



Diocese of
Guildford 

TRANSFORMING CHURCH
TRANSFORMING LIVES

the bishop's lent challenge

2018

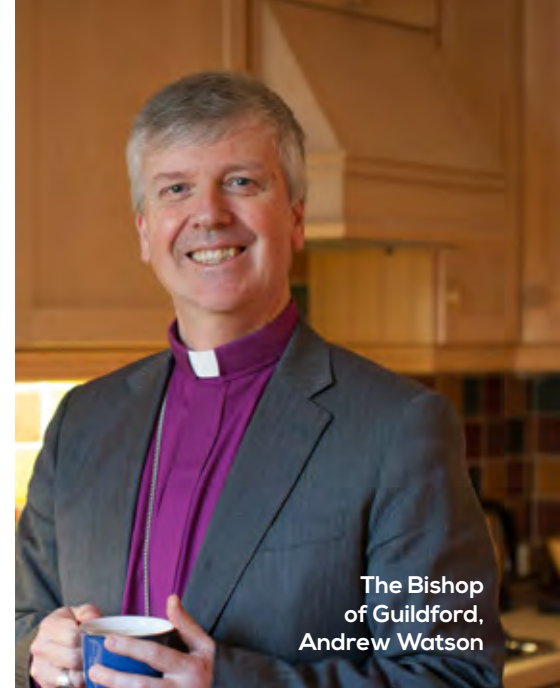
follow the rhythm of life,
and donate to two good causes

'prayerful, confident disciples in daily life'

introduction

Jesus' call to 'Follow me' is an invitation to all kinds of people – men, women, young people and children from every conceivable race, nationality and background. Following Christ doesn't stop with baptism and confirmation, with a conversion experience, or with belonging to a church community. That's just the beginning. And from that point on, it's our responsibility to do all we can to ensure that we grow and deepen our faith, and to encourage the faith of our family and others around us.

The first and most important goal of *Transforming Church, Transforming Lives* is 'For every parish and chaplaincy to develop an appropriate plan for making prayerful, confident disciples in daily life'; and the aim of this year's Lent Challenge is to look at the Rhythms of Life (what is sometimes called a 'Rule of Life') that help to sustain such prayerful, confident discipleship in daily living.



The Bishop
of Guildford,
Andrew Watson

These are summarised in just six words: **Read, Learn, Pray, Tell, Serve, Give**; and each week of Lent you are encouraged to reflect on one such word or 'rhythm' on the way to developing some kind of Rule of Life for yourself. Do feel free to use this material personally, or to share it with a group of friends.

As usual we will also be using Lent as a time of giving, and will be sharing the proceeds between two charities, one local and the other overseas. The local charity is once again the **Bishop of Guildford's Foundation**, which gives grants to churches engaging in community projects in poorer parts of the diocese; while the overseas charity is the **Anglican Communion Fund's project to support children with disabilities in Tanzania** (see back page). We were delighted that nearly £22,000 was raised through the Lent Challenge last year, and it would be fantastic to improve on this in 2018.



week one (february 14th-23rd): read

There is nothing more exciting than watching children open up as they learn to read – sounding out the letters to recognise a word: 'm-at mat', 'd-og dog' and so on. The opportunities are endless once you can read; and so many doors are closed if you can't.

Reading scripture is about much more than simply being able to turn the squiggles into sounds. It's about interpreting, taking to heart, understanding, and allowing what we have read to transform our lives. We may be able to read the words of scripture easily enough – but understanding them, and putting them into practice, is a lifetime's work.

Text and Questions: Acts 8. 26-40 tells of Philip's journey down the 'wilderness road' (subtext – this could be dangerous) where he finds an Ethiopian eunuch, who has just been to worship in Jerusalem, reading Isaiah.

The eunuch may be particularly excited by this book because of the promises to foreigners and eunuchs in Isaiah 56:3-8.

What does Philip ask him (v 30) and what does the eunuch reply? (v31)

How do you read the Bible? How often, when, which versions, which parts of it...? Who helps you to understand it?

Challenge: identify one book of the Bible that you don't know very well. Make a plan for when you will read it and buy a simple commentary to help you.

Prayer: Each day this week, read a verse from Isaiah 53:1-7 slowly. Read it over slowly several times and let the words sink in. Don't try to work out what they mean. Listen 'with the ears of your heart'. Is there a word or phrase which stands out? Let this lead you into prayer.



week two (february 24th to march 2nd): learn

The word for learn has many meanings in the Bible. It can mean gain knowledge, hear about, discover, take to heart or understand. The word 'disciple' literally means 'learner' – so that once we stop learning we stop being a disciple. Becoming a disciple is not like learning to drive or how to make your soufflé rise, though. The journey of discipleship is deeper and takes longer, starting in infancy and going on through the stages of life until the very end.

In the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses constantly reminds the people Israel that they and their children must learn both to love and to 'fear' (i.e. stand in awe of) Yahweh. He is concerned that they learn what it means to be part of the people of God and the kind of attitudes and behaviour that are expected. Many years' later the apostle Paul encourages his readers to do just the same.

Texts and Questions: Deuteronomy 6:1-9; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8.

When did you last learn something new about the nature of God?

What does Paul say to the Thessalonians? What does it mean to 'please God'?

How do we ensure that our children (and those in our church) learn about God?

Challenge: Be aware of your own behaviour for the next seven days and make a note of all the ways in which you acted like a person who had learnt to fear God (and the times when you didn't!)

Prayer: At the end of each day this week, sit quietly alone. Invite God to be with you as you run through the events of the day in your head. Pay attention to your emotions. Ask yourself: 'When did I feel most alive? For what am I most grateful? How might I do things differently another time?' Don't analyse but hand each response to God. Then commit the next day to him.

St Saviour's Special families Support Group

The Bishop of Guildford's Foundation has supported the Special Families Support Group attached to St Saviour's Church in Guildford. The Group works with about 40 families in the Guildford area who have a child or children with a disability or special needs. The group provides a network for parents to build friendships and access mutual support and advice, including information about local agencies and services. The group runs a monthly coffee morning and organises outings for families during school holidays.



Trinity Trust Team Godalming (TTT)

Vital youth work in the Godalming area is being helped by a £6,400 grant. TTT runs a street outreach programme to encourage young people to participate in a range of activities from sports and team building to healthy living. The team also gives advice on CV writing and interview skills and runs sessions on healthy eating and relationships. PC Jim Laverey, Waverley Youth Intervention Officer comments:

"I truly believe that through TTT's work and our work together, many young lives have been changed for the better."



week three (march 3rd-9th): pray

It's hardly surprising that prayer is a constant theme in the Bible and is essential to the life of the disciple and the life of the Church. However, we need to be careful not to turn prayer into an empty ritual or a shopping list; nor should we think that prayer is a way of telling God things that He doesn't know already! Here are two short passages to read and think about.

Texts and Questions: 1 Kings 3:3-14

What does Solomon ask God to give him?

What could our Churches be like if we all prayed his prayer every time we came together for worship?

Can you think about a time when you were taking on a new responsibility and what prayer you prayed?

Matthew 6:1-15

What does Jesus tell his disciples to do when they pray?

How often do you pray in that way – and how easy is it to do?

Jesus says 'your Father knows what you need before you ask him' – so how does that affect what we pray for?

Challenge: cut out the wordiness this week, and focus your prayers on that of Solomon, and on the Lord's Prayer.

Prayer: God, please give me an understanding mind every day this week, in every situation, that I may be able to discern between good and evil . . . Our Father in heaven . . .



ways to donate

Donations to the Bishop's Lent Challenge can be made through JustGiving, or by cheque made payable to 'The Bishop of Guildford's Foundation' sent to BGF, Willow Grange, Jacobs Well, Guildford, GU4 7QS. More information including a guide to JustGiving and Gift Aid forms, can be found at cofeguildford.org.uk/lent18/donate.

week four (march 10th-16th): tell

It is often difficult to share our Christian faith with others, particularly those who know us well. We are anxious that they might reject us; or we maybe worry that we don't know enough about our faith to answer the questions that might come our way. Yet every Christian is called to be a witness – to tell the 'truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth' of what they've seen and heard and experienced – and to do so in their own way.

People don't always listen to lectures or respond to being preached at, but most people love stories, especially ones that ring true. 'How might we best tell our story?' is the starting point of this week's rhythm of life.

Texts and Questions: Luke 7: 18-23

Jesus tells John the Baptist's disciples to 'Go and tell'. What have you seen and experienced in your life as a Christian

which you could tell others about?

Can you explain why you are a Christian?

Luke 9:1-6

How do you think the disciples knew what to preach and how to heal?

In what ways might Jesus' advice to his twelve disciples be of help to you?

Challenge: During this week, work out what your Christian story is. What have you got to 'go and tell' people about? Then – go and tell someone.

Prayer: Light a candle each day this week and spend a few minutes looking at the flame. As you look, imagine the light which glows within you and pray for any you know who haven't experienced that light for themselves.



week five (march 17th-24th): serve

Andy Murray knows how to serve. So do members of the Armed Forces, and Silver Service waiters. But service can all too easily become slavery, so we need to be careful about how we use this kind of language. Christian 'lives of service' do not mean we are brow-beaten, inferior or held captive – rather that we are captivated by the beauty of God and the wonder of being called into His mission towards the world He 'loves so much'.

Texts and Questions: Deuteronomy 10:12-22

What does the 'Lord your God' require of His people Israel?

How might we 'serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul'?

What are the 'other gods' we are tempted to serve?

1 Peter 4. 10-11

What gifts has God given you which can be used in the service of others?

Challenge: Each day this week, go out of your way to serve somebody who isn't expecting it, and see what happens!

Prayer: Jesus Christ, our Servant King, give me grace to serve others with generosity and compassion, and help me to discover that perfect freedom that comes from devoting my life to your service. Amen.

St Mary's East Molesey Community Café

St Mary's Church, East Molesey, has received a grant of £3,000 from the Bishop of Guildford's Foundation to help support the growth of their successful community café. This offers hot and cold drinks and home-baked snacks at affordable prices, with a soft play area for the under-fives on Wednesdays and Thursdays. On Fridays there is a quieter environment for those without young children. The café regularly attracts 50-60 parents and 40-50 children a day. Vicar, the Revd Richard Lloyd, said: "Our café is both a blessing to the community and an opportunity to reach out to those who do not currently come to church."



week six

(march 25th-april 1st): give

The word 'giving' in a church context is often linked with collections and stewardship - and sometimes accompanied by an inward groan or sense of embarrassment. But what if we compared our generosity with the generosity of God towards humankind, especially as we embark on this most Holy of Weeks? Would our attitude change?

The word 'give' occurs more than 70 times in the book of Genesis - the book which tells us about creation and the beginning of the story of God's people. Yahweh gives light, plants, food, land, offspring... showing us that, without doubt, our God is a God of abundant generosity. Paul also speaks of the 'generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich': a brilliant summary of all that Holy Week is about.

Texts and Questions: Genesis 1: 27-31

What has God given you today for which you are thankful?

How might you cultivate a spirit of gratitude and the generosity that flows from that?

2 Corinthians 8:1-9

Paul holds up the churches of Macedonia as models of generosity. Who are our role models when it comes to giving, and how might we become role models to others?

How might Jesus' life, death and resurrection inspire us to live lives of generosity?

Challenge: How might you respond to our Lent appeal this year, so as to bless the disadvantaged in our own communities and further afield?

Prayer: Every time you leave home each day this week, pause with your hand on the door handle and ask God to show you where you can give of yourself this day - whether financially, of your ability or your time.

Forest Estate Community Hub

The Bishop of Guildford's Foundation has provided £2,000 to help The Journey, River Church in Englefield Green, to continue to run a community hub for people living on the nearby Forest Estate. Starting with a family drop-in centre and mental health support network, activities have now include an all-age café garden project where people grow plants and vegetables to take home or use in the hub's cooking club, a monthly, free, community lunch which attracts around 60 people and a sports and crafts club for children aged 7-12.





the project

Anglican Communion Fund supporting children with disabilities in Tanzania

Tanzania remains one of the lowest-income countries in the world. Families with disabled children are amongst the most vulnerable members of Tanzanian society as a result of the stigma still attached to disability in a largely traditional African environment. Recent evidence shows that most mothers have been abandoned by their husbands, friends and community making it almost impossible for them to work and socially integrate. This project is a continuation of a successful collaboration between the Anglican and Catholic Dioceses in Morogoro. The collaboration has already seen success with its initial programme to raise awareness in the area to the needs of the disabled community.

The aim of this project is to give these families greater social integration and economic empowerment by identifying and training them to run and develop projects that will provide them with a sustainable income. Project teams will help to identify activities that align with the families, the village interests and the skills of those involved. Families will be supported on an ongoing basis to ensure a successful outcome.

The Archbishop of Canterbury's Anglican Communion Fund was set up over 20 years ago to support and encourage Anglican communities worldwide. The charity gives grants to strategic initiatives and financial aid in times of crisis; impacting the lives of people throughout the Anglican Communion who are often living in the poorest and most threatened parts of the world.