

End the Week with CME - April 4, 2008

4th Apr 2008

Welcome to End the Week with CME! This weekly email is sent automatically to Clergy and Readers in the diocese (if you don't want to receive it, please send an email to CovEW-unsubscribe@lists.covlec.org) but anyone is welcome to subscribe to the list, and we are especially keen to pass it on to any interested lay people, especially those who may have responsibility for preaching. To subscribe they simply need to email CovEW-subscribe@lists.covlec.org.

Coming Up

Looking at Matthew

This is the year of Matthew, and after Pentecost we have a straight run though his gospel until the Sundays before Advent. This study day will look at the structure of the gospel and some of Matthew's overall themes, together with an opportunity to examine one or two passages in greater depth.

Tuesday 22 April 2008, at Offa House, 10am-3pm with an abbreviated repeat from 7.30-9.30pm. Led by Richard Cooke. Cost: £30 (including lunch) for the daytime course, £12.50 (including coffee and cakes) for the evening. Grants of half the cost are available for clergy and Readers. Book through sarah.palmer@covcofe.org.

Ordination Services - understanding the theology of the liturgy

What is ordination all about? The Common Worship Ordination Services have been in use for a couple of years now and a study edition of the texts was published in 2007. This study day will look at the theology behind the service, how it is reflected in the liturgy, and what it says about a contemporary Anglican understanding of ordained ministry. Weds 14 May 2008, at The Red Hill Christian Centre, Snitterfield, 10am-3pm. Led by Adrian Daffern and Richard Cooke. Cost: £30 (including lunch). Grants for half the cost are available for clergy and Readers. Book through sarah.palmer@covcofe.org.

Unveiling the Women in the Bible

Dr Maria Frahm-Arp (PhD Warwick) will be presenting an exciting day seminar, in which she:

uncovers the stories of the women in the Bible,
examines the social and religious roles they played,
explores what relevance this has for our lives today.

Saturday 12 April 2008, at the Chaplaincy (Warwick University campus), 9.30am - 4pm. Cost: £5.00 (students £2.50). Please bring your own lunch. Hot drinks will be provided.

To book email mariafrahmarp@hotmail.com, or contact Emma Bratton on 07977 593017 or at emmajanebratton@googlemail.com.

Vocations 'Taster' Morning

Saturday 26 April 2008, 9.30am - 12.30pm, at Warwick Gates Community Centre, Cressida Close, Warwick Gates, Warwick CV34 6DZ.

Are you interested in finding out more about ministry opportunities within the Church of England, or do you know someone else who is? Ministries covered at the 'Taster' morning will include:

- Church Army
- Reader Ministry
- Ordained Ministry
- Ordained Local Ministry
- Ministry in Secular Employment
- Non-stipendiary Ministry
- Pioneer Ministry

All delegates will be able to attend a choice of two sessions, at which they will learn more about the particular ministry, from someone involved in it. For more details, go to:

<http://www.coventrydiocese.org/upload/file/Vocations%20Taster%20Morning%202008.pdf>

Please let Susan Mileham (Vocations Advisers Team Leader) know if you hope to attend by emailing susan@mileham.net or phoning 01926 426250.

NSM Meeting

There will be a meeting for all NSMs of the diocese, whatever the focus of their ministry, on Wednesday 7 May 2008, 7.30pm at St James' Church, Abbey Road, Whitley, Coventry.

A message from Pam Gould about the get-together:

"It is hoped that we can begin to put together a paper for the new Bishop, highlighting the contribution made to the life and witness of the Church in the Diocese by our large and disparate group. Maybe to look, too, at ways in which this contribution could be more creatively extended, where possible."

For more information, or to indicate you wish to attend the meeting, please email Pam Gould at revpamgould@aol.com.

Mission Training Opportunities, Spring 2008 Coventry Cathedral & Hope08

An exciting programme of Mission preaching and teaching opportunities will take place at the Cathedral beginning Sunday 13 April, to help train and enable Christians to engage in Mission during this year of HOPE08. With special guest speakers such as Steven Croft, Sharon Stone and John Drane these are opportunities not to be missed!

For more details, go to:

<http://www.hope08coventry.com/CMS/uploads/842/documents/Mission%20Training%20Spring%2008%20small.pdf>

Notes on the Gospel Readings for Easter 4 (Sunday April 13, 2008) - John 10. 1-10

Overflowing Life

Snow-storms marked Easter day this year, but despite it being the earliest in living memory, the signs of spring were unmistakable all around. The daffodils were out, the blossom not far behind, and the lambs had begun to play in the fields. You could see life beginning to overflow everywhere.

But beneath the surface of teeming life lies all the rawness of nature, brought home forcefully for me last week when we were away in Scotland for a few days. Our Labrador found the severed head of a lamb and proceeded to crunch it up with great relish, absolutely heedless of our commands to let it go and reverting to

wildness we hardly recognise in him.

John 10.1-10 is set as an Easter reading (the celebration lasts forty days, not a single Sunday) to help us get to grips with what the resurrection of Jesus means. Jesus did not reveal life as it's always been, in a cycle of death and rebirth as pagan spring festivals had done. His resurrection offers a new vision of eternal life, life 'in all its fullness' (v.10), full to overflowing.

The story starts with sheep. It's a well-worn image of Israel as flock and its leaders as shepherds that's being worked out here, of course. In Ezekiel 34 the accusation against the shepherds of Israel is that they have left the sheep to wander unprotected, prey to being ravaged by every wild beast around (Ezek. 34.4-6). The Pharisees, self-appointed guardians of Israel with whom Jesus has been in direct conflict since the episode of the man born blind (John 9.13 onwards), must be the thieves and brigands (vv.1, 10) who threaten the sheep in Jesus' parable (v.6 - the word relates to the Hebrew *mashal* meaning proverb or wise saying). The sheep are under attack - who will save them?

Like a lot of Jesus' parables this one has a riddle-like quality to it. Now he seems to be the gatekeeper (v.3), now he is the gate (vv.7,9), then he becomes the shepherd (v.11). But this is only a problem if we think that the passage is a puzzle to be solved like some kind of mathematical equation. If instead we stand back and see it as a dynamic cluster of images, the important point comes across: Jesus' promise is of safety and security for the sheep and he is represented by all the things which make them happen for the flock. Referring back to Ezekiel 34, we can see that Jesus is fulfilling the promise made by God himself that he will become the shepherd who will gather the lost flock together and lead it to safety and rich pastures (Ezek. 34.11-16). That is Ezekiel's image of life in all its fullness.

In John's gospel 'life' has a special place. Jesus is the living water and the abundant bread of life (John 4.10; 6.35); the gospel itself is written that 'you may have life by his name' (John 20.31). Life means relationship with God. But this life does not take place simply within the protected space of the sheepfold. The sheep come and go (vv.4, 9), but if they are in relationship with the shepherd then whatever happens to them, they will still have life.

The resurrection is the first demonstration that this teaching is true. Jesus' relationship with the Father is strong enough to withstand even the rupture of death itself. It represents a new kind of life which will not collapse into the eternal seasonal cycle of nature, and which will be fulfilled in the Old Testament images of the wolf lying down with the lamb (Isaiah 11.6-9), as the whole world achieves a new harmony and shalom.

This kind of overflowing life is a contrast to the material things with which we in the West surround ourselves. The contrast may suggest why there often seems to be more spiritual vitality in less well-off parts of the world. And it may remind us that the resurrection of Jesus should spur us to pray and work for a world made new that is beyond our wildest imaginings.

And Finally...

There was a terrible blizzard and it was snowing and snowing all weekend. By Sunday evening the vicar saw

that the snow had reached his window. He didn't think anyone would be coming to the church where he was due to take Evensong, but he felt obliged to go anyway. He fought his way through the icy wind and snow to get to the church. He waited for ten minutes in the bitter cold and was about to go when the door opened, and a man staggered through.

" Hello!" said the vicar. "The service will have to be cancelled tonight. You're the only one who has come."

The man replied, "Vicar, if you had a big flock of sheep, and only one came home that night to feed, would you still feed him?"

The vicar was amazed and cried, "Yes! I would!" Inspired by the Spirit, he preached his best sermon ever. He talked and talked about all of life's trials and joys. He referred to passages from Genesis to Job, Psalms to John, Acts to Revelation. He did so with profound excitement and conviction. This went on for a long time.

After the vicar had come to his final conclusion and ended the service, he went down and talked to the man.

"Thank you for coming" he said, "I hope you received what you came for."

The man replied, "Vicar, if you had a flock of sheep and only one came home that night to feed, would you make sure he ate the whole bale of hay!?"

That's all folks!

Richard

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