

Pastoral note, 21st February 2021

Really good news! Nick Went is home after 5 challenging weeks in hospital! He still has a long way to go – Chris is back in uniform to mastermind the drugs, but he is doing well. Do continue to pray for them both.

Please note that Margaret Dorrington's address is wrong in the new directory. It should be **51** Minster Court. Apologies for the mistake.

Fairtrade Fortnight. 22nd February-7th March. Helen and Richard Baggott sadly cannot offer the great Big Brew morning that we have enjoyed in recent years, but please do what you can to support this year's events. <https://rutlandfairtrade.wordpress.com/> will take you to a wealth of information including a presentation (webinar) entitled 'Climate, Fairtrade and You'. Covid-19 has of course impacted greatly on the poorest communities, and we need to help all we can.

Julie Gunton's funeral will be held at Kettering Crematorium on 1st March at 2pm. Details of the live link will be available in next week's Northgate. In the meantime, please keep Julie and her cousin, Tony, in your prayers.

Finally I have just learnt that Kathleen McKinnon died peacefully in her sleep on Sunday (14th) night. She would have been 101 next week. We send our sincere condolences to Duncan and James, her two sons, assuring them of our thoughts and prayers.

The flowers have bounced back after the snow, there is much to look forward to, but we need to be patient... With our continuing prayers, Angela.

Please note: any notices to go in next week's Northgate (28 February) should be sent to Northgate Convener Roger Rowell (rogerrowell.7@gmail.com) for forwarding to the appropriate editor.

NORTHGATE

The weekly notices of
OAKHAM METHODIST CHURCH

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21 February 2021

FIRST SUNDAY IN
LENT

Oakham Methodist Church – called to worship God and share our faith, we seek to serve and welcome all through the love of Jesus Christ.

Northgate Service for Sunday, 21 February 2021

The First Sunday in Lent

Today our service will be based around a liturgy which has been written by the Methodist Church for Ash Wednesday. Usually, in an Ash Wednesday service, the palm crosses which we received at last year's Palm Sunday are burnt and the ashes are applied to our foreheads, in the shape of a cross, as a sign of repentance at the beginning of Lent. This recognises that on Palm Sunday our voices join with the crowd celebrating the arrival of Jesus in Jerusalem and pledging ourselves to God. But in our frail humanity we just do not live up to our promises. We continue to sin, hurting ourselves, hurting others and hurting God. We cannot share the ashes today but we can take the time to make the commitment to reflect on ourselves over the Lent period, making our confession to God and committing ourselves to change.

Opening Prayer: God of truth and holiness, as we settle down to worship on this first Sunday of Lent, may we know your holiness and be enlightened by your Spirit, so that we may in truth join with all the saints in praise and penitence. Amen

Almighty God, creator of all and lover of all you have made, we come to worship you. Expand our ideas of holiness, and remind us that we are made in your image, holy and good. Drive from our hearts all that is mean and petty, all that is not good. On this the first Sunday of Lent we come with the matters that trouble our conscience: things we have done or said that did not reflect your goodness in Jesus. Things we could have done but chose not to. Acts of generosity we selfishly refused to do, or to receive. Lord Jesus, Friend of sinners, wash me clean. Holy Spirit, burn away the dross in my life. Heavenly Father, assure me not only of your loving welcome for repentant prodigals, but also of your strength to help me through this Lent. Speak to me now through your Holy Word, that by the Living Word I may be challenged and encouraged, in Jesus my Saviour. Amen

Readings: Isaiah 58:1-11 and Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Reflection: Ash Wednesday can be an uncomfortable time in worship. Our readings bring us up short. Sometimes we are called by God to go back to basics. So, some questions for us to reflect on from our readings: When have I "pointed the finger"? When do I "quarrel and

fight"? How do I deceive myself and serve my own interest? When have I "hidden from other people's needs"? This Lent what is the fast that the Lord requires of me? Might it be a fast from consumerism? From planet-damaging activities? From self-obsession? Where is my treasure? What does my heart return to morning by morning? Night by night? Do I speak of good, or of evil? And, lest we forget to hope - a quote from the alternative OT reading "Return to the Lord, your God, for God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love." (Joel 2:13). Take a time to sit quietly, if you have one look at a cross. Remember God's promise in Ezekiel 36:26 "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh."

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn:

Beauty for brokenness,
hope for despair,
Lord, in your suffering world
this is our prayer.
Bread for the children,
justice, joy, peace,
sunrise to sunset,
your kingdom increase!

*God of the poor
friend of the weak
give us compassion we pray
Melt our cold hearts
let tears fall like rain
come, change our love
from a spark to a flame*

Shelter for fragile lives,
cures for their ills,
work for all people,
trade for their skills;
land for the dispossessed,
rights for the weak,
voices to plead the cause
of those who can't speak.

Lighten our darkness
breathe on this flame
until your justice
burns brightly again
until the nations
learn of your ways
seek your salvation
Bring you their praise.

Refrain

Blessing: May the Lord of the dance, with you in the sombre days of Lent, bless your Lenten discipline with grace and bring you resurrection and hope in the strange blessings of Gethsemane and Calvary, in God's Holy Name, Amen

(Today's service prepared by the Rev'd Bekkie)