

Age doesn't matter

Georgina Byrne *reflects on* Genesis 12:1-4a

Most seventy-five-year-olds might reasonably assume that, after working hard, raising a family and engaging with the local community, they can expect some peace. Poor Abram is not so lucky. At that age God commands him to leave his home and travel to "the land that I will show you" – as yet undisclosed. His wife Sarai and nephew Lot are dragged into this escapade, too. All of this, of course, happens before he fathers two children – first Ishmael with Hagar and then Isaac with Sarai, when he is a hundred years old.

Abram, or Abraham as he becomes, knows that for God age is unimportant. When God invites him to an adventure he ups sticks and leaves with all the expectation of an optimistic youngster. He sees the world with fresh eyes, ready to explore and ready to be surprised by what God can do.

Age doesn't matter when we follow God's promptings. When I was Director of Ordinands, the oldest person I presented to the bishop for ordination was sixty-seven. She was one of the most vibrant, imaginative and inspiring priests I know. We may not have the energy for moving house or even being ordained, but, whatever our age, we can be challenged and surprised by God in our life if we keep our hearts alive to the possibility. 🍷

God of adventure, challenge me. God of life, surprise me. God of compassion, travel with me. Open my eyes and ears, my mind and heart, to the places where I will find you today. Amen.

Some things you might not know about Lent

by Caroline Hodgson

In AD 325 the Council of Nicaea formalised Lent as a period of preparation for Easter. It was originally called "tessarakosta" (in Greek) or "quadragesima" (in Latin) – both referring to forty days. The word Lent, derived from the Old English "lencten", meaning "spring", came into use from the twelfth century.

In some early Christian traditions, Lent lasted forty hours, to symbolise the length of time Jesus spent in the tomb. By around the fourth century, it had become a week long. Only later

was it extended to forty days, to echo Bible stories such as Noah's flood (Genesis 7:17), Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 24:18) and, of course, the time Jesus spent in the wilderness.

The forty days of Lent don't actually include Sundays. Every Sunday is considered a "mini Easter" a day of celebrating Christ's resurrection.

As well as being observed by Anglicans and Catholics, Lent is observed in the Lutheran, Moravian and Orthodox traditions, among others. In all of these the spirit of the season – turning away from sin and towards God – remains central. 🍷



Perpetua, Felicity and companions

by Alan Jefferies

Perpetua, Felicity and Companions are commemorated in the *Common Worship* lectionary on Saturday. Their story illuminates the brutality and violence to which early Christians were subjected.

In AD 203, during the reign of Emperor Septimius Severus, a young Roman noblewoman named Perpetua had recently married and become a mother. Her slave Felicity was also in the late stages of pregnancy. Their companions included three men named Saturninus, Secundulus

and Revocatus. All five were catechumens (committed Christians who were not yet baptised). To this group was added a sixth, named Saturus, who voluntarily went before the magistrate and proclaimed himself a Christian.

The detailed diary Perpetua kept during their imprisonment is one of the earliest known first-hand accounts of martyrdom. According to her account, they were arrested and executed in military games to celebrate emperor's birthday. Perpetua envisioned herself doing battle not merely with wild beasts, but with the devil as well. 🍷

“Lent is a time of going very deeply into ourselves... What is it that stands between us and God? Between us and our brothers and sisters? Between us and life, the life of the Spirit? Whatever it is, let us relentlessly tear it out, without a moment's hesitation.”

Catherine Doherty (1896-1985), Catholic social activist

Blandford Methodist Church: Sunday 1st March

Good morning and welcome to our Morning Worship which is being led by Mr Mark Priestley. The stewards today are Christine Lydford and Margaret Cornish. Thank you to Angela for playing for us and for the flowers. After the service, please join us in the hall for refreshments.

Dates for your diary:

Sunday 8 th March	10.45 am	Morning Worship led by Mr Colin Besant
Sunday 15 th March	10.45 am	Mothering Sunday: Local arrangement service
Sunday 22 nd March	10.45 am	Morning Worship led by Mr Brian Skelley
Sunday 29 th March	10.45 am	Palm Sunday: Ecumenical Morning Worship with Holy Communion led by Revd Dr Mark Kimber
Friday 3rd April	10.00 am	Good Friday: Service led by Revd Dr Mark Kimber
Sunday 5 th April	10.45 am	Easter Sunday: Morning Worship led by Miss Elizabeth Ward
Sunday 12 th April	10.45 am	Morning Worship led by Mrs Joyce Wild
Sunday 19 th April	10.45 am	Morning Worship led by Reverend Dr Mark Kimber
Sunday 26 th April	10.45 am	Morning Worship with Holy Communion led by Reverend Peter McNeill

Colehill Methodist: Every Monday, 11.00 am to 12.00 noon(ish), Bible Study, coffee, prayers and plenty of chat. All welcome.

Circuit prayers: First Saturday of every month at 8.30 am at Holtwood Methodist Church.

Bible in a year: 1st – 7th March: Numbers 23 – Deuteronomy 4 and Mark 7 - 10

Meet Reverend Dr Mark Kimber: Most Fridays Mark will be available in the Okeford Room from 10.00 am to 11.00 am for anyone who wishes to have a chat with him. However, on the third Friday of each month there will be a session entitled '**Meeting with Mark**' to which you are cordially invited.

Lent Challenge: Ash Wednesday this year falls on 18th February and so Lent begins. This period provides each of us with an ideal opportunity to take something on board, but also to give something back. As Christians, it would be good if we committed ourselves to reading firstly Mark's Gospel with its sixteen chapters, followed by Psalms 15, 1, 8, 16, 23, 46, 63, 67, 100, 117, 150, 121, 133, 119 v 57-64. To add an extra dimension to the reading of the Psalms why not try learn one of them off by heart.

The daily Bible readings from Mark's Gospel help us focus on Jesus as we prepare for Good Friday and then Easter Sunday and knowing portions of scripture is always a blessing. So, there we have the taking something on board, but what about the giving something back, you might be asking. Well, for this connexional year as a church we have committed ourselves to supporting two specific charities, Safe Families in Dorset and the Health Bus Trust. To do this fund raising is necessary. Might I suggest that alongside our weekly offering, we each donate £1.00 extra which is to be placed in a specially provided box that can be found on the table in the Narthex from Sunday 22nd. At the end of Lent the money collected will be added to other monies raised as our donation to the two charities.

Joyce Wild

Easter Sunday: There will be a sunrise service at 6.00 am at the Milldown on Easter Sunday.

Woodlands Methodist: Worship for You, 8th March, 6.00 pm, led by Reverend Angus Mayhew. Further details on poster in hall.

Woodlands Methodist: Jumble Sale, 14th March, Verwood Memorial Hall. Details on poster in hall. Also, Woodlands is in desperate need for more jumble i.e. men's & ladies' clothes, please.

Colehill Methodist: Coffee morning, Saturday 7th March, 10.00 am – 12.00 noon. Details on poster in hall.

Blandford Foodbank is urgently in need of (updated 19.2.26) – Cereal, Jam, Marmalade, Tinned meat, UHT milk, Deodorant (male and female), Rice, Rice pudding, Tinned carrots, Tinned fruit. Other donations of food or household goods are also welcomed. 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 remember to uphold in prayer those members of our congregation 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).

Minister: Reverend Dr Mark Kimber
Enquiries via Lead Steward, John Cornish, on 07799 516 735
Pastoral Support: Joyce Wild: Tel: 01258 454 091