

Image of the day - York Minster

March 4, 2021



St Patrick's Day Service from Down Cathedral via webcam

A service on the theme 'When Faith Gets Shaken' will be held in Down Cathedral at 12.00 midday on Wednesday 17 March. It will be shared via a Webcam link:

'When Faith Gets Shaken'

What do you do when life falls apart, and it feels as if God has left you? How do you keep going when your faith is rocked to the core? Sometimes things get so hard we're not sure where God is – or what he's up to. Drawing on their own experiences, Patrick Regan and Andy Flannagan will join us remotely in Down Cathedral on St Patrick's Day to address these deep questions in word and song.

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Patrick Regan

Patrick Regan OBE is the founder and CEO of Kintsugi Hope, a charity which aims to create safe and supportive spaces for those struggling with emotional and mental health challenges. He is also the founder of urban youth work charity XLP and the author of five books. Patrick has travelled widely working with and on behalf of the poorest communities and is a regular contributor on radio and TV on issues of poverty and justice.

Andy Flannagan

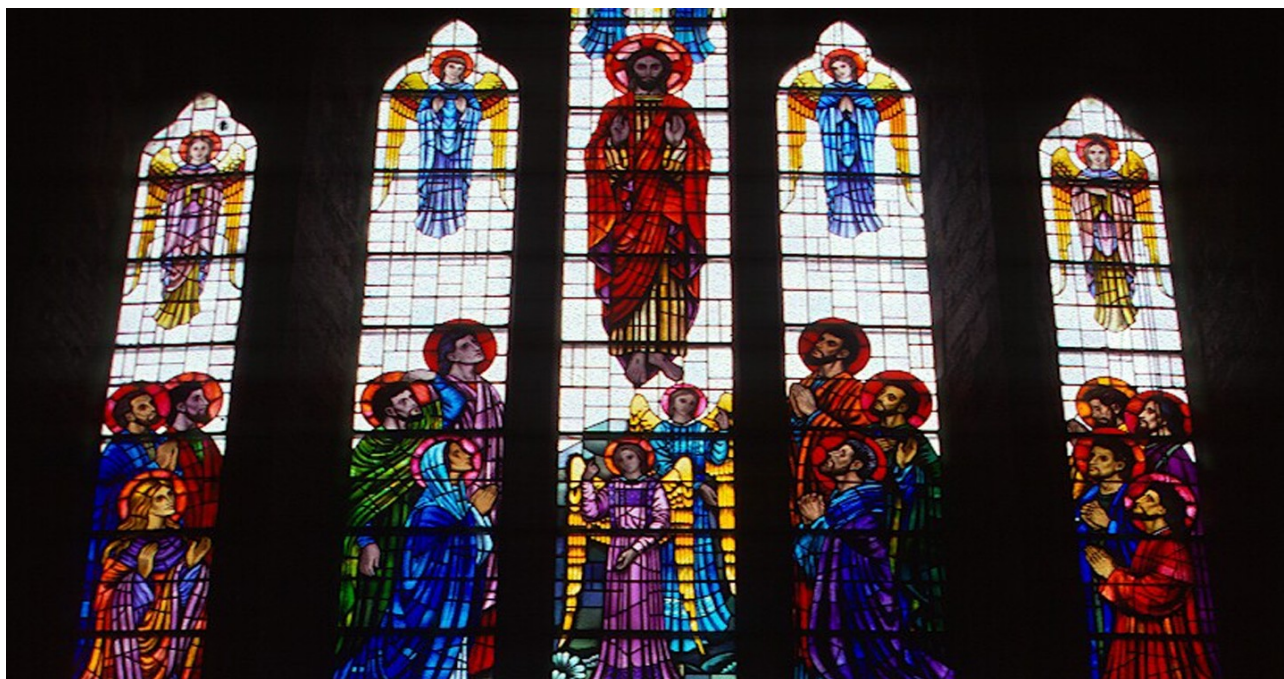
Andy Flannagan is a Luton-based, Irish singer-songwriter who was previously a hospital doctor. His campaigning song writing drew him into the political arena, and he is Executive Director of Christians in Politics. One of his driving passions is to see a just rewiring of the global economic system. As a writer and performer Andy is first and foremost a story-teller, weaving hope and pain into songs that soar with beautiful, poignant melodies that betray his Irish roots.

Please note that due to restrictions around COVID there will be no congregation at Down Cathedral, nor will there be in-person worship at Saul. In place of the pilgrimage the cathedral will be sharing a pre-recorded Prayer Pilgrimage on its website and social media channels.

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12.00 midday on Wednesday 17 March. Webcam link:
[www.downcathedral.org/services]

churchnewsireland@gmail.org



Sunday service from St Mary's Cathedral, Limerick

A Service of Holy Communion broadcast on the RTÉ News Channel this coming Sunday (7th March), at 2.15pm, will be from St Mary's Cathedral, Limerick. The service will be led by the Revd Bernie Daly, Dean's Vicar, with the Very Revd Niall J Sloane as preacher.

Dublin hospital chaplains appointed

Two new hospital chaplaincy appointments have been made by Archbishop Michael Jackson.

Following the recent recruitment process, Archbishop Jackson has appointed the **Revd Trevor Holmes** as the new full-time Healthcare Chaplain for the dioceses with

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responsibility for Beaumont, Connolly and The Mater Hospitals, commencing in May 2021.

Trevor was ordained deacon in Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin in 2013 and subsequently priested in 2015. He has served in a non–stipendiary capacity in a number of parishes in the Diocese of Meath & Kildare. He has been active in Church life since his teens and is currently a member of both Diocesan and General synods.

He has spent the majority of his career in North American multinational corporations, including in a variety of senior leadership positions. He has also served in senior roles in public service and higher education for over a decade. He was appointed the Secretary General of the Irish Red Cross in early 2020 having previously held the position of Vice President for External Affairs in Dublin City University and prior to that a similar role in University College Cork. As he prepares to take up his new position he looks forward to completing his remaining Clinical Pastoral Education over the coming months.

Trevor has been married to Anne for over thirty years and they have two adult sons, Lyndon and Elwin. In his leisure time, his hobbies include reading, travel (when it was allowed!!), theology, and current affairs.

Meanwhile, the **Revd Lesley Robinson** has been appointed as Chair of the Healthcare Chaplaincy Oversight Committee following the retirement of **Canon Robert Warren**. Canon Warren has been Chair of the Oversight Committee since its inception in 2014 and has undertaken this invaluable work with dedication, understanding and

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leadership as the landscape of hospital chaplaincy has evolved. It is anticipated that a handover period will take place during March and that Lesley will commence as Chairperson from April 1.

New columbarium wall in Dublin parish

A new columbarium wall in the graveyard of St Matthew's Church in Irishtown was dedicated by Archbishop Michael Jackson on Sunday past (February 28).

The columbarium will offer a place of repose for parishioners and for people from the wider community.

The dedication took place during a Service of Holy Communion which was livestreamed to parishioners who could not attend due to current restrictions. The Archbishop said that the dedication within the celebration of the Eucharist was “a sign and a symbol to us all of the communion of saints and of the spiritual and loving connection of the living and the dead as we journey through Lent 2021 and beyond”. During the service, the Vicar, the Revd John Marchant, commended parishioner and architect, the late Stuart Hamilton, whose vision led to the building of the columbarium.

The word columbarium derived from the nesting boxes of pigeons or doves, Archbishop Jackson noted. “The dove, the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus in the desert at his baptism and this cannot but be another resonance of the columbarium in a Christian context. It is a gentle and a

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The Revd John Marchant and Archbishop Michael Jackson following the dedication of the columbarium wall at St Matthew's Irishtown.

delightful image of what we do with the ashes of those whom we love now parted from us. We treat them with respect and affection. We share their memory with church and with community. Their ashes rest and nest, so to speak, in the columbarium. And for me in a very particular way these niches, these holes in the stone, connect me with that transformative and spiritual experience on The Mountain of Temptation and its perspective on an even more untouchable life with God on the next-door mountain," he said.

Archbishop Jackson also paid tribute to the Revd John Marchant who retires at the end of March, for all the wonderful positive and active things he has done in the parish in his years of service there.

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He described him as “tireless, responsive, industrious, helpful, courteous, outreaching and Godly” and wished him and his wife Pat everything that is best as they journey into the years ahead. He added that they would both be missed and cherished greatly.

He also acknowledged that there were many who would have wished to be in St Matthew’s in person for the dedication. However, he added: “. We all continue to seek for God and be found for God in Level 5 Lockdown wherever we are. It adds a certain frisson, a particular sharpness to Lent 2021. We carry in our own person the burden of responsibility for others as the first receivers of the burden of responsibility for ourselves. We have been here before. It gets no easier. Yet we are still all in this together and that too is part of our new understanding of gathering.”

'Keep churches closed' plea by Church of Ireland curate

Church of Ireland curate Reverend Conor O' Reilly has appealed for churches to remain closed over Easter, to protect the health of parishioners and avoid the mistakes that were made in the reopening of the country before Christmas, Maria Pepper writes

Reverend O' Reilly of the Wexford and Kilsoran Union of Parishes based in the Rectory in Killinick, was prompted to write a letter to the Irish Times in response to the ongoing lobbying of Government for churches to be re-opened in

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time for Easter, one of the most important times of the year in the christian calendar.

'It would appear that little has been learned from what happened in the lead-up to Christmas 2020, when reopening various sectors of society had such disastrous consequences in the post-Christmas period', he said.

'Now is not the time to be lobbying for reopening. Rather this is the time for the exercising of pastoral responsibility and not giving people false hope by reopening prematurely.

'The message of Easter will resonate throughout our land without needlessly risking people's health and safety. It is my sincere hope that Church of Ireland bishops will not engage in any similar lobbying.'

Reverend O' Reilly who has been based in Killinick since 2018, said he appreciates the sense of frustration that clergy and parishioners are experiencing at the closure of churches but in his view, it is a very necessary step in the interests of public health.

'At this time, health and safety have to be placed above all other considerations. Self sacrifice is part of the Gospel message. If we have to sacrifice public worship for a period of time, so be it.

'Everyone has had to make sacrifices during the past year and churches are no different. I would say that churches should lead by example in terms of helping to suppress the virus'.



'People miss public worship. I fully understand that. I miss it myself', said Reverend O' Reilly who conducts a service online every Sunday morning at 9.30 a.m. from the rectory in Killinick.

While local people are unable to attend a Sunday morning service, the online facility has allowed people from further afield, including the UK and the US, to tune in to the service.

He also makes an assembly video once a week for the children of St. Iberius national school in Wexford town and while he misses face to face interaction with the students, he has received positive feedback from the remote sessions.

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I would hope people would see where I am coming from. I don't want any parishioner to be put at risk. I do appreciate that some people don't have access to technology or the know-how. I am very conscious of that. We are in the situation we are in and we are doing our best to reach out to people..'

Reverend O'Reilly said churches were caught off guard by the first Covid-19 lockdown last March and many were not in a position to have Easter services online but this year will be different.

'We are more prepared and more tech-savvy. The past year has been a learning curve for clergy and parishioners. I strongly believe churches should stay closed. No-one wants to go back to public worship more than I do, but not until sufficient numbers have been vaccinated.'

He said the demographic of those who attend churches would be quite high and that is one of the concerns. 'You have to be cognisant of the wellbeing of parishioners. It's a difficult decision to make but it's to protect people's health'.

Reverend O' Reilly said that when churches were allowed to reopen after the first lockdown, protocols such as social distancing were put in place and they worked well. There were no reported incidences of Covid from a church service in the Wexford and Kilsoran Union.

But when the reopening happened in December, he became concerned. 'My gut was telling me that it was not a good idea and come January, we were going to have problems'.

Courtesy The Wexford People 02.03.2021

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Book Excerpt - Dear England by Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York

The following is an excerpt from the Archbishop of York's new book, “Dear England: Finding Hope, Taking Heart and Changing the World”, out this week in hardback from [Hodder and Stoughton](#), priced £12.99.

Dear England,

I was recently buying a coffee at Caffè Nero on Paddington Station. A flat white. This was a wise decision. The coffee from Caffè Nero is nicer than the coffee from the trolley on the Virgin train. I was on my way to Cardiff. The keynote speaker at the Church in Wales symposium on evangelism. It was a big gig. I couldn't be late. The Church in Wales was relying on me.

While the barista prepared my coffee (buying coffee never used to be so complicated, but a flat white seems to me to have got the proportions of coffee to frothy milk about right), a young woman turned to me, looked me up and down, and said, 'What made you become a priest?'

Now this is an interesting question. In fact, it is my standard interview question. I've asked virtually every priest I've appointed in the last fifteen years what they would say if they bumped into an old friend on a railway platform and were asked why they were a Christian and what difference it made to their lives. Now a complete stranger was asking me my interview question. For real. And I didn't have long to answer. I had to get that train.

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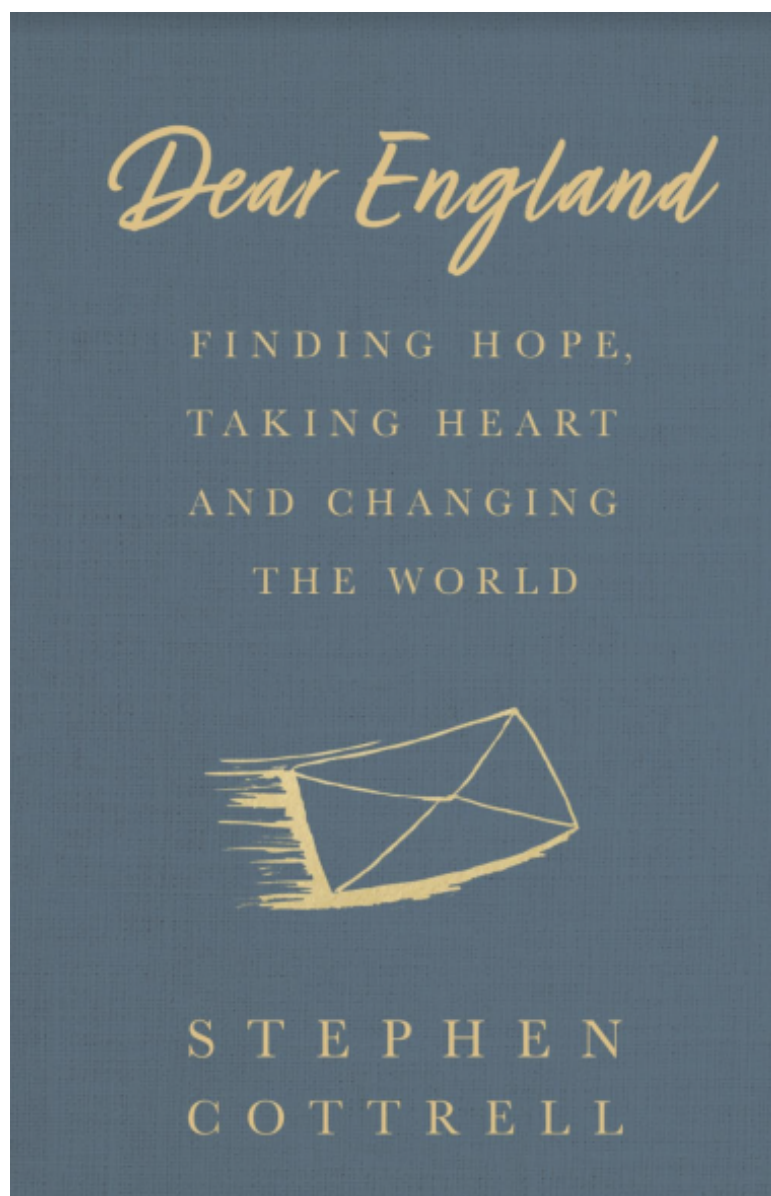
So I resisted the temptation to ask her in return why she was asking me. After all, it wasn't my natural aura of holiness that was giving me away. I was dressed as a priest. I said I had two answers to her question: one, a very short answer; and one, a slightly longer answer.

My first answer, the short answer, is God. I said to her that I simply believed in God. That, even though I wasn't brought up going to church, somewhere and somehow on the pathway of my life as I had sought to make sense of what it is to be human and what inhabiting this world could mean, I came to reckon that there is a God and that God is the source, the impetus and the precondition of everything. It hadn't been a sudden, thunderbolt conversion, nor did it mean I was unfamiliar with doubt and darkness. It's just that I had tried to make sense of life, and looked for some meaning in life, and had arrived at a point where life, the universe and everything in it made no sense without God. Moreover, as a Christian, when I said the word 'God', I saw in my heart the person Jesus. Jesus was the person through whom God had a human face and a human heart. Therefore, the God who was in every other respect unknowable and beyond, the source of everything but, by definition, outside of everything as well, had come down to earth, so that God could be known. Jesus was God speaking to us in the only language we understand: which is the language of another human life. That was the short answer!

The slightly longer answer was that I wanted to change the world. I asked her what she thought and felt when she looked at the world, and I told her what I saw was hurt and confusion. Oh, of course, there were fantastically beautiful,

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glorious and wonderful things as well. The world is brimming with expectancy and elation. But there is also injustice and horror, and while those persist, joy would always be tempered by caution and concern. I also told her that I had made a diagnosis. I told her I thought the problem lay in the human heart. I told her that I thought the human race needed a heart transplant. And I told her that, as I saw it, only God could do that.



Why was I a priest? Or for that matter, why am I a Christian? Why am I a follower of Jesus Christ? Why am I writing this letter that thinks it's a book? It is because I believe in God and I want to change the world. But I don't believe in God in quite the same way as I believe the sky is blue and the sun rises in the east. It is much more like I believe that love is real and that Chopin's nocturnes make me cry. Some things are achingly real, but harder to



demonstrate, though dig beneath the surface and we all deal in the common currency of love.

And I want to change the world – heart by heart. I cry out for the indignities and privations of the world. I long to see change and I thirst for justice. But I begin with the heart, believing that if my heart can change, then the world can change too.

The woman then said to me – and in many respects her words were much more interesting than mine – that when she met people of faith, she found they largely broke down into two categories. For the first group, faith seemed to be their hobby. They went to church – or, for that matter, the synagogue, the mosque, the temple – but it didn't make much difference to the life they led. In most ways their lives were indistinguishable from other people's lives, except for

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the fact that they went to church on Sunday. The other group – and these are her precise words; they seared themselves into my mind – 'embraced their faith so tightly, it frightened everyone else away'. (Perhaps your experience has been similar.)

'Is there another way?' she asked me.

But at this point, I had to get the train. I couldn't miss it. There wasn't time for the conversation I thought we needed to have. So I just said, yes, there was another way: the way of Jesus Christ. I said that Christians believe that Jesus not only showed us what God is like, but shows us what humanity could be like. I told her to go to her local church and she would find it.

But that's what really bothers me. If she did follow my advice and go to her local church, wherever that was, what would she find? Would she find a group of people who are joyfully trying to inhabit this world after the way of Christ? Or would it be a group of Christian hobbyists? Or something worse?

So this is what this book is about. It is a letter to this young woman, for I saw in her something that I see in so much of our culture. She was genuinely seeking for some meaning in her life beyond herself and beyond the things she had already been taught and experienced. She initiated the conversation, not me. Amazingly, she saw in my clerical collar (and hopefully in my demeanour) some representation of a worldview that might just scratch the itch of her spiritual longing.

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This book is what I would have said to her if I had had more time. And in a small way it is also a letter to the Church of England (and other churches are welcome to receive it too if they'd like). I want to remind us that our primary vocation is to share this story and to tell people about God and God's vision for the world.

There are lots of other things we need to do as well – not least live it out each day – but it has to begin with the story itself: the amazing, inexplicable, challenging and lovely story of what God has done in Jesus Christ to change the course of human history and to win our hearts.

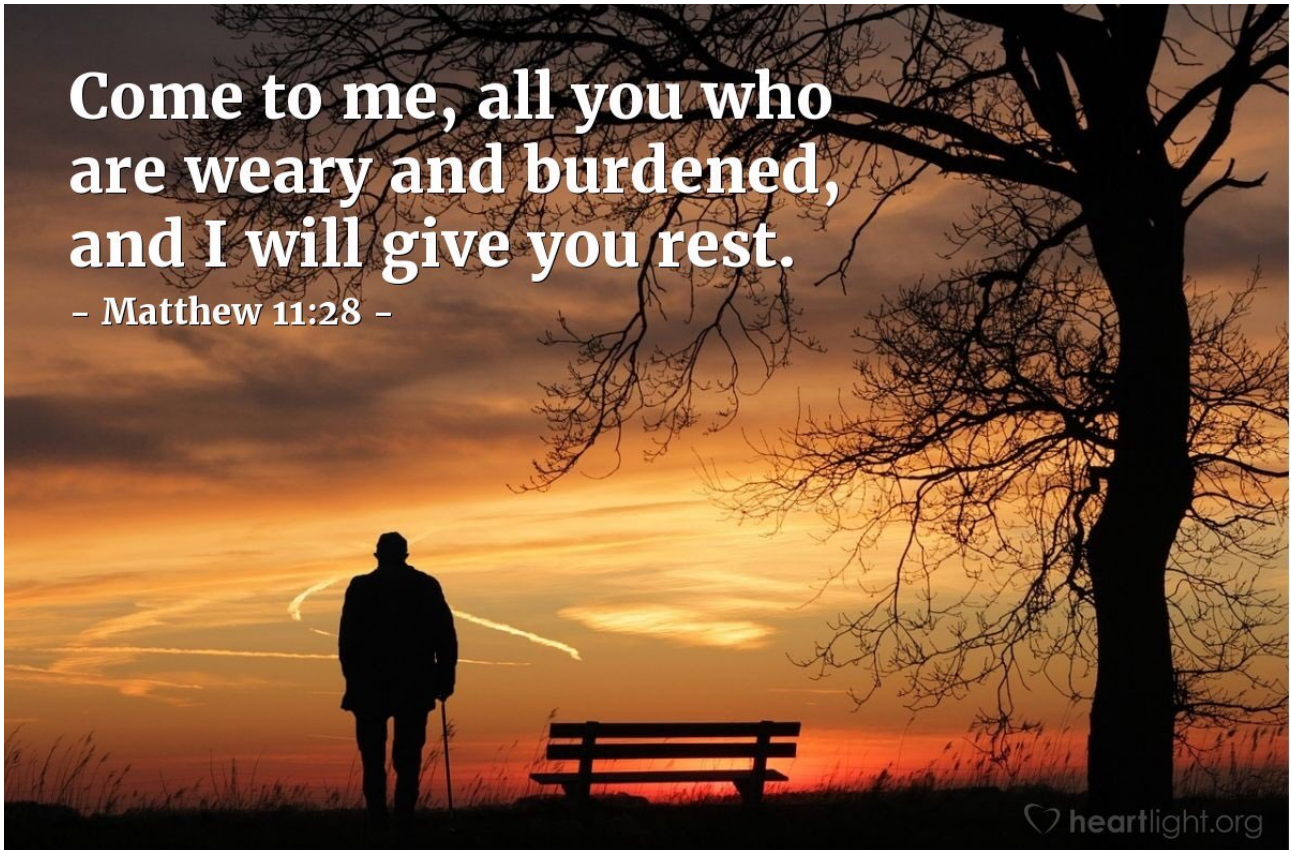
And I've called it Dear England because in writing to this woman I am also, if it doesn't sound too presumptuous, trying to write to everyone. The moorings of our culture have slipped from the passage of the Christian way, and other, sometimes malign and confused, currents now sweep us this way and that and leave us not knowing who we are, still less where we are going.

This book can't solve all that, but in reading it (and reading it won't take long; it is not a hefty tome) you might see something of God and something of God's purposes for the world. The very first Christians weren't called Christians, they were called followers of the way.

I like that sobriquet. It indicates a pathway to follow rather than a list of things to believe in. In fact, Jesus himself said, 'I am the way.' He is a companion, not a map. Let us see what life looks like if we walk with him.

**Come to me, all you who
are weary and burdened,
and I will give you rest.**

- Matthew 11:28 -



Pointers for prayer

Heavenly Father,
your Son battled with the powers of darkness,
and grew closer to you in the desert:
help us to use these days to grow in wisdom and prayer
that we may witness to your saving love
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Almighty Father,
whose Son was revealed in majesty
before he suffered death upon the cross:
give us grace to perceive his glory,
that we may be strengthened to suffer with him
and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

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one God, now and for ever.

Today we pray for countries unable to access vaccines. The UN secretary general has criticised the unfair distribution of Covid vaccines, identifying that 130 countries have yet to receive a single dose.

Pray for all teachers and parents involved with students or their children. We ask for stamina and creativity as they seek to educate in less than ideal circumstances.

It has been announced that on Ascension Day - 13 May 2021, Bishop Hosam Naoum will be installed as Bishop of the Diocese of Jerusalem, bearing the title Archbishop. Please pray for Bishop Naoum, his family and the Diocese.

We think today of families who are struggling to cope with the ongoing restrictions to normal life, especially those who live in small homes with no outside space. We pray for an abundance of tolerance to help ease their less than ideal circumstances.

Today we give thanks for young climate activists. A UN survey shows that demand for green business and jobs is particularly high among young people, who have been a driving force behind getting the issue onto the political agenda.

We pray today for the church across the world, especially in places where they are experiencing hardship and persecution. We stand together with our sisters and brothers and pray for God to bring relief from their circumstances.

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Holy God,
you know the disorder of our sinful lives:
set straight our crooked hearts,
and bend our wills to love your goodness
and your glory
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Speaking to the Soul

As the deer longs for streams of water, so I long for you, O God. I thirst for God, the living God. When can I go and stand before him?

Psalm 42:1-2 NLT

Having spent a couple of years in India I am very familiar with the challenges of living with intense heat. One lesson I learnt very swiftly is that you need to carry a drink with you at all times. But, inevitably, you sometimes forget – or at least I did! I can remember occasions when I was craving a drink and I was happy to drink anything to slake my thirst. Deer are just the same. They can only bound around the countryside for so long before they need to search for a stream of cool, refreshing water. King David uses thirsty deer as an illustration of his longing for the living God. He was desperate to meet God.

This psalm suggests that David was feeling depressed. Nothing seemed to be going right. It was a time of struggle and confusion but he knew that God could satisfy him in a way that nothing else could. Many things give us satisfaction for a short while - possessions, success, relationships, sex, status. But ultimately none of those things, important and

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precious as they may be, can give us the lasting satisfaction that our eternal God and loving heavenly father can give us.

Getting dehydrated isn't merely unpleasant but medically dangerous. It needs to be avoided at all costs. But becoming spiritually dehydrated is even more perilous. Without the spiritual strength to face life's challenges there is every possibility of us making foolish and destructive choices which are likely to be damaging for those around us as well as ourselves. This means that it is vital to ensure that we are drinking regularly from the streams that God provides.

We will all find spiritual strength in different ways but prayer, reading the bible and enjoying Christian fellowship will all be crucial elements. We need to reflect carefully on our daily pattern of life to ensure that we are getting the nourishment that we need. Our spiritual life and vitality depends upon it.

QUESTION

What are the streams that refresh your Christian life?

PRAYER

Dear Lord, thank you that you are always ready to satisfy my spiritual thirst. Amen.

