

Rectors Ramblings

Malachi 3. 1-5; Psalm 24 [1-6] 7-10; Hebrews 2.14-18; Luke 2.22-40

Dear Friends,

“Have mercy.”

I am grateful for Fr Martin exploring these words in his sermon last Sunday, and I hope you forgive me for returning to this subject again, but it's rare for two short words to hit home with the force that these have in the past week.

Bishop Mariann Budde's sermon outraged President Donald Trump and infuriated his supporters, as reported not only in the international news media, but in publications as diverse as Bloomberg and Glamour. The news coverage is evenly spread across the political spectrum, but Left-leaning and Right-leaning media are diametrically opposed in their reactions: the former praising the Bishop of Washington for asking the President to reconsider his actions against vulnerable minorities, and the latter citing separation of Church and State and demanding that she apologise.

Context, of course, is all. It was not just the words “Have mercy” that enraged the political Right, but that Bishop Budde was asking this on behalf of LGBT children, immigrant workers, refugees, and asylum seekers.

Here, the repeated, emphatic Biblical demand that mercy be shown to the poor and the outcast, is in direct conflict with the modern notion that religion and politics should not mix.

In fact, religion and politics have always mixed: inevitably since each concerns the way we treat each other and order our society. In Jesus' community, the only law was religious law, and he repeatedly challenged the Pharisees responsible for its enforcement. Religion and politics have been intertwined throughout history, from Emperor Constantine, Hild(a) of Whitby, Margaret of Scotland, and Thomas Becket, to Joan of Arc, John Knox, Mother Jones, Desmond Tutu and many, many others.

As Christians, we often hear about our role as servants (the New Testament uses the Greek word *douloi*, 'slaves') of God. We learn about Christ's 'self-emptying' (*kenosis*) in coming down from heaven to live among us. We hear of his washing the disciples' feet and praise the 'Servant King'. Since the 6th century, most popes have followed Gregory the Great's example in styling themselves 'Servant of the Servants of God' (*Servus Servorum Dei*).

By contrast, we rarely hear about the Christian use of power: the capacity to influence the thoughts, words, and actions of others. From infancy onwards, we are taught obedience to the authority of parents, doctors, teachers, clergy, police officers, coaches, foremen, line managers – and there are many good reasons for this, often relating to our own and other people's safety and well-being.

But the danger is that we find ourselves, as Christians, hesitant when people in authority use their power in ways that conflict with Christian teaching. Do we side with the bully or the victim? And what happens when we find ourselves in positions of power and authority? Sooner or later, some of us will become parents, doctors, teachers, police officers, coaches, foremen, managers – even (God help us!) clergy – or in other positions of greater or lesser authority. Do we become the bullies, or champion the victims? Or do we just look away?

Monday was Holocaust Memorial Day and I know that with the events in the Middle East many have found this especially hard this year. However, I reminded of the poem.

First They Came – by Pastor Martin Niemöller

First they came for the Communists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Communist
Then they came for the Socialists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Socialist
Then they came for the trade unionists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a trade unionist
Then they came for the Jews
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Jew
Then they came for me
And there was no one left
To speak out for me

For guidance, we must return to Jesus Christ, who exercised his own divine power and authority in very specific ways: to teach, heal and forgive, but also to confront those in authority who misused their power to exploit or exclude vulnerable people. **“Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely,”** wrote Lord Acton to Bishop Creighton in 1887. Following Christ, as Christians, we can and must find another way.

Forty days ago, we celebrated the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. This weekend Candlemas marks the end of the Christmas season, now we recall the day on which he was presented in the Temple, when he was offered to the Father and shown to his people. As a sign of his coming among us, his mother was purified, as we now come to him for cleansing.

In their old age Simeon and Anna recognised him as their Lord, as we today sing of his glory.” Simeon challenging Mary with the words of Luke’s Gospel: *“Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, ‘This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed – and a sword will pierce your own soul too.’”*

This Sunday we celebrate both the joy of his coming and his searching judgement and mercy, looking back to the day of his birth and forward to the coming days of his passion.

Please pray for our Baptism family at St Mary’s this Sunday for baby Jude, for Gina & Kirk his parents and for Jude’s Godparents.

Have a good week, be joyful, keep the faith and keep doing the little things that make a difference to those you love and those in need.

Paul xx

**Hymns: 377 Love divine all Loves excelling - 1419 Light of the World - 89 Faithful One
2417 Longing for Light we wait in Darkness - 1346 In Christ alone
(40 Be still for the presence of the Lord)**

ALPHA COURSE AT ST MARY'S

This February we are offering an Alpha Course at St Mary's Newick, starting at 7pm on Thursday 6th February. This will run every Thursday for 10 weeks. Come along and join us in a series of group conversations that freely explore the basics of the Christian faith in an open, friendly environment.

We start each evening with a meal together. You'll be hosted in a small group and watch an episode on a different question of faith – then you have a chance to share your thoughts and hear what others think. You can say anything you like, or nothing at all. Everyone's welcome. You're invited, no matter of your background or beliefs. It's free and there's no pressure to come back.

If you're interested you can sign up through <https://alpha.org.uk/try> or by emailing Sara on churchoffice@stmarysnewicks.church.

Intergenerational Opera Opportunity....with your help

Following a really successful programme last year, the Intergenerational Opera are keen to run a repeat programme this year with Newick School.

This is a five week course and in 2024 the cost of £500 was met by a single donation. This year the fee remains at £500 and we are looking for donations and pledges to cover this and allow the programme to run again.

If you are able to donate towards this fantastic opportunity for both the school and the community, please mail churchoffice@stmarysnewicks.church with your contact details and the amount you would be willing to give.

Thank you so much in advance for your kind generosity.

(We are still looking for pledges, with grateful thanks to those who have been in touch so far....)

SERVICES – FEBRUARY 2025

<p>Sunday 2nd February</p> <p>Candlemas Presentation of Christ in the Temple</p>	<p>8am BCP* Holy Communion Preacher : Rev Paul</p> <p>10am Holy Baptism Malachi 3:1-5 - Hebrews 2:14-18 - Luke 2:22-40 Preacher: Rev Paul</p> <p>6pm Evensong Leader: Geoff Clinton Preacher: Ian Reekie</p>
<p>Sunday 9th February 4th Sunday before Lent</p>	<p>8am BCP* Holy Communion Preacher: Fr Martin Morgan</p> <p>10am Holy Communion Isaiah 6:1-8 - 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 - Luke 5:1-11 Preacher: Fr Martin Morgan</p> <p>6pm Worship2 Leader: Mandy Stockwell</p>
<p>Sunday 16th February 3rd Sunday before Lent</p>	<p>8am BCP* Holy Communion at St Peter's Chailey</p> <p>10am Family Communion & Owls Jeremiah 17:5-10 - 1 Corinthians 15:12-20 - Luke 6: 17-26 Preacher: Rev Paul</p>
<p>Sunday 23rd February 2nd Sunday before Lent</p>	<p>8am BCP* Holy Communion Preacher Rev Paul</p> <p>10am Holy Communion Genesis 2:4b-9,15-25 - Revelation 4 - Luke 8:22-25 Preacher: Rev Paul</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">*DENOTES STANDARD YEAR C LECTIONARY READINGS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">PRAYER MEETINGS FOR CHURCH SERVICES EVERY SUNDAY 9.30 BARN CENTRE</p>	

PRAYERS AND REFLECTIONS



As always, please remember those on our prayer list:

Francis Bailey, Cole Louise Blackman, Bernice Blundy, Beryl Champion-Smith, Harri Gande, John and Elizabeth Gould, Rubie Geer, Juliette Lucas, Helen Lloyd, Spike MacGuire, Christina McCann, Shirley Mansfield, Derek Marshall, George Morrison, Patricia Moss, Ann Parker, Adrian, Andrea and Amber Parris, Gemma Peacock, June and Ron Perou, Christine Ripley, Rubie (aged 11), Cheryl Stewart, Martin Tardif, Marcus Thrower, Toni Warrilow, Sean Watson, Nasima Wright.

OUR PRAYER FOR GROWTH

**God of Mission who alone brings growth to your Church,
send your Holy Spirit to give Vision to our planning,
wisdom to our actions, and power to our witness.
Help our church to grow in numbers, in spiritual
commitment to you, and in service to our local community,
through Jesus Christ Our Lord**

AMEN

LEGACY FOR S MARY'S CHURCH NEWICK

YOUR WILL YOUR WIFE'S YOUR WIFE'S

HOW DO I PUT A LEGACY IN PLACE?

Please consider making a legacy gift to St Mary's Church, Newick.

Legacies

**For more information visit
the St Mary's Church**

[Website](#)

Regulars at St Mary's:



Children's Choir: 1st Sunday of each month 10am - 11am Barn Centre

Email: churchoffice@stmarysnewicks.church

Web: stmarysnewicks.church/youthchoir

Citizens Advice: Drop in sessions for free, confidential, impartial advice on topics including housing, benefits issues, cost of living, debt and much more:

- Wednesday 22nd January 10am - 1pm
- Wednesday 19th February 10am - 1pm
- Wednesday 19th March 10am - 1pm
- Wednesday 16th April 10am - 1pm
- Wednesday 21st May 10am - 1pm
- Wednesday 18th June 10am - 1pm

Free advice: 0208 278 7893 Tues - Thurs 10am - 3pm or email info@lewesdistrictca.org.uk

Lunch Club: Second Monday of the month in the Barn Centre at 12.30pm. to book your place please ring 01825 722186

NYC & NCT: A fun club for the young people of the village. Where? The Barn Centre. When? Wednesday evenings during term-time. Time? 18.00 Juniors and 19.30 Seniors

- Juniors: 11-15 years
- Seniors: 16-18 years

More information: [HERE](#)

Email: youth.newick@gmail.com

Owls: Crafts, Bible story, fun and refreshments

Email: childrenandfamilies@stmarysnewicks.church

- Sunday 19th January 9.55am - 11am
- Sunday 16th February 9.55am - 11am
- Sunday 23rd March 9.55am - 11am

Prayer Group: Every 1st and 3rd Monday 2pm Barn Centre

Prayer Meetings for Church Services: Every Sunday 9.30 - 9.45am Barn Centre



Tea at Three: Third Thursday of the month at 3pm in the Barn Centre. For more information contact Patsy on 01825 722590



Lewes District Local Plan



Open morning

1st February 10am - 1pm

Newick Village Hall

Local plans set out where future development will take place, such as new homes and locations for business growth, as well the local policy requirements against which future planning applications will be judged.

Come along and find out more about the proposed policies for our area and potential sites within towns and a limited number of villages including Newick.

This Lewes District Council event will also have representatives in attendance to answer any questions you have, as well as Parish Councillors from Chailey, Newick and Wivelsfield.

Complimentary tea & coffee

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

(Interdenominational)

at

ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH, MARESFIELD

On

Friday 7th March 2025 at 2.00 p.m.

The Theme is Written by the Christian Women of The Cook Islands

'I MADE YOU WONDERFUL'

The Cook Islanders have celebrated 200 years of Christianity in the group of 15 islands, spread over 800,000 sq miles in the Pacific Ocean.

This year they share their stories of struggle during Covid-19, of their culture being devalued and of the improvements in obstetric health care. We give thanks for their honesty and their witness to God's strength in their lives.

Based on the words of Psalm 139, and woven within the stories of three women, this service invites us to recognize that God created each of us with great attention and loving care. God created us. God knows us. God is with us. What a wonderful message to share.

**REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED IN THE CHURCH FOLLOWING
THE SERVICE**



Please visit our website stmarysnewicks.church for more information on the various organisations and events and activities available to you.

If you have any news you would like to share, any photos you would like to display, or any stories about St Mary's Newick or wider afield that you think the readers may enjoy - please mail us at:

churchoffice@stmarysnewicks.church

The content deadline is 10am on Thursday so please make sure you send anything to us in time. Anything received after 10am will be included the following week if appropriate.

Thank you.