

Lent2021



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

Week 5

17 March: Becky Hurst

18 March: Jane Hill

19 March: Ruth Richards

20 March: Revd Canon Jane Brooke

22 March: Revd Mark Green

23 March: Revd James Gibson

Mini challenge **5** 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



17 March
Becky Hurst

Lent2021

Working with Christian Aid for over a decade and with local communities in the past few years, it has always been clear that poor communities and individuals suffer the worst consequences of a disaster. Having few resources to fall back on, the tipping point into crisis is always close. Climate change is no different, we all will and do, feel the effects of a changing climate but communities are already seeing devastating drought, flood and storm destroy their homes, crops, and livelihoods more frequently, and these are the very communities that contribute the least to global greenhouse gas emissions and are often caretakers of the most diverse areas of nature on the planet.

Justice is an active tackling of the systems and structure which destroy the earth and prevent all from enjoying life in all its fullness. Living under the reign of God means seeking justice and righteousness here and now, living as citizens of a community built on love, peace and justice.

Becky Hurst, Crewe Parishes

"See, a king will reign in
righteousness, and
princes will rule with
justice."

Isaiah 32:1

Information Point

Find out about Christian Aid's climate change campaign here. Start seeking climate justice across the world.

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/campaigns/climate-change-campaign>

A prayer

God of justice,

We pray for all those in positions of power that they may lead with righteousness and justice.

We give thanks to all those working to enable life in all its fullness for everyone.

We pray for those in poverty for continued strength and hope.

We pray for ourselves, that we may take every opportunity to challenge injustice and empower the flourishing of others.

Amen.



18 March
Jane Hill

Lent2021

Humans need to toil and labour in order to survive. What is vanity, or in vain, is taking more than we need from the Earth's resources and the pursuit of wealth, which does not bring happiness in the long term. By our exploitation of the land and our plundering of the seas, we disrupt the forces of nature, destroy habitats and contribute to climate change and global warming. The Ecclesiastes passage assures us that the Earth will endure and remain forever, but if global temperatures continue to rise unchecked, what will happen to nature, and will human beings survive?

Now is the time to act before it is too late. Since I was a young child with my Observer's books, I have always loved nature and wanted to protect it. I was influenced by Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring" and "Pesticides and Pollution" by Kenneth Mellanby, both written in the 1960's and was inspired to study Zoology and do research on Ecology and Animal Behaviour. I now manage our church's Conservation Area. The warnings about the influence of human beings on nature and the planet have been there for a long time. As Christians, who are called to care for God's creation, we must do everything possible as individuals and churches to preserve the Earth's wonders and resources and to influence Governments to work together to tackle climate change.

Jane Hill, St Mary's, Upton

"The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity. What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun? A generation goes and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. The sun rises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it rises."

Ecclesiastes 1: 1-5

Information Point

Green Christian are a community of ordinary Christians working and praying together to be the difference.

<https://greenchristian.org.uk/>

A prayer

Dear Father God,

Please help and guide us as individuals and as churches to work together to care for your wonderful creation and to help prevent climate and global warming.

Amen.



19 March Ruth Richards

Lent2021

When we watch TV programmes by David Attenborough and other wildlife presenters, we often see the cleverness and importance of many tiny creatures.

Many years ago, I lived in Zambia and was familiar with the enormous mounds made by termites, and I marveled at how thousands of ants working together could build such structures. Thankfully, we did not see the devastation caused by locusts 'marching in rank' as has happened to such a devastating effect across the east of the African continent in the last few years, so we know that not all creatures do work for good. We have of course all seen the destruction of lives caused by a tiny virus as it has spread across the world.

What can we learn from this as Christians this Lent? Firstly, God's creation is wonderful, and we should respect and look after all of it. At home, for example, we have recently dug up part of our lawn to sow wildflowers in the Spring to encourage bees. At church (St Mary's Upton), our pre-school has made a bug hotel. Secondly and significantly these small creatures in Proverbs worked together in large numbers to great effect, so our small contributions to care for creation can have a great effect when we work together.

Ruth Richards, St Mary Upton

"The ants are a people not strong, yet they provide their food in the summer; the rock badgers are a people not mighty, yet they make their homes in the cliffs; the locusts have no king, yet all of them march in rank; the lizard you can take in your hands, yet it is in the kings' palaces."

Proverbs 30 v 25-28

Information Point

Joy in Enough is a Christian group trying to help us think through the possibility of a new economic model based on environmental protection. You can read more by following the link;

<https://joyinenough.org/>

A prayer

Dear Lord,

We thank you for all the creatures you have made. Help us to see that each person and each creature is valuable in your eyes. Help us to realise that when we work together it can make a real difference.

Amen



20 March Revd Canon Jane Brooke

Lent2021

Bright yellow daffodils and pale green buds pointing out from thin branches welcome us to springtime. They are signs of hope after the effects of a pandemic. We look, we notice, we feel and our hearts begin to burst with praise at the "glorious splendour" all around. The diverse and complex world, of which we are stewards, invites our awe and an immediate response of praise to God whose "greatness is unsearchable".

Some years ago, I was at home looking after 3 children who were under the ages of four. Parenting takes up every second of the day in terms of changing babies, feeding, washing clothes, going for walks and ensuring there is peace whenever a dispute breaks out. Prayer takes place in snatched moments. Being a parent is a precious gift, yet, as any parent knows, it can be extremely tiring.

One day I was feeling at that point of exhaustion as I stood washing up dishes at the kitchen sink. Something made me lift my head to look through the window pane and there on the lawn were two young bluetits. They showed off their bright, contrasting, feathers of blue, yellow, green and black as they hopped around in the sunlight. It was momentary but it was an unforgettable gift. My heart sang with gratitude for such beautiful creatures and I praised the creator God. That nanosecond, arrow prayer of praise, was a blessing to me too. It left me revitalised and ready for anything!

Take some time to reflect on where you have seen God's 'wondrous works' in the past few days and praise God.

Revd Canon Jane Brooke, Vice Dean of Chester Cathedral

"A Song of Praise. Of David.
I will extol you, my God and King, and
bless your name forever and ever. Every
day I will bless you and praise your
name forever and ever. Great is the
Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his
greatness is unsearchable. One
generation shall commend your works
to another and shall declare your
mighty acts. On the glorious splendour
of your majesty, and on your wondrous
works, I will meditate."

Psalms 145:1-5

Information Point

Young people especially need the Church to step up and take their future seriously by caring for God's gift of creation. Speak is praying and campaigning for global justice and creating a network of young Christians.

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

A prayer

Loving God,

Help me to notice the world you have given to us with new eyes today so that my heart and my whole being bursts into praise at your mighty works.

Amen



22 March Revd Mark Green

Lent2021

A friend who hadn't been to church since March spoke to me recently: "I keep asking myself 'Why did God let this happen?'"

For many of us the last year has been a real struggle. As I write this, tomorrow marks one year since we went into lockdown. Just before that happened, I put up a poster at church that said, "It's okay not to be okay - God meets you where you are."

I have kept it there as a reminder, not least to myself, that this past year has been hard and it's not just the lockdown, there are many things that cause us anxiety, affect our mental health.

I try to leave the house every day for a walk, and even if the route is the same it's always different. It's on that walk that I feel my spirits lifted as I encounter the fullness of God's work. It's the beauty and the astonishing variety in nature, and of course, it's the people, our communities, our friends and neighbours who have shown love and support for one another.

Each walk has been a reminder to me of his love, God meeting me where I am.

Revd Mark Green, St Stephen's Moulton

"Let them thank the
Lord for his steadfast
love, for his wondrous
works to humankind!"

Psalm 107:31

Information Point

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland have some resources that might inspire you.

ctbi.org.uk

A prayer

Dear Lord,

We thank you that we experience your ever-present love
for us through our encounters with your world. Wherever
we are come and meet us.

Amen



"But ask the beasts, and they will teach you; the birds of the heavens, and they will tell you; or the bushes of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this? In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of every human being."

Job 12:7-10

23 March Revd James Gibson

Lent2021

In these last months I have become particularly aware of my mortality. Much as I might like to think so, I am not invincible. The Coronavirus does not choose who it infects. I am a frail human being whose every breath is dependent on the miraculous functioning of my complex body.

I live in a privileged position that I can call on our amazing NHS to look after me, and hopefully fix me, when I am not functioning properly. However, this passage reminds me that however good the medical care and science my life, just as the lives of the 'beasts, ..birds, .. bushes, and fish' and all of creation, is totally in God's hands. I am dependent on Him for every breath. Every breath is a gift of life from Him.

So, it is important that we take time to look after this most amazing of gifts. Take to exercise, relax, eat, to sleep, to stop working... As we do so we not only keep well but we also care for God's very creation and world.

Take a moment to notice your breathing... Slowly and deeply breathe in the air that God gives to sustain you. Be amazed by the love and care that God shows you in each breath - in and out - and thank Him.

James Gibson, Holy Trinity, Hurdsfield

Information Point

The European Christian Environmental Network is a collaboration of churches across the continent working to highlight growing environmental risks and to work together for change.

<http://www.ecen.org/about-us>

A prayer

Dear Lord

In this moment, I thank you for the gift of every breath, filling me and sustaining me. Help me to be increasingly aware of how this gift comes from you, every breath...

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.

5

Resist fast fashion

Refrain from buying any new clothes in Lent.