is.

Jesus Christ did not teach us to condemn or to judge, Jesus' primary message was forgiveness and love. If this were so, then the last words he spoke would not have included 'Father forgive them,' and the only commandment he gave was that we 'should love.' If indeed, the promise and the presence of Jesus was the first word on the creator's lips, then surely his nature is the very nature of God himself; not one who crushes us, but one whose only desire is to love and forgive. The writer of the fourth Gospel says it just a little later, 'For God so loved the world (us) that he gave his only son, so that all who believe in him should not perish, but have eternal life.' (John 3:16). The love of Christ, and the love of God are the same.

There are naturally consequences for every human action, but if we recognise he has always been there for us, and always will, then guilt should never be our prison guards. Embrace him, and we are forgiven.

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

Lord Jesus,  
you have been there for us since the beginning of all things.  
Though your love has been my constant companion,  
I have walked away so often.  
I come to you again.  
I accept the forgiveness that is always within my reach.  
Release me from my chains,  
and set me free  
Amen



## Church Services etc. on TV/Radio

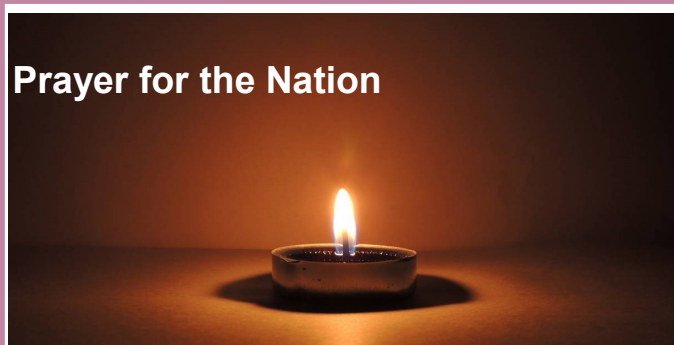
If you don't have access to the internet, try tuning in to the following:

Sunday 7 February

- 8.00am on Three Counties Radio - Although not advertised on their schedules, a short weekly service is broadcast.
- 8.10am on BBC Radio 4 - Sunday Worship marking Chinese New Year.
- 1.15pm on BBC 1 - Songs of Praise. Gospel Singer of the Year Final.
- 3.00pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong from Truro Cathedral.

Wednesday 10 February

- 3.30pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong from the Chapel of Clare College, Cambridge.



## Prayer for the Nation

In response to reaching the terrible milestone of 100,000 deaths from Covid-19, the Archbishops invite all to call on God in Prayer at 6pm each day based on the following themes:

- Sunday: Family, friends and loved ones.  
Monday: Schools, colleges, children and young people.  
Tuesday: Elderly, isolated and vulnerable.  
Wednesday: Businesses, the workplace and economic wellbeing.  
Thursday: NHS and other key workers.  
Friday: National and local government.  
Saturday: All who are grieving and all suffering with physical and mental ill-health.

## For the Children (& young at heart!)

This week we are looking at John, chapter 1, verses 1-14. In this passage it talks about the Word. This book of the Bible was originally written in Greek and instead of Word, John would have written Logos. Logos is a difficult word to translate into English and in this passage John is not just talking about a word that you might write on a page - the Word that John is speaking about is Jesus.

### Activities

Why not play this fun word game together. Think of a category e.g. animals, and then go through the whole alphabet and come up with a word that fits the category for each letter e.g. ant, bee, cat etc. See how many categories you can do and which are the easiest!

John wrote his Gospel to share the Good News about Jesus with others. How do you think we can share good news today? Why not come up with a creative way of sharing some good news e.g. create a poster, make a film, write a song? What other ways can you think of?

### Song

My best friend

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

### Prayer

Dear God, thank you for the opening of John's Gospel which reminds us that you loved us so much that you sent Jesus to live on the earth as a human and die for us on the cross. Thank you for your promise that anybody who accepts Jesus and believes in him can be a child of God. Help us to be carriers of your message of love, sharing the Good News about Jesus with all we meet.

*Resources from Together at Home.*

*For more free resources visit [tath.co.uk](http://tath.co.uk).*



Ash  
Wednesday

Join us for a special Ash Wednesday service at 6pm on Wednesday 17 February. To join the service, go to Zoom and enter the usual meeting ID: 998 074 6039.

To help you reflect on Ash Wednesday and throughout Lent, why not mark (with paint or a marker pen) a cross on e.g. a pebble, or alternatively cut out a cross from fabric or card and put it somewhere visible as a reminder.

## 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.



## Suggested Music for this week

A Gaelic Blessing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eve2y-P-Zjk>

Thou whose almighty word

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJuqdlVH8VY>

In heavenly love abiding

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7SFxG0h57kk>

Everlasting Arms

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

Holy Overshadowing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJWetk7zbGE>



# #LIVE LENT



## God's Story Our Story

The Church of England's Lent campaign. Six reflections for each week including a short bible passage, a brief exploration of the passage and a prayer. Download the free App, see the Church of England's social media or obtain a booklet from Church House Publishing for £1.99. If you would like a booklet but are unable to purchase one yourself, let us know and we will obtain one for you. Call Jacqui on 356993 or email [stjameschurchbiddendenham@gmail.com](mailto:stjameschurchbiddendenham@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

## Rev Eric Lomax Contact Details

Tel: 01234 328452

Mob: 07805 879537

Email: [Rev.ejlomax@gmail.com](mailto:Rev.ejlomax@gmail.com)

## 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.

**We would specifically ask you to consider supporting the Foodbank during Lent.**

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](mailto:help@biddenham.org.uk) with your name/phone number/address.

If you can volunteer, please email [help@biddenham.org.uk](mailto: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