

Connecting faith and daily life

Rewriting history

Caroline Hodgson *reflects on* Zephaniah 3:14-end, Psalm 116:1-3, 10-end and Luke 24:13-35

The story from Luke is familiar – two disciples, heart-broken, grieving, “looking sad”, trudge along the road from Jerusalem, the city which three days earlier had been the scene of so much drama. The cult that Cleopas and his companion belonged to had been quashed when their leader was unjustly tried, tortured and put to a brutal death. When the stranger draws alongside, Cleopas tells him that they had hoped that Jesus would be “the one to redeem Israel”. Their dejection is palpable.

The two men are bound for Emmaus. Perhaps they’re looking for a break from the chaos of the city, possibly they’re afraid for their own safety. Whatever the reason for their journey, it’s one of the darker moments in the New Testament.

So it’s astonishing that the unimaginable joy that they were about to experience would spring from the very source of their despondency. It’s summed up by Fr Denis McBride in his book *The Road to Emmaus and Beyond*, when he writes: “The past is not dead; it lingers on as a resource for meaning or it waits for new interpretation.”

It’s a wonderful idea – that, far from being fixed in history, the past can change through our reinterpretation – the realisation that, even in the darkest moments, when no redemption or resurrection seems remotely possible, God is there all the while. It’s why the writer of the book of Zephaniah, today’s alternative Old Testament reading, celebrates the fact that “the Lord, is in your midst”. 🙏

Let us pray – ACTS of prayer

Part 3 – T is for thanksgiving

by Kathryn Fleming

According to Meister Eckhart: “If the only prayer you ever say in our entire life is ‘Thank you’, it will be enough.” It’s easy, when all is well, to throw God a compliment – but the prayer of thanksgiving is so much more than this. It may start in response to a sudden awareness of God’s goodness – the birth of a child, a crisis averted, a friendship renewed – and it’s absolutely right that such blessings inspire gratitude. But we are called to a habit of thankfulness that enables us not just to notice daily blessings

but to carry on regardless of whether the immediate situation is easy to celebrate, or quite the reverse.

“Give thanks in all circumstances,” said Paul to the Thessalonians. In all circumstances! For me this is very much about trying to reach an underlying certainty that, since God is love, God is always intent on the best outcome.

Sometimes my thankfulness emerges through gritted teeth, but practising thanksgiving is good for faith and deepens our sense of God’s goodness and our faith in God’s love. 🙏



Lord, who walked alongside his disciples in their grief and reinvented the past for them, turning tragedy into triumph, strengthen our faith, to know that you are in the midst of everything in our lives, too. Amen.

Books of the Old Testament – Esther

by Trevor Dennis

The story of Esther concerns an attempt to annihilate the Jewish people. Read by religious Jews each year at their festival of Purim, it has become a particularly powerful tale since the Holocaust.

The setting is the opulent court of the king of Persia in the fifth century BC. Haman becomes the king’s second in command and decrees that all must bow down before him. When a Jew called Mordecai refuses, Haman tells the king that the Jews

are different and dangerous. The king decrees that they should be wiped out. Yet the king has a Jew in his court – his own queen, Esther! Mordecai warns her of the plot, and with great courage and cunning she sets about defeating Haman’s plans. The story ends with fearful slaughter.

Is the king manipulated, or is he his own man? Esther appears at first to be at the service of those around her, but she knows how to play the game at court. All of them are corrupted by the violence of tyranny, where God is nowhere to be seen – for God is not even mentioned once. 🙏

“It is not the body’s posture, but the heart’s attitude that counts when we pray.”

Billy Graham (1918-2018), evangelist

Blandford Methodist Church: Sunday 23rd April

Good morning and a warm welcome to our Morning Worship which is being led by Mrs Diana Middleditch. The stewards today are Tina Wild and Margaret and Alan Dymond. Thank you to Margaret Dymond for the flowers. After the service, please join us in the hall for refreshments.

Dates for your diary:

Sunday 30 th April	10.30 am	Ecumenical service, Blandford Camp – No Service at our church
Saturday 6 th May	8.30 am	Monthly prayer meeting, Holtwood Methodist
Sunday 7 th May	10.45 am	Morning Worship led by Mrs Christine Thompson
Sunday 7 th May	6.00 pm	“Going Deeper”, monthly meeting of prayer, worship and ministry at the Parish Church (first Sunday in each month)
Sunday 14 th May	10.45 am	Church Anniversary led by Reverend Gwyneth Owen, followed by lunch in the hall
Sunday 14 th May	4.00 pm	Easter Offering Service at Verwood Methodist Church
Sunday 16 th July:	10.45 am	Pauline’s final service at Blandford Methodist, followed by lunch in the hall
Sunday 23 rd July:	4.30 pm	Leaving Service for Reverend Pauline Crispin at Trinity Church, Ringwood
Sunday 24 th September	10.45 am	Harvest festival service led by Reverend Nick Wood from Verwood Methodist, followed by lunch in the hall

Bible in a year: 23rd April – 6th May (two weeks):

2 Samuel 16 – 1 Kings 22 and Luke 17:20 – Luke 23

It’s not too late to give a leaving gift for Pauline! Even though it is a few months yet until our Minister and Superintendent, Reverend Pauline Crispin, leaves us for pastures new, it would be good whilst she is on Sabbatical to begin thinking about a gift from our church which will form part of her leaving present. If you would like to make a monetary gift towards a leaving present, please pass this to Joyce before the end of May, and if you have any suggestions for a gift, please let Joyce know.

Church Anniversary lunch: Following our Church Anniversary service on the 14th May, we hope you will join us for a church family lunch. Lunch will consist of home cooked ham, Spanakopita, and Salmon en Crouete, all served with new potatoes, side salad and green salad with tomatoes and cucumber. This will be followed by Eve’s Pudding and custard and tea, coffee and mints.

The cost of the meal will be £6 per person (£2.50 for under 10s). Please add your name to the sign-up sheet in the Narthex to assist us with our catering. If you are able to pay when signing up, it will be a great help.

Catering Committee

Ecumenical Service: This will be held next Sunday, 30th April, at Blandford Camp. To comply with Camp security, if you wish to attend please add your full name to the "sign-up" sheet (which can be found in the Narthex), so that names can be passed on to the Reverend (Major) Ken Adolphe at the camp. You will need to take some form of photographic ID (such as a driving licence, bus pass, passport) with you. We have been advised that you will need to **arrive at the camp gates by 9.45 am** for the 10.30 am service (for security reasons). Should anyone wish to attend and need a lift to the camp, please let me know.

John Cornish

Going Deeper - A monthly "Filling Station"-type event: I wanted to invite you to come along to a new monthly evening service we're starting this term. It's called "Going Deeper" and it's a filling-station type event - aimed at people wanting a more charismatic/contemporary expression of worship but equally wanting to serve in their local context where they might not get that on a regular basis. Equally, there's something about the wider church gathering to seek God's presence. This is not about BFPC trying to steal your church's congregation members, but us trying to serve the wider church. We kick off on 7th May at 6.00 pm in the Parish Church - and we want to welcome all to come along and partake.

Reverend Chris Beaumont, Lead Minister, Parish Church

Blandford Foodbank is urgently in need of -

Tinned fruit	Tinned vegetables	Coffee	Squash/Fruit juice
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The following items are also running low and need restocking -

Tinned meat	Tinned soup	Jam/marmalade	
Rice pudding	Shampoo	Tea Bags	Toilet roll

For those able to support the Foodbank with items, a box has been placed in the Narthex as a collection point.

John Cornish

Prayer: Please can we continue to uphold in prayer those members of our congregation who we know are ill or suffering in some way.

If you know of anyone who would like prayer and be mentioned by name in The Link, please let me know (having obtained their permission first to mention them by name).

As Reverend Pauline Crispin is currently on sabbatical, for any immediate problems and concerns, please contact Joyce Wild in the first instance.

Minister:

Reverend Pauline Crispin

Pastoral Support:

Joyce Wild: (Tel: 01258 454091)