

Dear Friends,

/"Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert, where for 40 days he was tested....Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit./" (Luke 4:1-2, 14). Luke is always attentive to what the Holy Spirit is up to. A lake, or a flooded field, is full of water, but its in a river that water has power. The 40 days of testing in the wilderness don't rob Jesus of the Holy Spirit. Far from it. Instead the work of the Spirit in him is refined, channelled, and he emerges from 40 days of fasting and spiritual battle 'in the power of the Spirit'. We assume that going through trials weakens us, but what if God uses them to make us stronger? We assume that at the end of 40 days of fasting Jesus is at his weakest, but what if he is at his spiritual peak? It may not make sense to embrace Lent at a time when we've already given up so much that is precious. But the key thing is our intention: most of what we've lost in the last 12 months has been out of our control. In Lent we're invited to deliberately surrender to God, its /our /choice, to create more space for the Holy Spirit. It may feel (back to rivers...) that you're running at low capacity. But a dredged river holds more water than one which is silted up. Holy Spirit, dredge out of us the blockages, the gunge, the shopping trolleys and old wellies, the clogging of our spiritual channels. We want to have space for more of you. Amen.

Blessing Hampers: We had this message from the head of Preston Primary, after delivery of the 'Treats for Teachers' hamper last week:

/"Thank you once again for the hampers for the staff. They were so pleased! Trina (staff member) has worked out some kind of rationing system so everyone gets a share 😊. It really was very kind of everyone who contributed and your cards meant a lot too."/ So we are going big: next week we'd love to deliver a '*Treats for Teachers' to Oaklands primary school*', which serves Westfield estate, and a '*Hamper for Hospitals' to our local Summerlands Hospital*', which is the main mental health NHS unit for South Somerset. Please bring donations to St Peters Church 10.30-11am on Saturday morning (20th Feb), or to 3 Poplar Drive by the end of Sunday. Or if it's more convenient, you could donate money through the bank for us to buy goodies with. We'll need: tea, coffee, and individually wrapped biscuits/chocolates (e.g. penguin, club, rocky, breakaway etc.). We'll be asking the community to help out too.

Ash Wednesday: *we're kicking off Lent with an Ash Weds service over Zoom this Weds at 7.30pm, please do join us on <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6261684940> (just copy and paste into your web browser). If you're new to Zoom and want a hand getting set up, do get in touch with David or Ruth, or your cell group leader etc. and we'll help you get started. The *Lent course* 'Seasons of Hope' starts Weds next week, 8-9pm at the same zoom address. We'd love to see you there!

Youth Work Update: do have a look at this video which Ruth Glendinning has put together, along with some members of LIFT (the St James youth group), which gives you an idea of our youth work across the parish, the opportunities we have, and some things to pray for:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sOmYClgPZJc>

Lent Boxes/Collection: *each year the two churches give a proportion of our general income to our 4 Mission Partners. During Lent we usually give out 'Lent Boxes' so that people can contribute from home, and these donations are all added in to the pot. As a result, last year we were able to give £1000 each to Christians Against Poverty, Lords Larder, Counselling for Yeovil and Street Pastors, as well as build up a Parish Hardship Fund. St Peters folk can get a Lent box from Caroline Turner - please let her know if you'd like one dropped round. St James folk, you'll get an idea on how to make your own this Sunday, or just find a container and start putting cash in it! We'll aim to provide a chance for those to be brought in during Holy Week.

Thankyou to everyone who sent in *tricky Bible passages* for Sundays sermon, which you can view on the Youtube channel, it starts 42m and 20 seconds into the recording of the service. Just to say, please do ask us at any time about things in scripture, or elsewhere, that you're puzzling over, part of being a church community is that we can discuss these things together and discover what scripture means and what God is saying. Continuing the Bible theme, *Sunday sermons in Lent *will be on Bible passages which have inspired our preachers. Which bit of scripture do you find most inspiring? Because we have more than 5 preachers (God is good!), some of these will be available as midweek reflections on the Youtube channel.

A *Prayer Room for Yeovil *will be running from 20-22nd Feb (Sat - Mon), 24 hours a day for 3 days: you can sign up to a prayer slot at <https://www.24-7prayer.com/signup/d8dca8/>. There will be a Zoom prayer room to use: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82749544967> password 957680. The focus will be praying for our nation, government, town, friends and loved ones, for revival and for people to come to know the love of God.

Keeping Lent: if you've not already checked it out, our new Lent Prayer resource has daily prayers for Lent, and ideas of how to observe this season of grace. We've attached it to this email.

God bless you all, and keep you in His love and grace.

David and Ruth

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St James and St Peters on

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