



## The Priory Church of St Mary

**Welcome to our February edition of Keep in Touch.** Thank you to everyone who contributed articles and reflections as we prepare for Lent. We have had an invitation to join the Lent group being run from St. John's Maindee by their ordinand, Sarah Rosser. Details will follow or you can collect a Lent bag from the North Porch at St Mary's.

### Church in Wales

Lent is a time of giving up, of almsgiving and penitence, generosity may not, at first sight, appear to offer anything to our Lenten journey and reflections. Maybe we can 'see' generosity clearly at Easter or Christmas, but not in Lent. Yet, we have a generous God who pours upon us a generosity of love, opening our hearts to walk the path Lent leads us on – to Holy Week and the crucifixion, and onwards to the resurrection and Easter.

Generosity is a way of living and being, and a gift, an inheritance, from God to us – a gift which we are to share with others. In Paul's second letter to the Corinthians we read:

We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. 2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-2

"The **Ministry Area Council**, which has representatives of each church, had their first meeting with Reverend Sally, on Zoom, just two days after she was Licensed by Bishop Cherry as our new Ministry Area Leader and five days before she was Inducted to each church in a restricted ceremony at St Mary's.

Whilst much of our meeting was taken up with briefings on each church and on the collective role of the Council, we also touched on future issues

We are currently in a seven church Area, but the impending Diocesan re-structure of Parishes will result in our merger with others to form a new bigger Area of twenty churches, probably by the end of this year. This will not, of itself, reduce the number of clergy but it will bring significant changes for the administrative organisation of Parishes.

The Diocese has just circulated a comprehensive "Toolkit" to aid the planning and delivery of these changes and a preliminary meeting of representatives of the churches in the Usk, Raglan and Goytre Areas will take place in early March.

<https://monmouth.churchinwales.org.uk/en/clergy-and-members/ministry-areas/>

In the meantime, and whilst we cannot yet re-open churches for common Worship, Sally is arranging virtual Joint Sunday Services and Coffee chats that are proving very popular and spiritually refreshing. We are all agreed they are a great demonstration of our new Leader's determination and ability to bring worship to all our churches despite our being held apart under the current constraints."

Sandy Blair



Dear Friends,

Gosh time flies when I'm having fun. Whilst I take ministry very seriously, these first few weeks with you have been immensely good fun too as I begin to explore new church buildings, start to build new friendships with you, and learn how you work, and what your hopes and dreams are.

As Sandy talks about, there is a lot of change on the horizon, and whilst we must plan and prepare for this, I would also like to commend to you the practice of using today's energy for today. In the Sermon on the Mount Christ says to the crowd, "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." (Matt 6:34), and I think we should listen to this advice.

Whilst it is important to plan and look ahead, we must do that trusting in God, and believing that he will give us the tools, the energy, and everything else we need, to ensure that the future is planned in a way that will be for the benefit of his Kingdom, and will reflect his love for us.

As we enter Lent I pray that you will find comfort in the God who loves you. I also pray that you will find ways to reflect on the difficult themes of Lent and see how they can help us to grow and flourish in that love. And most of all I pray that you will be able to trust in the God of all, whose love transcends all human frailty and who has you in the palm of his hand. Amen.

With love from Sally xx

**The Catholic Food Kitchen:** The kitchen has been operating since May 2020. Gloria Dolan from the Catholic Church took over the running of the kitchen and its volunteers and she organises the ordering she also administers all aspects of the kitchen and its requirements. Volunteers prepare, cook and deliver meals in the local community. At present we are delivering approximately 41 meals twice a week and food parcels once a week on a Tuesday and Thursday. This number is increasing as the need for support grows and word of the kitchen spreads throughout the community of Usk and its surroundings.

We feel blessed than none of the people we support or any volunteers have been very ill through Covid-19. Hopefully, with good progress continuing to be made vaccinating everyone, we can look forward to better times later this year. Meanwhile, the team of volunteers work hard to distribute nutritious and tasty meals and deliver food parcels.

The volunteers value being of service to our community and enjoy getting to know more of the clients as time passes. We intend to extend opening the church hall for social activities when we are allowed. It will be a lovely way to relieve the isolation so many of us have been feeling during the last year.

Although the kitchen is run through the Catholic Church many of the volunteers are from our own Ministry Area, the Baptist Chapel and are supported by a wonderful range of people from different faiths and no faith.

Please let me or the Kitchen know if you or anyone else would benefit from our support.

Dee Seabourne: You can contact me on [07527699916](tel:07527699916) or email: [dee\\_bury@yahoo.com](mailto:dee_bury@yahoo.com)

**Services St Mary's** is open for private prayer Thursday morning at 10am.  
Usk MA Services:

9.30am Service on YouTube

- [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCS\\_MlCl7UW1xWiQm7ZxMr1A/videos](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCS_MlCl7UW1xWiQm7ZxMr1A/videos)

10.30am Zoom coffee after church -

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85702033318>

Meeting ID: 857 0203

There is no Morning Prayer next week but Compline is happening on

Thursday on Zoom Compline

Meeting ID 954 9508 3856

Passcode COMPLINE



Smiling is contagious,  
Smiling relieves stress,  
Smiling improves our mood,  
Smiling makes us look younger,  
Smiling lowers the blood pressure.

Father God, there's so much joy in the world,  
help me to find something to smile about every day.  
And when I'm tempted to grumble and take life for granted,

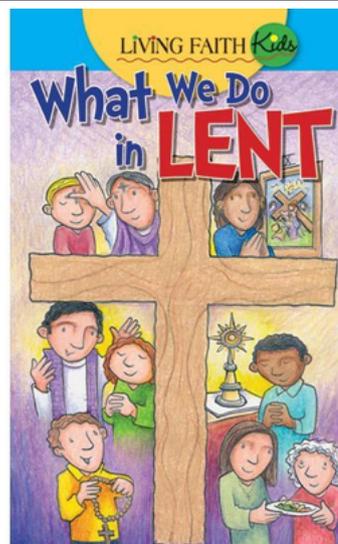
Give me a nudge and remind me to count my blessings.  
Take care and keep smiling!

**Reflections:** When I was staying with my niece Fiona a couple of years ago, during Lent, I noticed her three children dipping hands into a tub on the sideboard and pulling out a piece of paper and reading the words on it before stuffing it in their pocket and heading off for school.

I asked Fiona what this was all about and she explained that, in lieu of giving up something for Lent, she had encouraged them to write down 40 good deeds or actions and put them in the tub, and each day try to carry out what was on the paper they individually drew examples were befriending a child spotted on their own at play time, refraining from talking in class, lending their favourite toy or book and so on.

This has remained in my memory and each Lent I do some soul searching, wondering whether denying myself chocolate for 40 days is more about wanting to lose weight than denial for Christ – maybe more prayer and more giving may be more appropriate? - answers on a post card please!

Sarah Byford



Lent comes from the Anglo Saxon word lencten, meaning "lengthen" and refers to the lengthening days of spring.

The forty days represents the time Jesus spent in the wilderness, enduring the temptation of Satan and preparing to begin his ministry.

You are invited to explore Lent with Lent in a Bag which can be collected from the North Porch at St Mary's - or contact one of the Church wardens :

Carol  
Tel. [01291 672293](tel:01291672293)  
Sarah -

Tel. [01291 673528](tel:01291673528)

**Usk Vicarage** is owned by the Church in Wales and managed by the Diocesan Parsonage Board. The Board has recently agreed that the Vicarage is not to be sold or let but held for an intended Diocesan appointment in a few months time. Responsibility for it's care has therefore passed from the Ministry Area and the St Mary's Wardens to the Parsonage Board Inspector.  
Sandy Blair

Father, help me to see this holy season of Lent as a time of spiritual renewal, rather than a time of deprivation. Motivate me to reach a new level of experiencing your grace.

To receive a weekly update from Rev'd Sally. Please email [revdsally@gmail.com](mailto:revdsally@gmail.com)

**St Mary's PCC** would like to thank everyone for their continued generosity. We paid the Parish share to the Diocesan and continue to maintain the building.

*Thank You*