

End the Week with CME - May 23, 2008

23rd May 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.

Thanksgiving for the life of Simon Richmond

Following last week's request for prayers for the Richmond family, there will be a thanksgiving service for Simon at Coventry Cathedral on Friday 30 May at 7.30pm. Please continue to pray for Yvonne, Melissa, Luke and Ollie and also for Simon's mother Margaret and his sister Jane.

Coming Up

Women Bishops - but what kind?

A study day for women and men. 10am - 3pm, Monday 9 June 2008 at Offa House.

Legislation for the ordination of women bishops will come before the General Synod in the near future. It is a timely moment to ask what we expect of bishops in general, and what we think women bishops might bring to the role. What kind of leadership is appropriate for the church of the future?

The day will be chaired by Katrina Scott (Diocesan Adviser for Women's Ministry), and there will be input from Rosie Ward (Leadership Development Adviser, CPAS). Cost: £30 (including lunch). Grants for half the cost are available for clergy and Readers. Book through sarah.palmer@covcofe.org.

Future of the Church of England

Tuesday 10 June, 7.30pm at St Nicholas Church, Kenilworth.

The Deaneries of Coventry South and Kenilworth have invited Canon Dr Christina Baxter, Lay Chair of General Synod, to give her thoughts on the future of the Church of England. Christina has been in post since 1995, and has also been a member of Archbishops' Council and its Finance Committee since 1999. She has been a member of the Women Bishops Working Party since 2003.

If you would like further details, please contact Audrey Hobley at hobley78@tiscali.co.uk.

Annual Regional Training Partnership (RTP) Forum

Saturday 14 June, 10am - 3pm, at Droitwich Spa Methodist Church. (Lunch is included.)

This year's West Midland Regional Training Partnership Forum, will look at approaches to theological reflection and will be led by Professor Stephen Pattison from Birmingham and the Revd Judith Thompson from Worcester. For more information about the day, please contact Jenny Harris at jenny.harris@birmingham.anglican.org or on 0121 426 0437.

Subverting the Empire: Romans Disarmed

Blah . . . is a series of conversations on mission, worship, church and Christianity in today's rapidly changing culture.

CMS have planned a 2008 'blah tour', and have invited Brian Walsh and Sylvia Keesmaat over from Canada to present it. "Romans Disarmed" will take place in Birmingham on Tuesday 17 June, 10am until 4pm at Birmingham Cathedral.

For more information, or to book online, go to www.blahonline.net.

Ministry Where You Work?

Sunday 13 July 2008, 2 - 5pm at St John's Church Centre, Westward Heath.

An invitation to all Readers, OLMs and NSMs in the Coventry Diocese. Come and discuss:

- Could you have a ministry at work?

- How might God be calling you to expand your ministry?
- An opportunity to explore possibilities beyond your parish role.

If you would like to attend, or find out more information, contact Felicity Smith (chair of the Coventry Ministers in Secular Employment group) on 01926 492452 or at felicity@fandi.me.uk.

Unity in Diversity: celebrating the breadth of Reader Ministry

The Central Readers' Council National Conference will be held Friday 12 - Sunday 14 September 2008 at the University of North Wales, Bangor.

The keynote speaker will be Canon Dr Christina Baxter CBE, and the Principal of St Johns College, Nottingham will be leading an exploration of 1 Corinthians 12. There will also be a number of seminars, led by Readers who are involved in different aspects of ministry outside the church, such as prisons, hospices, bereavement, education etc.

A core part of the weekend will be worship and fellowship, and throughout the weekend there will be an exhibition of various resources relevant to Reader Ministry.

Cost: £170 per head if you book before 30 June / £180 per head for bookings after 30 June.

For more information, contact Alan Wakely, CRC Secretary, Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3AZ, crcsec@c-of-e.org.uk or Susan Salt, Chair of the organising committee, Christ Church Vicarage, Meadows Avenue, Thornton Cleve Leys, Lancashire FY5 2TW, nsalt@waitrose.com.

www.readers.cofe.anglican.org

Notes on the Gospel Readings for Trinity 2 (Sunday June 1, 2008) Matthew 7.21-29

Southern Judea by the shores of the aptly named Dead Sea is a bleak and arid landscape of bare rock and earth split by ancient, now dry, water-courses. I'm recently back from a trip to Israel with some Readers from the diocese, and on our last day we travelled south, through this almost lunar landscape.

It was a shock to come upon the Herod the Great's mountain-fortress of Masada, rising above the parched

desert. On the northern tip of the diamond-shaped rock, Herod built a Summer palace, kept cool by the desert winds and with a stunning view across the desert many feet below. Josephus, the Jewish writer of the late first century, speaks in awed tones of the wonder of this palace, which had water 'as if from fountains' all around it. The fortress itself withstood a siege by the Roman Army for three years after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70AD, but one of the questions which puzzled archaeologists was how the defenders managed to find enough water to survive for that long. There is no spring at Masada, and rain is rare.

Yet within the mountain Herod's engineers dug out several huge cisterns to keep water in. But how were they supplied? An excavation team under Yigael Yadin in the mid-1960s found the answer when torrential rains briefly interrupted their dig. Flash-floods divided the archeologists' camp in two, and raging rivers ran through the ancient, dry wadis. But at the same time they saw an almost miraculous event, as the water-channels dug centuries before by Herod's men filled and carried water up the mountain. The ancient aqueducts which connected up the cisterns were broken, but Yadin and his team saw how just one rain-storm could provide enough water in a few hours to supply a garrison of one thousand for three years, just as Josephus had said.

Herod harnessed the destructive power of the water, but a little further north, between Jericho and Jerusalem, you can see massive modern storm-drains beside the road. They seem exaggeratedly large. Why would they be necessary? But the driver of our coach assured me that, when it does rain, they are needed. Before they were there, he said, a sudden flood could easily wash the road away.

All of which is the background to Jesus' story about the house built on the rock (Matt. 7.24-27). Masada is the quintessential house on the rock, still there two thousand years after it was built. How many hundreds of houses over the centuries have been built as the archeologists' camp was, in a place that looked secure, only to be swept away by a rare but violent flood.

Matthew's gospel perhaps more than the others emphasises that it is not enough simply to hear the teaching of Jesus: it must be done as well. Although I don't accept the simplistic version of the story of the early church which pits a Jewish form of Christian faith (led by James, Jesus' brother, and reflected in Matthew's gospel) which observed the Law against a Gentile version (the brainchild of Paul) which rejected the Law, there is a tiny grain of truth in the stereotype. For Matthew and those like him, Jews who were heirs of a great tradition which stressed right conduct as the touchstone of right belief, the anti-Law, 'anything goes' tendencies which Paul unleashed, to his horror, in Corinth for example, needed to be corrected. It was not enough to say 'Lord, Lord' (7.21): where was the evidence that this faith was real?

For Jesus the target had been religious teachers whose scrupulous observance of the Law became an excuse to ignore the needs of others (see Mat. 7.11). Their conduct gave the lie to their claim to be following God's will: 'you shall know them by their fruits' (Matt. 7.16).

'When Jesus finished saying these words' (Matt.7.28) is a phrase which Matthew deliberately uses five times, noting the end of the five blocks or books of teaching in his gospel which present Jesus as the new Moses, one greater than the greatest of Israel's teachers and prophets. So this passage is the conclusion to the Sermon on the Mount, and it stresses the importance not just of right belief, but of right action.

It is clear that it is right action that leaves a legacy behind. Right belief on its own does not do so. So what are the actions for us that will lead to legacy of faith?

And Finally... Some Bible Questions

Do Edomites cause an itch?

Is the Leviathon a race where you run 26 miles in blue jeans?

How much does a Pentecost?

How far can a Pharisee?

What formula do you use to calculate the volume of a Sanhedrin?

How much beer can you pour into a Philistine?

How many cards are in a MelchizeDEK?

Do people in the nation of Cush have it easy?

Was the sermon on the mount delivered on horseback?

That's all folks!

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