

Lent2021



**A gentle Lenten journey from
the Diocese of Chester**

Week 4

10 March: Revd Calum Piper

11 March: Val Vibrans

12 March: Revd Ruth Mock

13 March: Revd Jane Proudfoot

15 March: Ven Mike Gilbertson

16 March: Anne Draper

Mini challenge ④ 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

10 March Revd Calum Piper

Lent2021

"Let everything that
breathes praise the
Lord! Praise the Lord!"

Psalm 150:6

During the first national lockdown as our normal routine of worship was disrupted, my family developed a new pattern for worship on a Sunday. We would sit down in front of the TV at 10am (with tea and cake) to watch the online service from one of our churches. Following its completion, we would then go out for a walk in the surrounding countryside.

As we walked, we saw spring developing and then eventually spring turning into summer. If this had been any other year, we would have completely missed all that we were seeing – the blossoming trees, the newly birthed lambs, flocks of birds moving across the sky, the signs of autumn and winter slowly disappearing under the wonder of new seasons. The chaos of creation was seemingly moving from one season to another all with the beauty of praise to God.

It's easy to just focus on the worship we offer God when the activity of our worship is surrounded by four walls. Yet the activity of worship is going on all around us, by all forms of creation. As everything around us praises the Lord, so too we are called to join in with their song and not just sing on our own.

Revd Calum Piper, Bramhall

Information Point

Could your church contribute to a major study of flora and fauna in your churchyard? Sign up to help the study taking place between 05 June and 13 June.

<https://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/expression-of-interest-in-churches-count-on-nature-2021/>

A prayer

Dear Lord,

Thank you for the wonder of creations song worshipping
you all around us. Help us to join in with their song of
praise, and to learn more of you through it.

Amen

11 March Val Vibrans

Lent2021

"For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse."

Romans 1:20

What kind of God is revealed to us in all the things around as we go about our daily lives? There is an order and anticipation at the start of each year; the trees with bare branches, then the buds appear and finally the magnificent sight of many different coloured leaves and bark is revealed. Walking around a churchyard I am aware of all the things that are reliant on one another - trees give shelter from winds and sun, provide refuge and nurture for birds and the earth. The native flowers and spring bulbs herald a promise of kinder days. In these difficult times, the sight of God's creation brings me reassurance and joy and with that a desire to protect the natural growth which offers a haven for many people as they walk by.

Stand a moment in your daily exercise walks and give thanks to our God for such spectacular beauty. Look around and glimpse what God is like.

Val Vibrans, St George, Poynton

Information Point

Why not follow Ruth Valerio's blog. Ruth works for Tearfund and writes extensively on her faith and environmental issues.

<https://ruthvalerio.net/>

A prayer

Lord

Thank you that we can see your hand all around us. At this time of Lent make us ask questions of ourselves; are we caring for what you have given us.

Amen

12 March Revd Ruth Mock

Lent2021

"For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield, but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave the beasts of the field may eat. You shall do likewise with your vineyard, and with your olive orchard."

Exodus 23:10-11

God's instructions to the Israelites about the way they should live included careful use of their land. It is difficult to know how strictly these Sabbath instructions were observed in the seventh year, but it's clear that God intended for rest and generosity to be guiding principles for his chosen people.

At St John's in Sandiway, we have been thinking about ways to increase the biodiversity of the churchyard. We were tempted to rush out and plant wildflower seeds but a visit from Cheshire Wildlife Trust persuaded us to watch and wait. A brief survey found rare species including waxcap fungi and many other native plants. We were advised to reduce mowing in some areas and let the grass grow.

Can you create a mini meadow by letting the grass grow in a part of your garden or churchyard? These wild areas will encourage different plant species to grow, providing space for insects and wildlife. Allowing the lawnmower to rest for most of the summer, can provide huge benefits to nature!

Revd Ruth Mock, St John's, Sandiway

Information Point

Why not discover what Christian Aid are doing to bring resilience to communities affected by climate change?

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/our-work/what-we-do/resilience-climate>

A prayer

Loving God,

Help me to pause and pray and open my eyes to the needs of others and the needs of the wider world.

Amen

13 March Revd Jane Proudfoot

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Jesus told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the vinedresser, 'Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?' And he answered him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

Luke 13:6-9

I was taught as a child that patience is a virtue, but my patience, like everyone else's who is concerned for the health and flourishing of the planet, is being sorely tested.

The parable of the fruitless fig tree reminds me that in the waiting there is work to be done. The gardener has to tend to the tree, feed it and prune it to encourage its growth. He can't expect the fruit to come without his patient attention being paid to it. As Rudyard Kipling said, 'Gardens are not made by singing 'Oh, how beautiful,' and sitting in the shade.' Throwing our hands in the air and saying that our small contribution is not important is a dereliction of our stewardship of this beautiful planet we call home.

God has placed in our hearts a sense of awe and wonder in his creation and given us the means to take care of it. Mending what we have broken will take time and patience but we each have a part to play. What will your contribution be?

Revd Jane Proudfoot, St Wilfrid, Grappenhall

Information Point

Tearfund has some brilliant tools and resources to help Christians explore the issues around climate change.

<https://learn.tearfund.org/en/resources/series/reveal-toolkit/reveal-toolkit-climate-and-environment>

A prayer

Lord God,

Be patient with me. Make my heart yearn to nurture and love the earth and forgive me for the times when I've taken your beautiful gifts for granted.

Amen.

15 March Ven Mike Gilbertson

Lent2021

"Heaven and earth will
pass away, but my
words will not pass
away."

Matthew 24:35

One of the most important elements of the Christian faith for me is hope: a clear-sighted confidence that God has a plan and that he is working his purposes out.

In this verse, Jesus is talking to his disciples about what will happen in the future. There are going to be hard times, such as the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans. But through it all, the word of God, including the words of Jesus, will remain completely reliable, and a sure guide.

The Bible sometimes talks about heaven and earth passing away, as Jesus does here. But there are also wonderful promises of a new heaven and a new earth, in which creation is restored to perfection. What I take from this is the overall promise that God will transform this earth. That's a great hope.

We live in a creation which is beautiful and good, but which is also damaged and in need of God's transformation. Let that spur us on to care for the world God has made, and to help the healing of our environment where our selfishness has marred it, not least in the whole area of climate change, much on our minds today. And let us do that confident in the good purposes of God, who loves the earth and whose promises never fail.

Ven Mike Gilbertson, Archdeacon of Chester

Information Point

If you want to make your voice heard over climate justice then why not take a look at Hope for the Future, who have lots of hints about bringing churches and communities together for decisive action.

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

A prayer

Heavenly Father,

As I look around at the amazing creation you have made,
help me to remember your faithfulness. You have great
plans for your world, and your word never fails. Help me to
live each day in the light of that hope.

Amen.

16 March Anne Draper

Lent2021

"A voice says, 'Cry!' And I said,
'What shall I cry?' All flesh is
grass, and all its beauty is like
the flower of the field. The grass
witheres, the flower fades when
the breath of the Lord blows on
it; surely the people are grass.
The grass withers, the flower
fades, but the word of our God
will stand forever."

Isaiah 40:6-8

I love the change in the seasons, and the new life which appears every spring fills my heart.

Isaiah speaks of seasons coming and going and that none of us lasts forever. But because God's word endures forever, as Christians, we should be people with a longer-term perspective than our own lives on earth. We must endeavour to hand on to future generations a world that is still beautiful and full of life.

I have been recycling since the 1970s when I first became aware of the finite resources our planet holds. In recent years this awareness has grown stronger as rainforests are destroyed, rare species endangered and air polluted. I pray to God whose "word will stand forever" to help preserve his wonderful creation. I continue my small efforts like picking up litter, planting insect pollinating flowers or another tree. Sometimes there are bigger things we can do together - our church last year achieved its silver Eco Church award. Big or small, our efforts matter, as we follow God's command to care for his creation. The breath of the Lord will blow on us all, but the seasons will, I hope, remain and be there for the next generations to enjoy.

Anne Draper, St James, Audlem

Information Point

Water scarcity is a huge issue in today's world. The Ecumenical Water Network is an international coalition of Churches initiated by the World Council of Churches to seek to ensure the preservation, responsible management and equitable distribution of water. Find out more by following the link.

<https://www.oikoumene.org/what-we-do/ecumenical-water-network>

A prayer

Dear Lord

Thank you for providing such beauty and so many resources in our world. Help us to be mindful of how we use or abuse them and how we can make a positive difference; so that future generations will continue to enjoy your created beauty and have bountiful resources available to use wisely.

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.



Stop food waste

Don't leave anything on the plate and resist overstocking the fridge.