

St. James Parish Newsletter

22nd November 2020



Our Mission Statement

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind...and your neighbour as yourself. Matthew 22:37-38

Sunday Podcasts

of each Sunday Morning Service are available after the service on YouTube.

A time to speak

Parish Podcast on the YouTube channel.

The address for both is at the bottom of the page.

SASS

Throughout the pandemic we have continued to support our asylum seeker and refugee friends. We are grateful for your positive response to appeals we have made over the years.

We would like to put together Christmas gift bags for the children and would be very grateful if you can provide any of the following items:

coloured pencils & felt tip pens, crayons, chocolates for children, drawing pads, picture & story books for children up to age 10, or money for us to buy whatever else is needed.

Please contact Sandra (01792 473569) or Margaret(07719916704)
Many thanks.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

This Sunday is affectionately and traditionally called 'Stir up Sunday'. It is an informal term in Anglican churches for the last Sunday before the season of Advent. It gets its name from the beginning of the collect for the day in the Book of Common Prayer, which begins with the words, "Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people". But over the years it has become associated with the custom of making Christmas puddings on that day.

But there is a serious side to this. It is a call to action. To get stirred up about our faith. As we look across the religious landscape of Britain we can see that Christianity is slowly but surely getting edged out of public consciousness. Recently I found out that more and more people don't know what a Vicar is, and recent surveys shows a stunning ignorance of the person of Jesus Christ, with many just seeing it as another form of swearing.

But non-Christians are not my main concern. They are not so much rejecting Christianity but just showing their ignorance of it. No, my concern is that Christians themselves are wishy-washy, following a dumbed-down anodyne version of the faith, which is so severely compromised that it is virtually indistinguishable from the world around it. Many have so camouflaged themselves with worldliness that they have blended into the pagan and secular culture and no longer stand out from or against it. What we are left with is a very superficial version of it.

This week I have been on jury duty. As we deliberated as a jury to try and reach a decision on the case, a Muslim man stood up and asked to be excused for several minutes because it was time for prayer. He didn't impose this on us, or expect us to stay silent. But he had to stop and make his offering. So laying his jacket on the floor as a temporary prayer mat, and facing east, he said his prayers while the rest of us talked quietly together.

I was very impressed. This man had the courage of his convictions. I may not agree with his religion but I am impressed by his devotion. I wish I could say that about many Christians today, many of whom don't even come to church when there is an opportunity.

Jesus once said that he expected his disciples to be salt and light. But instead, all too many of us have lost our saltiness and hidden our light under bushels and baskets, afraid of offending anyone who may not share our belief. We are cowardly, compromised, and too much in love with the spirit of our age. That Muslim man however was not afraid to practise his religion even if it meant the risk of looking foolish or causing a minor inconvenience.

Why are we not like that? It doesn't mean getting into people's faces or becoming overly religious, obnoxious or super-spiritual. But it does mean not being afraid to be noticed, not being afraid to talk or practise our faith, and it certainly means being prayerful and spiritual. So we desperately need to be stirred up once again. To consider what it is that we actually have in Jesus. He is the pearl of great price, He is the King of kings and Lord of Lords. He is the Son of God, incarnate, who came to demonstrate the love of God in His willingness to take our sin on Himself and to die on the cross to rescue us from its deathly power. That is something to get excited about and deeply grateful for. So my prayer is that the Holy Spirit would once again fall on His Church and stir it up again. Here is that wonderful prayer for Stir up Sunday:

Stir up, O Lord, the wills of your faithful people; that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may by you be plenteously rewarded; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God bless you all.

Mark

Readings:

Ezekiel 34: 11 - 16, 20 - 24 Psalm 95: 1 - 7 Ephesians 1: 15 - end Matthew 25: 31 - end

THIS NEWSLETTER IS AVAILABLE ON THE PARISH WEBSITE:

www.stjamesswansea.org.uk

St. James Sunday Services on YouTube are available here:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCoNVEa6r8mEr_KnOkSv6qQA/

The Vicar's New blog can be found here: sonofzebedee.blogspot.com

Ecochurch

Last week we started to hear a bit about the work of Living Streets Uplands in our community. Before continuing with news of the projects, I want to remind us why, as a community of Christians in Uplands, this is something we should be hearing about in the Church newsletter.

One of the sections to consider as an Ecochurch is Community and Global engagement. Even in the middle of a global pandemic, when we can't consider improving our buildings, this is something we can do. Engaging with our community is an expression of faith. It shows us another way to show that we care about what goes on outside our church gates. That we don't live in a holy bubble.

Like looking after asylum seekers or litter picking, trying to make the area greener and more pleasant, or in a myriad of other ways, churches are able to demonstrate the love of Christ for all and that love becomes a seed bed for those who are seeking.....
Jenny Wyatt

Five Questions

This week we welcome another contributor to Five Questions:

1. What is your name? - Gwen Bailey
2. Where were you born? - St Athans, Bridgend
3. What is your earliest memory of Church? - Going occasionally to Evensong with my parents at St David's, Neath.
4. When did the Christian faith become important to you? - I think the Lord was nudging me from an early age but I was too busy growing up. It wasn't until I was in my forties, during some very sad and difficult years, when I worked with a lovely Christian friend, who gently told me how much God loved me and she encouraged me to give my heart to Jesus. Since then that wonderful gift of faith has shown me that God is for us, always has been and always will be.
5. What is your favourite Bible verse and why? - That's difficult because the Bible is full of so many wonderful promises of God's love for us and so it's difficult to choose just one, so here are two!

Jeremiah 29:13 You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all of your heart: yes I say you will find me.'

John 14:23 'Whoever loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and my Father and I will come to him and live with him.'

(The following words were not written by me but are 'spot on' for what I believe):

Just as each new day presents us with a different challenge, the Lord reveals the beauty of His character, the fulfilment of His promises and the tender provision of His grace. We don't know what today may bring, but we do know that God will amaze us with His unfailing, ever-new compassion. The depths of the valleys just make the mountain tops that much more breath taking.

Ecclesiastical joke

An old nun, who was living in a convent next to a construction site, noticed the coarse language of the workers and decided to spend some time with them to correct their ways. She decided she would take her lunch, sit with the workers and talk with them. She put her sandwich in a brown bag and walked over to the spot where the men were eating. Sporting a big smile, she walked up to the group and asked:

"And do you men know Jesus Christ? They shook their heads and looked at each other... somewhat confused. Then one of the workers looked up into the steelworks and yelled out, "Anybody up there know Jesus Christ?" One of the steelworkers yelled down, "Why?" The worker yelled back, "Cause his wife's here with his lunch."

Acts of the Apostles

Every Tuesday for an hour we are looking at the Book of Acts via Zoom. Interested? Email the Vicar at the address below.

Please let him know if you want to join anytime and he will send you an invite.

Important dates

Tuesday 24th November 7pm
Zoom Bible Study The Book of Acts

Thursday 17th December 7pm
Zoom congregational meeting

Quick quotes by G.K.Chesterton

"Fairy tales do not tell children that dragons exist. Children already know that dragons exist. Fairy tales tell children the dragons can be killed."

"The Bible tells us to love our neighbours, and also to love our enemies; probably because generally they are the same people."

"The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult; and left untried."

Quick quips:

What's the best thing about Switzerland?
I don't know, but the flag is a big plus.

Did you hear about the claustrophobic astronaut? He just needed a little space.

Why don't scientists trust atoms?
Because they make up everything.

Why did the chicken go to the séance?
To get to the other side.

What sits at the bottom of the sea and twitches?
A nervous wreck.

Contact information

For all contributions to the newsletter please email the Vicar, Mark, at: stjamesuplands1@googlemail.com

Home phone number: (01792) 470532

The Parish Website can be found at: www.stjamesswansea.org.uk