

Lent2021



A gentle Lenten journey from
the Diocese of Chester

Week 3

03 March: Revd Anne-Marie Naylor

04 March: Revd Caroline Throup

05 March: Ven Ian Bishop

06 March: Lynn Spedding

08 March: Revd Vanessa Layfield

09 March: Very Revd Dr Tim Stratford

Mini challenge 3 Introduce meat-free days

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

03 March Revd Anne-Marie Naylor

Lent2021

"In his hand are the depths of the earth, the heights of the mountains are his also. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land."

Psalm 95:4-5

Imagine all the nurturing and creative things which hands do each day. Hands cooking a meal, hands soothing a distressed child, the potter's hands, the engineer's hands... Hands are the part of the body where intention and feelings turn into action, where ideas become reality. And God's hands are where his love and desire overflowed to form matter, into a beautiful creation.

There is nothing that hasn't been brought into being by the touch of God's hands. Sit for a few minutes outside with your hands on the ground, knowing that where you are touching, God's hands touch too. That makes the ground holy!

At St Mary's Astbury we are thinking about our own holy spaces, especially our churchyard. It is somewhere which is visited often by people who need to feel God's loving touch. Could it reflect God's touch more in the way we care for it? Perhaps our next extension will be a nature or woodland churchyard, where we will look to bring back wildflowers or bees, and use sustainable materials.

Revd Anne-Marie Naylor, Astbury and Smallwood

Information Point

Looking for inspiration on how to manage your Churchyard effectively – Check out this link to Caring for God's Acre. Caring for God's Acre is a charity that specialises in the preservation of wildlife and the heritage of burial grounds, graveyards and cemeteries.

<https://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/>

A prayer

Dear Lord,

On this journey through Lent renew my vision. Bless me with awe and wonder at the sheer holiness of creation, that I may touch it lightly and reverently.

Amen

04 March Revd Caroline Throup

Lent2021

"Happy are you who sow
beside all waters, who let
the feet of the ox and the
donkey range free."

Isaiah 32:20

This short verse has us picturing both waters and animals - two important elements of God's glorious creation. It also speaks of sowing, a means of human interaction in creation throughout history. The verse ends a longer section addressing the future peace of God's reign, reminding us that the whole of creation, and our place in it, is part of God's reign. When all is in harmony, God's peace rules.

Perhaps this is why so much in creation is a gift to us? I like nothing better than to be on, or beside, water - anything from a garden pond to crashing waves along the coast. Others might find creation's blessing is in sowing and watching things grow, while others again are happiest with their favourite animals around them.

The diversity of the natural beauty across our planet is staggering. But, sadly, so too is the extent of the damage human beings have wrought on God's glorious creation.

Take a moment to think about how you interact with the natural world:

Where do I find God's peace in creation?

What can I do to make a difference where the damage has been done?

Revd Caroline Throup, Wilmslow

Information Point

Parish Resources website can help you to buy your energy from 100% renewable sources. Check out the link and buy responsibly.

<https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/index.php/categories/energy/energy-basket>

A prayer

Dear Lord,

Help me always to appreciate the beauty and variety of your creation, and to play my part in protecting the waters, the land, and the wildlife around me.

Amen

05 March Ven Ian Bishop

Lent2021

"When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the LORD your God."

Leviticus 19:9-10

There's a principle here that is repeated again and again in scripture. It's about being generous to those who have little. Take what you need but no more.

It's a principle that can be applied to the exploitation of the world's resources. If we all lived more simply then the exploitation of the rainforests and the fossil fuels that are devastating our planet wouldn't be needed. It would be easy to be cynical and say 'what difference can I make'? But the scriptures always start with a call to take individual responsibility and to leave the big picture to Him.

Last year, inspired by a visit to Chester Zoo, I dug out a wild pond in our garden. It's nice having a pond in the garden but I deliberately leave it for wildlife. I've been rewarded with ducks dropping by and any number of other creatures. The local biodiversity has noticeably increased and it has become a little bit of garden left for those that need it more than I do.

Spend a moment examining your own heart. Can you as an individual make a small difference?

Ven Ian Bishop, Archdeacon of Macclesfield

Information Point

Chester Zoo is leading conservation both internationally and locally. Want to know more about their support for Cheshire wildlife?

<https://www.chesterzoo.org/what-you-can-do/campaigns/wildlife-connections/>

A prayer

Dear Lord,

On this journey through Lent help me to live more simply, to remember not to take more than is needed and to make small differences.

Amen

06 March Lynn Spedding

Lent2021

"This is the Lord's doing;
it is marvellous in our
eyes."

Psalm 118:23

About 12 years ago I took part in a bee-keeping course. It was a revelation to me – not least as (note my ignorance!) I had at one point to ask the person next to me why the course leader was showing us pictures of wasps.

The course was fascinating: we learned about the changing role of the worker-bee through her life-cycle, the “waggle-dance” by which foragers communicate the location of excellent pasture, and the mysterious “drone congregation area” where the virgin queen goes to mate. So excited was I that I had to share my new-found knowledge with all – interested or not. The organisation of and relationships within a colony could provide many a sermon.

A few years ago, with financial support from members of our congregation, a colony of bees was purchased for our church roof. To support them, we also created two raised beds (in our otherwise rather sterile churchyard in the centre of town) and planted these up with bee-friendly flowers. It has been wonderful to see the bees grazing on our recently planted bank of crocuses and raised beds.

These visible signs are just small reminders of the interdependence of all life on our amazing planet – and of our responsibility to celebrate and sustain it.

During this pandemic crisis, so many have found both wonder and solace in the natural world. Could you plant something – a tree, a shrub, a perennial flower – as your own contribution to sustaining God's creation?

Lynne Spedding, Macclesfield

Information Point

Great work is being done by the Cheshire Wildlife Trust – learn more at the link below.

<https://www.cheshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/>

A prayer

Creator God,

May we never lose our sense of wonder at the intricacies of nature. Help us to play our own small part in sustaining wildlife.

Amen

08 March Revd Vanessa Layfield

Lent2021

"Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"

Matthew 6:26

Like many, I find being in the countryside spiritually uplifting.

My husband Jonathan and I have moved to an old farmhouse. Dating from 1640 it's a bit less roomy than our previous home. However, having more external space has provided an excuse to acquire an elderly tractor. Now the soil is being prepared for sowing seeds in our vegetable plot.

The scenery here is beautiful, with an abundance of wildlife. The greater spotted woodpecker is a daily visitor, and families of kestrels and owls inhabit the nearby trees. I have found that creating a few moments to watch these families has taught me something about life. I watch the adult fly off in search of food for its young. It uses its abilities to see and hunt and, on finding food, returns to share it. I realised that just as the parent has provided for its young, the food has been provided by a heavenly Father.

But what has this message taught me about humanity? Mindful that many parents struggle to provide food for their children, I am a firm believer that we are agents of God's love, that our heavenly Father provides enough resources to feed all people, that whoever sows generously will reap generously and, just like the birds, from the smallest seed an abundance of food can be provided for all people.

So, when you see a bird find food, remember that our heavenly Father has provided the seeds for them and for all people, that the hungry shall be fed.

Spend a moment examining your own heart. How might you share your resources with others?

Revd Vanessa Layfield, diocesan Engagement and Inclusion Officer

Information Point

The Climate Emergency Toolkit has been put together to help churches make a difference and be ready for the world climate conference in Glasgow in November.

<https://www.climateemergencytoolkit.com/>

A prayer

Dear Lord,

On this journey through Lent, help me to be an agent of your love, to plant the seeds you have provided, and share my resources with others.

Amen

09 March Very Revd Dr Tim Stratford

Lent2021

"... then I saw all the work of God, that no one can find out what is happening under the sun. However much they may toil in seeking, they will not find it out; even though those who are wise claim to know, they cannot find it out."

Ecclesiastes 8:17

My education was heavily oriented towards science and I began work designing technology for the automotive industry after completing an electronics degree. I had learned that by human endeavour we were able to grow our understanding of God's creation both in microscopic detail and on a universal scale. I also quickly learned that no matter how much my understanding grew, there was still more to know. And not just me. The same is true for every scientist. The more you research, the more you realize you do not know.

I also came to see that there were significant domains of knowing that science could not begin to understand. One such case is love. Evolutionary scientists can explain the developmental advantage of love to the human species. Neurobiologists can explain the electrical impulses and chemical compounds associated with feelings of love. But to truly understand love is something else.

Our spirituality and knowledge of God is like this too. We cannot toil to work out what is in the heart of God, instead, we give ourselves into our creator's hands and learn what it is to be a child of the eternal kingdom.

Give a little time to consider the limits of your own knowledge and the vastness of your unknowing, then wonder at the greatness of God, the creator of all.

Very Revd Dr Tim Stratford, Dean of Chester

Information Point

Need some help in getting the conversation started at your Church?

<https://www.climateemergencytoolkit.com/prepare>

A prayer

Father God,

You formed us from the dust of the earth and placed us in a garden.

Remind us of our place as your creatures at home in your creation and enable us to find a home in you.

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.

3

Introduce meat-free days

Especially try to limit red meat.