

# NEWSLETTER

19<sup>th</sup> February 2026

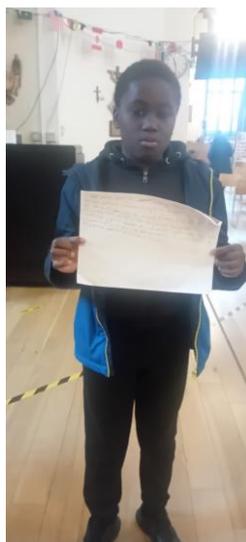


**Dear Everyone - Greetings to you all**

**Transfiguration: Points from Ibezim's sermon:** At the Transfiguration God revealed the true nature of Jesus, Mark 9 v2-10. Jesus took Peter, James and John to the mountain. They left the chaos of the world where he was transfigured in front of them. Moses and Elijah came to him; Moses representing the Law; Elijah, the prophets; Jesus being the fulfilment of both. God spoke to Peter, James and John, saying, "This is my beloved Son, whom I love. Listen to him", revealing the divinity of Christ, showing Jesus as fully man and fully God. We see in this what the Old Testament is pointing us towards. Moses too went up into the mountain away from the people (*for 40 days where his face became radiant from being in God's presence. Exodus 34:28-35*) and, hearing God's voice, received the Commandments. We too must separate our lives away to be nearer to God, to build a strong relationship where separation is very important, to be like Jesus and Moses to leave the cares of the world. If we draw nearer to God for self-examination, we can hear his voice and act with love and forgiveness.

Ibezim pointed out, that we are coming into Lent when we can search who God is and ask ourselves, "What is Jesus to you?" Can we try to be like him and show compassion, mercy and love. "Can you achieve this".

**Sam on Transfiguration:** As it was half term, most of our Sunday School members were away. But Sam who comes every Sunday with his mother Modupe told us what he had learnt about the Transfiguration. He said: "I learnt about the event of the Transfiguration which was when Jesus went to the mountain-top to pray. He had also brought 3 of his disciples to come with him. Then whilst Jesus was praying, his disciples saw two other figures beside him who they recorded were Elijah and Moses talking to Jesus. Transformation means a complete change of form or appearance into a more beautiful or spiritual state. Mountains are important and symbolic places in the Bible where people met with God. We know this because people had seen and heard of the event". Thank you, Sam, for telling the story of the Transfiguration so clearly.



**Birthday Celebrations:** Last Sunday we had three joyful birthday celebrations. It was the turn of Sylvia, Shaniv and Ash to have Happy Birthday greetings sung to them and prayers for the coming year for their health and happiness. Needless to say we had two delicious cakes to enjoy at coffee time. And thank you for them.



**Anita:** Please send lots of prayers for Anita who has had an operation this week in the Royal Free. She is making a good recovery, and, with luck, Simon will be bringing her home in a day or two.

**World Day of Prayer:** As you know the annual “World Day of Prayer” is taking place on, **Friday 6<sup>th</sup> March at 2.00pm in our church.** Rose, who is on the committee for our Area Churches, is organising it to be truly representative of Nigeria. Rose is hoping that our Nigerian congregation members will wear their traditional dress and contribute some Nigerian dishes. There will be displays of Art and music from Nigeria that many of us are familiar with. The service will be great and one we are looking forward to. Please support this service. It will be one everyone will enjoy.

The World Day of Prayer is a global ecumenical movement led by Christian women who welcome you to join in prayer and action for peace and justice. The 2026 materials and service has been compiled by the women of Nigeria so it couldn't be held in a better venue. The theme is, “I Will Give You Rest” and brings us a powerful invitation drawn from Matthew 11:28-30. At a time when people worldwide are carrying heavy burdens, our Nigerian sisters offer profound insights into finding rest in God.



**Listening and Learning, Bible Study:** The date of the next session is Thursday 05<sup>th</sup> March.

**Coffee:** As usual our coffee morning is from 10.30am-12noon. Do come and enjoy coffee, cake and a chat.

**Toddler Group:** The Toddler group is not meeting this week as it is half term. **We badly need more helpers for this group.** If you are willing to give some time to help between 9.30 and 11.30am on Tuesdays, please contact Kamran. ([Kamran@gg-pc.co.uk](mailto:Kamran@gg-pc.co.uk))

**Malcolm Guite Writes about his sonnet of the Transfiguration:** Malcolm Guite always has a poem about the great Christian events. At this special time he has written about “The Transfiguration” (which is below) when he says, “The Transfiguration is usually celebrated on August 6th, but is also sometimes remembered on this Sunday before Lent, which is a good time for it too, as I believe the glimpse of glory in Christ they saw on the mount of the Transfiguration was given in order to sustain the disciples through darkness of Good Friday. Indeed it is for a disciple, looking back at the transfiguration from Good Friday, that I have voiced the poem”.

His poem is taken from his collection “Sounding the Seasons”, published by Canterbury Press and is now now also out on Kindle. He generously always says to us, “Please feel free to make use of these sonnets in church services and to copy and share them”.

**The season of Lent is almost here:** The Bishop of Sodor and Man, The Rt Revd Tricia Hillas, who used to be Chaplain to the House of Commons, shares with us a prayer for the beginning of Lent that people might like to use as a personal Lenten prayer. It is printed below.

**The Revd Dr Helen Paynter:** has written an article (printed below) on “The Weaponising of the Bible”. Dr Paynter is Director of Theological Education, Tutor in Biblical Studies, and Executive Director of the Centre for the Study of Bible and Violence, for Bristol Baptist College. She is also attached to St Paul’s Cathedral. Her most recent book is **Blessed are the Peacemakers: A biblical theology of human violence.** Her writing is in the context of how many today, clearly have not read the Bible and are “weaponising” what they think it says; using it for their own political ends. These people are given much publicity in our media, mainly because it makes for cheap sensationalist headlines and gives them a false sense of power.

This is alarming, especially that many who talk publicly about it clearly have no knowledge of it at all, especially the New Testament, “The Magnificat” and/or “The Sermon on the Mount” and know little, if anything, about the life and teaching of Jesus and the kind of role model he was. They are blatantly using it against immigrants, asylum seekers and anyone who doesn’t look, in their narrow terms, “British”. And this is so very dangerous. The phrase the “weaponisation of the Bible” is coming into use by many of us who are concerned about how it is used to harm and damage individuals and groups. Please read what Dr Paynter says. It would be very interesting to know what you think.

**Reading for Lent?** I don't know if the books suggested below by myself and Jenny are of interest to you, They are by noted and recommended authors, who will take you deeply into thought, asking questions and bring greater awareness and questioning. Also any poets or sonnets by Malcolm Guite would be good to read. Perhaps Audio books or Blogs are of more interest. If so, I would like to recommend a BBC Radio 4 Blog recorded by Professor John Barton, who is a noted scholar, priest and Theologian, whose most famous book is, "The History of the Bible". The BBC has recorded an omnibus edition of five of his broadcasts on "The History of the Bible". It is really worth listening to. It can be found on: BBC Sounds <https://share.google/5hBd0Nin3lYaF0mfo>

If you have any books you would like to recommend, please let me know and I will keep adding them to the list. If you would like to borrow any of them please ask me.

**With love and good wishes- Sally**



### **A prayer for the beginning of Lent from the Bishop of Sodor and Man.**

Holy and Merciful God,  
 As we step toward this Lenten journey,  
 we do not pretend we are stronger than we are.  
 You have met your people in deserts before.  
 Meet us there too.  
 Strip away what is false in us  
 not to shame us, but to free us.  
 Quiet the noise that keeps us distracted  
 from the steady pulse of your love.  
 Teach us to hunger for what truly nourishes.  
 Teach us to release what weighs us down.  
 Teach us to trust that repentance is not punishment but return.  
 Knit us together in courage and compassion.  
 Let this season be honest.  
 Let it be gentle.  
 Let it be transformative.  
 And when Easter light breaks in,  
 may we recognize it because we have learned how to wait in the dark.  
 In the name of Christ,  
 who walked the wilderness before us  
 and walks it still with us.

**Give me this power - part 1**

## Reflections on the weaponisation of Scripture from Helen Paynter

“Give me this power”

So spoke a certain Simon Magus, as he watched the apostles wielding the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8). His request rewarded him with a rebuke from Peter, and the enduring shame of having an ecclesiastical crime (Simony) named after him.

While, strictly, Simony is about the selling or buying of clerical office, its namesake’s original instinct was even baser – the desire to use spiritual power for his own advantage. In my own research over the last ten years I have seen this instinct at work in what I term the “weaponisation of Scripture”.

The Bible has two types of power. As a Christian, I believe that God speaks through it and uses it to change lives. I term this “vertical power” – it is transcendent. The other power, operating “horizontally”, is not derived from God, but depends upon the trust and confidence which believers place upon the text. And this can result in the weaponisation of Scripture, where someone (usually with a measure of spiritual authority) preys upon a believer’s desire to be obedient to God’s word, and manipulates its presentation to them in order to manipulate them.

The 500th anniversary of the publication of a banned Bible might remind us that a very powerful way to control people with Scripture is to prevent or restrict their access to it. That facilitates the control of the narrative. Plantation owners, for example, handed their slaves Bibles with the exodus account completely excised, lest they learn of God’s active intervention on behalf of another slave people. Or, to use another example, the Magnificat has been banned many times on account of its revolutionary claim that God will humble the arrogant and bring down the rich.

I’m off to re-read Mary’s song now.

### Transfiguration



For that one moment, ‘in and out of time’,  
On that one mountain where all moments meet,  
The daily veil that covers the sublime  
In darkling glass fell dazzled at his feet.  
There were no angels full of eyes and wings  
Just living glory full of truth and grace.  
The Love that dances at the heart of things

Shone out upon us from a human face  
And to that light the light in us leaped up,  
We felt it quicken somewhere deep within,  
A sudden blaze of long-extinguished hope  
Trembled and tingled through the tender skin.  
Nor can this blackened sky, this darkened scar  
Eclipse that glimpse of how things really are.

*The painting above is artist Rebecca Merry's response to the poem. Rebecca is well known for her paintings in egg tempora and in responding to this 'iconic' moment in the life of Christ she has drawn on her training in icon painting. She writes:*

*"I wanted to stay with the idea of the circle for an important event in the life of Christ, and the theme of cycle and circle that is a theme of your book, "The Changing of the Seasons, the Unchanging Nature of God" ( published by Canterbury Press). Underneath is the circle and the cross, a symbol also in Egyptian hieroglyphs of the city but of course the cross (or crucifix) is the meeting point of two worlds, heaven and earth, and the division of the upper circle as light and the lower as dark also symbolises this. The red is a recurrent themes of all the illustrations but here it implies Christ's blood (and sacrifice) but also the life blood and life giver that God/Christ is to us all, giving light to the world".*

### Suggested Books for Lent

In last week's newsletter I offered some books you might be interested in reading for Lent. I asked if anyone had a favorite book they could recommend. In response Jenny sent her recommendations which I add to the ones already listed. I have also added a BBC Sounds Podcast as mentioned above of Professor John Barton's book, "The History of the Bible", <https://share.google/5hBd0Nin3lYaF0mfo>

Jenny's recommendations are:

**'Failure': Bishop Emma Ineson (SPCK 2022).** This is a helpful and accessible Christian reflection on 'what Jesus says about sin, mistakes and messing stuff up'. It's so refreshing to read something that's so realistic without being at all judgemental.

**'Saying Yes to Life': Ruth Valerio (SPCK, 2020).** This is a thoughtful reflection on themes in Genesis 1, describing how they relate to environmental, ethical and social concerns that have a global impact, and suggesting how we as followers of Jesus might respond.

**'The Heart's Time': Janet Morley (SPCK 2011).** I keep coming back to this one. It's a wonderful collection of poems, not all written from a Christian perspective: there's one for each weekday of Lent, each accompanied by a short commentary. Do try it even if you don't think you enjoy poetry - you might be surprised!!



**Last Week's Suggestions:**

**Bewilderment: A Spiritual Guide** by Robert Atwell former Bishop of Exeter – Canterbury Press

**How we Learn to be Brave: Decisive Moments in Life and Faith** by Mariann Edgar Budde Episcopal Bishop of Washington  
– AuthenticMedia.co.uk

**I Julian** by Claire Gilbert – Hodder and Stouton

**Journalling the Psalms** by Paula Gooder – Eden Christian Book Specialists

**Listening to the Music of the Soul** by Bishop Guli Franci-Dehqani – SPCK publishing

**Women of Holy Week: An Easter journey in nine stories** by Paula Gooder – Church House Publishing  
*(This one is great for younger readers)*



### **How We Are**

As always, we send our love and prayers to all those who are sick. Please continue to pray for them that they gain in strength and good health; that God’s healing hands may be upon them.

We send our love and prayers to Ruth, Thomas and Elizabeth and the rest of her family. Ruth is at the moment caring for her mother after the death of her father.

We pray for Anita who is in hospital for an operation. We pray for a complete recovery for her and send our love to her and Simon.

We pray for Daniel, for Keith, Relia and Myfanwy; for Chuba Agbim, for Eunice Adiele, recovering from an eye operation, for Gideon Onwutalu, Sir Edmund Onochie, Rose Ochwada. Please keep Kelly’s father John in your prayers.

We hold all the above in our hearts that they may be filled with God’s healing in their health and, if bereaved healing in their grief.

Please continue to let us know of family members and friends who are sick and would welcome our prayers, either by WhatsApp, email, Kamran@gg-pc.co.uk or by phone, 020 8455 1873

### **Topic: Church Wardens’ Personal Meeting Room**

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/8585545365?pwd=em85aDF5ZmJ5ZkVlb0x0DaDhY2paUT09>

Meeting ID: 858 554 5365

Passcode: J4FbKf

**AV Desk:           Contact details:**

Parish Priest: Revd Kamran Bhatti   Office Tel: 020 8455 1873   Website: [www.gg-pc.co.uk](http://www.gg-pc.co.uk)

Date	Bible Passage	Readers	Intercessor	Refreshments	Eucharistic Minister	AV Desk	Wardens on duty	Service leader	Preacher
22/02/26 <b>Bring &amp; Share</b>	Psalm 32 Romans 5:12-19	Cynthia Guy	Kai	Cynthia/ Chinwe	Nehar/ Nwadi	Shaniv	Ifey/ Shaniv		Rev Kamran
01/03/26	Psalm 121 Romans 4:1-5,13-17	Conny Sim	Rose	Christina	Sally/ Tony	Daniel	Nehar /Sohail	Nehar	Rev Ibezim
08/03/26	Psalm 95 Romans 5:1-11	Andrew Abi	Alexis	Nora	Daniel/ Ezim	Onyeka	Tony/ Bilan		Rev Kamran
15/03/26	Psalm 45:10-17 Ephesians 5:8-14	Keith Elizabeth	Simon	Naila	Ifeyinwe/ Onyeka	Shaniv	Ifey/ Shaniv	Jenny	Rev Ibezim
22/03/26	Psalm 130 Romans 8:6-11	Sohail Dozie	Kai	Silvia	Nehar/ Nwadi	Ruth	Nehar/ Sohail		Jenny
29/03/26 <b>Bring &amp; Share</b>	Psalm 118:1-2,19-29 Matthew 21:1-11	Sam Daniel	Jenny	Cynthia/ Chinwe	Tim/ Naila	Onyeka	Tony/ Bilan		Rev Ibezim