

St Francis Weekly News for THE SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE LENT [or the Sunday called Quinquagesima*] 14th February 2021



This newsletter may have come to you by email or through your letterbox, if you received it on paper but are happy to receive an email in future please email deborah.lechmere@ntlworld.com If you know anybody else who would like this delivered or emailed please contact Deborah or Revd Janet: revdjanetwyer@outlook.com

***OR...**



May your day be filled with
love

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN ST FRANCIS CHURCH?

CHURCH REMAINS CLOSED FOR WORSHIP

In order to keep everyone safe the church remains closed for Sunday worship. However, we continue to broadcast the service via the St Francis YouTube channel.

If you would like assistance in respect of joining our YouTube channel or would like to talk about how you might receive Holy Communion please do not hesitate to get in touch with us.

SUNDAYS BEFORE LENT

Just this Sunday to go before we hurtle into Lent via Ash Wednesday!

The Gospel reading for the Sunday next before Lent is Mark's story of Jesus taking three of his disciples to a mountain top and showing them exactly who he is...

This final showing before we enter into the journey to the cross leaves us in no doubt as to who it is we are walking with and invites us to marvel at the awesome love God has shown to us through the precious gift of Jesus.

As we continue on with the journey, Wednesday 17th February will see us observing the ancient tradition of Ashing. This is an opportunity to acknowledge that we are a part of God's family, say sorry for our wrongdoing, receive forgiveness and step out, newly forgiven into forty days of preparing ourselves in readiness to greet anew the Risen Christ.

Unfortunately, we will not be able to observe Ash Wednesday as once we would have done, but that doesn't mean we cannot make it a beautiful and profound act of prayerful worship.

We plan to offer a socially distanced short act of penitence to anyone who might care to attend St Francis at 11.30am on Wednesday morning. If you would like to be included please text your name to: 07368 832294.

We will also be livestreaming a Service of Holy Communion with Ashing at 7.30pm that same evening via YouTube.



Never mind Ash Wednesday – what about Shrove Tuesday? Revd Winnie, Brother Eeyore and Piglet are looking forward to pancakes for tea...

LENT 2021

It has, over the years, become customary for churches to offer a formal course of study for people to follow as part of a Lenten discipline.

Because of current circumstances we have decided that we will not be running a group course but will instead offer individuals the opportunity for a one to one guided journey through Lent. If you would like to discover more of what might be available please contact either Revd Janet or Fr Tracy.



CAN YOU PLEASE HELP?

A young woman member of our St Francis family is desperately in need of a helping hand.

Through no fault of her own she will be homeless at the end of February and so we are seeking out anyone who might be in a position to offer her a safe permanent place of lodging.

We can offer a small monthly payment for suitable accommodation.

We very obviously cannot disclose her personal circumstances here, but should you think you might be able to help, please contact Revd Janet, 07368 832294.

GET CREATIVE!



We received a couple of pictures showing some yummy looking biscuits and a cake made by William and Jack. Master bakers in the making I think! [Next time boys it would be nice to get some of the real thing...]

And Diana sent this in – a little poem that always makes her smile:

Every time I pass a Church
I pay a little visit



So when at last
I'm carried in
The Lord won't say:
'Who is it?'

If you have something that you would like us to consider for the newsletter please feel free to send via email revdjanetwyer@outlook.com or post a copy of your submission through the vicarage door. [Not the original please, we cannot guarantee its safe return]

THE SNOWY WEATHER

In Alaska, wood frogs freeze for seven months, thaw and hop away



Not being an Alaskan Tree Frog, I'll be very glad when this cold snap disappears! However, I'm also more than aware that with the thaw there is the threat of equally unwelcome water appearing in places it shouldn't be.

Bearing in mind the precarious state of St Francis Tower roof and the flat roof to the front of the building we're hoping for the best. We are currently awaiting an architect's inspection that will tell us what works will need to be carried out.

We'll keep you informed – watch this space...

STILL LOOKING FOR SPONSORS



Adam has made the brave decision to dye his hair green on 24th February as part of his fundraising efforts for the 'Teenage Cancer Trust'. If you would like to sponsor him in this endeavour please contact his mum, Mrs Jeanette Reeve: 07704 046497

CHURCH OPEN

The Church continues to remain open weekday mornings between 10am and 12pm. Please feel free to pop in – we are here to assist and support wherever we can.

WINTER LOCKDOWN

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE CHURCH IS NOT OPEN FOR SUNDAY WORSHIP.

However, the church is available for individual prayer every weekday 10.30am – 11.30am.



If you would like to spend some time in the church or would like to make enquiries about receiving Holy Communion please do feel free to contact:
Revd Janet – 07368 832294
or
Fr Tracy - 07834 845623

If you would like to join in with Sunday Worship we continue to broadcast via the St Francis YouTube channel. Just search for 'St Francis Heartsease YouTube'

HOME GROUP

Throughout Lent Jim Green will continue to offer folk the opportunity to get together via a Zoom Room every fortnight on a Wednesday evening.

The forthcoming dates are:

February 24
March 10, 24

Joining Jim and the group who meet regularly is an ideal opportunity to try something different as a way of observing Lent and deepening bonds of fellowship.

As ever the times are 7- 8pm, and the format is very simple: chat, catch up with each other, read a Bible passage, pray for each other.

Please email Jim for further details and he will be happy to make contact and pass on all you need to know, including the zoom link address. His email is as follows: jimpiecrust@gmail.com

NEIGHBOURHOOD NOTICE BOARD

As spring approaches our thoughts may be turning to gardening and growing veggies etc

If you might be interested in sharing part of the St Francis 'Let it Grow' land to the rear of the church please contact Jim Green on the above email address.

If you have a notice you would like included under the noticeboard – please email your piece to revdjanetwyer@outlook.com or deborah.lechmere@ntlworld.com

PASTORAL CARE MATTERS

Please remember you are not alone, if you would like a chat or if you need some assistance of any kind, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

If you live on the Heartsease we are also able to offer help if you or someone you know needs support with emergency basic food provision.

Our contact details are as follows:

Revd Janet: 07368 832294

Fr Tracy: 07834 845623

24/7 Answerphone: 01603 431259
[checked daily]

There is also someone available in church weekday mornings if you would prefer to talk to someone face to face.



USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS

Childline: 0800 1111

Samaritans: 116 123

Domestic Violence Hotline: 0808 2000 247

[If you hear a neighbour in distress please do not hesitate to call this number or 999; you could save a life]

Mind: 0300 123 3393

Age UK: 0800 169 6565

Norfolk Assistance Scheme: 01603 223392

Now open
We have trained debt advisers
We can also help you before you get into debt
Please call 07765739987 and leave your name & number
Or email heartseasecmacentre@outlook.com

THE CURATES'S CORNER

Some of you may be aware that we have been working on a plan to take our involvement with Cycling UK into the future with some new ideas.

An important step forward was when we acquired a 'Stuff Hub' – basically a garage provided by the City Council for a variety of uses. One of those uses will be to act as a base for our fleet cycles (we have four; more on those later) and for our maintenance equipment.

The object is to eventually offer guided rides for anybody who would like to spend some time cycling with a group around the local area, discovering cycle routes and making friends, perhaps with a view to explore cycling as a means of transport for shopping and visiting, and for health, fitness and fresh air. We hope to be in a position to lend out, free of charge, some cycles for those who may not have one and want to give cycling a try.



We will also be able to offer a 'bicycle doctor' service for people who may have old bikes that need to be revived, or anybody who just feels their cycle might need a check-up; as well as offering training in maintenance to those who would like to discover their inner mechanic! Again, this will be a free of charge service in principle.

We are looking for volunteers to help us when we emerge from lockdown. If you are interested in being trained to lead guided rides or help with bicycle maintenance in the future, please do get in touch.

Yesterday I was pleased to be able to attend an online seminar with Cycling UK to meet with other club members from around the UK and to share ideas and problems. I was really interested to hear what is going on in other projects. Due to the lockdown, most activities are understandably limited, but one club in Sheffield has been lending out fleet bikes to NHS workers. Again, if you are an NHS front line worker and you need to borrow a bike, do get in touch as we may be able to help you, at least until the lockdown comes to an end.

Cycling can be a wonderful way to improve health and well-being; I was very interested to hear yesterday that arthritis sufferers have found that

gentle cycling can work wonders for their mobility and pain relief. Those who suffer with mental health difficulties have also found cycling to be hugely beneficial, apparently.

The most important benefit of cycling is its contribution to the environment. By using a cycle instead of driving, we can significantly reduce our carbon footprint even if it is only occasionally; remember that the short urban journeys so suited to cycling are very greedy of fuel when travelled by car.

This brings me to the issue of cycle paths. There are lots of reasons why we should campaign for more. There are several examples locally where a dedicated cycle path would make a huge difference; it would be a simple matter to devise a continuous route from the Heartsease to new Rackheath with a few short lengths of interconnecting pathway, for instance.

Our Christian faith combined with our church's patronal saint, Francis, means that care for our environment and treading lightly upon the earth should be very close to our hearts and I am thrilled that with 'St Francis Cycling' we will be able to make a significant contribution.

Every blessing,

Fr Tracy

A WORD FROM THE VICAR

Having been together for over forty years [cue for a song, for those old enough to know it...] David and I are well past the point of marking St Valentine's Day. However, this year I will be making an exception!

What has got me interested in this St Valentine's Day is the opportunity to rejoice in our shared love by joining in with a worldwide initiative to commit to this beautiful planet of ours – this earth with which we have a very special relationship indeed.

Without planet earth sustaining and nurturing us, we would simply cease to exist. Consequently, because I think it is incredibly important that we love, nurture and care for planet Earth I will be joining in with the 'Show the Love' campaign organised by the Climate Coalition that encourages people from all nations to think about making changes to personal lifestyle and to pray for the will to make it happen.

So, this St Valentine's Day I will be observing a day of sustainable, careful living – making sure that I am as eco-friendly as possible. I will even be trying to make changes that I can keep to!

I hope you will join me in loving Mother Earth this St Valentine's Day and hopefully ever thereafter

A loving and blessed

Revd Janet

PS. With thanks to Sue Green for pointing me in the direction of 'Show the Love'. Sue is heading up our St Francis Eco Church initiative, if you would like to know more, I'm sure Sue would love to hear from you. Her number is: 07873 818631

SHOW THE LOVE PRAYER 2021

O God who is love

Let love empower our compassion
Let love embrace each and everyone
Let love unite humans and non-human
In restorative co-existence.

O Jesus, love come down to earth
May we honour the earth
May we honour all that dwells in the earth
May we be reconciled with the earth
Become what we are, of the earth.

O Spirit of love
Grant us a spirit of humility
Grant us a spirit of carefulness
Grant us a spirit of friendship
For the earth and all that dwells with us here.

SHOW THE LOVE BLESSING 2021

May our loving God, who created the world
and all that is in it, inspire us to delight
in our beautiful home,
And to live in wonder, peace and joy.
May our living God keep our hearts turned
to loving our neighbour
and to respecting the creation we share.
May our merciful God
help us to live this week
in goodness and hope,
And fill us with God's peace. Amen



FOR OUR PRAYERS

We pray for those who are in need of prayer at this time: Derek H; Evie; Rodrigo; Huggy; Megan; Denise H; Christine; Stephen C; Margaret T; David & Cynthia S; Maegan; Tom; Riley & his mum and family; Jeanette, David & Grace; Paula; Pete; Fr Brian; Hazel.

We continue to pray for all those in our Church, friends and family who are managing long term health issues including Doreen; Rosemary; Sheila; John; Joy; Shirley.

We pray too for all NHS and NSFT Staff.

We remember with love Alberto & Georgina; Stephen Webster; Kevin Lemmon; Peggy Bunn and all those who have died in recent days and pray for their family and friends.

A PRAYER FOR THESE UNCERTAIN TIMES

God of compassion,
be close to those who are ill, afraid or feeling isolated. In their loneliness, be their consolation;
in their anxiety, be their hope;
in their darkness, be their light;
through him who suffered alone on the cross,
but reigns with you in glory,
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**The Church of St Francis
Heartsease**

Heavenly Father
We ask your blessing upon us.
Hold the Heartsease Community,
and all the world,
in your arms of love.
Be with us.
Give us your strength,
peace, and healing grace.
Watch over us,
protect us from harm;
and keep in safety
all those who care for the sick
and attend to our needs,
in Jesus name we pray.
Amen

PRAYERS FOR THE SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE LENT

Almighty Father,
whose Son was revealed in majesty
before he suffered death upon the cross:
give us grace to perceive his glory,
that we may be strengthened
to suffer with him
and be changed into his likeness,
from glory to glory;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen

Holy God,
you know the disorder of our sinful lives:
set straight our crooked hearts,
and bend our wills to love your goodness
and your glory in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Holy God,
we see your glory in the face of Jesus Christ:
may we who are partakers at his table
reflect his life in word and deed,
that all the world may know his power
to change and save.
This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

READINGS FOR THE SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE LENT 2 KINGS 2:1-12

Now when the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. Elijah said to Elisha, 'Stay here; for the LORD has sent me as far as Bethel.' But Elisha said, 'As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.' So they went down to Bethel. The company of prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, 'Do you know that today the LORD will take your master away from you?' And he said, 'Yes, I know; keep silent.'

Elijah said to him, 'Elisha, stay here; for the LORD has sent me to Jericho.' But he said, 'As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.' So they came to Jericho. The company of prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha, and said to him, 'Do you know that today the LORD will take your master away from you?' And he answered, 'Yes, I know; be silent.'

Then Elijah said to him, 'Stay here; for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan.' But he said, 'As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.' So the two of them went on. Fifty men of the company of prophets also went, and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. Then Elijah took his mantle and rolled it

up, and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, until the two of them crossed on dry ground.

When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, 'Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you.' Elisha said, 'Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit.' He responded, 'You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not.' As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. Elisha kept watching and crying out, 'Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!' But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.



PSALM 50:1 - 6

The Lord, the most mighty God, has spoken ♦
and called the world from the rising of the sun to its
setting.



Out of Zion, perfect in beauty, God shines forth; ♦
our God comes and will not keep silence.

Consuming fire goes out before him ♦
and a mighty tempest stirs about him.

He calls the heaven above, ♦
and the earth, that he may judge his people:

'Gather to me my faithful, ♦

who have sealed my covenant with sacrifice.'

Let the heavens declare his righteousness, ♦
for God himself is judge.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now,
and shall be for ever. Amen

2 CORINTHIANS 4: 3 – 6



And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness', who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

MARK 9: 2 – 9



Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make

three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!' Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them anymore, but only Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

REFLECTION FOR THE SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE LENT

The Transfiguration of our Lord

We have come to the end of the Epiphany season, but today's readings are still about showing forth, or revealing something of God.

Today we have probably the most dramatic story of all. Jesus is on top of a mountain with three disciples, and he is transformed in front of them. This scene comes at a pivotal point in Mark's Gospel. Jesus has asked the disciples who they think he is and Peter responds with "you are the Messiah". This is the point at which Jesus begins to teach them about what it means to be the Messiah, and the Transfiguration is part of that process.

We are told that Elijah and Moses were there with him. These are two of the greatest characters in the Old Testament. Moses led God's people out of Egypt and gave them God's law.

Elijah was one of the great Old Testament prophets. He pops up regularly in the Book of Kings to denounce the corrupt practices of the rulers of the day and to warn against the dangers of chasing after foreign gods.

Moses and Elijah represent the Law and the Prophets, the main foundations of God's word in the Old Testament. They testify to the fact that we can only fully understand who Jesus is from the background of the stories in the Old Testament of God's dealings with his chosen people.

Our reading from the Old Testament tells the last part of the story of Elijah. He has acted as a prophet for over 20 years, proclaiming God's message to three different kings and the time has come for him to pass on the work to his successor.

Elisha has been with Elijah for some time, understudying the role, and, as hard as Elijah tries

to leave him behind, Elisha sticks like glue as Elijah travels around the country.

Elijah turns to him and asks what he wants and the response is “a double portion of your spirit”. The “double portion” was the inheritance of the eldest son, and it means that Elisha wants to be acknowledged as Elijah’s successor. Elisha’s stickability is rewarded as he sees Elijah taken up heaven in a chariot of fire and he does inherit Elijah’s prophetic gifts.

Our New Testament reading has its background in the story of Moses. The book of Exodus tells us after that after Moses had met God his face shone, and this made his companions uneasy, so he put a veil over his face to hide the shining. Paul uses this as a metaphor for how sometimes God’s word can be concealed and he encourages the church in Corinth to make sure that they don’t veil God’s message, but proclaim it in all its glory.

So what happened on the mountain, and why is it important?

We are told that when Jesus was transformed, or transfigured, his face shone and his clothes became dazzling white. The disciples would have seen this as a reference back to the Book of Daniel where “One Ancient of Days sits on the throne and his clothing is as white as snow”.

They see Moses and Elijah and Luke’s account adds that they were talking to Jesus about his departure, and the word used is Exodus, the same word as that used to describe God’s saving act in rescuing his people from slavery in Egypt.

A cloud covers the mountaintop and the cloud traditionally represents the presence of God. Out of the cloud comes the voice of God “This is my Son, my Beloved, listen to him” The disciples were probably not present when Jesus was baptised so this is their confirmation by God himself that Jesus is the Messiah, through whom God will save his people.

Someone has to say something and, of course, it’s Peter. Let’s make three shelters – it may be he wanted to make sure the experience lasted but the reality is that these things cannot last.

There have been times in my Christian life when I’ve had what one would call mountaintop experiences, These have been at various times and places and it’s important for all of us to recognise and enjoy these times when they come, but to realise that they are given to equip us for what happens when we come down off the mountain.

So the Transfiguration is another step on the road to Calvary. It commemorates the turning point in Jesus’ ministry where the disciples start to learn who he is, and start to learn what it will really mean to be the Messiah.

What is there for us to learn? From the Old Testament reading I really like the way Elisha stuck with his master whatever was said and whatever Elijah did. That stickability is a quality that we should seek to practice and which we should value highly.

From the Psalm we can take comfort that we have a mighty God who created the earth and continues to rule and watch over it.

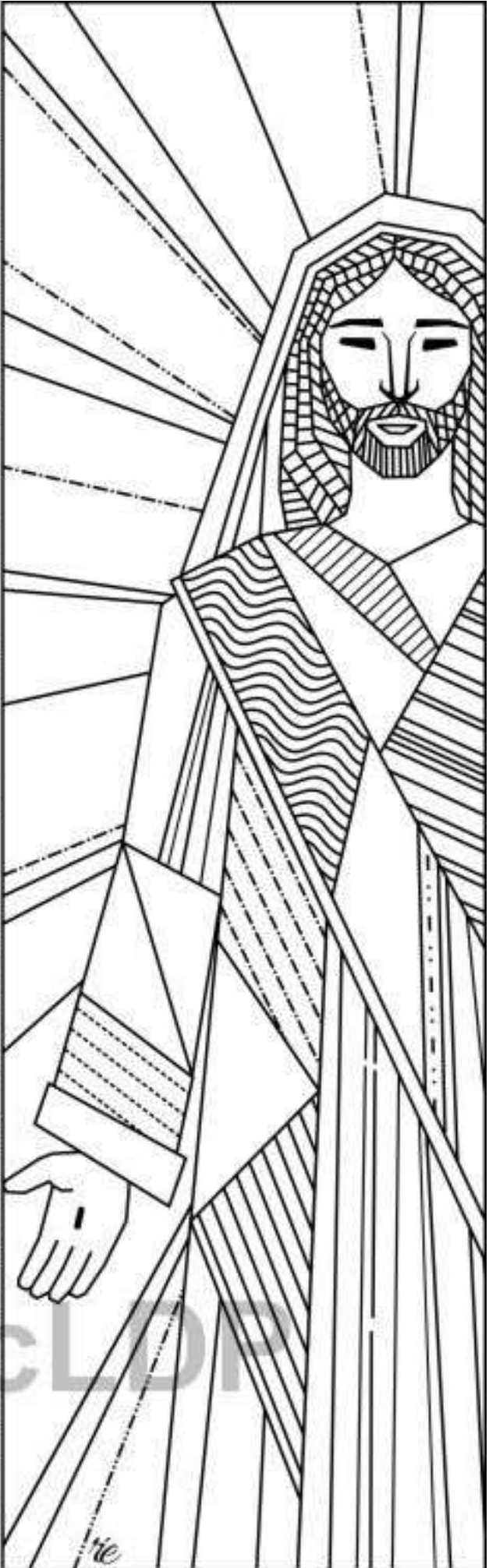
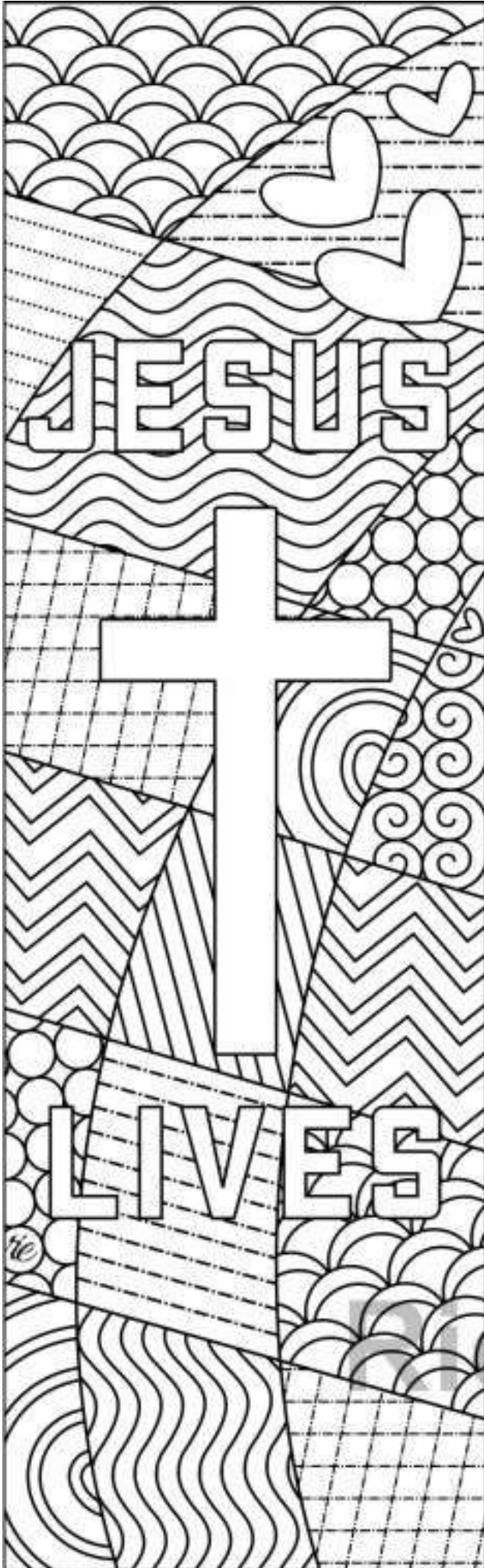
From the New Testament Reading I think we need to take the words of Paul that “we do not proclaim ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord”. All we are, all we say and do, is not to make ourselves look good, but to proclaim ourselves as servants of God who want to share his love.

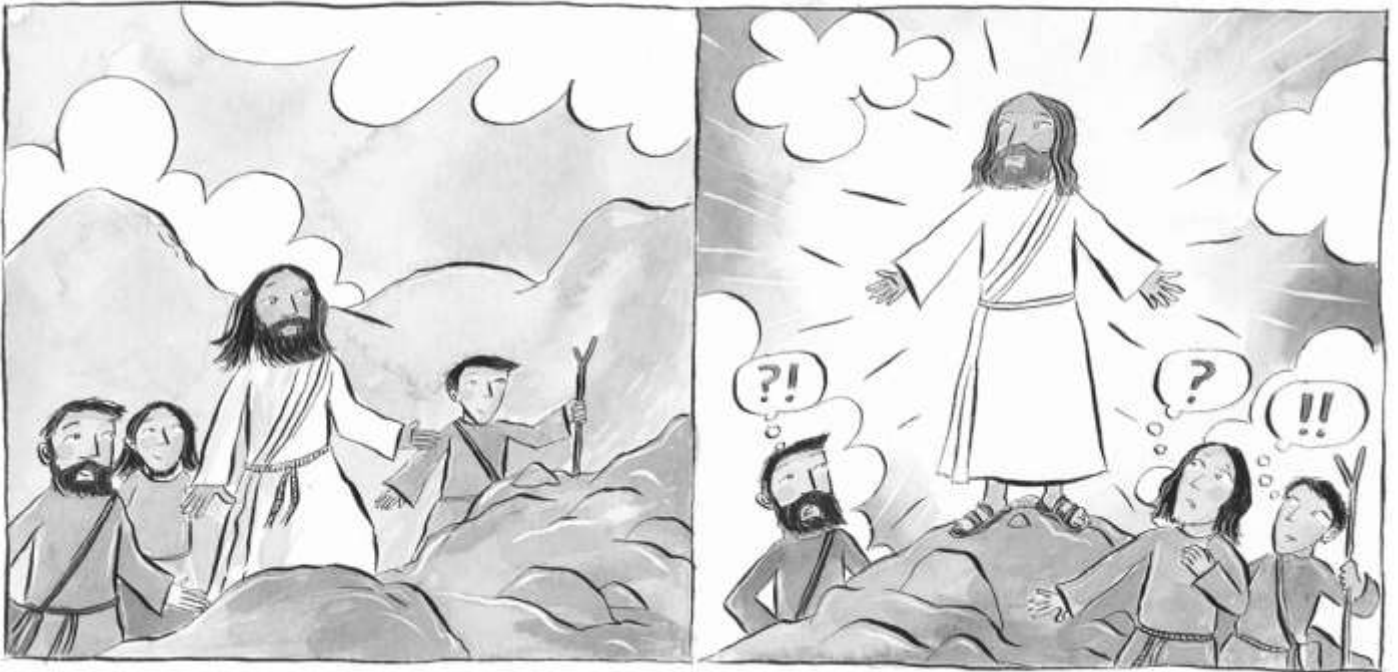
From the Gospel reading we learn more of whom Jesus is, but we also learn that the importance of those experiences we have on the mountaintop is that they equip and renew us for the life of service in the community.

Finally, I think we should be grateful that we have a God who gives us these encouragements along the way. I am sure Peter, James and John looked back on the experience as something they remembered and treasured, so that even when life was difficult it was a reassurance of the saving power and the love of God.

David Lechmere
Lay Reader







Up the high mountain they went: Jesus, Peter, James and John. Up and up they climbed. The disciples were tired. And then, suddenly, before their very eyes, Jesus was transfigured! He was changed; radiant and brighter than the sun. His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than the whitest they had ever seen.

The disciples were amazed! And as they watched, two other figures appeared: the prophet Elijah, and Moses, the great leader of the Israelites. They were talking with Jesus. The disciples were terrified! They didn't know what to say. Suddenly, Peter spoke up: 'Let's build shelters! Let's build three shelters, right here! One for Moses, one for Elijah and one for Jesus.'

And as they stood, a cloud overshadowed them. And from the cloud a voice spoke to them: 'This is my beloved Son. Listen to him.' Suddenly, there was no one there any more, only Jesus. The disciples were confused. But they knew they had glimpsed something amazing. So they set off back down the mountain: Jesus, Peter, James and John.

Jesus said that they were to tell no one what they had seen. Not until after he had risen from the dead. The disciples were puzzled. But they kept the secret.



