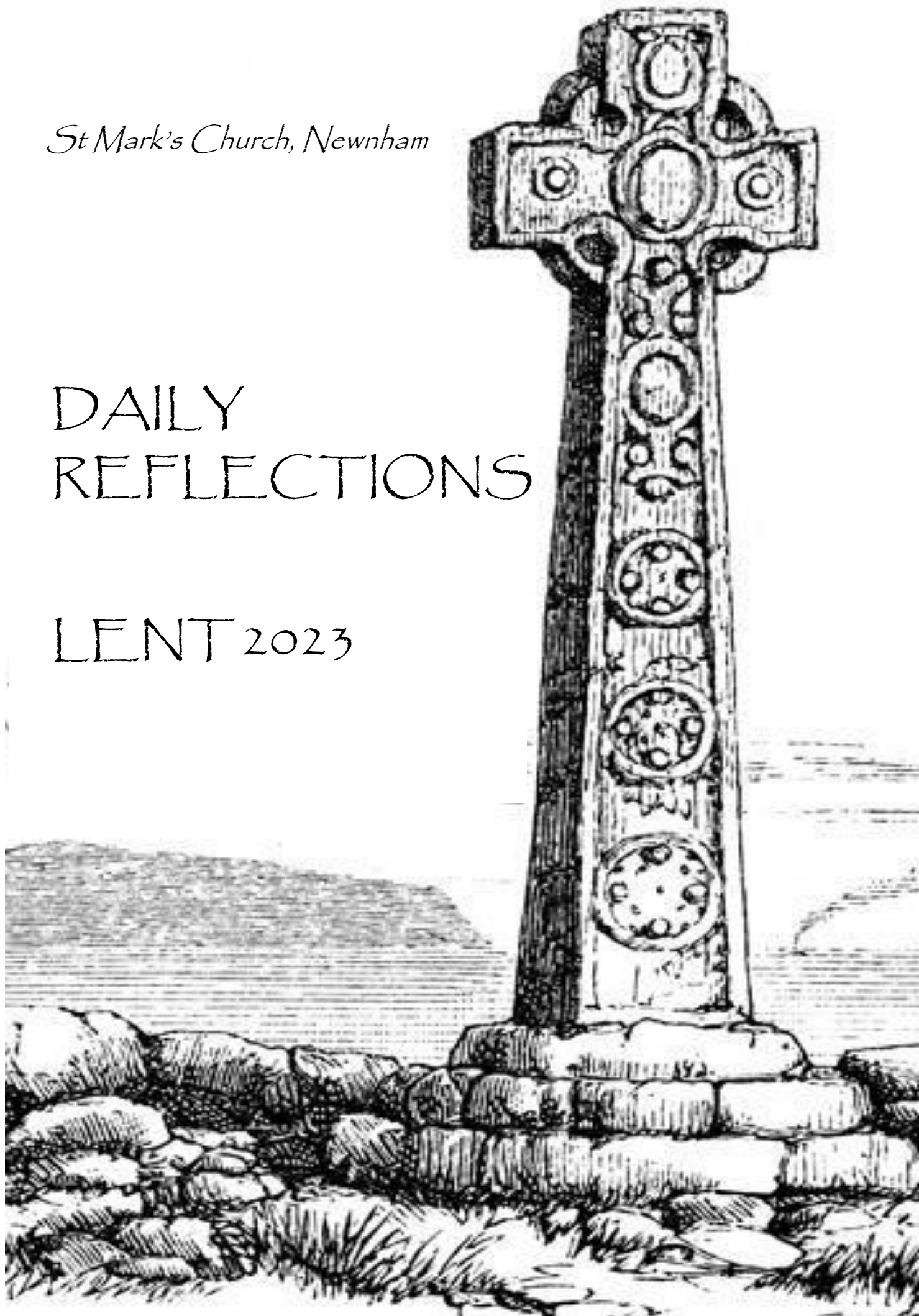


St Mark's Church, Newnham

DAILY
REFLECTIONS

LENT 2023



Lent anticipates the coming of Easter. At Easter we will celebrate new life and new beginnings. Jesus has risen, death is defeated. It is the most important event in the Christian calendar. Being a people who are so set on arriving at the destination our natural instinct might be to rush to get there.

Lent slows us down.

Lent is a season of both anticipation and preparation. We are invited to slow down and to be restored.

We are invited to read the scriptures, to ponder and to pray. To be silent before God. To let God put us back together.

At St Mark's, rather than Lent Groups or talks, this year we want to encourage each person to take time to tend to their own spirituality and discipleship, our own walk with God. But we mustn't forget that we don't do this alone. Part of the journey includes our **Sunday services**, when we gather together for worship and prayer, word and sacrament.

We also want to be together in some way throughout the week. We invite you to consider coming to a said service of **Evening Prayer each Monday at 5pm** throughout Lent. But this booklet too is intended to bring us together, reading and praying from the same material in our own homes, or in our small groups, which will add to the sense of a church waiting upon God together.

How to use this booklet....

Try and find a time during the day when you can take at least a few minutes. It may be that giving something up for Lent allows you the time to do this. Start with a few moments of quiet, offering the time to God. Use this booklet to the extent that it gives you a framework, stimulus and some resources. However, sit light to it if you find yourselves led in another direction or praying in a different way.

The pattern is straightforward. Each week day there is a bible reading, sometimes just a verse or two, sometimes a longer passage. There is also a suggestion for a prayer each day.

Each weekday offers a different option; a way to use silence, a reflection, something to ponder or think about through the day, a question or an action. Saturday offers a chance to explore something that may be new to you, something you may be able to do alone or with others. Make this booklet your own. There is space for notes at the back if that helps, along with details of some spiritual practices that you might like to try this Lent, along with details of our Easter talks.

Slow down and be restored.

ASH WEDNESDAY service in church, 7.30pm

Read Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Ponder What are you hoping for this Lent?

Are you giving anything up?

Pray Lord, it is risky to let ourselves be led by the Spirit.

So often it leads us into the wilderness.

Help us to be assured of your presence. Amen

THURSDAY 23rd February

Read Isaiah 58:2-10

Ask Thinking about both today's reading and yesterday's, is fasting about the individual or other people?

Pray Lord God, may we be the answer to our prayers.
That we might loose the chains of injustice,
free the oppressed, feed the hungry,
shelter and clothe those in need, in worship of you. Amen

FRIDAY 24th FEBRUARY

Read Matthew 6:5-15

Act Cut a strip of rough material and keep it in your pocket or purse; whenever you see or feel it, remember this season of Lent and your hopes for it.

Pray the Lord's prayer, leaving silence after each line to meditate on the words you are praying.

SATURDAY 25th FEBRUARY

Try Opposites Prayer - if you normally pray quietly, try shouting praise or prayers to God, if you like modern music, try using a traditional hymn, if you normally pray inside, go outside etc.

SUNDAY 26th FEBRUARY - Gather

1st Sunday in Lent

church services at 8.00am and 9.30am

MONDAY 27th FEBRUARY evening prayer in church, 5pm

Read Luke 4:1-13

Silently think about a time when you have felt alone or in a wilderness place. Thank God for his presence and tell him how being in the situation feels. Be honest and take time.

Pray Lord, bless all who guide us through the wilderness of this life that we may experience the ministry of angels. Amen

TUESDAY 28th FEBRUARY

Read John 4:1-14

Reflect 'Nothing in life is to be feared: it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less'

Marie Curie

Pray Lord, make me an instrument of your peace: where there is hatred let me bring your love. Amen

WEDNESDAY 1st MARCH

Read John 4:27-42

Ponder What does 'living water' mean to you?
How would you explain to someone what it looks and feels and tastes like?

Pray Let Your living water flow over my soul, let Your Holy Spirit come and take control of every situation that has troubled my mind. All my cares and burdens on to You I roll. Amen

THURSDAY 2nd MARCH

Read John 4:15-26

Ask How do you react to others, that is, those who are different from you in terms of background, gender, age, intelligence, personality etc.?

Pray Lord, open our lips to sing of your praise, but also our minds to do your will and our hearts to serve your people. Amen

FRIDAY 3rd MARCH

Read Psalm 23:1-4

Act Fairtrade fortnight runs from 27th February – 12th March. What household items could you change to make sure you only buy fairtrade?

Pray Generous God, as we are aware of those in the world who are hungry and thirsty, make us hungry for justice and thirsty for righteousness. Amen

SATURDAY 4th MARCH

Try finding out about the life of a well-known (or maybe obscure) saint. Imagine how their experience of God could encourage or challenge you.

(see: christianity.fandom.com/wiki/Anglican_Calendar_of_Saints)

SUNDAY 5th MARCH - Gather

2nd Sunday in Lent

church services at 8.00am and 9.30am

MONDAY 6th MARCH evening prayer in church, 5pm

Read Psalm 51:1-17

Silently meditate on the psalm and the ways you can use the words in honest prayers of confession.

Pray Lord God, help me to believe that you forgive, and to receive forgiveness where I need it most. Amen

TUESDAY 7th MARCH

Read John 8:1-11

Reflect 'Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her' (verse 7).

Pray Lord, you are the way, the truth and the life; help us to walk in your way, speak in your truth and live in the fullness of your resurrected life. Amen

WEDNESDAY 8th MARCH

Read Galatians 5:22-23

Ponder your week so far, the conversations you have had, the people you have met, the things you have done – and not done.

Be honest with yourself about the good and the bad.

Pray Be honest with God about the above and where you feel the need, ask for forgiveness. Acknowledge before him too the things you have done or said with which you are pleased.

THURSDAY 9th MARCH

Read Romans 2:1-4

Ask What is the difference between judgement and justice?
How do we deal with things we think are wrong?

Pray Give us generous hearts, O Lord, full of love and compassion, slow to judge and quick to forgive. Amen

FRIDAY 10th MARCH

Read Luke 7:36-50

Act Decide to do a random act of kindness today, for someone you know or for a stranger – or both!

Pray Go through the alphabet and give a word of praise or thank God for something or someone beginning with each letter.

SATURDAY 11th MARCH

Try Lectio Divina – a method of bible study. Choose a short reading from the bible, perhaps start with the gospels. Read through alone or in a group. Allow a pause. Write down, or share in the group, one word from the reading that strikes you. Read again. This time expand to a phrase or sentence. Read once more and now write down or share any further comments or thoughts on the words you have read.

SUNDAY 12th MARCH - Gather

3rd Sunday in Lent

church services at 8.00am & 9.30am

MONDAY 13th MARCH evening prayer in church, 5pm

Read Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

Silently become aware of all the good things around you in life, give thanks to God. Take the things that worry you and turn them over to God.

Pray Continue in silence for as long as you can, aware of your own breathing and of God's presence with you.

TUESDAY 14th MARCH

Read 1 Samuel 3:1-10

Reflect on what you can actually hear in the silence.

Pray that you may hear God's voice above the noises of the world.

WEDNESDAY 15th MARCH

Read Mark 1:35

Ponder Are you someone who loves quiet, silent contemplation and/or being alone? Or does quiet and solitude make you anxious?

Pray Lord, I thank you that I am me, with all my strengths and all my weaknesses. Thank you that you know me. Help me to see you in the busyness and action of life and in the solitude and quiet.

Amen

THURSDAY 16th MARCH

Read Exodus 3:1-6

Ask What does God's voice sound like?

Where or in what way might you hear it?

Pray O let me hear Thee speaking in accents clear and still,
Above the storms of passion, the murmurs of self will.

O speak to reassure me, to hasten or control;

O speak, and make me listen, thou Guardian of my soul.

FRIDAY 17th MARCH

Read James 1:19-20

Act Try and pause before you speak today. Take time to listen, look, feel and taste before using your voice.

Pray May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight. Amen

SATURDAY 18th MARCH

Try using your body in prayer. This may be as simple as kneeling or changing posture. Or facing in different directions to pray for different things. Or using your hand to pray for different things.

(see www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/learning-pray)

SUNDAY 19th MARCH - Gather

Mothering Sunday

church services at 8.00am and 9.30am

MONDAY 20th MARCH evening prayer in church, 5pm

Read Matthew 25:31-45

Silently Consider your hands – in what way can they serve?
Consider your feet – where can they take you to help?
Consider your ears – who needs you to listen?
Consider your eyes – what opportunities can you see?

Pray Jesus Christ, let me remember you in the face of all who are in need. Amen

TUESDAY 21st MARCH

Read Matthew 20:20-28

Reflect 'Everybody can be great. Because everybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve. You don't have to know about Plato and Aristotle to serve. You don't have to know Einstein's theory of relativity to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.' *Martin Luther King*

Pray Give us O Lord a heart full of grace. Amen

WEDNESDAY 22nd MARCH

Read Mark 9:35-37

Ponder Who do you compare yourself to?

Pray Think of those who the world puts last, or on the bottom of the heap. Ask God to help you see them as he does.

THURSDAY 23rd MARCH

Read Romans 12:1-2

Ask What can I do to change the world?

Pray Teach me to swim God in the rivers of faith.
I paddle, ankle deep. I want to dive.
Lead me, whatever it takes, to deep faith. Amen

FRIDAY 24th MARCH

Read Matthew 5:13-16

Act Visit someone that you haven't seen for a while or write them a letter if they are not local.

Pray for each person in your address book or everyone you can think of at church.

SATURDAY 25th MARCH

Try inviting people round for a meal. Maybe people who don't know each other well. The meal can be very simple. Focus on getting to know each other. If you aren't able to do that, are you able to cook an extra portion of your meal and take it to someone else?

SUNDAY 26th MARCH - Gather

Fifth Sunday in Lent

church services at 8.00am and 9.30am

MONDAY 27th MARCH evening prayer in church, 5pm

Read Mark 4:35-41

Silently take time to listen to the noises around you, outside, in the house, at work. Write down what they make you think of – it may be people, events or situations.

Pray for the things you have written down.

TUESDAY 28th MARCH

Read James 2:14-19

Reflect 'Both gospel proclamation and social action are equally important. They are like two blades of a pair of scissors: if either is missing the cutting edge is lost.' *David Watson*

Pray for a situation where hope seems lost. Try and then see if you can do something about it.

WEDNESDAY 29th MARCH

Read Philippians 2:5

Ponder What do people think about Jesus?
What do they think about the church?
How can we show who Jesus really is?

Pray Jesus, let us be you to all we meet. Amen

THURSDAY 30th MARCH

Read Philippians 2:12-18

Ask What are the things I have to do that I dislike doing?
Is it possible to see them as a blessing?

Pray Thank you God for *(name something you dislike)*

FRIDAY 31st MARCH

Read 1 Peter 3:13-18

Act If you had to sum up in one sentence the importance of your Christian faith, what would you say. Try to compose that sentence today.

Pray Lord, may I have the strength and the courage to speak of your love to those I meet. Amen

SATURDAY 1st APRIL

Try speaking to one person this week about your Christian faith.
Try also to do something practical for someone that shows the love of Jesus.

SUNDAY 2nd APRIL - Gather

Palm Sunday

church services at 8.00am & 9.30am

MONDAY 3rd APRIL evening prayer in church, 5pm

Read Luke 19:28-40

Silently think about those in the crowd shouting for Jesus the King, then think of the second crowd a week later shouting for his death.

Pray Lord Jesus, acclaimed as King, crucified as a criminal, teach us to accept our sufferings and triumphs for your glory alone.
Amen.

TUESDAY 4th APRIL

Read Luke 21:1-4

Reflect 'When the power of love overcomes the love of power, the world will know peace' Jimi Hendrix

Pray O God of life, help us to live with thankful hearts for the life you have given us; and help us to live with hearts that are generous. Amen

WEDNESDAY 5th APRIL

Read Luke 22:54-62

Ponder Which of the characters in the narrative of the gospels do you most identify with? Why?

Pray May God bless you with discomfort at easy answers, half-truths and superficial relationships, so that you may live deep within your heart. Amen

MAUNDY THURSDAY service in church, 7.30pm

Read John 13:1-17

Ask What does betrayal look like?

What does service look like?

Why do we share bread and wine?

Pray May God bless you with anger at injustice, oppression and exploitation of people so that you may work for justice, freedom and peace. Amen

GOOD FRIDAY service in church, 2.00pm

Read Luke 23:32-49

Act walk, cycle or drive to Grantchester Meadows for a joint service at 10.00am with members of the churches in Grantchester and Trumpington.

Pray May God bless you with tears to shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, hunger and war so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and to turn their pain into joy. Amen

SATURDAY 8th APRIL

Try getting up early enough to see the sunrise.

EASTER SUNDAY - Gather

Resurrection!

church services at 7.00am (Grantchester Meadows), 8.00am & 9.30am

PRAYER PRACTICES

You might like to take up a new form of devotion during Lent, or return to one you have found helpful before. Below are a few suggestions of different Christian prayer practices you could try. Feel free to ask Rachel, the curates or our ordinands for more information.

Body prayer

A practice attributed to Julian of Norwich. To do this, you move repeatedly through four simple postures a few times:

- **AWAIT** (hands at waist, cupped up to receive): Await God's presence, however it may come to you.
- **ALLOW** (reach up, hands open): Allow a sense of God's presence) to come ...or not...and be what it is.
- **ACCEPT** (hands at heart, cupped towards body): Accept as a gift whatever comes or does not come. Accept that you don't know everything, that you are not in charge.
- **ATTEND** (hands outstretched, ready to be responsive): Attend to what you are called to, willing to be present and be God's love in the world, however God calls you to.

Jesus Prayer

This short prayer, used especially by Orthodox Christians, can be prayed throughout the day as you go about your activities; it can also be used as a repeated chant within periods of quiet meditation. A common form of words is: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

Examen

There are many forms of this practice, drawn from Ignatian spirituality. It gives an opportunity to pray at the end of each day, reflecting back and looking to the day ahead. Here is a simple form:

1. Take time to still yourself, and become aware of God's presence.
2. Review the day with gratitude. What are you thankful for?
3. Pay attention to your emotions. How might God be speaking to you through what you have felt today?
4. Choose one feature of the day and pray from it, whether that was a time of difficulty, gladness, or even something insignificant.
5. Look toward tomorrow, and ask God to guide you in any challenges.

Practicing the Presence of God

Practicing the presence of God can be done anywhere and at any time. It's simply calling to mind that God dwells within us through Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Being aware of God in our daily lives takes being intentional. Welcome Jesus into whatever you are doing. You might want to set a timer at various intervals to remind yourself to call to mind the presence of Jesus.

Entering into the story

Take a narrative passage from the Bible, such as one of Jesus' encounters, and spend some time imagining yourself into the story, whether as a bystander or one of the characters. What would you see, smell, hear? How would you feel? Make your imagination of it as detailed as possible, and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to reveal something about God or yourself.

Contemplative prayer

There doesn't need to be any particular method for contemplative prayer. You might begin with a piece of music, the scent of a flower, or by repeating a line of scripture. Having prompted yourself, spend time in silence, for as long or as short as you are comfortable, giving the initiative to God. Pay attention to your breathing. Your mind may wander in various ways, and that's fine; note when it does and bring yourself back to stillness, perhaps by repeating a key word or phrase for you such as 'love', 'be still', 'Lord have mercy', etc. You may want to end with the Lord's prayer or the Grace.

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Looking ahead.....

## RESURRECTION AND BEYOND....

A series of talks between Easter and Pentecost

Thursday evenings at 7.30pm in church

The resurrection of Jesus – what really happened?

April 20<sup>th</sup>      Speaker: Richard Bauckham

The resurrection of Jesus – what does it mean for us?

April 27<sup>th</sup>      Speaker: Sarah Atkins

The ascension of Jesus

May 4<sup>th</sup>      Speaker: Jeremy Begbie

The coming of the Holy Spirit

May 11<sup>th</sup>      Speaker: Rob McDonald

The future of Jesus

May 25<sup>th</sup>      Speakers: Jeremy Begbie & Richard Bauckham  
to lead as a more informal 'in discussion' style evening

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