



Diocese of Ely
THREE RIVERS GROUP
Chippenham, Fordham, Isleham, Kennett, Snailwell

Sunday 21st February 2021 Lent 1

Hymn: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=flmS7uJz1Ho>

1 Through all the changing scenes of life,
in trouble and in joy,
the praises of my God shall still
my heart and tongue employ.

2 Of his deliv'rance I will boast,
till all that are distressed
from my example comfort take,
and charm their griefs to rest.

3 Oh, magnify the Lord with me;
with me exalt his name;
when in distress to him I called,
he to my rescue came.

4 The hosts of God encamp around
the dwellings of the just;
deliv'rance he affords to all
who on his succour trust.

5 Oh, make but trial of his love,
experience will decide
how blest are they, and only they,
who in his truth confide.

6 Fear him, ye saints, and you will then
have nothing else to fear;
make you his service your delight,
your wants shall be his care.

Introduction to Lent and Litany

Brothers and sisters in Christ, since early days Christians have observed with great devotion the time of our Lord's passion and resurrection and prepared for

this by a season of penitence and fasting. By carefully keeping these days, Christians take to heart the call to repentance and the assurance of forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel, and so grow in faith and in devotion to our Lord. I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy word.

Let us now call to mind our sin and the infinite mercy of God.

God the Father, **have mercy upon us.**

God the Son, **have mercy upon us.**

God the Holy Spirit, **have mercy upon us.**

Holy, blessed and glorious Trinity, **have mercy upon us.**

From all evil and mischief; from pride, vanity, and hypocrisy;
from envy, hatred, and malice; and from all evil intent, **good Lord, deliver us.**

From sloth, worldliness and love of money; from hardness of heart
and contempt for your word and your laws, **good Lord, deliver us.**

From sins of body and mind; from the deceits of the world,
the flesh and the devil, **good Lord, deliver us.**

In all times of sorrow; in all times of joy; in the hour of death,
and at the day of judgement, **good Lord, deliver us.**

By the mystery of your holy incarnation; by your birth, childhood and obedience;
by your baptism, fasting and temptation, **good Lord, deliver us.**

By your ministry in word and work; by your mighty acts of power;
and by your preaching of the kingdom, **good Lord, deliver us.**

By your agony and trial; by your cross and passion;
and by your precious death and burial, **good Lord, deliver us.**

By your mighty resurrection; by your glorious ascension;
and by your sending of the Holy Spirit, **good Lord, deliver us.**

Give us true repentance; forgive us our sins of negligence and ignorance
and our deliberate sins; and grant us the grace of your Holy Spirit
to amend our lives according to your holy word.

Holy God, holy and strong, holy and immortal, have mercy upon us.

Silence is kept.

Make our hearts clean, O God; **and renew a right spirit within us.**

**Father eternal, giver of light and grace,
we have sinned against you and against our neighbour,
in what we have thought, in what we have said and done,
through ignorance, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.**

We have wounded your love, and marred your image in us.

We are sorry and ashamed, and repent of all our sins.

**For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who died for us, forgive us all that is
past; and lead us out from darkness to walk as children of light. Amen.**

God our Father, the strength of all who put their trust in you, mercifully accept our prayers; and because, in our weakness, we can do nothing good without you, grant us the help of your grace, that in keeping your commandments we may please you, both in will and deed; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Collect

Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ fasted forty days in the wilderness, and was tempted as we are, yet without sin: give us grace to discipline ourselves in obedience to your Spirit; and, as you know our weakness, so may we know your power to save; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord **Amen.**

Readings

A reading from the Book of Genesis (9.8-17)

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, 'As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.' God said, 'This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.' God said to Noah, 'This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.'

A reading from Peter's first letter (3.18-end)

For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight people, were saved through water. And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

Psalm 25.1-9

- 1 To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.
- 2 O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me.
- 3 Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame; let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.
- 4 Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.
- 5 Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long.
- 6 Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old.
- 7 Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O Lord!
- 8 Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.
- 9 He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.

A reading from St. Mark's Gospel (1.9-15)

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.'

Sermon (with thanks to Sue Potts) <https://youtu.be/9BdD8vYncIQ>

To be frank, on first receiving the rota and finding I was down to preach on the first Sunday of Lent, I was quite concerned as to how to proceed. Year on year, Lent has, in my experience, been a solemn season in which to contemplate the time when Jesus, immediately after his baptism, was sent into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit; a stay in which he wrestled with hardship, dangers and temptation as he discerned the vision and purpose of his ministry.

A solemn and austere season into which nonetheless, I have, year on year willingly entered, encouraged along the way by many, many dear companions in the faith who have journeyed with me. A season in which I have chosen to practise self-denial, perhaps by giving up chocolate or alcohol or crisps or screen time. A season in which I have consciously decided to practise self-discipline, devoting time to bible study, prayer and reflection and often painful self-examination which, through the years, has taken me into dark wastes of my life I'd rather avoid and brought me face-to-face with ugly fears I'd prefer to keep locked away. A time of penitence and reflection in which faith and friendships have been deepened and hearts and minds prepared for the journey which, we know, must lead to the dark shadow of the cross.

But this Lenten season feels way different, because the truth is that the last year has seemed like a protracted Lenten period, and one, for sure, that no one would enter out of choice. A wilderness season into which we've been thrust, and in which we are still wandering. A cruel and unfamiliar and dangerous place in which we've had no choice in giving up so very much that we hold dear and so very much that enriches and gives meaning to our lives. A list which is too long and too painful to go into now.

So, what impact will the deprivations and sorrow and anxiety of these past dark months have upon our navigating this Lenten journey? What message can we take from the texts of this particular day?

Well, at first glance, St Mark's gospel, unlike Matthew and Luke, gives no details of Jesus' stay in the wilderness. He states that, after Jesus' baptism came an affirmation from heaven, 'You are my Son, the beloved, with you I am well pleased', after which

'the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.'

He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan;
and he was with the wild beasts;
and the angels waited on him'

Brief this wilderness passage may be, but with Mark, every single word counts: and what first pops out, interestingly, is that Mark tells us the Spirit 'drove' Jesus into this wild and barren place. Does this imply he didn't choose to be there? If so, this straightway connects and resonates within me in this particular time and context.

Mark then states Jesus was in the wilderness for 40 days, and was tempted. Again, he gives no details of what those temptations were, or how he responded to them. It is left blank. And that gives space to wonder. How did he spend his time? Did he pray all the time, or sometimes just sit, aware of God's presence and love? Was he, in this testing time, filled with anguish and torment 24/7, or did he sometimes star gaze or marvel at a grain of sand or a scorpion or a soaring eagle? How did he get through those dark, scary, cold, lonely nights? And it got me wondering; in the wilderness of this, our time, what temptations stalk me? What temptations stalk you?

Perhaps the temptation to doubt? (Where exactly is God in this, anyway? Does God care?)

To apportion blame

The temptation to utterly despair and give oneself up to the inevitability of the creeping darkness

The temptation to respond to this difficult time with a growing, bitter cynicism

And then, Mark tells us he was with the 'wild beasts'. What 'wild beasts', what dark fears lurk in the corners of my mind? In your mind?

The fear of illness and death, for sure

The fear of losing precious loved ones

The fear of losing security

The dark fear that can come with loneliness and isolation

And yet, in the depths of this wilderness, Mark's words instil hope. For there was always, in Jesus' heart and mind, the voice of God 'You are my Beloved'. And there was the Holy Spirit giving strength. And there were angels along the way.

In these dark days, may I never forget, may we never forget, that we are all Beloved of God, created in his image. Beloved and precious. That, through Christ, we are gifted with the Holy Spirit, the 'Comforter', literally, the one who gives strength. That in this, our wilderness time, there is still God's provision. That we can still encounter blessings and beauty and joy in unexpected places. That there

have been, and will be, angels along the way; people who, even though they may not be aware, are 'messengers of God'. Folk who, in dark and barren times come alongside and uplift hearts and spirits, perhaps through a word of advice or wisdom or encouragement, or through acts of kindness or compassion, or just by 'being there'. Folk who are, literally, 'A God-send'.

And, in these dark times, may we be assured of the presence of Christ, who came as Emmanuel, God- with- us, in total solidarity with us. The One who knows and understands our heartache and doubts and struggles and sorrows and walks with us, even in the darkest valley.

I end with the moving words of a dear mentor and friend, Revd Selina Garner who describes a recent experience of God's provision in this wilderness time. Of the presence of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, bringing strength; the power of prayer; the power of God's love to unite us in time and space; of encountering strangers who are as 'angels'; and of the tangible presence of Christ, our light and guide, even in the darkest place.

'I find that I still need to learn to walk in the darkness. I sat in a nursing home carpark today after being asked to offer last rites to a beloved mum. Two of the amazing care staff wiped clean and then took the holding cross I had brought to her - in full PPE. They also took two phones - one to call me and one to call her daughter who called her sister on another phone so she could also join the prayer. Together the six of us - in four different locations - prayed together for Christ to accompany this precious lady on her final journey. The care staff held their hands over her to bless her, I prayed the words and we all surrounded her with love. I am so humbled by those two young women working on the COVID-19 frontline who went out of their way to make this morning possible and in whom I saw Christ. Tonight I pray for the lady who was so close to her final breath and for her daughters unable to hold her hand. Tonight I pray we can all learn together to walk in the darkness with Christ xxxx'

Amen

Hymn <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NZSb6P6FM18>

1 Just as I am, without one plea,
but that thy blood was shed for me,
and that thou bidd'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

2 Just as I am, and waiting not
to rid my soul of one dark blot,

to thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

3 Just as I am, though tossed about
with many a conflict, many a doubt,
fightings and fears within, without,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

4 Just as I am, thou wilt receive,
wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
because thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,
begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,

and the life of the world to come. **Amen.**

Intercessions

With confidence and trust let us pray to the Father.

For the one holy catholic and apostolic Church let us pray to the Father.

Lord of compassion, **in your mercy hear us.**

For the mission of the Church, that in faithful witness she may preach the gospel to the ends of the earth, let us pray to the Father.

Lord of compassion, **in your mercy hear us.**

For those preparing for baptism and confirmation] and for their teachers, godparents, and sponsors, let us pray to the Father.

Lord of compassion, **in your mercy hear us.**

For peace in the world, that a spirit of respect and reconciliation may grow among nations and peoples, let us pray to the Father.

Lord of compassion, **in your mercy hear us.**

For the poor, the persecuted, the sick, and all who suffer, for refugees, prisoners, and all in danger; that they may be relieved and protected, let us pray to the Father. Lord of compassion, **in your mercy hear us.**

For those whom we have injured or offended, let us pray to the Father.

Lord of compassion, **in your mercy hear us.**

For grace to amend our lives and to further the reign of God, let us pray to the Father. Lord of compassion, **in your mercy hear us.**

In communion with all those who have walked in the way of holiness let us pray to the Father. Lord of compassion, **in your mercy hear us.**

God our Father, in your love and goodness you have taught us to come close to you in penitence with prayer, fasting and generosity; accept our Lenten discipline, and when we fall by our weakness, raise us up by your unfailing mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Reflection

At the point in our service where we would usually be remembering the Last Supper together, we pause to pray for those with whom we would usually be receiving bread and wine in church. Quietly think of each of those people now, those you know well and those you know less well; those for whom you know what to pray, and those for whom you're unsure or find it more difficult to pray.

Perhaps as you do this you might like to eat some bread and drink something. We are reminded that although separated at this time we are still members together of the body of Christ.

Let us pray

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come;
thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.**

**And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.**

Amen.

Lord God, you have renewed us with the living bread from heaven; by it you nourish our faith, increase our hope, and strengthen our love: teach us always to hunger for him who is the true and living bread, and enable us to live by every word that proceeds from out of your mouth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Hymn: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CFoactKMJHQ>

1 Father, hear the prayer we offer:
not for ease that prayer shall be,
but for strength that we may ever
live our lives courageously.

2 Not for ever in green pastures
do we ask our way to be;
but the steep and rugged pathway
may we tread rejoicingly.

3 Not for ever by still waters
would we idly rest and stay;
but would smite the living fountains
from the rocks along our way.

4 Be our strength in hours of weakness,
in our wanderings be our guide;
through endeavour, failure, danger,
Father, be thou at our side.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. **Amen.**

Dismissal

Go in the peace of Christ. **Thanks be to God.**

Recessional Music: Celtic worship 'Be thou my vision'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CFoactKMJHQ>

Notices

Services and Events this coming week:

- **TONIGHT (Sunday 21st Feb), 8pm** (with chat from 7.30pm) – Compline in contemporary language on Zoom (meeting ID: 810 1509 1842)
- **Monday 22nd Feb 2.30pm** Monday Prayer Group (details below)
- **Tuesday 23rd Feb, 8.15am** – Morning Prayer on Zoom (meeting ID: 875 0897 9103)
- **Tuesday 23rd Feb, 7.30pm** – Isaiah Bible Study (details below)
- **Wednesday 24th Feb 10.30am** – Caring for Creation Course (details below)
- **Wednesday 24th Feb, 7pm** – Midweek Compline via Zoom (meeting ID: 839 7034 6065; Passcode: 003793)
- **Thursday 25th Feb 11am** Mothers Union Prayers (details below)
- **Thursday 25th Feb 7.30pm** – At home in Lent Course (details below)
- **Friday 26th Feb 2pm** – The Cross at the heart of God course (details below)
- **Sunday 28th Feb** – morning services via Zoom. Details to follow by email.

Sunday Evening Service – 8pm

A quiet service to round off Sunday, open to all. Is there someone new you'd like to invite to this? The Zoom session will open from 7.30 to allow people to chat beforehand, and worship will start at 8pm (Meeting ID: 810 1509 1842).

The pattern for February/March will be as follows:

3rd Sunday (21st Feb): Compline in contemporary language

4th Sunday (28th Feb): Contemplative service.

1st Sunday (7th March): Traditional (BCP) Compline

2nd Sunday (14th March): Celtic Night Prayer

Isleham Choir (and friends) Meet Up

Several members of Isleham Choir were saying they missed the social side of meeting up. Mark Liversidge will be hosting a Choir Social on Zoom on Fridays from 7pm. Friends welcome to join in, no one will be forced to sing 🎤

Meeting ID: 891 3261 8797; Passcode: 006650.

Mothers' Union Prayers by Phone

Another opportunity for MU branch members to pray together by phone on **Thursday 25th February**, at **11am**. Dial **0203 901 7895**, then enter the meeting ID: **817 4323 6690**.

World Day of Prayer – Friday 5 March 2021

WDP is an important date in the ecumenical calendar when we're invited to join with our Christian sisters and brothers from different denominations in praying for a particular part of the world. The focus this year is the Pacific archipelago of Vanuatu. As our annual gathering can't take place in person, we will mark WDP on 5 March via Zoom (accessible by telephone or by computer/tablet as you prefer). All are welcome to join us at 10.45 for 11am on Friday 5 March using the following meeting ID: 677 594 2821; Passcode: 797979; Telephone: 0203 901 7895

Lent Courses

Mondays 2.30pm Prayer Group (Meeting ID: 814 9378 5679)

Tuesdays 7.30pm Isaiah Bible Study

Wednesdays 10.30am Caring for Creation

Thursday 7.30pm Lent in 47 household objects

Friday 2pm A Cross in the heart of God

One off Themed Prayer Group Big world/Small world

Friday 26th March, 10.30am – Charities

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84788166060?pwd=OEQwNnEwOGNYSmRPNU1jU3ZWRVpYdz09>

Meeting ID: 847 8816 6060 Passcode: 435924

Self Guided Lent Course

Bishop Stephen will be recording 5 videos on discipleship for use during Lent.

They will be available here: www.youtube.com/c/TheDioceseofEly/videos

Easter Eggs

We would like to give every child who normally attends church a Fairtrade 'Real Easter Egg' the 'only one with the Easter story in the box'. The cost of each egg is £4.50. Would you consider sponsoring an egg (or two!)? Donations, cash or cheque (made payable to 'Three Rivers Expenses Account'), can be posted through Revd David or Revd Sue's letterboxes. If you would prefer to pay via BACS the details are: Three Rivers Expenses Account. Sort code 30-95-96 a/c no. 14177960. Thank you.

Intercessions: Funerals (attendance by invitation only)

Doris Emily ('Betty') Aves

Isleham Cemetery, Monday 22nd February at 12 noon.

Bevin Roy Theobald

St Peter & St Mary Magdalene Fordham, Friday 26th February at 2pm

Edith Karaszewicz

St Peter & St Mary Magdalene Fordham, Tuesday 2nd March at 2pm

Richard Bowman

Isleham Cemetery, Thursday 4th March at 1.30pm

Three Rivers Group Ministry Team

Rector: The Rev'd David Cleugh 723010 davidrcleugh@gmail.com

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Social Media Facebook: @thethreeriversgroup

Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_xNAa4zgNZrE8lmizNC_3g