

**First Sunday of Lent,
Sunday, 6th March 2022**



Dear Friends,

‘Worship the Lord your God and serve only him.’
(Luke 4: 8)

The beginning of Lent feels as though it has been overshadowed by the desperate events unfolding in Ukraine. On Ash Wednesday, as we gathered, our thoughts and prayers were for the restoration of peace and for all those involved in this unnecessary war as much as for Vladimir Putin to withdraw from his pursuit of war crimes against an innocent nation. Our world is reeling with horror at the prospect of a third world war as a consequence of Russia’s actions. There is understandable terror for those who have lived through world war, and for those who have fought in subsequent wars. There is a global fear for generations of children who will suffer the cost of what appears to be one man’s desire to recreate the greater glories of the Soviet Union as he remembers them from his own childhood. His delusion and abuse of power as Putin gives into woeful earthly temptation will scar our world for sure.



As Christians, we must stand strong in our faith. Putin has invoked an unjust war and the people of Ukraine have been forced to protect themselves in the righteous pursuit of liberty. Across the world, people are mustering in support of the Ukrainian people. It is humbling to see people in our cities, towns and villages moved by compassion as we gather much needed practical help and support for the victims; setting up drop-off centres, collecting essentials and co-ordinating the delivery of these items to those so desperately in need of help.

Already, organisations across the country are finding they are swamped with so many donations and resources that they are having to ask people to stop donating. As a Benefice, I know that many of you want to do all you can to help and I believe the best way we can do this is by making personal donations to the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) by making a direct donation via the website at: <https://donate.redcross.org.uk/appeal/ukraine-crisis-appeal>

You may also find these links helpful:

<https://ukrainianinstitute.org.uk/russias-war-against.../>

<https://www.unicef.org.uk/donate/donate-now-to-protect-children-in-ukraine/>



'The Temptation of Christ' by Ludwig Ferdinand Schnorr

This week, we are blessed to have been given a reflection on love from Susan Ansell, which I pray will help relieve your anxieties and help us all focus on what Jesus would want us to do: to worship the Lord our God and serve only Him, and to work together in love for our neighbours, whomsoever and wheresoever in the world they may be.

More than ever, in God we trust,

Jax

Rector, The Downs Benefice

Reflection on God's Love by Susan Ansell

Each one of us has a deep longing inside of us to know that we are loved. It's not the type of love that is portrayed in a romantic movie but a deeper kind of love. It's a love that is constant and doesn't change over time, a love that will never fail us and isn't based on what we do. It's a love that is pure and doesn't hold back. This kind of love is only found in God.

As humans, we can often forget how much God loves us. We might try to find that love in other places. That is why it is so important to remind ourselves on a daily basis that we are loved by Him. Fortunately, we don't have to look too far to be reminded. Whenever we need to, we can go to the Bible to read God's love letter for us. It is essentially His love letter to us.



Rublev's Icon

All over the Bible, you read about God's love for His people. We learn the story of creation, the fall, and the beautiful plan of redemption that God has for us.

As we weave through the storyline of the Bible, God has a lot that He wants us to know. He tells us how much he loves us and that his love is not something that we have to work for. He gives it freely to those who believe in Him. We find that He is a jealous God as well. He wants our hearts completely and longs for us to be wholly devoted to Him. He is the only one who will satisfy the longings of our soul.

We learn that God takes care of us. He provides for every single need that we have. We can fully trust in Him and the plans that He has for us. He wants to remind us that He is with us always. We are never alone.

We learn about Jesus. Every part of the Bible points toward Him. He did not want to be separated from us because of sin. He sacrifices himself and redeems humanity. Jesus did not hold back any part of Himself, He gave it all. He saves us when we could not save ourselves. He loves us this much.

'The Bible is a love letter from God to the people that he loves.' St Augustine

Collect Prayer for the First Sunday of Lent

Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ fasted forty days in the wilderness,
and was tempted as we are, yet without sin:
give us grace to discipline ourselves in obedience to your Spirit;
and, as you know our weakness, so
may we know your power to save; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Psalm 46

Our prayers for the people of Ukraine continue and we trust that the words of Psalm 46 may become to them a reality and that they will know the presence and peace of Christ with them in their turmoil:

- 1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.
- 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;
3 though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its tumult.
- 4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.
- 5 God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved;
God will help it when the morning dawns.
- 6 The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter;
he utters his voice, the earth melts.
- 7 The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.
- 8 Come, behold the works of the Lord;
see what desolations he has brought on the earth.
- 9 He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear;
he burns the shields with fire.
- 10 "Be still, and know that I am God!
I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth."
- 11 The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.



Luke 4:1-13 - The Temptation of Jesus

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. 3 The devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.' Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "One does not live by bread alone."

Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, 'To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.' Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'

Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'"

Jesus answered him, 'It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

Benefice Lent Reflections

This year, we are hosting a series of Lent talks around our parish churches reflecting on the life and works of remarkable Christian activists. Please see the schedule of talks below. Do make a point of coming along as part of your Lenten meditations.

Dr Cicely Saunders (1918-2005) – Founder of the Hospice Movement. (Crawley – Monday 7th March)

John Wesley (1703-1791) - Leader of a revival movement within the Church of England which gave birth to the Methodist Church. (Sparsholt – Wednesday 16th March)

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) - German pastor who wrote 'The Cost of Discipleship' and was interned by the Nazis for his resistance to Adolf Hitler. (Littleton – Tuesday 22nd March)

Gladys Aylward (1902-1970) - Missionary to China depicted in the film 'The Inn of the Sixth Happiness' starring Ingrid Bergman. (Wherwell – Thursday 31st March)

Wilson Carlile (1847-1942) – Founder of The Church Army – (Chilbolton – Friday 8th April)

These talks will be held, subject to Coronavirus restrictions, in the Churches and start at 7pm

Date	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
LENT begins - 2nd March			Ash Wednesday		
7th March	Crawley				
16th March			Sparsholt		
22nd March		Littleton			
31st March				Wherwell	
8th April					Chilbolton
Holy Week				Maundy Thursday	Good Friday

Schedule of Services

Now that all national Coronavirus restrictions have been lifted, it is no longer necessary to book seats in our parishes for services. Neither is it mandatory for you to wear masks in church. However, Coronavirus is still very much with us. There are a number of people in our villages with it at present, so we are encouraging people to observe social distancing measures.

As our services begin to open up again, we have a wide range of sacramental and lay-led services on offer. Of particular note, Peace and Wholeness begins again on 20th March at St Catherine's, Littleton. St Mary's, Crawley and St Stephen's Sparsholt are enjoying new lay-led Morning Worship services on 3rd and 4th Sundays respectively.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Ch</i>	<i>Cr</i>	<i>Li</i>	<i>Sp</i>	<i>Wh</i>
<i>6th March</i>	Morning Prayer	Holy Communion	4pm – Café Church with Karis Kids		
<i>13th March</i>	4pm – Evening Prayer for Lent		Holy Communion		Morning Prayer
<i>20th March</i>	Holy Communion	Morning Worship		8am – BCP Holy Communion	
<i>23rd March WEDNESDAY</i>			Holy Communion		
<i>27th March</i>	Mothering Sunday Family Service	Mothering Sunday Family Service	Mothering Sunday Family Service	Mothering Sunday Family Service	Mothering Sunday Family Service
<i>3rd April</i>	Morning Prayer	Holy Communion	4pm – Café Church with Karis Kids		
<i>10th April Palm Sunday</i>	<i>With Wh</i>		Holy Communion with a Donkey Procession	Palm Sunday Service with a Donkey Procession	Palm Sunday Service
<i>14th April Maundy Thursday</i>				6pm - Holy Communion with Washing of the Feet	
<i>15th April Good Friday</i>	<i>With Wh</i>	10am - Easter Garden	12 noon - Good Friday Meditation		3pm - Good Friday Meditation

<i>17th April</i> EASTER SUNDAY	Easter Holy Communion	Easter Service	Easter Holy Communion	Easter Holy Communion	Easter Service
<i>24th April</i>			Morning Prayer	Morning Worship	8am – BCP Holy Communion
<i>27th April</i> WEDNESDAY			Holy Communion		