

WE ARE EASTER PEOPLE IN AN OFTEN GOOD FRIDAY WORLD



The Venerable Mark Butchers
Archdeacon of Barnstaple

WHEN I was a vicar in North Tawton back in the 1990s, I remember making an Easter Garden with the Sunday School. I'd collected some stones, moss and flowers and a few dry twigs to make the three crosses. We stuck the crosses in some earth and covered the earth with the moss and flowers. It looked good. A few days later I came back into church and, to my amazement, one of the dry, dead twigs had begun to bud. New life was emerging out of what had looked completely dead and lifeless.

This bare cross of sin, death and despair is held by something greater — by Love and Life itself

In the Middle Ages artists sometimes depicted the cross as flowering, with buds and blossoms growing out of it. It was their way of depicting new resurrection life flowing from Jesus's death.

The cross is a stark reminder of all that is dead and barren, hopeless and sinful: the nails driven in, the mocking and insults remind us of human sin which crushes good people around the world, grinding them into poverty or early graves; Jesus'



PHOTOS: ALISON PRICE AND FRONA GIBBONS



ARTISTIC LICENSE: Easter gardens at Myddle in Shropshire and Narborough in Norfolk.

cry of desolation, his suffering and death speak of human despair, human pain, and the inhuman things people can do to each other.

But Jesus' resurrection is the proclamation from on high that all this – this bare cross of sin, death and despair – is held by something greater – by Love and Life itself.

His resurrection does not lessen the awfulness of what happened on the cross – that remains all too real. It doesn't wipe it away like some giant blackboard rubber, as though it never happened. Nor is our human pain made any less real by the vision of future resurrection life. Our world is still beset by all kinds of suffering and tragedy, as we see each week on our TV screens.

But what the resurrection does do, is show that death and evil did not, do not and never will have the last word. God can take them into himself, hold them, draw their sting and give back love for evil and life for death. This is the flowering of the cross – transformation, new buds, new life. This is our Christian hope. This is what makes us Easter people in an often Good Friday world.

**Alleluia! Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

CHURCH OF ENGLAND DEVON

GOOD NEWS FROM THE DIOCESE OF EXETER | MAY 2019

Inside:



LAY READER CLOCKS UP 60 YEARS

Michael Lewis celebrates his Diamond anniversary at Holy Trinity, Exmouth

CHRIST IS RISEN!

The Archdeacon of Barnstaple reflects on being Easter people in a Good Friday world



WILL YOU BE PART OF THE GLOBAL PRAYER WAVE?

THE DIOCESE'S Mission Team is hoping to make this year's Thy Kingdom Come prayer event bigger than ever before with a host of activities and gatherings planned across Devon.

The global wave of prayer, which is in its third year, is the vision of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. The Most Revd Justin Welby said that, when they launched it, they 'hoisted a small sail rather nervously, and there was a howling gale of the Spirit which seemed to carry this whole thing forward in the most beautiful way.'

Millions of Christians across the world will come together between Ascension Day and Pentecost, this year between May 30 and June 9, to unite in prayer for others to come to faith in Christ.

In Devon, the theme will be Fields of Gold. Exeter's Diocesan

Mission Enabler, the Revd Barry Dugmore, said: "Jesus speaks about the Kingdom of God being like treasure in a field; so precious that a man sold everything he had in order to gain it; or like a merchant who had seen a precious pearl who sold all he had in order to possess it."

The survey taken after the 2018 Thy Kingdom Come showed the impact that the movement is making. A whopping 91% prayed for friends and family to come to know Jesus; 85% felt motivated to pray more often; and 42% of people felt more motivate to talk to others about Jesus.

A 'Say One For Me' event is being planned in Sidmouth this year, which will involve a small ecumenical group of people being out in the town asking people: "If you prayed today, what would you pray for?"

Julie Wheeler, who is part of the team, has loved being involved in Thy Kingdom Come each year.

She said: "It was great to be part of the launch here in Sidmouth last year. We particularly enjoyed being out in the town with Bishop Robert which included meeting 'people of hope', those active in our community, and praying with business owners. This inspired us to do the Chaplaincy Everywhere course, looking at how we might extend chaplaincy in the town. We are hopeful of setting up a new chaplaincy opportunity in the near future."

Revd Barry Dugmore added: "On Pentecost Sunday, Exeter Cathedral will be hosting our Diocesan beacon celebration and prayer event. It will be an amazing gathering for hundreds of people of all ages from across Devon. We'd love you to be part of it and to bring your treasure chest of prayers as a symbol of your church or local community and the on-going work and prayer for God's Kingdom across Devon."

i For more information, contact the Revd Barry Dugmore on 01392 294920.



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DIAMOND ANNIVERSARY FOR EXMOUTH LAY READER

THERE have been diamond celebrations in Holy Trinity, Exmouth, after a much-loved lay reader clocked up 60 years of service.

Michael Lewis was admitted as a Reader at Wakefield Cathedral on March 14 1959. He has served at St Matthews, Dewsbury, Holy Trinity Horsefield, Christ Church Downend, St Bartholomew Bayton, The church of the Blessed Virgin Mary Studley, St Peter Coughton and Exmouth.

Team Rector, the Revd James Hutchings, said: "It was lovely to celebrate Michael's diamond anniversary as a Lay Reader. He has made a huge contribution to the life of our mission community and the many parishes he has served over 60 years.

"Michael brings an acute mind, an eye for detail, and commitment to the gospel in his



TUCKING IN: Michael cutting a rather fabulous looking cake with his daughter at Holy Trinity, Exmouth.

ministry, laced with a healthy sense of humour. Michael has contributed in many ways beyond the formal role of being a Reader, most notably bringing his experience as a teacher to bear as a long standing Governor of the Beacon School, our local church school. We look forward to the start of the next 60 years!"

DIOCESAN STAFF ATTEND DOMESTIC ABUSE WORKSHOPS

MORE than 200 members of the Diocese of Exeter, including clergy, churchwardens and parish safeguarding officers, attended a series of workshops to improve their awareness of domestic abuse and be better able to respond should there be issues locally.

The workshops, which took place at Buckfast Abbey, Hatherleigh and CREDITON, were part of the programme the Diocese of Exeter is completing to raise awareness of domestic abuse across its church communities in Devon, recognising that domestic abuse is as prevalent in church communities as in the wider communities.

The Diocese has partnered with Restore, an international Christian Alliance that aims to transform relationships and end violence against women by working with the church and Christians worldwide.

Spotlight on...

THE REVD WIZ SLATER

This month, we chat to the Revd Wiz Slater, Team Rector for the Clyst Mission Community, also known as the five parishes of Pinhoe, Rockbeare, Clyst Honiton, Sowton and Broadclyst.



Was your Christian faith kindled from birth by church-going parents or was it more of a Damascus road experience?

I grew up in a Christian family and went to a fantastic church and youth group but lost my way in my early twenties. The Damascus road experience came with the breakdown of a five-year relationship when I realised for the first time what grace meant; that even though I had totally turned my back on God, He had never left me and was waiting for me with open arms.

When did you first feel called to ordination?

I was training as a Lay Reader in my early 30s when the curate in my church said he thought I should look into ordination. I was from a background that didn't support the ordination of women so it was an interesting time for me and my family.

What/who sustains you?

Other than Jesus? My friends and family, the people who have loved me through all the ups and downs, who know all my faults and yet still love me. I was quite ill for a period of time two years ago. Looking back, I can see how my family and friends carried me through a very difficult time.

When/where do you feel at your most spiritual?

I feel closest to God just sitting in my study when I pray. I have always loved being surrounded by hundreds of others who were worshipping but since being ill I have found stillness and quiet to be a massive blessing. I can't be still or quiet for too long though before I need to be with people again.

What do you think is the most important aspect of being an ordained minister?

To be who we are, warts and all, and to live alongside others, travelling with them and sharing our lives with them. The church talks about leadership which is undoubtedly important but I think we can lose some of the vital task of simply loving those we are called to live amongst and serve. That will look different for all of us as there is no one 'model of ministry' that will fit all. Trying to be and do everything or thinking we are the answer to all the church's problems is bad for us, bad for the church and, ultimately, dishonours Jesus.

What do you do to relax?

I love to cook and bake so relaxing for me is listening to a good talking book whilst in the kitchen cooking up a storm.

WELCOME TO THE DIOCESE, CHRIS KEPPIE



THE DIOCESE of Exeter's new Church and Society Officer, Chris Keppie, wants to improve engagement around important issues facing the church and wider society. These include poverty, health and climate change.

Chris has extensive experience working with local government housing associations and charities in the field of social housing and

homelessness in both inner city and rural settings, as well as voluntary work on environmental issues.

Philip Sourbut, Director of Mission and Ministry at the Diocese, said: "I am delighted that Chris has joined the team. I know that he will bring both commitment and experience to this very important role."

You can contact Chris on 01392 294924.