

Good morning everyone, and I hope you are all doing well. Here is our video worship for this week, filmed this time in our respective homes by Revd Carole, Ruth and myself, and again with some hymns to sing along to as well.

<https://youtu.be/m5Fm2GmC6fY>



Worship and Reflection for the Second Sunday before Lent

An act of worship for the Second Sunday before Lent (7th February 2021) from the Kingsbury and Baxterley Group of Churches, with a reflection from Revd Dr Jo...

[youtu.be](https://youtu.be/m5Fm2GmC6fY)

As you'll see, we are now at the second Sunday before Lent, so there is only a week and a half to go before Ash Wednesday. I am sorry that we won't be having services in church that day, but do please let me know if you would like to go in to one of the churches on your own or in your bubble for private prayer that day, and I will make arrangements for that to be possible. We shall however have a service in the evening of Ash Wednesday via Zoom that day, and I hope some of you may be able to join in that. More details next week.

I'm afraid it's too early to say with certainty when services in the church buildings will resume. My feelings are that we should await the government's announcement later this month concerning the anticipated easing of the national lockdown. My hope would be that we shall be in a position to have a service on Mothering Sunday (14 March), but I will also be preparing materials for prayer and reflection at home during Lent. These will include materials for a Lent Course on "Lenten Landscapes", which will also be the basis for our Wednesday evening Zoom Bible reflections. If you have any thoughts or views concerning the re-opening of the buildings for worship, do please let me know; I cannot guarantee that we will be in a position to do everything that is asked or hoped for, but I can assure you that your views will be listened to and valued.

With love and prayers

John

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2 before Lent 7 February 2021

Colossians 1.15-20 John 1.1-14

At the very heart of the Christian faith is the story of Jesus, the story described in the title of a classic Hollywood film as “The Greatest Story Ever Told”. Every story, they say, has a beginning and an end; but what we choose to take as the beginning will make a huge difference to how that story is shaped and understood. In the New Testament we have four tellings of the story of Jesus, in the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Matthew and Luke both start, more or less, from where we might expect the story of someone’s life to begin, with his birth at Bethlehem and the circumstances surrounding it. Mark skips all that and plunges right in to where the action starts, with Jesus as a young adult coming to the river Jordan to be baptised, in readiness for his public ministry of proclaiming and enacting the Kingdom of God.

Both options seem reasonable choices as to where to start this story of who Jesus is and what he did. But it is the Fourth Gospel, John’s, which adopts the most radical solution to the question of where to begin the story of Jesus. Not by the banks of the river Jordan, not in the stable at Bethlehem, not in the angelic announcement to Mary and Joseph, not in the genealogies which traced his lineage back to Abraham and even Adam, but rather before that, right back to a point beyond which we cannot even imagine: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”. Before the created universe came into being, Jesus, the Word, is.

“In the beginning”: it is a stirring and resonant phrase. The fantasy author Terry Pratchett, in one of his Discworld novels, came up with the line, “In the beginning there was nothing, which exploded”. It is a neat and witty take, not only on modern, scientific theories of the origins of the universe in a ‘Big Bang’ moment, but also on other, more ancient and poetic accounts of creation. The opening of John’s Gospel echoes the opening of the Book of Genesis, “In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void, and darkness covered the face of the deep.” It is a majestic, glorious picture, to which we can only properly respond with wonder and awe.

Starting his Gospel in the way that he does, John equates the beginning of the story of Jesus with the beginning of the story of everything. It starts, not with nothing, but with God. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”. Jesus is shown to be more than the miracle child of Bethlehem, more than the healer of the sick and friend of the poor, more than the long-expected Messiah, more even than the crucified, risen and

ascended Lord. Jesus is the one who was there in the beginning, in the Godhead, speaking the universe into being.

Beginning the Gospel in this way shapes how we see Jesus, but it also shapes how we see the world and ourselves. Jesus did not come into the world as a stranger, but as the one through whom and in whom this world was made. All manufactured objects bear the mark of their maker, and the world is no exception. The imprint of Christ, the Word of God, runs through the universe, like an indelible watermark. That insight heightens the pathos and the paradox of humanity's rejection of Jesus; as John puts it, "He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him."

The world has rejected God; but God has not rejected the world. Even when the maker of the world goes unrecognised and spurned, and cast out onto a cross, love never ends. The grace, mercy and truth of God, embodied in Jesus, infuses the universe, precisely because all that is has come into being in him and through him. We bear the stamp of our maker, not just as individual human beings, but as part of a creation that has been spoken into being through the living, loving Word of God. No matter how much and how often we may turn away from our creator, nothing can ultimately break that bond of belonging.

The only true response to this story of Jesus, the greatest story ever told, is to fall upon our knees, in wonder and awe, in humility and praise. In beginning his Gospel in this way, John summons us to our true calling, to worship our creator who, in Jesus, has come into this world that he made, and who fills it with his grace and truth and love. Praise be to God. Alleluia.

Hello everyone

I hope you are all doing ok. Here is some music to accompany February 7th 2021.

06 - All creatures of our God and king - [All Creatures of Our God and King \(Grace Community Church\) - YouTube](#)

314 - Immortal, invisible - [Immortal, invisible, God only wise - YouTube](#)

323 - In heavenly love abiding - [In Heavenly Love Abiding - YouTube](#)

551 - O worship the King - [HANOVER-O WORSHIP THE KING - YouTube](#)

and some extras -

A Gaelic Blessing Rutter - [A Gaelic Blessing - John Rutter, The Cambridge Singers, City of London Sinfonia - YouTube](#)

Let all creation sing Ogden - [Let All Creation Sing - YouTube](#)

Bless the Lord, O my soul - [Bless the Lord, O My Soul, Op. 37, No.2 - YouTube](#)

Ubi caritas - [UBI CARITAS - Ola Gjeilo - YouTube](#)

peace perfect peace - [Praise And Harmony Singers "Peace Perfect Peace" - YouTube](#)

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow - [Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow - YouTube](#)

This week we had a poorly guinea pig but happily and thanks to our lovely vet we have spent the week nursing her back to health. Not easy to feed a guinea pig special food and medicine through a syringe but the girls have been fantastic and learned some new skills very quickly which is lucky because we now have to feed her 4 times a day. Our other piggy feels a bit left out so has had special treats of extra spinach and peppers

We have enjoyed experimenting with new dinner ideas this week with a favourite being mushroom risotto. Not sure why we have never attempted to cook this at home before but we will definitely do it again.

We also did the RSPB big bird watch last Sunday - not hundreds of birds but we did get robins and blackbirds and lots of pigeons. Phoebe's homemade bird feeders did a great job in attracting them and we enjoyed seeing what food combinations they liked the best.

We hope you are all managing to stay safe and well and find ways to pass the wintry days. We have noticed the nights starting to get lighter too which we are pleased about.

As always we send you lots of thoughts, prayers and love and look forward to when we can see you again.

Love from Sarah and the family xxxx