



THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST LEONARD, LEXDEN

ORDINARY PEOPLE. EXTRAORDINARY GOD.



PARISH MAGAZINE

MARCH 2019 50p

LENT: LEARNING TO EMBRACE GRACE



If you want to get your head around what Lent *really* is, I suggest you first need to get to grips with what Lent *isn't*!

Lent isn't about punishing ourselves, nor about God punishing us. Lent isn't about making ourselves worthy of God. And (thank goodness!) it's definitely not about showing each other how very holy we really are.

No, Lent is simply about our openness to grace. Grace is the free gift of love and mercy given to us by God because God wills us to have it, not because of anything we've done to earn it! It's grace that all the stuff associated with Lent - repentance, fasting, reconciliation - should open us to. Or, to put it another way: openness to grace is the true purpose of repentance, fasting, and reconciliation.

Just like every other person who has ever lived, each of us is flawed and vulnerable in some way. But if we fall into thinking we must punish ourselves, imagine we can make ourselves worthy of God, or if we worry about how holy others think we are, we are effectively closing ourselves to grace! Because, when we turn in on ourselves, we turn away from God.

The wonderful truth of grace is that it doesn't matter how unworthy or inadequate we think we are. God holds his gift of grace out to *everyone* – to you, to me – no matter how many times we've messed things up or fallen short or disappointed ourselves or others. The gift is there – we simply need to turn and embrace it.

To me, all those things we do at Lent are part of embracing grace. Repenting – recognising and turning away from our neglect or rejection of God's love – reminds us of the greatness of God's grace. When we fast

– whether from Facebook or chocolate or lunch – we recognise and turn away from excessive dependencies or obsessions that distract us from God’s love, so we can also reflect on the abundance of good things God has given us. (Which is to say, we remind ourselves of God’s grace!) And when we are reconciled to others, well, then we experience God’s grace very powerfully in relationships resurrected from the dead.

As we enter this Lent, may each of us strive to open ourselves and others to the free gift of God’s love and mercy - of *grace*.

A great way of trying to focus ourselves on grace is to take part in a Lent course – gathering with others to reflect on the beauty and challenge of God’s love for us and the world. I’m delighted that we’ll be running the *Life Attitudes* course this Lent (details later in this magazine) and I very warmly encourage you to take part in one of the groups.

If you’ve never taken part in a Lent group before, this lovely course would be a great introduction for you – do please sign up if you can.

Math

MARCH/APRIL DIARY



Because Mothering Sunday falls on 31st March, the service at 9.45am on that Sunday will be an All Age Eucharist, and on the following Sunday, 7th April, the service will be a Parish Eucharist with Junior Church.

COVER PHOTO

Matt blesses the Christingles at the All Age Service in February

MARCH DIARY

Saturday 2nd

8.30am Men's Breakfast in the Nicholls Room

SUNDAY 3rd: Next before Lent

8.00am Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)

9.45am All Age Eucharist

6.30pm Evensong and sermon

Tuesday 5th

10.30am Holy Communion at Wren House

2.30pm Lexden Ladies Group in the Nicholls Room

7.30pm 'Medley' house group (Rosemary 515245)

Wednesday 6th: ASH WEDNESDAY

10.00am Eucharist with imposition of ashes

10.45am Holy Communion at Woodlands

11.30am Holy Communion at Cheviot

7.30pm Eucharist with imposition of ashes



Thursday 7th

8.00am Eucharist

SUNDAY 10th: Lent 1

8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)

9.45am Parish Eucharist and Junior Church

6.30pm Evensong and sermon

Monday 11th

7.00pm Eucharist

7.45pm PCC in the Nicholls Room

Tuesday 12th

2.30pm Mothers' Union Service in church followed by AGM

Wednesday 13th

10.00am Eucharist followed by coffee

11.30am Lent Course in the Nicholls Room

7.30pm Lent Course in the Nicholls Room

Thursday 14th

8.00am Eucharist

2.30pm 'Constable' house group (Hugh 564577)

SUNDAY 17th: Lent 2

8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)

9.45am Parish Eucharist with Junior Church

6.30pm Evensong and sermon

Wednesday 20th

10.00am Eucharist followed by coffee

11.30am Lent Course in the Nicholls Room

7.30pm Lent Course in the Nicholls Room

Thursday 21st

8.00am Eucharist

Saturday 23rd

12.30 Friendship Lunch in Church

SUNDAY 24th: Lent 3

8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)

9.45am Parish Eucharist with Junior Church

6.30pm Evensong and sermon

Wednesday 27th

10.00am Eucharist followed by coffee

11.30am Lent Course in the Nicholls Room

7.30pm Lent Course in the Nicholls Room

Thursday 28th

8.00am Eucharist

SUNDAY 31st: Lent 4, MOTHERING SUNDAY

8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)

9.45am ALL AGE EUCHARIST

6.30pm Evensong and sermon

Saturday 6th April

8.30am Men's Breakfast in the Nicholls Room

SUNDAY 7th April: Passion Sunday

8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)

9.45am PARISH EUCHARIST WITH JUNIOR CHURCH

11.30am Annual Parochial Church Meeting

6.30pm Evensong and sermon

ST LEONARD'S, LEXDEN

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

will be held in Church on
Sunday 7th April at 11.30am.

I hope as many people as possible will be able to attend this gathering, which is the most significant meeting of the year for the governance of our parish church. To encourage those who find it difficult to get out after dark to attend, we are holding the meeting immediately after Sunday-morning coffee this year. We will also treat ourselves to cake, to keep energy levels up!

The APCM is an opportunity for those on our electoral roll to keep informed of all things St Leonard's, to ask questions, and to vote for our Church Officers, Parochial Church Council members, Deanery Synod Representatives, and other roles.

A meeting such as this would usually last no more than 90 minutes. Watch out for the formal notices over the coming weeks.

Matt





March

3rd March	All Age Service
10th March	Growing through Lent – The Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness, where he is tested and strengthened. <i>Luke 4:1-13</i>
17th March	For this life only? – Paul tells the Corinthians that if Christ is not raised from the dead, their faith is in vain, their sins remain, and their hope in Christ is futile. <i>1 Corinthians 15:12-20</i>
24th March	Understanding suffering - With his own suffering lying ahead of him in Jerusalem, Jesus reflects on two recent disasters in the area. <i>Luke 13:1-9</i>
31st March	Mothering Sunday All Age Service



Messy Emmaus: 28th April, 3-5pm

THE CHURCH ELECTORAL ROLL

FULL REVISION—FINAL REMINDER

Our Electoral Roll is to be completely revised before this year's Annual Parochial Church Meeting on 7th April.

If you are baptised, attend St Leonard's Church, are aged sixteen or above, you are encouraged to enter your name on the new roll by completing and signing an application form.

If your name is on the existing roll you will still need to re-apply; this is a full revision.

Forms and a collecting box are available in church. If you would like some help with obtaining, completing or returning your form, please contact Jo Burrows: electoralroll@stleonardslexden.org.uk or a Churchwarden or a member of the Ministry or Pastoral Teams.

Please ensure that all forms are returned by Sunday 10th March.

You should be aware that information entered on your application form will be held on a computer database. It will be used only for the purposes of St Leonard's Church and will not be made available to outside organisations.

Jo Burrows, Electoral Roll Officer

FRIENDSHIP LUNCH

Our next Friendship Lunch will be on
Saturday 23rd March at 12.30pm.

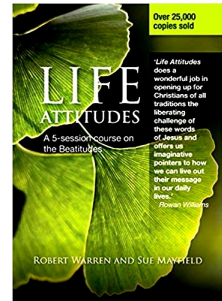
Please sign up on the list
at the back of the church.

Bring a friend or neighbour along too!



LIFE ATTITUDES:

Our course for Lent 2019



Christian life is about what and who we are just as much as it is about what we believe. One particular passage of the New Testament has always been crucial to thinking about Christian life: the 'Beatitudes', Jesus's teachings in Matthew 5.3-10.

Our lent course for 2019 – called, *Life Attitudes* - is an engaging and accessible reflection on these Beatitudes and how they can shape our real lives in the real world. It's not an academic course, you don't need to know it all already, and there's no test – each session will be a relaxed, fun and stimulating gathering open to everyone.

We'll be running two sessions in Church each Wednesday from 13th March – one at 11am in the morning and another at 7.30pm in the evening. The course runs for five weeks.

You are free to come to some or all of the sessions as works best for you, of course. There's no need to book, but it would be very useful to get a rough idea of how many we might expect at each session - so if you could please email admin@stleonardslexden.org.uk or sign your name up on the list that will appear at the back of the church, we'd appreciate it.

You don't need a copy of the book to take part, but if – like me – you like to have one to follow, then they are available from Church House Publishing at www.chpublishing.co.uk or by phoning 01603 785925. Just ask for *Life Attitudes* by Robert Warren and Sue Mayfield.

I'm thrilled that our ordinands Maggie and Jacquie and our Youth Worker, David have agreed to help run this course. I hope to see many of you there.

Matt

CONFIRMATION – is God calling you or someone you know to do something beautiful?



One of the great delights of being a parish priest is walking alongside those who are preparing for confirmation, and I'm thrilled we'll be readying people for confirmation at St Leonard's soon!

Many of us are very familiar with Confirmation, but I'd like to offer a brief explanation for those who aren't. Confirmation is an important and beautiful part of our journey as followers of Jesus Christ, which flows from our Baptism.

If you're not familiar with Confirmation, it is a very special one-off service where individuals confirm their commitment to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ. If you were baptized when you were a child, your parents and godparents made promises on your behalf. At a confirmation service, you make these promises for yourself. Your friends and family as well as the local Christian community will be there to promise to support and pray for you. The service often takes place at a different church or at the Cathedral so that people can gather from many different churches to celebrate together. The bishop lays their hands on the head of those being confirmed and asks the Holy Spirit to give them commitment and joy to live God's way with the words, 'Confirm, O Lord, your servant with your Holy Spirit.' It's a truly inspiring moment!

Continued overleaf ➡

You might also consider Confirmation if you were baptised as an adult, but are not yet confirmed, or if you've come to faith but haven't yet been baptised.

One of the joys of Confirmation is the opportunity to prepare for it by exploring our faith with others who are also thinking about it. This is a safe space to ask *any* questions you have about God, Jesus and the journey of faith.

If you're not 100% sure whether you'd like to be confirmed, please chat to me (577392 or matt@stleonardslexden.org.uk). You'd be very welcome to join us for our explorations and discussions, - and then it's up to you if you'd like to be confirmed at the end of it.

Matt

COFFEE MORNING



For our February Coffee Morning we were made most welcome at the home of John and Judith Evans, and raised around £295 for church funds.

There was a wonderful array of quiches, cakes and sausage rolls, and very special thanks are due to Judith and to the others who contributed.

There will be no Coffee Morning this month, but the next one will be on 13th April, by kind invitation of Sarah Orr. Details will be in the April magazine. Make a note of the date now, and do come along!

Jean Hallett

BIBLE READING NOTES



If you are wishing to read from the Bible on a regular basis but get bogged down with long passages which you don't understand, and so give up, then you might like to try the notes which are published by BRF

There are several different sets of notes but the two that are used by our congregation at the moment are New Daylight and Guidelines.

In **New Daylight** there is a short printed passage from the Bible, followed by a commentary, then perhaps a short prayer or thought for the day.

Guidelines does not have the printed passage but it gives you the Bible reference followed by a longer commentary. There is no set prayer.

They are ideal for slipping in a pocket or bag or for taking on holiday. There is also a large print copy available. I have put some back copies in the library for you to look at, or borrow, so you can see what might best suit you. It need only take 5 minutes of your day, although it is possible to spend much longer on it if you wish.

The booklets come out three times a year, and the cost is £13.50 for a year.

I will soon be ordering for the coming year, so if you are interested, do please speak to me for more information.

Rosemary Elden

A Date for Your Diary: Saturday 18th May

PARISH AWAY DAY

at Stoke-by-Nayland, Suffolk

This will be a day for reflection, fun and sharing together in the beautiful surroundings of St Mary's, Stoke-by-Nayland, Suffolk. We'll take some time to contemplate St Leonard's, the parish and our communities, and to consider our hopes for the future.

We'll arrange for lift-shares and for a simple bring and share lunch nearer the time. The Church has toilet facilities, a kitchen, and chairs for our use. There are nearby swings and an abundance of stunning countryside also.

Matt

(Please note the change of venue from Hadleigh to avoid the traffic excitements of the Hadleigh Show!)



MOUSE TAILS



As always in the St. Leonard's mouse community, they were all busy with daily survival, scavenging for food, stashing away anything that could come in useful someday, attending their weekly services and the youngsters learning lessons with Grandpa.

On a pre-arranged evening the Church mice, the Woods and the Halls met in the Hall to make arrangements for the Baptism of Pablo and Daisy's twins, Eva Maria and Noel Christos and the feast afterwards. Their little service was much simpler than the human one, but Grandpa conducted the service and had a small bottle of holy water and a little dish kept especially for Baptisms. Because they were twins there were two Godmothers, Fern Wood and Winnie Hall; and two Godfathers, Bertie Wood and Rupert Balcony. The choir sang a hymn accompanied by Tommy Organ on his harmonica.

As there had been a recent Messy Church the younger mice had saved enough bits of ribbon and coloured paper to make each twin a special Baptism card to keep and a pretty bouquet of snowdrops for Mum Daisy. After the service they all scampered off to the Hall for the celebration feast. The Woods family had brought their contributions to the party including watercress (which was a huge favourite) and the fizzy elderflower wine. Grandpa and the Dads had made a stock of acorn beer and herb cordials whilst the Mums had excelled themselves as usual with all sorts of tasty titbits, even though it was quite difficult at this time of year when things were not so plentiful.

Once the feast had been demolished the youngsters were allowed to play their favourite games and work off some of their excess energy. Tommy Organ played some lively music and they all joined in with jigging and hopping about. →



Soon, everyone began to feel that a rest was called for and they sat happily exchanging their news. Pablo, looking around at the happy families, was a little sad that his own parents could not be with them on this special day. He wondered if Mrs Robin had found his parents in Spain and when they could expect to see her return.

Eventually talk turned to Easter, a feast much loved by all the mice, and arrangements were agreed on how they would celebrate. Clearly, there would need to be a lot of scavenging during the next month, but they knew everyone would contribute as they always did.

Soon everyone was yawning (some of the youngest mice had already nodded off) so they made their way to cosy nests for a good night's sleep with happy dreams of the lovely day.

CT

LOOK WHAT SURFACED AT





We had a Whale of a Time!
Messy Church in February was all about Jonah



WORDS AND MYSTERY

Last summer we buried part of my childhood. June had looked after me as a child and was part of a dwindling group of people who remembered my parents. When I wrote to thank the priest for conducting her funeral service I expressed surprise that she would have wanted a church service as I had no recollection of her ever having been a church-goer. It was a country tradition, he replied, to want to be buried in one's local churchyard and, in June's case, to be re-united with her late husband. All this made sense but it was the service itself which seemed to sit less convincingly with the congregation who responded hesitantly throughout. It was this and other similar occasions which have made me think that if we have not exactly forgotten the language of the church then the hymns, the prayers, the imagery and the responses have become both less familiar than they were, and therefore no longer have the resonance they did.

The same could be said of religious texts which have been set to music by composers for hundreds of years. Much of this sacred music is now being heard in contexts other than in worship. Can the texts mean as much as they did, if they no longer belong to the liturgy for which they were written? An unforgettable quote came from a customer who is now a parish priest in the West Country. She said, 'I am uneasy about this sort of music being performed as entertainment'. It is difficult not to feel that we are losing something to a world of drinks intervals and applause as this music migrates from church to concert hall.

It cannot be denied that, thanks to concerts and recordings by groups like the Tallis Scholars, sacred choral music is reaching a wider audience than it ever did. Concert promoters go out of their way to provide foreign language texts in both the original and English translation. Listeners have a perfect right to ignore these, of course, and not engage with them at all. In a recent performance of the Rachmaninov Vespers [or the All Night Vigil] there was little choice, as the piece was performed in almost total darkness and it was impossible to read the programme. We were advised to do our homework before the lights went down.

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Creating the right ambience for the performance seemed to be the priority. If the members of the audience had set their hearts on relating the music to the texts then one would never have known as they sat contentedly basking in the sound.

At St. Leonard's John Stainer's Crucifixion is sometimes performed on Palm Sunday evening. This is always a liturgical performance and the feel of the occasion is quite different from a concert performance. Every year at St. Mary's, Maldon the choir performs Bach's St. John Passion. This is also a liturgical performance and again feels quite different for the same reason. The drinks interval is replaced by a few words from the Bishop, who attends every year, and the work continues with minimal interruption. At the end, the Bishop is escorted out and only then does the audience applaud.

At Christmas the language of the church can become cryptic, pagan and multi-lingual – a poetic collaboration attempting to do justice to the mystery of the incarnation and a reminder that words are but a feeble attempt to express the inexpressible. Some texts clearly proved too cryptic for compilers of the Bethlehem Carol Sheet. The final verse of *Unto us a Son is born* goes:

*He the source and He the end!
Let the organ thunder,
While our happy voices rend
The jocund air asunder, the jocund air asunder.*

Nothing beats the exotic mystery of the original. To those who want everything explained the only question would be, 'What part of this, exactly, don't you understand?':

*O and A and A and O
Cum cantibus in choro
Let the merry organ go
Benedicamos Domino, benedicamos Domino.*

Robin Greathorex