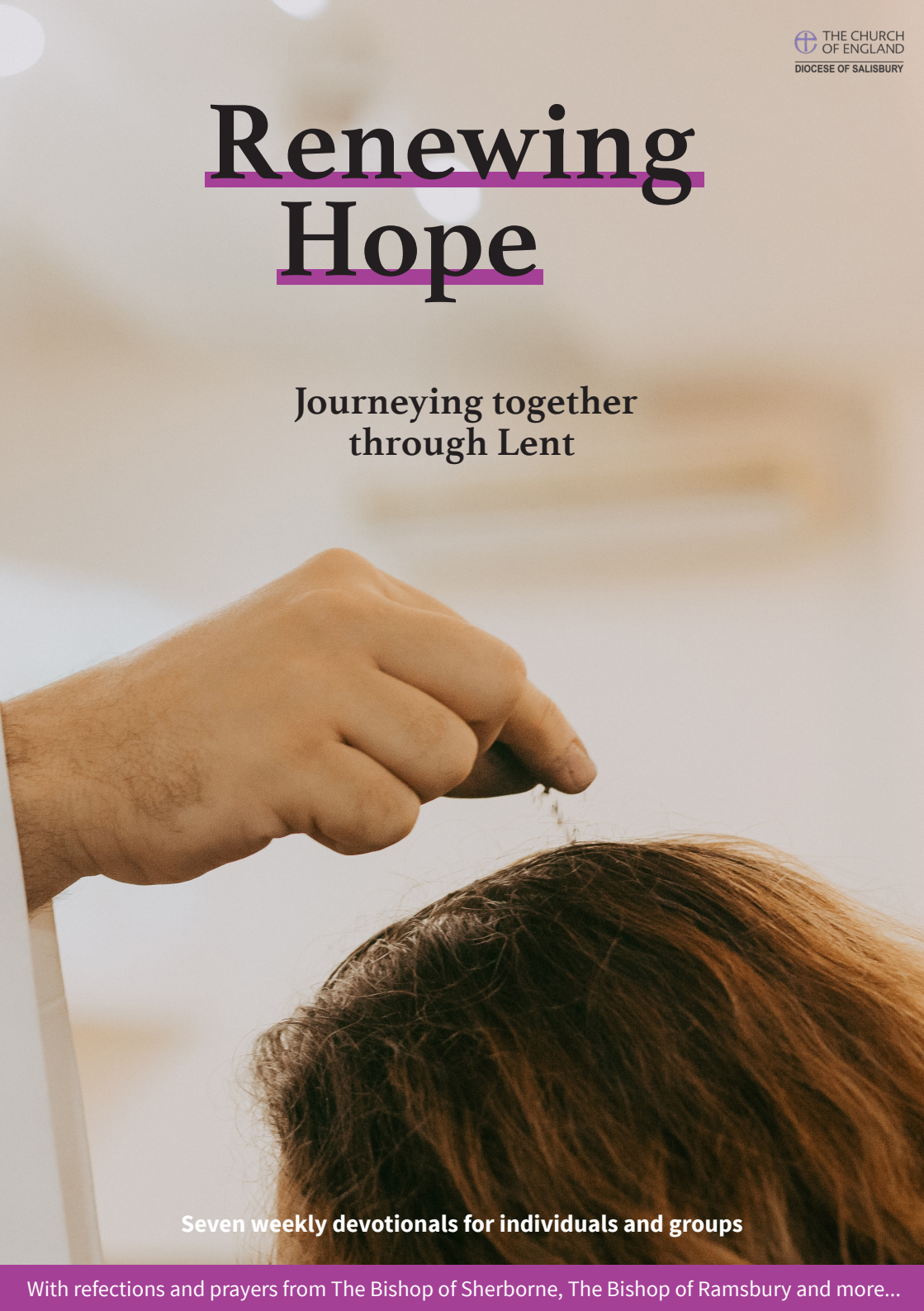


Renewing Hope

Journeying together
through Lent



Seven weekly devotionals for individuals and groups

With reflections and prayers from The Bishop of Sherborne, The Bishop of Ramsbury and more...

Introduction

Self-examination, penitence, self-denial, study, and preparation for Easter. Lent is upon us and is a season of reflection and preparation before the celebrations

**Now is the healing time decreed
for sins of heart and word and deed,
when we in humble fear record
the wrong that we have done the Lord.**



Photo by Pro Church Media on Unsplash

Week 1

Evangelism

By Revd Mike Tufnell

Matthew 28:16–20

16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Reflection

Are there any more influential verses than these to inspire the global movement of disciples of Jesus that is the Church today? We are reminded at the start of our reading that there were eleven...just eleven. And how many billion profess faith in Christ today!? These verses are aptly known as The Great Commission. They give us an imperative, some instructions, and some inspiration.

The imperative is to ‘go and make disciples of all nations’. The Church of England’s vocation as always been to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ afresh in each generation. We are to be joyful witnesses to our Saviour, that new believers might be baptised into the family of God.

But our instructions are not just to be and make witnesses, but ambassadors, disciples whose whole lives tell a better story – a movement of missional disciples fully submitted to the teaching of Jesus wherever they are throughout the week.

This is a weighty call. Thank goodness Jesus meets the disciples doubt (v.17) and anxiety with reassurance and inspiration. Whether they worshipped or waived, he commissions them on the basis of his authority and power. It is not after-all our competence, but his power within us that makes this possible. And he reminds them that he will be with them, and us, always, to the very end of the age.

Prayer

Father God, thank you for sending Jesus as our Saviour. Jesus, you have all authority in heaven and on earth, so we receive afresh your call to make disciples. Holy Spirit, empower us as witnesses and ambassadors and inspire us with your presence. Amen.



Week 2

Discipleship

By Lizzie Whitbread

Photo by Wesley Tingey on Unsplash

I Peter 2:21

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

Reflection

This week we ask the question am I courageous enough in my discipleship?

In what ways can I stand up for good even at a risk of suffering for it?

In the book Hope Not Fear* Hassan Akkad writes of how he felt when he first joined the protests in Syria against Assad

'I made a decision I would have to join the protests. I felt a deep conviction that I needed to take part...But it was

difficult I knew already what protesting would mean.'

In the book he goes on to describe his experience of arrest, torture and fleeing across Europe as a refugee and seeking asylum in the UK. His life turned upside down by risking suffering to stand up for good.

This lent let each of us reflect on what we can't just stand by and watch. Ask where is God calling me to stand up for good even at a personal cost. In the face of injustice, discrimination, environmental destruction, greed or so many other issues that we see in our communities.

Prayer

Lord, May we be a people of faith across the Diocese following in your example of suffering for God's kingdom. Amen.



Week 3

Collaboration

By Joy Tubbs

Photo by cottonbro from Pexels

I Corinthians 12:12

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body.

Reflection

Our family has something of a tradition: an Easter project which brings us together intent on 'doing a job' too big for one person; our collaboration will make it possible. Several days filled with rolled up sleeves, good food, laughter, argument on the best way to get the job done and by the close, pride in our endeavours. This year it is a barren piece of difficult to reach garden on the top of a high gabion wall; the vision for its future has been drawn up, now for the work!

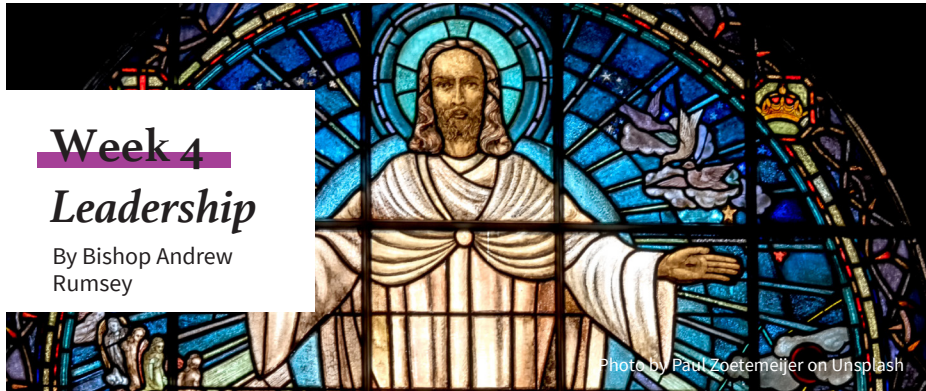
Across the weekend we will all play our part; we belong together, value each other and the best will be drawn from each of us. From Great grandparent to 2-year-old, we will work and play together. I think God

will smile, as we enjoy our togetherness after several years of not being able to gather. I know when the Easter weekend arrives, at some point I will stand back, overwhelmed by my love for those around me. I will pause and give thanks to God for all He has given.

I wonder how much God must love to see His children gather? His Church, one body, collaborating, each bringing different gifts, characteristics and ministries, each His unique once in eternity creation, each contributing to His Kingdom. How much joy must there be in seeing us work and play together, sharing His love?

Prayer

Father God, thank you for making us one amazing body. Help us Father, together, to make your life visible to those who do not know you; to work together for you, humbly, simply, serving. Help us Lord to be one body, to be your church. Amen.



Week 4 Leadership

By Bishop Andrew Rumsey

Photo by Paul Zoetemeijer on Unsplash

Philippians 2:3

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves

Reflection

As I write, Storm Eunice is buffeting Ramsbury House, with sudden, sharp gusts that strain and bow the willow tree in our garden. Anything loose or rootless is prone to being tossed about and broken. Even the strongest trees are, of course, vulnerable to being felled in this kind of wind, but there is no doubt that strong roots help.

Jesus' leadership during turbulent times for God's people Israel was truly radical, in the sense that it addressed the roots – of people's strength and weakness, their motivation and aspiration. Which is why his invitation to discipleship is so costly

and can (as in his encounter with the Rich Young Ruler) feel discouraging: asking, after all, that we surrender everything to God, and allow him alone to lead us. When we do, however, we find that Christ has already given up everything for us – and does not ask of his followers anything the has not already enabled by his life, death, and resurrection.

Christian leadership begins with self-emptying – that hardest and most vital of tasks. Not for our harm, but so that we may be rooted and grounded in that which alone can save us – the love of God in Christ.

Prayer

Leading Lord,
I offer myself in your service this day.
Rooted in your love,
May I show and share with others
The way of life.
Amen.



Week 5 Serving Others

By William Triffitt

Harold Copping, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Luke 10:25-37

27 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and, Love your neighbor as yourself.

Reflection

The Good Samaritan is such a familiar parable, it's easy to glance over the reality of what's going on. A vulnerable dying man, neglected by those who should've nursed him to life, rescued by an enemy. It's a powerful, challenging image.

This parable comes from an expert in the law asking Jesus 'who is this neighbour I'm meant to love'. The word used here for love is the Greek word 'agape'. Agape is an unconditional love, the same word used to describe why Jesus died on the

cross for us. When you love God and your neighbour with this love, it's only natural that you want to serve and give everything for them. That doesn't mean it's easy! But we love because God first loved us (1 John 4:19), and out of love comes service to Him and those around us. The Greek word for service, 'diakonia', is the same word which is most used for ministry in the Bible. It means to wait on tables. Ministry is a result of love. If you want to become better at loving your neighbour, spend more time dwelling in God's love, and you'll find you just can't stop!

Prayer

Lord God,
Help me to share Your love and serve those around me every day.
Amen



Week 6

Embracing Justice

By Revd Jonathan Herbert

Photo by Hans on Pixabay

Amos 5:24

Let justice roll on like a river and righteousness like a never-failing stream.

Reflection

In May this year 'I took the knee' in the rain for 8 minutes in Bournemouth at event organised by Dorset Stand Up to Racism to remember the 8 minutes that a US police officer knelt on the neck of George Floyd. As we knelt, I was filled with a sense of anger at the injustice of our world and so many people's indifference. I thought of the Travellers I know forced to live on the roadside facing daily threats, abuse, and now facing criminalisation as new laws on trespass are passed. I thought of the peoples and creatures of the world affected by the climate emergency, refugees fleeing famine and oppression. The growing numbers of

hungry children in our own land whilst our government commits to developing more nuclear weapons.

The heavy rain falling like great tears seemed to sum up my sorrow. Then as I watched rivulets of water rushing into the gutter those words of Amos spoke to me, ' Let justice roll on like a river and righteousness like a never failing stream' and suddenly I felt invigorated.

Prayer

Christ, alpha, omega, avatar of hope,
Whose heart in spite of all,
Hopes on in spite of us,
Hopes on for us, in spite of us-
Rain, rain on us
untamed, unconstrained
Your wildfire storm of hope
Daniel Berrigan



Week 7

Equipping

By Bishop Karen Gorham

Photo by ABEL MARQUEZ on Unsplash

Psalm 37

Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Reflection

Lent is traditionally a time for preparation, in years gone by it was a time when candidates were prepared for baptism at Easter. John the Baptist preached a baptism of repentance, a setting aside of the old self, and a turning towards a new way, demonstrated by Christ in the wilderness. Confession is a kind of self-emptying, coming before God afresh with open hands seeking to do things Christ's way and not our own. And it is as we come with those open hands that God equips us.

Lent is an ideal time to offer to God those empty hands and to receive the

new things which God wants to give us. It may be a new form of service, it may be for boldness, or it may be to become more Christlike as the Holy Spirit gifts us from within. We read in Psalm 37 'Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.' And remember God is the God of surprises, so that equipping may be unexpected and comes almost always undeserved. Perhaps as your preparation, designate a moment this week to come to God in prayer with open hands.

Prayer

Generous God, you known before we ask what we need to be your disciples, as we come with open hands, equip us to be the people you want us to be, for the glory of your name. Amen.

