





#### **MANNOFIELD CHURCH of SCOTLAND**

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Ash Wednesday—2nd March

Today marks the beginning of the season of Lent, 40 days of fasting, renewal and deeper attention to our Christian Faith.

There is a hymn that has been attributed to Gregory the Great, who lived in the 6th century. It was translated into English in the 1800s by John Mason Neale, an Anglican priest known for translating from the Latin and leaving out verses that did not follow the doctrine of the Anglican church. Whether or not Gregory actually wrote this hymn, or Neale left out particular verses, these words are beautiful and describe the intention and capture the mood of the season.

Again we keep this solemn fast,

A gift of faith from ages past

These forty days which year by year,

Bid contrite hearts to Christ draw near.

More sparing, therefore let us make The words we speak, the food we take, Our sleep, our laughter, every sense, Learn peace through holy penitence.

Let us avoid each harmful way That lures the careless mind astray; By watchful prayer our spirits free From scheming of the enemy. We pray, O Blessed three in one,

Our God while endless ages run,

That this our Lent of forty days,

May bring us growth and give you praise.

I pray this Lenten season will help you be more reflective and prayerful, drawing you closer to God in preparation for the celebration of the death and resurrection of our Lord, Jesus the Messiah.

Dr Amy Bender



# DO YOU WANT TO FAST THIS LENT?

In the words of Pope Francis

- Fast from hurting words and say kinds words.
- Fast from sadness and be filled with gratitude.
- Fast from anger and be filled with patience.
- Fast from pessimism and be filled with hope.
- Fast from worries and have trust in God.
- Fast from complaints and contemplate simplicity.
- Fast from pressures and be prayerful.
- Fast from bitterness and fill your hearts with joy.
- Fast from selfishness and be compassionate to others.
- Fast from grudges and be reconciled.
- Fast from words and be silent do you can listen.

Alan and Anne Thompson

#### Friday 4th March

Spring

- **S** Smiling costs nothing. It is something that is of no value to anyone until it is given away.
- **P** Pray about everything and don't forget to thank God for the answers.
- **R** Remember God hears all our prayers but answers them in his own way.
- I found God in the morning. We just sat and talked. I kept him near me all day, at bedtime I knelt in prayer and felt his gentle presence saying— "Someone does care"
- **N** New day ~ What I do with this day is important because I have exchanged a day of my life for it.
- **G** God help me to remember that nothing is going to happen today that you and I together cannot handle.

Janice Gill

Heavenly Father, I am humbled that You find me valuable and of great worth – that I matter to You! At the start of each day, remind me of the lengths that You went to find and rescue me; Especially, when I am tempted to turn away from You. Amen

Life Group

"Everything that you can see in the world around you presents itself to your eyes only as an arrangement of patches of different colours." – John Ruskin

On the Sundays of this Lenten Season, we are going to think of the different colours that might frame the story of the stories of the season's scriptures.

#### The Colour Purple

Purple is the obvious place to start as, like Advent, it is the colour of Lent. In some traditions of Church the colours of the liturgical seasons are much more on display. We see these colours displayed in Pulpit Falls and Clergy vestments and on wall hangings that are changed according to the season of the year. These colours draw our eyes to their significance within the stories of church teaching.

Purple was for a while my 'favourite colour' growing up. It wasn't the commonest colour but rich, deep, and velvety. Not the easiest colour however to match with other clothes! Little did I know as a child, that the colour of course is associated with royalty. Back in the day it was a Roman imperial colour - worn by emperors, priests, governors, and generals. Purple togas were the Gucci of the Mediterranean elite. It became a colour associated with Kings and Queens. It was an expensive colour to make on account of the ingredients which were required to make the dye.

Yet purple is also associated with injury. Though blood comes out as a different colour, purple is associated with the colours we see in bruises and the battered body of someone who has been beaten. It is represented in the badge of honour the 'purple heart' given by the United States Army to injured soldiers.

Purple is also associated however with liberation and transformation – the gaining of freedom. It was the colour adopted by the suffragette movement working to enfranchise women with the fundamental right to make decisions-the right for women's voices to be heard through the power of the vote.

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So, for us at the start of Lent, purple is the colour that we paint first on our Lenten Canvas. Why? Well, because it reminds of the royalty of Jesus – the Christ King, God's son, King of the Jews – it reminds of the battering which he took (our wounded hero) – and most of all because it reminds us of the destination we travel to celebrate, which is 'transformation' and the 'liberation' to live as the God's people.

Rev. Keith Blackwood





During the next 6 weeks follow along with the Lent Bible Study based on the BBC TV Series "BROKEN" broadcast in 2018.

Each Monday in the LENT E-BOOKLET you will find READING NOTES to help you reflect on the themes. Additionally you will find suggested details of clips you can watch from the Series to help you connect with the on-screen themes in the TV Series.

The TV Series is available on most platforms; found on the DRAMA CHANNEL (Freeview, SKY, TALKTALK etc or can be purchased as a DVD on the usual sites).

The course was devised by 3 Priests (Bryony Taylor, Rebecca Tobin and David Twomey). The subtitle of the Study is 'a course about real life and real faith'. The aim is that it will help people to engage with the realities of life and how they can be framed by faith in Jesus Christ.

In the E-Booklet the notes have been adapted enabling people to use the Study as reflective practice that can be undertaken during the 6 weeks. It will begin on Monday 7th March and carry on through into Holy Week with the notes appearing each Monday in our Booklet.

The 6 sessions:

- 1. Beauty in the ordinary
- 2. Loving the unlovable
- 3. Guilt and shame
- 4. Impossible situations
- 5. The power of Holy Communion
- 6. Is the church still relevant and needed today?

#### Monday 7th March



### **Optional: watch TV SERIES "BROKEN"**

### Episode 1, clip from beginning to 3.12

Fr Michael lives and works in a community which would not be described as beautiful. The city, with its grey industrial landscapes and grubby, littered streets, crowded with terraces, is the backdrop for the stories Fr Michael shares.

The settings for this drama mirror the lives of Fr Michael's parishioners, which are often harsh and messy. We see the poverty and pain of Christina reflected in the shuttered shops and closed-down businesses; the desperation and lost hope of Roz in the harsh, flashing, lights of the gambling machines; the anger and alienation of Vernon in the graffiti splattered walls.

Fr Michael, like the people he cares for, is careworn and tired. Grief, confusion, and pain, stain the lives and faces of Christina, Helen, Andrew, Roz. Hunger, poverty and hopelessness take their toll on body and soul.

And yet, in the messiness, there are moments of profound beauty. The sunlight breaking in through the opening church doors; green shoots in cracks in the pavement; the soft glow of Fr Michael's candle; Christina's face as she watches her daughter delight in a new white dress; Andrew's moment of courage and truth, his relief at speaking out; Fr Michael's sad smile.

What is it that makes the ugly, grey landscape a romantic backdrop? The strained, bruised face a wonder to behold? What has the power to turn the ordinary things of everyday life into rare beauty?

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Song of Solomon 2.9b-14 (The Message)

Look at him there, on tiptoe at the gate, all ears, all eyes - ready!

My lover has arrived, and he's speaking to me!

Get up my dear friend, fair and beautiful lover – come to me! Look around you:

Winter is over; the winter rains are over, gone! Spring flowers are in blossom all

over. The whole world's a choir – and singing! Spring warblers are filling the forest

with sweet arpeggios. Lilacs are exuberantly purple and perfumed, and cherry trees fragrant with blossoms.

Oh, get up, dear friend, my fair and beautiful lover – come to me! Come, my shy and modest dove – leave your seclusion, come out in the open. Let me see your face, let me hear your voice. For your voice is soothing and your face is ravishing.

#### ACTIVITY

Read the passage over and over.

Is there a word, or a sentence, that jumps out at you? Which of these words

are for you today? Why?

Consider some of these questions:

Can you feel the energy in the Bible reading? Why is it there?

Have you ever noticed beauty in an unexpected place or time? What did you experience?

Why is beauty sometimes hidden?

Does beauty matter? Why/why not?

Have you ever felt beautiful? Why?

What do moments of beauty have in common?

#### RESPONSE

Look at yourself in a mirror and consider, you are wonderfully and fearfully made, what makes you beautiful?

#### PRAYER

Lord, lift up our weary spirits

so that we might find rest and eternal peace within you;

May we stand upon mountains and walk on stormy seas.

Give us that unspeakable joy to dance in the rain.

Amen.

Tuesday 8th March

#### Hymn 338

#### Jesus, tempted in the desert

Jesus, tempted in the desert, lonely, hungry, filled with dread; 'Use your power,' the tempter tells him; 'turn these barren rocks to bread!' 'Not alone by bread,' he answers, 'can the human heart be filled. Only by the Word that calls us is our deepest hunger stilled!'

Jesus, tempted at the temple, high above its ancient wall; 'Throw yourself from lofty turret; angels wait to break your fall!' Jesus shuns such empty marvels, feats that fickle crowds request; 'God, whose grace protects, preserves us, we must never vainly test.'

Jesus, tempted on the mountain by the lure of vast domain;

'Fall before me! Be my servant! Glory, fame, you're sure to gain!' Jesus sees the dazzling vision, turns his eyes another way; 'God alone deserves our homage! God alone will I obey.'

When we face temptation's power, lonely, struggling, filled with dread, Christ, who knew the tempter's hour, come and be our living bread. By your grace, protect, preserve us lest we fall, your trust betray. Yours, above all other voices, be the Word we hear, obey. Wednesday 9th March

#### The Miracle that is Spring

At this special season my mind is drawn to the dawn of new life in so many ways. The miraculous awakening in the growth and flowering of bulbs at this time is particularly astounding in that it all happens no matter what the weather or growing conditions. It is a miracle of nature that so many beautiful flowers grow and bloom in ground that is so cold and unforgiving to bring us the wonder of such beauty and new life.

This year as spring approaches, I have been drawn especially to the miracle of the egg. Inside this simple, but extremely effective piece of kit, are the few building materials for the continuation of our bird species. The embryos of the new bird is secreted in the yolk of the egg surrounded by the white which keeps it safe. All is encased in a delicate membrane which forms the lining of the hard shell which is its secure home until it is subjected to a period of incubation. During that time, the embryo is brought to life by warmth and is nourished by the yolk and white of the egg. When the baby bird has grown enough to fill the shell it knows somehow that it has to pick its way out of the shell to emerge along with its siblings as fully formed and developed birds under the wings and bodies of the mother hen.

At the farm where I was brought up, hens made better mothers than ducks, geese or turkeys and they were often used as surrogate parents to their offspring. However the mother hen must have been quite confused when her brood of ducklings or goslings made their way to the burn and went off swimming on their own. Nevertheless she reassured her respective broods with great love and care whatever they were. Nature can beat us hands down and teach us many lessons.

Matthew 23:37 says "How often I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings"

Anne Farquhar

Thursday 10th March

A Prayer for Lent

Almighty God, keep us both outwardly in our bodies, and inwardly in our souls that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Book of Common Prayer

Margaret Stewart

#### Friday 11th March

One of my favourite childhood Easter traditions was to make a miniature garden on a large plate, using the tiniest blooms from the garden - such as primroses, scilla, miniature daffodils and blossom and putting them in eggshell vases - we broke them carefully at the top for this purpose when baking! (One was also reserved for the Easter sponge and held upright by the glacé icing!)

These "vases" were placed around and between moss covered stones, with a "cave" representing the Garden of Gethsemane. I loved helping mum as a child and still make Easter gardens today, now with my own grandchildren. We use mum's tiny lona crosses on the landscape and eventually, during the Easter weekend, the children get to add those fluffy yellow chicks and foil wrapped eggs at will!

Sheila Towns



Saturday 12th March



#### Easter in the Navy 1962

One of my most memorable Easters was when I was in the Q.A.R.N.N.S.

Some of us had the weekend off duty and were asked if we could decorate the chapel for Easter.

After much discussion we decided that as there were thousands of primroses in the hedgerows nearby to Plymouth these were what we would use. (We could gather wild flowers at this time)

It took us many hours of gathering and arranging these beautiful flowers, every surface we could cover had primroses on. It was a sight I will never forget!

The chapel was full on Easter Day, the Royal Marine Barracks were near by. The added bonus was the playing of the Royal Marine band.

Angela Dyce.

"Mere colour, unspoiled by meaning, and unallied with definite form, can speak to the soul in a thousand different ways." – Oscar Wilde

#### The Colour Brown

Strangely, as I write this I recall a different season of my life when I used to answer, 'brown is my favourite colour'. Not many people in my school class said the same! I reckon it was because for me it was a warm cosy colour, but mainly because it is the colour of chocolate!

Brown is the colour of the earth. Though often covered by different colour – remove the grass, the snow, the tarmacadam and underneath the colour is most usually brown. The earthiness of the colour reminds us of what creation is built on. The soil of life, the nourished and fertile ground that sustains life which God made.

In the stories of the season brown frequently features in my imagination. Last week the 1st Sunday of Lent featured as the associated colour of the desert where Jesus found himself for 40 days and where he was tempted by the devil. Jesus was tempted to turn stones into (brown) bread but refused. Yet later in his ministry he was happy to feed thousands on loaves he sourced and again broke bread symbolically with his friends.

It is also the colour associated with the land that Moses was led to with his people and as God spoke to him promises of a land for the people and their ancestors that would be theirs forever and which would be a land flowing with milk and honey. In my head honey is a brown based colour too – comforting and nourishing.

Readings associated with this 2nd Sunday of Lent often feature the story of transfiguration. As we will see, the colour associated with this event takes me not to brown, but a different colour. Alternative Readings for this week however do indeed lead me to see brown. 'Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!'

The colour brown reminds us of the earth given to us by God with all we need for nourishment. It reminds us of Jesus in wilderness times, God's steadfastness, and willingness to take keep us safe under the wings of His Love that cover us all.

Rev Keith Blackwood



#### Monday 14<sup>th</sup> March

Broken A course about real life and real faith

Loving the Unlovable Mother Rebecca Tobin

## Optional: watch TV SERIES "BROKEN" Watch Episode 1, clip from 26.33 to 27.47

Fr Michael lives and works in his community every day, not just on Sundays. He sees the people who come to Mass, on their best behaviour, but he also sees the people who come to church in fear, anger, and desperation, searching for answers.

Fr Michael sees people at their best, but more often, he sees people at their worst, their lowest ebb. His work is to see these people, and not just to see them, but to love them.

Fr Michael ministers to Vernon, a young man with a mental illness, who most people find strange and frightening. He ministers to Roz, who looks beautiful, but hides ugly truths. He ministers to Carl, who faces prejudice and abuse because of his sexuality.

Fr Michael is called to love and serve not just people who are clean, happy, and strong, but those who are damaged, angry, and unlovable.

Fr Michael ministers to a young woman, Christina, who has lost her job and is struggling to feed her children. Bruised, bloodied, and desperate, she rejects Fr Michael's offers of help:

Dialogue:

Fr Michael: Can I come and see you some time?

Christina: Um... Why?

Fr Michael: Because I think you're in pain... [she shows him her bandaged hand] no, real pain

Christina: I'm just skint, Father

Christina is in terrible pain; her loud, angry words and her defensive and hostile demeanour stem from a terrible secret she is keeping. Everyone can see her bruises, her rudeness, anger, cheap clothes and un-brushed hair.

Fr Michael sees through that unlovable exterior, he sees the real Christina, beloved child of God. Eventually, his steadfast care allows her to reveal her secret. Knowing that she is loved and supported, Christina is able to face the consequences of her actions.

Fr Michael loves the unlovable because God loves him. God's love is for everyone. Love comes from God, and there is more than enough to go round. God loves people who are angry, strange, and damaged. God loves people in prison, homeless people, starving people. God loves poor people, sad people, guilty people. No one is unlovable to God. God loves us. God loves you.

#### 1 Peter 4.6-11 (The Message)

Listen to the Message. It was preached to those believers who are now dead, and yet even though they died (just as all people must), they will still get in on the life that God has given in Jesus.

Everything in the world is about to be wrapped up, so take nothing for granted. Stay wide-awake in prayer. Most of all, love each other as if your life depended on it. Love makes up for practically anything. Be quick to give a meal to the hungry, a bed to the homeless - cheerfully. Be generous with the different things God gave you, passing them around so all get in on it: if words, let it be God's words; if help, let it be God's hearty help. That way, God's bright presence will be evident in everything through Jesus, and he'll get all the credit as the One mighty in everything - encores to the end of time. Oh, yes!

#### ACTIVITY

Read the passage several times. Is there a word, or a sentence, that jumps out at you? Which of these words are for you today?

Consider some of these questions: Who do you love? Who loves you? Why? Does God love you? How do you know? How do you know you love someone? Why is it so important to love one another? What are the things that stop us being loving to one another? Can you feel the urgency in this Bible reading from Peter's letter? Why is it there? How can God's love help us to love others?

#### RESPONSE

Look at yourself outside and inside, state something positive about yourself. Consider those you interact with on a regular basis - and in turn reflect on something positive about each of them.

#### PRAYER

Lord, lift up our weary spirits so that we might find rest and eternal peace within you; May we stand upon mountains and walk on stormy seas. Give us that unspeakable joy to dance in the rain. Amen. Tuesday 15th March

#### Hymn 551

#### In Heavenly love abiding

In heavenly love abiding, no change my heart shall fear; and safe is such confiding, for nothing changes here; the storm may roar without me, my heart may low be laid; but God is round about me, and can I be dismayed?

Wherever he may guide me, no want shall turn me back; my Shepherd is beside me, and nothing can I lack. His wisdom ever waketh, his sight is never dim; he knows the way he taketh, and I will walk with him.

Green pastures are before me, which yet I have not seen; bright skies will soon be o'er me, where darkening clouds have been. My hope I cannot measure; my path to life is free; my Saviour has my treasure, and he will walk with me. Wednesday 16th March

Through the Year with William Barclay

It is one of the strange things in the modern Church that we think of the Easter faith only at Easter time.

It is at Easter time almost alone that we think of the Resurrection and of the life to come; it is at Easter time almost alone that we sing the hymns of the Easter faith.

The Easter faith should be in our thoughts not simply at a certain season of the Christian year; it ought to be the faith in which Christians daily live, and in which in the end they die, only to live again."

Sandy McKenzie

#### Thursday 17th March

In modern times we tend to hear more about the cultural traditions of St Patrick's Day more than we appreciate the religious significance of the Saint. The NYC St. Patrick's Day Parade is one of New York City's greatest traditions. The first parade was on March 17, 1762 — fourteen years before the signing of the United States Declaration of Independence. The first NYC St. Patrick's Day Parade was comprised of a band of homesick, Irish ex-patriots and Irish military members serving with the British Army stationed in the colonies in New York. This was a time when the wearing of green was a sign of Irish pride but was banned in Ireland. The first St Patrick's Day parade in Ireland was held in Waterford in 1903.

Today we associate the date with Parades and Parties - singing and dancing.

Yet the patron saint of Ireland whose name is associated with the annual festival is a highly intriguing religious figure. Born in Roman Britain, he was kidnapped and brought to Ireland as a slave at the age of 16. He later escaped, but returned to Ireland and was credited with bringing Christianity to its people. By the time of his death on March 17, 461, he had established monasteries, churches, and schools. Many legends grew up around him—for example, that he drove the snakes out of Ireland and used the shamrock to explain the Trinity. Legends they may be, but certainly he is a figure closely connected with the rise of Christianity in Ireland.



#### Friday 18th March

#### **Piggy Biscuits**



You will need: digestive biscuits, mini marshmallows, icing (made up to spreading consistency and coloured pink), mini chocolate drops, ready-made fondant icing rolled and cut into small triangles, paper plates, knives, spoons, wet wipes or basin of warm soapy water.

Ask the children to clean their hands. Give each child a paper plate and a digestive biscuit. Ask the children to spread pink icing all over one side of the biscuit. Ask the children to stick on chocolate drops for eyes, mini marshmallow for snout and triangles of fondant icing for ears to form a pig's face.

Talk about the story and how it was when the younger son was looking after the pigs and eating their food that he realised that he should go home. Talk about the welcome he received and how the father's love in the story is like God's Love.

#### Saturday 19th March

#### Easter in Tennessee

I was baptised in this small, Presbyterian church and one of the special memories was Easter Sunday morning, because we always had a sunrise service. My sister and I got a new dress that would last the year, and we often chose a lovely spring one. Never mind that most Easters it was far too cold to wear a spring dress before the sun rose. It was so exciting to leave in the dark and arrive before the sun peeked over the horizon. We would gather beside the church and huddle together for warmth. I particularly remember the singing, because it would be acapella and the sound of voices harmonising Christ the Lord is Risen Today, was part of the special, unique service. We also enjoyed the fact that the sermon was usually short! After the service we would gather for a breakfast together. People would bring dishes in to share, some of the men of the church would cook bacon and sausage, and it seemed to taste extra good on Easter Sunday morning. The fellowship shared was such a special time. Then we had Sunday School and Easter service to look forward to, and lunch to follow made by Grandma with many courses shared with cousins. We followed lunch with hiding Easter eggs and finding most of them, but never all. When we came to Scotland I was bemused that the eggs were rolled and not hidden. We have enjoyed getting to know the traditions here, and making them part of our experience.

Dr Amy Bender



"Suffice it to say that black and white are also colours... for their simultaneous contrast is as striking as that of green and red, for instance." – Vincent van Gogh

#### The Colours of Black and White

Don't worry, even for me it is an impossibility to recall a time from life when I claimed either of these to be a favourite!

Let's begin where it all begins. God created the light out of the void that was darkness. Then he created a dome to separate what was above from the sea below. He called the dome sky. If we can see nothing else - we look up and we see the blackness of sky and the white of the stars and we know we are alive and have a place in this Universe created by God.

In Lent we could read of God showing the sky to Abram. 'He brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your descendants be."

In the season of Lent, much like Advent we focus a lot on darkness. The 'black' that stains all of humanity, for we recognise the error of our ways in damaging what God has created for us. We continue to darken that vision of a good earth and good life even today. We leave many seeing the canvas of their life only in shades of black - Poverty, Sickness, Homelessness, Prejudice are the experiences of too many. These blights on human life dilute the colour that life could and should be adorned with.

Black also reminds us of the darkness that engulfed the earth upon the death of Jesus on the Cross.

Yet white features too in our stories and themes of Lent. If we were to read the Psalms, we hear mention of 'snow' in Psalm 51 associated with the first Sunday of Lent. The week before lent we encounter the well-known story of Transfiguration. The story where Jesus's appearance changes and his clothes are turned into a dazzling white. (There's a story to pin up on the message boards of Persil, Bold, Ariel, Fairy if there ever was one!!)

Though our life is made up of many colours and shades representing the variety of life experiences we know, we recognise that there are some things that are just Black and White. Things we should know, accept, and deliver on if we are interested in counting ourselves as those faithful to God. Let's shine white in a dark world – may the people of God be as countless as the stars in the night sky.

Rev Keith Blackwood



Monday 21<sup>st</sup> March



**Guilt and Shame** 

# **Optional: watch TV SERIES "BROKEN"** Episode 3, clip from 20.10 to 23.04

Session three addresses the topic of guilt and shame. This is a major theme in Broken.

Fr Michael Kerrigan has his own struggles, due to his past experiences, especially in childhood. In the series, he meets Roz. Roz comes to him because she is a serial gambler who has been stealing vast sums of money from her employer in order to fund her addiction. Seeing no way out, she has resolved to take her own life.

Trying to stop her, Fr Michael reveals to her something of his own struggles with shame. She asks if anyone else knows about these and as they talk, Roz says: 'Guilt is when you know about it. Shame is when everyone knows.'

People often think of guilt and shame as worrying about every little single thing that we have done or not done. But they are far more powerful than that. They are not so much about what we have done but who we think we are.

All too often we can feel worthless. That may be because of the things we have done or not done. More often, our sense of worthlessness comes from other people and the things they say to us or the way they behave towards us. We internalise those and start to believe they are true.

We see something of this in the modern 'Shame culture'. Bringing shame to other people is a powerful weapon. Maybe this has always been the case, but the accessibility of the cyber world has taken shame and shaming to a whole new level of meaning and power.

In this session we seek to respond to some of our own struggles with shame and explore what it means to forgive and be forgiven. That means forgiving ourselves for the things we may have done which cause us guilt. It also means letting go some of the hurtful things we believe about ourselves which cause us shame. In doing so, may we discover the love that God, who created us in his image, has for each one of us.

#### Romans 7:15-25 (The Message)

What I don't understand about myself is that I decide one way, but then I act another, doing things I absolutely despise. So if I can't be trusted to figure out what is best for myself and then do it, it becomes obvious that God's command is necessary.

But I need something more! For if I know the law but still can't keep it, and if the power of sin within me keeps sabotaging my best intentions, I obviously need help!

I realise that I don't have what it takes. I can will it, but I can't do it. I decide to do good, but I don't really do it; I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway. My decisions, such as they are, don't result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time. It happens so regularly that it's predictable.

The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up. I truly delight in God's commands, but it's pretty obvious that not all of me joins in that delight. Parts of me covertly rebel, and just when I least expect it, they take charge.

I've tried everything and nothing helps. I'm at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? Isn't that the real question?

The answer, thank God, is that Jesus Christ can and does. He acted to set things right in this life of contradictions where I want to serve God with all my heart and mind, but am pulled by the influence of sin to do something totally different.

#### ACTIVITY

Read the passage over and over.

Is there a word, or a sentence, that jumps out at you? Which of these words might be for you today?

Consider some of these questions: Do you think we live in a 'shame society'? What evidence can you see of it? Is there such a thing as right and wrong? Is there anything you regret not having said or done in your life? If you could go back, how would you change it? In Broken, Roz steals to fund her addiction. Is she a victim or the architect of her own downfall?

#### RESPONSE

Consider something from your life you are ashamed of or regret or feel you could and should do better with. Resolve to not make this mistake again and where possible put things right.

#### PRAYER

Lord, lift up our weary spirits so that we might find rest and eternal peace within you; May we stand upon mountains and walk on stormy seas. Give us that unspeakable joy to dance in the rain. Amen. Tuesday 22nd March

#### An Easter Return

I was in St. Andrews working in the Old Course hotel in July 1970. - the year of the Open Golf Championship. I was asked to oversee a private function for an American businessman for all the players who took part in the Championship. When the function finished he came over to me and thanked me for the commendable way I had undertaken his requests for his reception. He asked me to come and see him after everything was tidied up. I went to his private room later where he asked if I would be interested in working for him in his private beach club in Bermuda. I jumped at the chance and was in Bermuda early November of the same year.

When I look back I can see my life at that time being like the Prodigal son. I had left the Christian family home, gone out into the material world to find a life for myself. I enjoyed the freedom of doing, going, when, and where I wanted with new friends to parties, clubs etc. After a while this life felt hollow, with no purpose. One day a Bermudian woman who was one of a few friends asked me along to her church for Easter service. I agreed and duly went along on my moped which was the only means of transport for non-residents. I was given a warm welcome, and the service was moving, just as if God has called me home, back into his house, just like the Prodigal son. I attended this church a few times before returning to Scotland and served at the former Treetops Hotel as a Assistant Manager. I met my wife there, she was the Head House Keeper. We were married in Summerhill Parish Church 1974 where her father was the beadle for many a year. I became an elder there and undertook other duties before transferring to Mannofield Church to become involved in a few committees which is still the case today. The Lord has my life's path laid out in front of Him and still today He is challenging me to do more, to bring His word to those who do not believe. I think the Lord will speak to you as he has spoken/shown me the path I should take in my life here in Aberdeen. Just like The Prodigal son I came home and now live with the Lord Jesus in my heart.

Listen for the Lord as he will talk to you in the most unlikely ways. The Lord will bless all who repent and follow him.

Les Black

Wednesday 23rd March

#### WHAT'S IN A NAME

Easter is a very special time of the year for us all. However, in my family it was particularly significant as my mother's name was Easter-Lily.

The family story as related by my grandmother, was that neither she nor my grandfather could register my mother's birth as they lived in the country. Therefore, my great grandmother (my grandfather's mother) was charged with registering it.

Now that was perhaps foolhardy as my great grandmother had named her own children - Garland, Duffus, Lemon and Elliot. Elliot was my grandfather so wasn't he the lucky one!

As my mother was born on Easter weekend, my great grandmother chose this name for her new grandchild! In 1914, that was indeed a most unusual name.

Brenda McGovern


Thursday 24th March

### Spring

To me Spring means new life.

Lambs frolicking in the fields—unsteady at first but gaining in confidence and gambolling around.

All the Spring bulbs—first the snowdrops pure and beautiful.

Crocuses and tulips and best of all the bright yellow daffodils.

How can you not smile when seeing bunches of daffodils like sunshine in spring!

Trees and shrubs bursting with new growth and ready to bloom.

Small things like this bring hope and encouragement for us all, the promise of renewal and God's hand in our creation.

Janice Gill



## **EASTER PRAYERS**





Saturday 26th of March

### **Memories of Easters Past**

The Church in which I was brought up in Glasgow was splendidly decorated for Easter. On the chancel was a tiered structure built by some of the men, probably ten feet high, on which were set many vases and glass jars of daffodils so that going into the Church we were faced by a wall of Spring flowers. It was beautiful, so much so that we were happy that our wedding was to take place at that time of the year. The guests assembled in their finery, the only problem was that in order to preserve the flowers as long as possible, there was no heating in the sanctuary. They all froze especially since it had snowed that morning! The devil may have worn Prada but this bride wore her thermals!

As we went out to sign the Register, my mother seemed to be overcome with emotion as she stumbled from the front pew. In fact her brand new patent leather shoes had stuck to each other as she stood for the exchange of vows and she was barely able to walk!

Fast forward a few years and we moved to another church near to where we lived. Is was a very active church in which the young people played a prominent part. One very memorable Good Friday after the evening service, the Church was stripped of all adornment and we all left in darkness to the sound of nails being hammered into a very large cross which had figured in the service. Truly impressive. On Easter Sunday at dawn there was a service in the Fossil Grove at Victoria Park among the 230 million year old petrified trees which was moving in that it let us think of the timeless nature of God and His Creation. Our boys both played in the orchestra for that service before going back to the Church for breakfast and hot cross buns or bacon rolls.

As a family, we would often go out into the countryside near Glasgow. One year, our older son Euan was keen to take his chocolate cream egg to eat on our walk. Alan told him he had put the egg into the boot. Euan was putting on his climbing boots for the walk. There was a squelching sound and that's when he discovered that Alan meant the hiking boot, not the car boot.

Chocolate cream mud pie!

We have so many precious memories of past Easters but the message has never changed. God loved us so much that He gave us His son to die on the Cross that we might be saved. Happy Easter everybody!

Anne and Alan Thompson



Sunday 27th March

"Colour is a power which directly influences the soul." — Wassily Kandinsky

### The Colour Grey

It's funny how such an unremarkable colour is actually one of the most common colours seen. When we think about it, it's everywhere (and not just in Aberdeen!) We see it on school children, under our feet and most men will have a grey based suit in their wardrobe. We also know the colour emotionally. All of us at times just know ourselves a little grey at times – not really one thing or another, but just feeling a little flat inside.

It's apt that grey features in our stories of Lent.

As the people journeyed through wilderness and desert the dust on their feet would be thick. In the trampled ground the earth turns grey. In the stories of Lent Jesus was a traveller too. Travelling to the Cross he first made his way through villages and towns. Stopping off at people's homes and first dusting down his shoes covered in the grey of temple ground.

The most significant association of grey with the season of Lent however, comes not from the bible stories of travelling, or indeed the assumption of many people of the time feeling a little grey as the harshness of life and unfulfilled promises left their mark on them emotionally. It comes from the tradition associated with our brothers and sisters in the Roman Catholic Church who mark Ash Wednesday with a symbolic action. The green (spoiler alert) Palms from the year before are burnt in a little oil and the grey dust created is used to sign the foreheads of those in attendance at a Service on this Holy Day of Ash Wednesday and the start of Lent.

The Season of Lent brings first an experience of grief before the mood is changed with Easter Sunday. By this point in Lent we are getting closer to Holy Week when the greyness of mood is most intuitively felt. It is right to grieve what is lost. What we mean by this, is what we have lost in terms of the dilution of the vision God had for the world and all of humanity the result of human activity or inactivity. To be a little grey in this season is all right. In fact it is healthy - for without a recognition of what could have been, we can't find our way to the sense that Easter brings of - 'what still can be'.

Rev Keith Blackwood



## Monday 28<sup>th</sup> March



# Optional: watch TV SERIES "BROKEN" Episode 3, clip from 06.51 to 12.35

Broken is filled with people in impossible situations.

In the very first episode we are introduced to Christina, a struggling single mum of three. Disastrously, she loses her job for stealing from her employer. To make matters worse, her mum, whom she lives with, suddenly and unexpectedly dies. Christina doesn't report her mum's death, so that she can draw her pension, a decision which eventually leads to her imprisonment.

Later on, we see Andrew, one of the police involved in Vernon's death. He tries to tell the truth of what happened, but comes under immense pressure to change his statement. He is faced with the possibility of losing his job and risking his family's future, or being involved in a cover up he knows is wrong. In different ways, all of us face impossible situations in our lives, be it in our work life, our relationships or in our finances.

There are times when we just don't have any choice about a course of action, even if we know that the potential outcomes will be really difficult or hurtful. There are other times when our choices are not clear-cut, when we do not know where to turn. We hear in the Bible that 'nothing is impossible with God' (Luke 1:37). But what does that actually mean?

It is easy to see this or hear it as a slightly glib, easy response to really complex situations. We can also hear it as condemnation of our lack of faith. If only we really believed, then everything would sort itself out. Sometimes wonderful things happen to people to help their situation. But not, of course, to everyone. This is not to deny the power of God, but it is to recognise the genuine reality of life. Most of us muddle along on a balance of honest struggle and trust. Yet in the midst of all the challenges of life, our call is to hold onto the truth of what we know of God; His nature, his promises and his love are the same yesterday, today

and forever. And holding onto that is immensely hard. But sometimes, it's all we've got.

### Psalm 69:1-4, 13-18, 29 (NRSVA)

- Save me, O God,
- for the waters have come up to my neck.
- I sink in deep mire,
- where there is no foothold;
- I have come into deep waters,
- and the flood sweeps over me.
- I am weary with my crying;
- my throat is parched.
- My eyes grow dim
- with waiting for my God.
- But as for me, my prayer is to you, O Lord.
- At an acceptable time, O God,
- in the abundance of your steadfast love, answer me.
- With your faithful help rescue me
- from sinking in the mire;
- let me be delivered from my enemies
- and from the deep waters.
- Do not let the flood sweep over me,
- or the deep swallow me up,
- or the Pit close its mouth over me.
- Answer me, O Lord, for your steadfast love is good;
- according to your abundant mercy, turn to me.
- Do not hide your face from your servant,
- for I am in distress—make haste to answer me.
- Draw near to me, redeem me,
- set me free
- I am lowly and in pain;
- let your salvation, O God, protect me.

## ACTIVITY

Read the passage through once silently, and once out loud.

Is there a word, or a sentence, that jumps out at you? What words speak to you today? Why?

Consider some of these questions: Have you ever found yourself in an impossible situation? Fr Michael is torn between a desire to protect a friend from self-harm and his duty to uphold the seal of Confession. Which do you think is the more important? Is it ever OK to do something wrong in order to survive? Would you rather: Have to say everything you think out loud or never be able to speak again? Would you rather: See into the future or change the past?

### RESPONSE

Recall hard times from your past and reflect on how they have shaped who you are today.

### PRAYER

Lord, lift up our weary spirits so that we might find rest and eternal peace within you; May we stand upon mountains and walk on stormy seas. Give us that unspeakable joy to dance in the rain. Amen. Tuesday 29th March

#### Hymn 361

### Forgiveness is your gift

Forgiveness is your gift, Both cleansing and renewing, To catch us when we drift, Our base desires pursuing; And hug us back to life And bring us to a feast Where all will celebrate The life your love released.

Your grace goes out to meet The sinful and the doubting, Your arms and dancing feet Speak louder than all shouting: O God how great your love Which takes us empty in, And with our worth unproved, Lets better life begin. Wednesday 30th March

### Spring

I was brought up on a farm in the North East and Spring was always such a busy time.

The fields would have been ploughed over the winter as and when the weather allowed , so Spring and milder weather meant it was time for planting. Corn, barley, potatoes, turnips , carrots and less common vegetables in the kitchen garden.

It was a time for new life too --lambs were born, calves, piglets and chickens. Some years --great excitement --a new foal.

Snowdrops and pinkies would appear among the grass at the roadside and blossom on the fruit trees.

Spring for me has always meant a time of anticipation, hope and new beginnings.

Ellen Smith

'I would dearly love to tell the whole congregation of the hope their generosity gives to the food bank organisers, (not us-the charities) and know that this would be a perfect channel, but don't know how to tie it in. In a talk the other week, Somebody Cares said by Thursday their supplies were running very low, but they knew the Mannofield contribution would be arriving to save them. I would like people to know that!' Thursday 31st March

### The Garden in Spring

At the bottom of the garden there is a place to pray Where we can sit and contemplate the wondrings of the day. The flowers now are pushing through; they bide their time to sing As I await the congregation now upon the wing. Here comes the blackbird then the robin; we are gathered three So now the offering as a child I give Him from me.....

> 'Thank you for the world so sweet, Thank you for the food we eat, Thank you for the birds that sign, Thank you God for everything.'

Rhonda McColgan



### **Butterflies and Bulbs**



During my time working in the South of England the hot summer months were enjoyed by all the family. I was very lucky as my place of work was in the drawing office of a large Georgian mansion set in extensive parklands. The staff were able to enjoy the attractions of well kept gardens, a tennis court, a swimming pool and two croquet lawns. All of these were well used especially at the weekends when most of the population took to their cars and headed for the coast which was some forty miles from Basingstoke. It was common that on their return journey they would sit in a traffic jam for anything up to an hour. We on the other hand would drive out to the office which took ten minutes and enjoyed a swim and a picnic. Bank holiday weekends brought the worst traffic jams and from our house we could see the stationary traffic on the A30. The local newsagent capitalised on the drivers by going from car to car selling copies of the evening paper.

In the garden at the office were well stocked herbaceous borders and on bright sunny days clouds of butterflies enjoyed the nectar from the flowers. I commented on this to one of the staff a Mr Clem Bernard who I discovered was a butterfly expert. He had supplied an exhibit of all the sixty odd British butterflies for display at the London Festival of Britain in 1951. I told him I had a schoolboy interest in these insects and Clem started me off as a serious collector giving me all the information about how to catch, mount and display these bright coloured insects. This was in 1961 when there was not the conservation restrictions prohibiting the collection of butterflies. There are many fascinating features concerning the life of a butterfly as it progress from egg to the caterpillar, then into the chrysalis and finally to emerge as the winged insect. Some butterflies hibernate during the winter and it is on a warm spring day they emerge and you may find one fluttering inside your garden shed. To me this wonder of nature gives me great pleasure and a colourful reminder of brighter days ahead. At the same time we can see the colour of flowers from the spring bulbs which also have been in state of hibernation.

We have all witnessed the darkness of the past two years but we hope and pray for the brightness which comes with Springtime. The world can be bright and full of colour we just have to keep looking and enjoying it.

John R. Little

Saturday 2nd April

There is a Green Hill Far Away" by Cecil Frances Alexander

It is The GOOD NEWS of EASTER in a concise form. I seem to have been singing this Hymn for a long, long time!

HYMN There is a green hill far away, Outside a city wall, Where the dear Lord was crucified, Who died to save us all.

We may not know, we can not tell What pains He had to bear; But we believe it was for us He hung and suffered there.

He died that we might be forgiven, He died to make us good, That we might go at last to heaven, Saved by His precious blood. There was no other good enough To pay the price of sin; He only could unlock the gate Of heaven, and let us in.

O dearly, dearly has He loved, And we must love Him too, And trust in His redeeming blood, And try His works to do.

Sandy McKenzie



### Sunday 3rd April

## "Life is about using the whole box of crayons." - RuPaul

### The Colour Red

'Come on ye Reds'!

As much as it pains me being a fan of the colours 'claret and amber', I must defer to the sentiment of RuPaul and recognise it would be wrong not to include the colour of Aberdeen.

We can't escape red as the colour of blood and the fact that our scriptures (Old and New) are full of 'bloody' stories. In the season of Lent these stories are never far from the surface. We think of the blood spilled as Moses and his people escaped Egypt and the advent of the tradition of Passover. The blood of the lamb marked on doorways to protect the death of the first born. As the tradition grew it was a celebration of God's protection and for Jesus, like all Jews then and now, marking the Passover was an important cultural and religious event. So much of Jesus Passion story is associated with this Festival. He made his way to Jerusalem for Passover but also to his death. He met with his disciples to celebrate the Passover and for us today that Supper becomes our Holy Communion.

We can't escape from the colour red as Jesus was arrested, beaten, hung and nailed on a cross and even as more pain was inflicted on him as he endured his final hours.

Our faith story, in fact our life today with God, is stained by the colour red and the death of Jesus.

Yet, red is such a positive colour. Around the world in so many traditions it is seen as the most glorious and lucky of colours. So even as we stop and ponder what red means in the Passover and Passion story, we as Christians are led to being reminded that the death of Christ ultimately means we are free to live for God as hopeful, positive people. The red in Easter is not death – it is about life. Jesus is the lifeblood of our relationship with God and our very being.

Rev Keith Blackwood

## Monday 4<sup>th</sup> April



The power of Holy Communion – Rev Bryony Taylor

# Optional: watch TV SERIES "BROKEN" Episode 3, clip from 48.44 to 51.50

Saying Mass is at the heart of Fr Michael's life as a priest. As a result we see him with his congregation sharing communion in every episode of the series Broken. It is a constant backdrop to the action in the drama and it also becomes the crucible of Fr Michael's own struggles, particularly as he reaches the words 'this is my body', 'this is my blood'.

Likewise, for many Christians, the sharing of Holy Communion is at the heart of our meeting together. Holy Communion or the Eucharist or Mass is a mysterious ritual meal during which we remember the giving up of Jesus' life on the cross for the whole world and the eternal life brought by the resurrection. We share bread and wine mindful of our need of God, remembering that, like Jesus, we too are a broken people somehow made whole again by the Holy Spirit. There is a powerful scene in episode 3 in which Andrew, the police officer, attends church. Andrew struggles in this episode with a dilemma – should he protect his colleagues and lie, or tell the truth and risk losing his job leaving him unable to support his young family? He meets with Fr Michael to discuss this, Fr Michael naturally encourages him to tell the truth. He leaves Fr Michael's house in anger.

The next scene we are back in church during Mass. Andrew sits at the back, head in hands. The line moves forward as people get up to receive communion. Eventually, Andrew joins the line, there is a pause as he puts his hands out to receive the host from Fr Michael. Michael looks intently at him and then simply gives him the host saying, 'the body of Christ'. Later, Andrew knocks on the presbytery door and we encounter this scene:

Andrew: Why did you give me communion, Father? Fr Michael: Why did you come up for it? Andrew: Because I've never needed it so much in my life. Fr Michael: That's why I gave you it. 53 It is often at those times when life is most desperate that we need not words, but actions, not words but something beyond that. That is what Holy Communion offers to us: the presence of God, in the bread and the wine, no words or explanations required, just the opening up of our hands and hearts to receive.

### Luke 24:28-35 (New Revised Standard Version)

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.' So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?' That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!' Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

### ACTIVITY

Read the passage over and over.

Is there a word, or a sentence, that jumps out at you? Which of these words are for you today? Why?

Consider some of these questions:

"he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread" Luke 24:35 – why do you think that it was at the breaking of the bread that the disciples finally recognised Jesus?

What does it mean to you that the bread we receive at communion is broken? Why do you think Jesus chose to use bread and wine to help us remember him? What does having bread and wine at church mean to you?

Do you ever feel that you 'need' to go to a communion service? Why/why not?

### RESPONSE

Consider what God offers to you in the way of the nourishment we need in life.

### PRAYER

Lord, lift up our weary spirits so that we might find rest and eternal peace within you; May we stand upon mountains and walk on stormy seas. Give us that unspeakable joy to dance in the rain. Amen. Tuesday 5th April

Come to the table

By Barbara Hamm

Come to the table of grace. Come to the table of grace. This is God's table; it's not yours or mine. Come to the table of grace.

Come to the table of peace. Come to the table of peace. This is God's table; it's not yours or mine. Come to the table of peace.

Come to the table of love. Come to the table of love. This is God's table; it's not yours or mine. Come to the table of love.

Come to the table of joy. Come to the table of joy. This is God's table; it's not yours or mine. Come to the table of joy. Wednesday 6th April

### EASTER LILIES

Oh! beautiful lilies, so fair and sweet, Ye opened your leaves for the Easter morn And helped us rejoice that the winter had passed And helped us to welcome the Spring's glad dawn.

(Abridged - Mary Dow Brine)

Brenda McGovern



Thursday 7th April

#### **The Easter Flower**

Far from this foreign Easter damp and chilly My soul steals to a pear-shaped plot of ground, Where gleamed the lilac-tinted Easter lily Soft-scented in the air for yards around; Alone, without a hint of guardian leaf! Just like a fragile bell of silver rime, It burst the tomb for freedom sweet and brief In the young pregnant year at Eastertime; And many thought it was a sacred sign, And some called it the resurrection flower; And I, a pagan, worshiped at its shrine, Yielding my heart unto its perfumed power.

by Claudius McKay

Friday 8th April

### EGGS

In the 1960s, if my memory serves me well, the shells of eggs were white and were stamped with the British Lion symbol.

One Easter, in the early 1960s, I remember my brother and I visiting our Aunt; upon our arrival we were sent into the garden to gather grass and vegetable leaves. These were put into an old pan with water and eggs. Once boiled the eggs were removed and the task repeated with tea leaves and garden soil. The end result were egg shells of a beautiful green and coffee colour. We then all went into the garden to roll our eggs and enjoy an Easter picnic.

Happy memories where the weather was always "fine"!

Easter Blessings.

### Sandy McKenzie



Saturday 9th April

#### Hymn 366

### Come into the streets with me.

Come into the streets with me! Come to where the crowds will be, see a strange and gentle king on a donkey travelling.

Come and follow my leader, come and follow my leader, Jesus Christ is riding by, come and follow my leader!

All the people shout his name, wave their branches, sing his fame, throw their coats upon his road, glad to praise the Son of God.

Come and follow my leader, come and follow my leader, Jesus Christ is riding by, come and follow my leader! If the soldiers draw their swords, will we dare to sing these words, be his friends for just a day, cheer him on, then run away?

Come and follow my leader, come and follow my leader, Jesus Christ is riding by, come and follow my leader!

Jesus goes where things are rough, Jesus knows when life is tough, always comes to us, his friends, so his story never ends.

Come and follow my leader, come and follow my leader, Jesus Christ is riding by, come and follow my leader! "Let me, O let me bathe my soul in colours; let me swallow the sunset and drink the rainbow." — Kahlil Gibran

### The Colour Green

We have to include the colour Green in this remarkable story and we have to finish with it of course on this Palm Sunday.

Green is about life – new life. We cover the brown earth with green — grass, crops, trees. I say we, but even if there was no 'we' the natural creation around us testifies to new life growing in this wonderful canvas of creation. In the Roman Catholic and Anglican Church anytime there is no special colour for a short-lasting season of the church year or a special Sunday, the colour green is everywhere on the vestments worn by clergy and pulpit coverings.

When it comes to Lent, we begin the story with a reminder of God's creation – the Garden of Eden. There is nothing like a garden for greenery. We remember also that Jesus was arrested in a garden after spending time there conversing with God and sharing his troubles with his Divine Father. Jesus' tomb was in a garden. So while we lament, this Sunday, the loss of Eden, we should also remember the garden of resurrection. Though Easter Sunday is a week away and there are a few dark themes still to get through - the glow of Easter and sunrise and the colour green symbolising new life is still present for us.

As the green Palm branches are waved in the air and lain at Jesus feet in a scene from Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem, we rejoice with all the followers of God for God is all about bringing new life. 'Let there be greening of our earth....'. Let there be new life for all.

Rev Keith Blackwood



Monday 11<sup>th</sup> April



Is the church still relevant and needed today? by Rev Bryony Taylor

# Optional: watch TV SERIES "BROKEN" Episode 6, clip from 12.40 to 19.00

Throughout the entire 6 episodes of Broken, Fr Michael and his church community bump up against all manner of societal problems. We see the poverty of a young mother in the first episode, who when her mother dies, keeps it quiet so that she can draw her last pension cheque to see her through for the week. We see a squeezed mental health service that can't keep a very sick man in hospital any longer and the staff choosing him over others in the same position, purely because they know he is loved. Fr Michael comes up against the pressure on families to let their children be princes and princesses on the day of their First Holy Communion – paying hundreds of pounds they can't afford for a pretty dress or suit.

Fr Michael's life and ministry is not in a vacuum. He doesn't just spend his time saying mass. Saying mass is at the centre of his ministry but his ministry is in the centre of his community.

In the final episode of the series, Fr Michael preaches a sermon about righteous anger, pointing out the terrible damage that is done in his community by gambling machines. He says of Jesus' driving out of the money changers from the temple: "As Christians, we are meant to try and emulate Christ. Are we allowed to emulate that bit? Are we allowed a bit of righteous anger? I hope so."

Straight after mass we see images of men from the church smashing up the gambling machines in the street nearby.

Some people think that the church is completely irrelevant in the 21st century.

Fr Michael's congregation is tiny. He is just one priest. Consider, though, would you say he is irrelevant? That he should give up, as he considers doing towards the end? Is the church still relevant and needed today?

## John 2:13-17 (The Message)

When the Passover Feast, celebrated each spring by the Jews, was about to take place, Jesus travelled up to Jerusalem. He found the Temple teeming with people selling cattle and sheep and doves. The loan sharks were also there in full strength. Jesus put together a whip out of strips of leather and chased them out of the Temple, stampeding the sheep and cattle, upending the tables of the loan sharks, spilling coins left and right. He told the dove merchants, "Get your things out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a shopping mall!" That's when his disciples remembered the Scripture, "Zeal for your house consumes me."

### ACTIVITY

Read the passage several more times.

Is there a word, or a sentence, that is catching your attention today?

Which of the words are for you today? Why?

Consider some of these questions:

Should Fr Michael have encouraged people to go and smash the gambling machines?

Are we allowed righteous anger like Jesus?

What difference would it make if there was no church at all?

Does congregation size matter? Fr Michael's church is small but what difference do they make?

What would you say to someone who told you the church is irrelevant in today's world?

Is it a good thing that many churches collect food for foodbanks?

### RESPONSE

Consider a local concern, pray for it and combine your prayer with an action such as writing to a local MP/ MSP, volunteering or giving to your local foodbank.

### PRAYER

Lord, lift up our weary spirits so that we might find rest and eternal peace within you; May we stand upon mountains and walk on stormy seas. Give us that unspeakable joy to dance in the rain. Amen. Tuesday 12th April

In my Easter bonnet with all the frills upon it (and my Clark's sandals, of course,), in our garden at Great Western Road on Easter Sunday 1958 aged 4, then mum and I heading off to Mannofield Church and Miss Horn's Sunday School for me.

Not my usual sunny self, though, in this picture I can still feel that bow scratching my neck!!

Rhonda McColgan



Easter Story <sup>Word Gearch</sup>



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APOSTLES BETRAYAL CAVE CHURCH CROSS CROWN CRUCIFIXION DISCIPLES FAITH GOOD FRIDAY JESUS CHRIST JUDAS LAMB LAST SUPPER LENT MARY MIRACLE PASSOVER PENANCE PENANCE PENTECOST PRAYER REDEMPTION REJOICE RESURRECTION RISEN SAVIOR SON THORNS TOMB



Maundy Thursday—14th April

Our Lenten journey is almost complete. We have arrived at Maundy Thursday, the day the sanctuary is traditionally stripped of all colour. The term comes from mandatum, (Latin for commandment) proclaiming Jesus' new commandment to love one another as he has loved us. This day celebrates Christ's example of humble service and self-offering, and marked by the washing of feet and sharing of communion.

A hymn sung on this day is "Jesu, Jesu Fill us with your Love."

This hymn was written in the last century by Tom Colvin. He was a Church of Scotland minister who worked in inner-city London as well as missionary work in Ghana and Nyasaland (now Malawi) in the 1900s.

He wrote "Sitting there in the moonlight, I felt it simply had to be about black and white, rich and poor. I was ashamed of the wasteful affluence of my people but proud of the Gospel that transforms us into servants of one another. It is only when we who are rich learn to have the humility of the slave towards the poor of the world that we shall be able to learn from them. They have so much to teach us and share with us."

Servant mentality celebrating Christ's example.

Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love, show us how to serve the neighbours we have from you.

Kneels at the feet of his friends, silently washes their feet, Master who acts as a slave to them.

Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love, show us how to serve the neighbours we have from you.

Neighbours are rich folk and poor, neighbours are black, brown and white, neighbours are nearby and far away.

Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love, show us how to serve the neighbours we have from you.

These are the ones we should serve, these are the ones we should love. All these are neighbours to us and you.

Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love, show us how to serve the neighbours we have from you.

Loving puts us on our knees, serving as though we are slaves. This is the way we should live with you.

Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love, show us how to serve the neighbours we have from you.

Dear Jesus, keep showing us how to be humble and how to love our neighbours as you love us. Let us offer ourselves to you. Amen.

Dr Amy Bender

