

ST LUKE'S NEWS *May 2024*

St Luke's website:

www.stlukeschurchbuckfastleigh.org.uk

St Luke's Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/StLukesBuckfastleigh

Dart & Avon Mission Community website:

www.dartandavonmissioncommunity.org.uk

CHURCH SERVICES IN MAY	
Sunday May 5 th	<i>No service at St Luke's</i> 9.30am <i>Holy Communion at Staverton & Family Service at S Brent</i>
Thursday May 9 th ASCENSION DAY	11.30am Reflective service
Sunday May 12 th	11.00am Holy Communion
Sunday May 19 th	11.00am Morning Worship
Sunday May 26 th	11.00am Holy Communion

THIS MONTH

There will be a reflective service for Ascension Day at 11.30am in church, (a service for the whole mission community).

Please note there will be no Compline this month, but we hope to resume in June.

WITNESSES FOR JESUS *(a reflection by George Day)*

When the risen Jesus appeared to his disciples on that first Easter Sunday evening, one of the things he said to them was "You are witnesses of these things," (Luke 24:48). Then after Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit, that is what we see – Peter and the others bearing witness to Jesus as Messiah and Lord, and as risen from the dead. And that witness has continued over the centuries, which is how we stand as Christians today.

And now we are the ones called to bear witness to Jesus. A daunting task, just as the task committed to the original disciples was thoroughly daunting. But a vital task, even though we are faced with difficulties – reduced numbers in church, aging congregations, financial pressures, (wo)manpower issues, etc.

We can respond with gloom and despair, or we can try to ignore the issue, OR we can seek to fulfil the task we are given.

An important part of that is what we pray for. We pray in our church services about world needs, about the needs of people, locally and further afield, about our church's activities, etc., but do we ever pray for God's help in bringing other people to faith in Jesus? If we don't pray for it, it suggests this is low on our list of priorities.

Of course, prayer is never magic, but it does express before God what we hope for and want.

And prayer should never be aggressive – too often in the past we were inclined to speak of wicked sinners who needed to be saved from damnation and hell fire – but it should express a real desire that people should come to faith in Jesus, and find God's love for themselves.

So let's make sure that we don't just bemoan the difficulties, but rather seek God's help in this.

In a recent sermon I suggested that along with such prayer there must be a number of other essential things.

- 1) Deep trust in God, and a seeking of his grace and help.
- 2) Our witness is to Jesus, and his love, not just to vague religious ideas.
- 3) The days of just speaking the message are over – we bear witness to Jesus perhaps chiefly by what we do, individually and as the church. And *then* by what we say.

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- 4) We must be upfront and honest about our failings as the church, and seek to remedy those failings.
- 5) We need to honestly and openly engage with the very real questions that people have that stop them coming to faith in Jesus.

Here is something for all of us; we are all called to be witnesses to Jesus.

MOTHERS' UNION

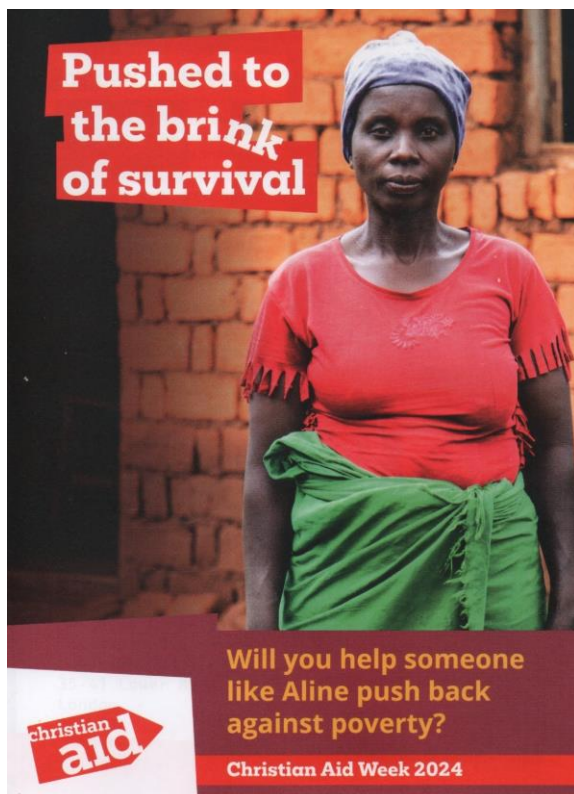
At our meeting in April Elaine Day led the members in an Easter Meditation, based on the women who first discovered the tomb of Jesus was empty.

Our next meeting will be led by Heather Sayle on 'A Sense of Place'. This will be on Thursday 2nd May at 2.30 pm. All welcome.

RETIRING COLLECTION FOR CHRISTIAN AID

Following our pattern of a special retiring collection once every 3 months, there will be a collection for Christian Aid on 12th May, which is the closest Sunday to Christian Aid Week. Please do give generously to this collection – what we give can make a real difference to people's lives. And it is a basic putting into practice of our faith in God.

The section below comes from a recent Christian Aid leaflet.



Pushed to the brink of survival

Abused, homeless and hungry, Aline dreamed of a better future. It seemed impossible. But with a little support from you, someone like Aline can make their dream come true.

Aline, from Burundi, was married while still a child. When her violent husband forced her to flee, she was plunged into extreme poverty.

Driven from her home without her children, Aline had no roof over her head, no food and no money. "I wandered the streets, asking anyone for a place to sleep," she says. Few showed her kindness.

"People would insult me and treat me with contempt. They forgot I was a human being."

In Aline's rural community, it's not uncommon for women to be physically abused. Like many women, Aline had also been denied any role in life outside the home. As poverty pushed her to the edge of survival, it looked as if she had no opportunities or support to push back.

Her dreams of bringing herself and her children to safety, and building a brighter future, seemed unachievable. Despite Aline's courage, poverty seemed impossible to escape.

But Aline pushed back harder.

She took her first step back from the brink thanks to small business training funded by Christian Aid.

"I came out with amazing knowledge and skills. The trainer restored a sense of hope and energy in me,"

Putting what she'd learned into action, Aline united with others to set up a Village Savings and Loans Association. It gave everyone a way to save and borrow money. And it helped Aline set up a business selling avocados and peanuts.

Today, Aline has created a thriving business and a safe, nurturing home for herself and her children. With a little help, she's made her dreams come true. And she's now using her experience to help other families escape extreme poverty.