

SHARING THE GOOD NEWS: everyday, everyone, everywhere

Let's cry out to God this Easter, for a greater availability of each one of us to share the good news, caught up in **JESUS' BRIGHT IDEA**. Naturally infectious, supernaturally blessed, unexpectedly fruitful and causing ripples of life and love across our Diocese. Voices from across the years, older and more recent urge more of us to be witnesses

"What an insidious reversal of the biblical command to be salt and light in the world. The rabbit-hole Christian remains insulated and isolated from the world when he/she is commanded to penetrate it. How can we be the salt of the earth if we never get out of the saltshaker?" REBECCA MANLEY PIPPERT

"It didn't take the goat-herder a long time. Whatever he learned he went out and shared every day, whatever he learned he went out and shared, and in that way the first church was planted in his home" [IN A MISSIONAL CONTEXT], JERRY TROUSDALE (*MIRACULOUS MOVEMENTS*) argues Jesus chose a time consuming disciple making strategy – yet **"within seventy years, the cadre of people around Jesus had taken His good news into every corner of the Roman world."** He focused on a few to win many, engaging an entire family or group, not just the individual expecting the hardest places to yield the greatest results.



STEPHEN VERNEY (*FIRE IN COVENTRY*) – **"evangelism is the proclaiming of good news about Jesus ... but it is not instructing people about something which I know and they don't. It is rather helping them to discover what they already know and to become what they really are. The first principle of evangelism must be that the Spirit of truth is already within the person whom I am approaching as an evangelist. The person and I are going to discover the truth together.... The evangelist will have to emerge from the encounter a changed person.... What we have got to do is to put ourselves together at the disposal of God, so that we are no longer 'us' and 'them', but a company who may be grasped together by the Spirit of truth."**

JESUS' BRIGHT IDEA: Jesus was **ALIVE!** And over the next forty days, he visited his friends. 500 in all. One minute he was doing **IMPOSSIBLE** things, like appearing out of nowhere in a locked room. The next he was doing ordinary, **everyday** things, like cooking fish at the seaside. It was all down to his brand-new resurrected **BODY**, a body built to last for ever. 'I want you to tell my story to **everyone**, everywhere,' Jesus told his disciples. 'Make them disciples too. Baptise them in the name of the **FATHER**, and the **SON** and the **HOLY SPIRIT**. Teach them everything that I have taught you. And I will be with you as you do it. For ever. Always.' But how was he going to do that, exactly – be with them **everywhere** and always? This is how:....."

BOB HARTMAN, *'THE LINK-IT-UP BIBLE'*

Of the Gen Z students turning to Christ in Toulouse, France recently TONY WILSON reports in Premier Christianity, March 2025 that souls are "won" for the Lord through strong and profound friendships. New Christians are then built into strong disciples through a programme (known as the **five vitamins) teaching them how to pray, build fraternity, transform the mind, evangelise and serve the poor. Finally, when they graduate, they are "sent" into the world to make new disciples wherever they end up.**

Witness: "Jesus's final words to his apprentices were, **"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."** ... to tell others the good news of Jesus, through the practice of witness. To do this **we must become people of hospitality in a culture of hostility. We must embody and extend the love, welcome, warmth, and generosity of the inner life of God. We must open our homes, our tables, and our lives to 'the last, the least, and the lost'.**

JOHN MARK COMER IN "PRACTICING THE WAY"

"I glanced down at my arms and despite the heat of the day I pushed my sleeves up and saw that goose bumps had formed. I shuddered at the intensity of the presence of heaven in the market square and, like my dream encounter with the angel, I found it almost hard to breathe. Yet with every breath I struggled to exhale I felt Jesus walk amongst the crowds by His Spirit and tenderly touch and reach out to those who stood gathered to hear me. It was utterly beautiful to see him, yet not physically, but spiritually mingle shoulder to shoulder one moment in the crowd and then fly like a dove to the next, descending on the hungry people who had gathered to hear the 'famous' Philip."

CHRIS DUFFETT IN "PHILIP: A NOVEL"

Church: C = Clergy; R = Reader; **Schools** - All listed schools are CoFE schools - H = Headteacher; EH = Executive Headteacher **Chaplaincy** CH chaplain

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 Alcester Deanery AD – Katie Cross	2 Churches of Arden <i>C – in vacancy;</i> <i>interviews 1&2 April</i>	3 Wilmcote CoFE Primary H – Anita Twyman	4 everyday ~ in the ordinary	5 Heart of England Benefice <i>C – in vacancy</i>
LENT 5 6 Bidford-on-Avon Primary H – Andrew Morris	7 Salford Priors Primary H – Helen Bowen	8 <u>GRANTS COMMITTEE</u>	9 Temple Grafton Primary H – Tara Yorke	10 <u>BISHOP’S STRATEGIC</u> <u>INTEGRATION GROUP AND</u> <u>CORE STAFF TEAM</u>	11 everyone ~ his story, history	12 Dunnington Primary H – Monica Gamble
PALM SUNDAY 13 <i>Luke 19.28-40</i> Wilmcote with Billesley <i>C – in vacancy</i>	14 <i>Fragrance of perfume</i> <i>John 12.1-11</i> Alcester Minster and Mission Hub C – Katie Cross	15 <i>We would see Jesus</i> <i>John 12.20-36</i> Coughton Primary H – Alex Kolb	16 <i>Full extent of his love</i> <i>John 13.1-22</i> Alcester St Nicholas Primary H – Laura Newell	17 <i>Love one another</i> <i>John 13.1-17, 31b-35</i> Wootton Waven Primary H – Karen O’Shea	18 GOOD FRIDAY <i>John 18.1-end of 19</i> <i>It is finished</i>	19 <i>John 19.38-end</i> <i>In the garden a new tomb</i>
EASTER DAY 20 <i>John 20.1-18</i> <i>Rabboni! (Teacher)</i>	EASTER MONDAY 21 <i>Matthew 28.8-15</i> <i>Go to Galilee:</i> <i>there they’ll see me</i>	22 Beaudesert with Henley- in-Arden & Ullenhall C – Cath Rindl	23 Henley-in-Arden Primary H – Kate Adcock	24 Arden Valley Benefice – C – Jo Parker	25 everywhere ~ he is with us always	26 Daniel Corlett, associate minister at Alceseter supporting rural leaders
EASTER 2 27 Arden Marches Benefice C – Kate Mier	28 Mappleborough Green Primary H – Alex Finch	29 Studley St Mary Primary H – Rebecca Gordon	30 <u>DIOCESAN ADVISORY</u> <u>COMMITTEE (DAC)</u>		‘everyday, everyone, everywhere’ - summing up the relevance of the Gospel for all	

PRAYER DIARY

Prayer

Rejoice, heavenly powers!
Sing choirs of angels!
O Universe, dance around God’s throne!
Jesus Christ, our King, is risen!
Sound the victorious trumpet of
salvation

from *The Exsultet*
(the Easter Song of Praise)

Go forth and set
the world on fire

IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA

BEING HEALTHY CHURCH

“It certainly didn’t take a worldwide research project to convince people that church growth is inconceivable without evangelism. How else could the church grow if not through the process of sharing the gospel to bring more and more people into the Body of Christ? This process is generally called “evangelism” CHRISTIAN SCHWARZ

SPECIFIC DAYS – APRIL 2025

1 - Alcester Deanery –We give thanks to God for our two new incumbents, Jo and Cath, who will bring new life, not only to their benefices, but also across the deanery in their areas of specialism. We continue to pray for the **remaining benefices in vacancy** and ask for God's leading in choosing the right people. We pray for our Church schools as they gather in our churches to celebrate Easter. AD Katie Cross. Deanery Lay Chair – Sue Jacques

2 – Churches of Arden – Aston Cantlow, Claverdon with Preston Bagot with Wootton Wawen Interregnum - the interviews for our new Priest-in-Charge are scheduled for 1/2 April. We pray for all those attending the Alpha Course at Claverdon which concludes on 9 April –Assoc Minister, James Holden; C (PTO) Phil Hanson R (PTO) – Norrie Moore

5 – Heart of England Benefice Interregnum - We give thanks for the support of our retired clergy who have made a huge difference to sustaining ministry and mission in the Vacancy. We continue to pray for an appointment to the Rector position. We give thanks for our four church schools, we are grateful for the new Headteachers but praying again for a new Head Teacher for Salford Priors. Assoc C – Sheila Bridge; R – Allan Stevens

13 – Wilmcote with Billesley Interregnum - seeking an Associate Priest as Minister in Charge.

14 – Alcester Minster & Rural Mission Hub – For Alcester Minster benefice (*also see right*). We give thanks to God for continued growth in our churches, seeing new people coming, faith deepening and a new worshipping community forming on Great Alne Park. Please pray for wisdom in appointing to our House for Duty post and our upcoming ALPHA course which will begin after Easter. Assoc – Daniel Corlett; Curate - Julie Lindsey Reader- Judith Cox, Clergy with PTO - Julian Davey, Stave Tash, David Hall; Children and Families Worker - Jen Hopkins, Preaching Team – Nick Payne, Paul Cross, Stuart Tilsley, Jane Cornwall, Andrew Deeks, Emma Berry, Tricia Berry.

22 – Beaudesert, with Henley-in-Arden and Ullenhall - We are grateful for the community spirit, heart for Jesus and the many helpers eager to pour God's love out to the people here. Pray for inspiration in how we can better meet the needs of our children, youth and their families and for the Mother's Day and Easter events we are putting on.

Cath Rindl, rector from 1 February 2025; R (PTO) – Malcolm Aldridge, Judith Cox

24 - Arden Valley – We give thanks for the recent refurbishment of the church hall in Langley; for our family services in Norton Lindsey and Snitterfield and our Open the Book team. For our older friends and neighbours, we give thanks for those in good health and pray for all operations and treatments to take place as planned. Retired Clergy (PTO) – Richard Livingston; R Emeritus (PTO) – Joan Wilkinson; Anna Chaplain - Celia Spiers

27 – Arden Marches Benefice – Giving thanks for the ministry of Kate Mier, and responsiveness of the churches at Studley, Mappleborough Green, Preston Bagot and Oldberrow. R (PTO) – Alan Greathead, Joan Lock Pat Wheeler; R – Joy Holland.

Assoc = Associate; PP = Permission to preach; PTO = Permission to Officiate;

C = Clergy; R = Reader

More from Alcester, for your prayers

Alcester Minster Rural Mission Hub We're thankful for teams from across the diocese progressing through Greenhouse to start new missional activities. Please pray for them and those considering joining Greenhouse in June - that they will discern God's leading as they pioneer new ways of being church.

www.ruralmissionhub.org

Keeping the flame of faith burning is still our work...

THE FOURFOLD GOSPEL

"It was about the end of the first century that another collection of Christian writings began to take shape and to circulate among the churches. This was the fourfold Gospel. Mark's Gospel was published at first in the church of Rome, Matthew's in the churches of Syria and Palestine, John's in the church of Ephesus. Luke's presumably had a more widespread circulation as soon as it was released for general publication. But from the second century onwards we find the Catholic Church using all four of these gospels, and no other. By the time of Irenaeus (180), the fourfold character of the Gospel canon had become for orthodox Christians one of the accepted facts of life, as axiomatic as the four cardinal points of the compass ... there is something to be said for the view that the gathering of the fourfold Gospel was accomplished in Ephesus as an almost immediate sequel to the Gospel according to St John."

FF BRUCE 'THE SPREADING FLAME', p. 225

MICHAEL FROST, in *Mission is the Shape of Water* (2023) says that when FF Bruce wrote his early history of Christianity 'he found himself torn between focusing on the church as an institution or retelling the story of the Holy Spirit's work among his people.' He was haunted by the words of William Inge, the dean of St Paul's Cathedral, who said, '*The real history of Christianity is the history of a great spiritual tradition.*' By this, Inge was referring to the pattern of the Spirit's unceasing witness, even, at times, if it is only through a small remnant of the faithful. Bruce titled his book *The Spreading Flame* because, as he saw it, the advancement of Christianity was like that of a growing wildfire.'

He writes, "*the redeeming message of Christianity burst as a great light on the people that walked in darkness.*" ... "*Keeping the flame of faith burning is still our work. How brightly it burns depends on how dark the world around it is.*"

PRAYER IN THE TRINITY

In *'The Essence of Prayer'*, Ruth Burrows speaks of *'Prayer in the Trinity'*, and her developing life of prayer.

She writes, "The only form of piety that made any appeal to me was what I would now call biblical theology. I read and reread the Gospels; prayed and prayed the stories and dialogues, seeing myself always as the person Jesus was confronting, and begging Jesus for the same graces of cleansing and healing: for sight, living water, food, faith, love ... **I also prayed his own prayers: in the course of his ministry, at the last supper and in the garden, and, of course, these prayers were to the Father. Often, I used to think of those nights he spent alone praying to his Father, and wanted to identify myself with this prayer.... The New Testament became prayer. I realized that God spoke to me, revealed Himself to me in these texts, and my prayer was my response.**"



"It might seem that all this is only a human activity: a human person addressing the Son, Jesus, and with him, addressing the Father. And so it is. But, if we look closely, we see clearly that this 'activity' simply cannot derive merely from ourselves. Often enough, it runs clean counter to natural perception, to what our senses tell us. Flesh and blood do not reveal these things, nor enable us to respond. **There is a force, a Spirit within, that prompts,**

urges, enables us to ignore our own natural estimation of how things stand, and choose, instead, to believe. Nothing runs so counter to nature as the experience of our spiritual poverty, and a practical love for it such as this can only be done by the work of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus.... **'because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.'** (Romans 5.5)"

"We are being led, not by nature, but by the Spirit, for we are indeed God's children and the Spirit inspires our own spirit to cry out in confidence: 'Father, my dear Father.' (Romans 8.14-16).

It is the Spirit who continually upholds our natural weakness with divine strength; who is always praying deep within us even when our heart seems mute, uttering our most authentic desires, desires that we hardly know we have."



"THE AUTHENTIC SIGN"

Much of the unusual communicative power of the Celtic Christian movement was attributable to the *ethos* of its communicators and its communities. Aristotle believed that when auditors hear an advocate speaking, they are asking (perhaps subconsciously) whether the speaker can be trusted and believed. Aristotle observed that, in complex matters – like statecraft and religion – in which even the community of specialists cannot agree on what is true, the non-specialist public accepts "probability." The public accepts the idea, case or cause that seems most probably true, and their judgement of the idea is influenced by their judgement of the speaker; *the advocate they see and perceive as most trustworthy, and believable is probably communicating truth.... "the authentic sign."*

from HOW CELTIC CHRISTIANITY
COMMUNICATED THE GOSPEL
GEORGE HUNTER III

- Each month **we focus on a different Deanery; this month it is Alcester.** For May it will be Fosse Deanery, Coventry South Deanery is in June, and Shipston Deanery is in July. I look forward to receiving updates from area deans and clergy, and anyone else with specific prayer requests.
- **Coming up – the Themes for the next three months are New Worshipping Communities (May), Net Zero/Creation Care (June) and Generous Giving (July)**

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