

Launch of Lenten Appeal. 13 Jan 2022.

This was presented in church. Please read it prayerfully.

I am reminded of the bit in Jeremiah about the potter, throwing clay on the wheel. The pot crumpled as he worked it, and he patiently began again and made a different vessel. God, the potter; we, the clay.

So – we have no vicar, for a bit. It's not our fault. Metaphorically we are down to 14 men, and it's the captain who is off the pitch. Are we going to fold? Of course not!

I am struck by how much is happening in the inter-regnum. Partly it coincides with the emergence from the pandemic – we can meet up again and we are re-forming our community, though in a different shape. But there is also a growing sense that we are being remoulded. Well - Carpe Diem! Let us seize the day and move forward together. We can do this, and we are being nudged to do it!

There is a new strap line on the website: *Worshiping God and Serving the Community*. I would like to invite us all to use the time up to Lent and through to Easter to explore and re-examine how we worship God, and how we serve the community.

For example, we can all pray! There are some Lenten prayer groups starting. Let us pray that the name of Jesus is evident in all that we do. The Daylight group meets on some Saturdays and there is a focus on prayer. It is rediscovering links with the Community of St Chad, a diocese-wide group. Anyone can join these groups, as well as praying individually. Prayer is what unlocks the church potential. Let us explore and revitalise our prayer life through Lent.

We may be able to volunteer. Sunrise – the breakfast group - now has enough – thank you all very much. But - could you steward for the church so that we can stay open for longer? Might you help with the Friday concert lunches? The soup hub, and the Street Pastors could use more volunteers. We are reaching out to schools and the university – we will need helpers. Housebound folk need visiting – we need pastoral volunteers. Some of you, as it was said about the late Duke of Edinburgh, have probably 'done your bit' and we salute you. But for most of us, let us use Lent to re-evaluate our use of time.

And we need to re-start our donations to mission. I was speaking only two days ago to a man who has recently moved to Shrewsbury to open a residential centre which looks after men just released from prison. He wants someone to take bible readings to the men. Do we have a volunteer? He is in need of funds because he has given up his job as a top lawyer in London and moved to Shrewsbury, a town historically steeped in the monastic tradition, to live as a Franciscan, and is being supported by a London church, and a group of praying friends. He is living by faith. We surely should be supporting this. But we have heard about the parish finances. Yet I remember the late Bishop Ronnie saying 'now we aren't giving to mission any more I might as well take my donations elsewhere'. In order to fund our emerging mission, serving the community, I would like to suggest a plan.

What if, by Easter we could increase our monthly donations by £1000 per month, for three years. Now, the story of the widow's mite tells us that 2 copper coins from a small purse are worth more than several gold coins from a bank vault, but that also presents a challenge to many of us. Are we giving as much as the widow, in proportion?

This has already started, by the way. It is amazing. I know of two people in the last few weeks who have already upped their contributions.

If 2 of us present could find £100 per month that would be the first 200.

If 4 more of us could find £50 per month that would add nicely.

If 10 of us could find £20 per month that would take us past half way.

A further 20 of us who could manage £10 per month would see us almost there.

The remainder comes from 40 of us who can promise £5 per month for the three years. Let not moth and corruption get your earthly treasure! Lay up instead spiritual treasure.

We haven't been doing collections due to covid, and if you want to give something now, you can use your mobile phone. There is a number on the pew sheet: 70460. Text it with StChads10 to give £10.

But the best way to give is via a standing order. Bank details are:

Sort Code 30-97-62 Account No 00399018

Please also though, fill in a Gift Aid form, to add value to your giving – they are in the foyer.

I remember as a child being told by my Mother that she saw her whole purpose on earth as to bring Glory to God. Let us use Lent to examine how we can bring glory to God through our prayers, our service, our giving.