

Lent2021



A gentle Lenten journey from
the Diocese of Chester

Week 1

Ash Wednesday 17 February: Bishop Keith, Bishop of Birkenhead

18 February: Revd Joe Kennedy, Oxton

19 February: Revd Christine Broad, Woodchurch

20 February: Revd Sue Shrine, Bredbury

22 February: Revd Dr Andrew Knight, Partington and Carrington

23 February: Revd Peter Froggatt, diocesan Director of Outreach

Mini challenge ① Cut out single-use plastics

This Lent the Diocese of Chester, led by the diocesan Environment Forum, is inviting you to join in with a Lenten journey. Leading the way are 40 individuals from around our diocese who will each reflect on God's word and God's world. They will delve into scripture and share inspiring personal stories about the small ways in which they are moved to cherish the gift of life.

So, are you up for joining in?

Daily reflections

Follow the daily reflections below. They've been organised into weekly booklets to share with others via email, and printer-friendly versions are also available to print and post to those who might prefer the reflections in a physical format.

Mini challenges

Take up our 7 mini challenges throughout Lent. Set by the diocesan Environment Forum, these 7 mini challenges will stretch you to live your life differently for the season of Lent (and beyond). So, instead of *giving up* something for Lent, why not try *taking up* one or all of these mini challenges?

Ian Bishop

Archdeacon of Macclesfield

17 February Bishop Keith

Lent2021

"God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Genesis 1:28

Ash Wednesday is one of the most solemn days in the Church's year. I've always found it very moving both to receive ash on my forehead and to give it to others and either hear the words or say them "Dust you are, and to dust you shall return, repent of your sins and follow Christ".

When we hear the words of God to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1 "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth" (Genesis 1:28) the scope of our sin and our need to repent just increases. Following Christ, we find, is being fruitful and filling the earth according to his commandments, and far from being some introverted preoccupation with sex, this command is given as part of the blessing of the whole creation. May God forgive us and lead us to true repentance for turning dominion into selfish exploitation. May the birds of the air, the fish of the sea, as well as all the other creatures know that we realise our existence is as much for their blessing as we know their existence is for our blessing. And may our children and our children's children know it too.

I'm praying the Lord would show me during Lent what repentance is like in all these areas, for what goes on inside my house as well as what goes on outside in the garden, in the supermarket, the supply chain and way beyond. As we receive the forgiveness and grace of Christ, may the birds, the fish and every living thing have cause to be grateful for our dominion and not, because of it, be groaning in grief.

Bishop Keith Sinclair, Bishop of Birkenhead

Information point

Ever wondered why Christians should care so much about creation and the gift of the Earth? A Rocha explain it beautifully here.

<https://arocha.org.uk/about-us/why-we-do-it/>

A prayer

God our Father,

The strength of all who put their trust in you, mercifully accept our prayers; and because in our weakness, we can do nothing good without you, grant us the help of your grace, that in keeping your commandments we may please you, both in will and deed; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

18 February
Revd Joe Kennedy

Lent2021

"And I brought you into a plentiful land to enjoy its fruits and its good things. But when you came in, you defiled my land and made my heritage an abomination."

Jeremiah 2:7

My wife, Emily, has given me permission to say here that she has lived with type 1 diabetes for twenty years now. She got diagnosed in the year we were engaged. Emily is also allergic to milk, so we both joke occasionally that 'a land flowing with milk and honey' would be wasted on her!

It wouldn't, though. A land flowing with milk is one in which the soil is so rich that it can support lots of healthy (and fertile) animals. And a land flowing with honey is one where there is a wealth of flowers, fruit and vegetables for the bees to pollinate. So a land with an abundance of milk and honey is good news for all of us.

God gave to the Hebrew People a milky honeyed land. And He offers to us all a milky, honeyed, beautiful world. Too often, we respond by corrupting the land, the air, and the waters, and by treating our fellow creatures in outrageously bad ways. Are we not all implicated one way or another?

Lent is a great time for an examination of conscience. What could you or I be doing better?

Revd Joe Kennedy, St Saviour Oxton and Joint Chair of the diocesan Environment Forum

Information Point

Eco Church is a prestigious award given to churches that have made significant efforts to care for God's world. You can register for Eco Church and find out more by following the link.

<https://ecochurch.arocho.org.uk>

A prayer

Creator God,

We praise and thank you for the milky, honeyed, beautiful world you give to us. Give us also, we pray, contrite spirits and fill us with love for your creation. In Jesus' name.

Amen.

19 February Revd Christine Broad

Lent2021

“You shall not pollute the land in which you live, for blood pollutes the land, and no atonement can be made for the land for the blood that is shed in it, except by the blood of the one who shed it. You shall not defile the land in which you live, in the midst of which I dwell, for I the Lord dwell in the midst of the people of Israel.”

Numbers 35: 33-34

Behind the stark words of Numbers 35 is a simple understanding that human behaviour which breaks God's commandment of Exodus 20:13 “You shall not murder” defiles, or pollutes the land. Responsibility to keep this commandment rests with each individual member of any given community. There is a relationship between human obedience to God's laws and the holiness of the earth, the world. The ancient Israelites knew something which later generations may only just be rediscovering. But you and I wouldn't commit murder would we? I hope not! But when I make an unnecessary journey by car and churn out the resulting pollutant gases into the environment, perhaps I am putting my own need for convenience before the needs of my sisters and brothers for clean air, and that is questionable behaviour.

Do I really need to use my car for journeys of less than a mile or so when I could walk to the destination in less than 20 minutes? My car was out of action for a little while last year and I found that I could, in fact, do a lot more walking than I had been used to and as well as making a smaller contribution to the planet's greenhouse gas levels I also found that this was good for my own wellbeing!

Are there other ways in which putting my own needs before the needs of my brothers and sisters across the planet contributes to the pollution of the air, land or water? Can I make some different choices that will show obedience to all of God's commandment; love for my sisters and brothers and better care of the Earth?

**Revd Christine Broad,
Vicar of Holy Cross Woodchurch and Dean of Women in Ministry**

Information Point

If 10% of Churches register and 5% gain the bronze award Chester Diocese would be well on the way to achieving Eco Diocese status. Register your Church today and find out more about Eco Diocese by following the link.

<https://ecochurch.arochoa.org.uk/denominational-awards/eco-diocese/>

A prayer

Creator God,

We praise and thank you for the milky, honeyed, beautiful world you give to us. Give us also, we pray, contrite spirits and fill us with love for your creation. In Jesus' name.

Amen.

20 February Revd Sue Shrine

Lent2021

"Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God."

Luke 12:6

I think Jesus is expressing how much God cares about seemingly insignificant creatures like sparrows in this verse. Apparently, these tiny birds were not only sold cheaply, but were probably sold as four for two pennies with one given free. It reminds me of 'Buy one get one free'. How often are we tempted to buy more than we need because one is on offer, then find that we don't need the extra one?

In God's creation every creature has value. At St Barnabas' Church we have bee hives in the orchard behind the Church. We all associate bees and bee keeping with honey and bees wax, products that we can use, but the real benefit of bees to the world is the amazing job they do in pollinating our flowers and crops. Bees are key to making the eco system work, vital for a healthy environment and human life.

Watching our bees, you can't help but realise that colonies of bees are a wonderful example of a community living and working together for the common good. Each part of the community valued, set to work and contributing positively. Bee numbers have dropped dramatically and if there is a sign that all is not well with the world the bees are an alarm call to all of us. We cannot all keep bees, but we can all create an environment where bees can flourish. Something as simple as a pot of herbs or wildflowers on an outside windowsill not only looks good but also makes a bee friendly area, especially if we encourage our neighbours to do it too.

Value the small creatures around us. Especially value the bees. They are a model of community cohesion and despite their size vital to our lives. God rightly cares for the small things.

Revd Sue Shrine, St Barnabas Bredbury

Information Point

Could you join A Rocha's 'Wild Christian' community? Find out what it takes to be a Wild Christian by following the link.

<https://arocha.org.uk/wildchristian/>

A prayer

Creator God,

We praise and thank you for the milky, honeyed, beautiful world you give to us. Give us also, we pray, contrite spirits and fill us with love for your creation. In Jesus' name.

Amen.

22 February Revd Dr Andrew Knight

Lent2021

"And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, 'Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost.'"

John 6:12

My favourite meal of the year is usually on Boxing Day: baked potatoes and multitude of leftovers: cold meat, roasted vegetables, cheeses and reheated Christmas pud. No elaborate preparations, just honest leftovers from the plentiful provision of the season. When Jesus fed 5000+ people on the hillside with a boy's provisions of just five small loaves and two small fish, God's superabundant generosity and blessing was manifest. Not only were 5000 fed in this alfresco feast, but they "ate their fill". In a place and time when food was scarce and starvation a real possibility, to be stuffed full, completely satisfied, was a real blessing and cause for celebration. Yet God's blessing went further... The disciples were instructed to gather up the leftovers, 12 basketfuls so that nothing would be lost.

Shockingly, one third of the food produced in the world today is wasted. 1.3 billion tonnes of food a year discarded, as it spoils, is surplus to requirements or doesn't meet our exacting standards of perfection. Yet, 11% or 820 million people in the world don't have enough food and are undernourished, and over 8 million people in the UK are in food poverty, struggling to buy the food they need.

How can we reflect God's superabundant generosity to us in the way we conserve, share and bless others with food we buy, store and cook?

Revd Dr Andrew Knight, Partington and Carrington

Information Point

Climate Stewards encourage you to calculate your carbon footprint, reduce it if you can and offset the rest. Find out more by following the link.

<https://www.climatestewards.org/>

A prayer

Jesus, Bread of Life,

We praise you for your abundant gifts in our lives. Fill us with your compassion and love so we would willingly share this abundance with those in need, and in your mercy, may our small offerings achieve miraculous things for your Kingdom.

Amen

23 February Revd Peter Froggatt

Lent2021

"Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them."

Luke 12: 27 - 30

As I write I am getting ready to move to a smaller house. For 25 years my wife and I have moved to bigger houses, so have never had to make a decision about what we should keep. Now the time of reckoning has come: an amazing amount has gone to the tip, to charity shops, to friends and family. And even more amazingly, nearly all of it has been unseen and unused for years. It has made me wonder what all these possessions were for.

Christians are very diverse, in age and background and life circumstances. But Jesus tells us that something that they should have in common is a distinctive trust in their Father God as the one who provides. Instead of anxiously buying things to make us feel secure or special, we look to him for security and significance, and trust that he will make sure that we have all that we need materially. A distinctive mark of the Christian is that we can live more simply, because we trust a loving Father. I wonder if we might pray that we can show that trust more and more.

Revd Peter Froggatt, diocesan Director of Outreach

Information Point

The Church of England General Synod has committed to trying to achieve net zero carbon for the whole Church by 2030. It's a tough challenge but you can find out about the practical steps to take to help the Church achieve that.

[Practical steps net zero carbon](#)

A prayer

Loving Father,

Cause us to trust you more, and our possessions less. Please help us to show this as we live more simply.

Amen

Lent2021 ...7 mini challenges

This Lent the Diocese of Chester, led by the diocesan Environment Forum, is inviting you to join in with a Lenten journey and to think about how we might all play our part in living more sustainably. Let's think about what we might change in our daily lives to show our love for God's creation and the environment.



Cut out single-use plastics

Try to avoid buying items that cannot be easily recycled.