

# spill the beans

worship and learning resources for all ages

issue 50

lent, easter, pentecost

14 february to  
19 may 2024

sampler

A resource with a Scottish flavour for  
Worship Leaders, Sunday Schools, Junior  
Churches and Youth Leaders.

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# introduction

Welcome to the second in a series of eight issues of Spill the Beans through which we will be taking an alternative journey through the Scripture over the next two years. Having spent the last year with The Women's Lectionary, and not at the beginning point of either the Revised Common Lectionary or the Narrative Lectionary, this was an opportunity for thinking about a different way to engage the Scripture with a contemporary setting.

## Word And World Lectionary

Members of the Spill the Beans Resource Team took time out earlier this year to consider the way forward and with enthusiasm embarked on creating our own two year lectionary. We had past experience with our "Path Less Travelled" lectionary in 2018-19 which was inspired by user feedback.

This time we decided to deliberately and methodically to engage Word and World using the device of special days and themes. For instance, using United Nations' focus days, or saints days, or particular festivals. We have shaped these into short thematic series. We would encourage engagement both with the Scriptural texts for each day and to use this as an opportunity for your congregation to engage with some of the international themes that arise.

This is a different approach for us and we hope it will be inspiring to you in your worship as we pray it will be for us as we lead worship in our own settings.

We have decided to keep the format for the layout of the issues as we have used in the past year, and to encourage the development of intergenerational worship.

## Intergenerational Worship

Spill the Beans has always been rooted in the power of story telling. Story binds generations together. In that shared bond of story lies the creative space for building relationships between generations. Using different ways to engage with the story recognises the variety amongst us all: some learn by listening, others by doing, others by creating. All are valuable and a part of our shared worship of God.

We are encouraging you to experiment as we will be doing with ways to worship intergenerationally in an authentic and inclusive manner. To that end we are still providing a rich variety of resources but grouped by how they help us **'tell the story'**, **'explore the story'**, and **'live the story'**. Mix and match, rewrite, contextualise for your own setting, try something different, and have fun with it! Please do give us feedback.

There are many resources online to help think more deeply about intergenerational worship. A simple but very helpful summary is provided by the Methodist Church, copied below.

## Intergenerational worship IS about:

- **building relationships**—offering a key time for people to get to know each other better and build a sense of connection;
- **a time of worship and learning that is offered in a simplified and participatory way**—simple does not mean shallow; rather it enables everyone to contribute and receive in a meaningful and appropriate way;
- **providing an inclusive experience and a sense of belonging**—helping everyone of all abilities to feel part of the body of Christ, whatever their experience;
- **being a bridge**—not only between ages but also for those who are exploring what being part of a church means. This relaxed service style can provide a comfortable place for some to discover more about Christianity;
- **encouragement, nurture and inclusiveness**—it is a means by which faith can grow and, in turn, inform life-making or life-changing decisions;
- **exploring vocation**—an opportunity to discover and develop gifts and calling.

## Intergenerational worship is NOT about:

- limiting the richness of resources used;
- oversimplifying the message or adding a children's talk into the 'usual' service;
- unstructured and chaotic worship;
- children having token responsibilities for roles and participation;
- limiting potential to explore faith and discipleship together;
- nuclear families exclusively worshipping together.

## Information

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Sleepless Nights Publications



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# the team

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## Key to Abbreviations

In the worship ideas section the following abbreviations may be used to indicate different sources of worship music:

ATAS	All the Assembly Songs You'll Ever Need
CG	Common Ground
CH4	Church Hymnary, 4th Edition
GTG	Glory To God: The Presbyterian Hymnal
JP	Junior Praise
MP	Complete Mission Praise
STF	Singing The Faith
SGP	Songs of God's People
WGP	Wild Goose Publications

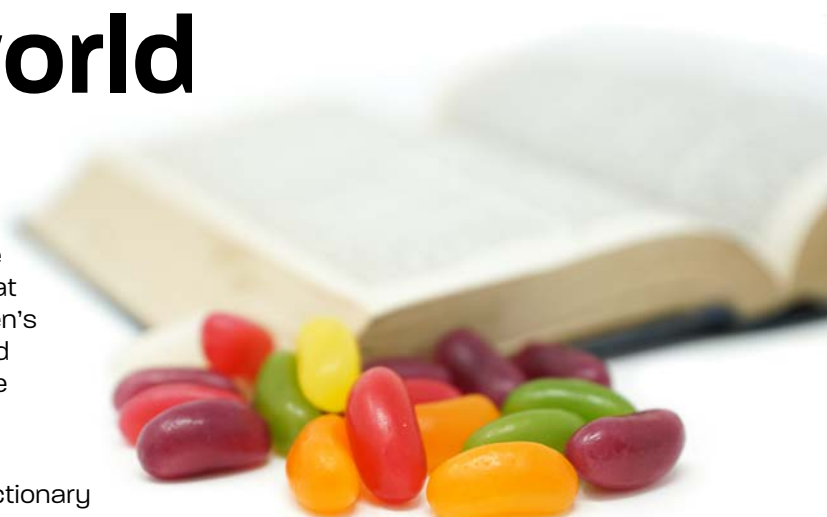


# word and world

## New Lectionary December 2023—November 2025

Members of the Spill the Beans Resource Team have been exploring ideas on what to do following our year with The Women's Lectionary. As we are mid-stream in both Revised Common Lectionary and Narrative Lectionary, we decided to take the opportunity to do something different.

This is our second foray into creating our own lectionary following The Path Less Travelled in 2018/19. The inspiration for this new plan was to connect the worship of the church more systematically with events that are happening around and outside the church. This includes 'national' or 'world' days, particular seasonal events and people. We are excited at the opportunity this may give us to engage with other events. Some are very serious such as International Holocaust Memorial Day, while others may inspire some fun such as National Ice Cream Day and one close to our hearts... Jelly Bean Day!



Note that we are still fine tuning this, but the following table will give you the main basis of where we are planning to journey for the two years from Advent 2023.

As always, this is invitational, and you are welcome to join us as and how is right in your own setting. We pray it is a jumping off point for your own engagement of Word and World.

Date	Liturgical	Theme	Primary Text	Support Text	Links/Notes
<b>YEAR 1</b>					
3 Dec 23	Advent 1	Equality, Diversity, Inclusion	Isaiah 40:1-11	Matthew 8:1-4	Abolition of Slavery (2 Dec)/Persons of Disability
10 Dec 23	Advent 2		Malachi 3:1-7	Galatians 5:13-14	Human Rights Day
17 Dec 23	Advent 3		Isaiah 16:2-5	Luke 1:5-25	International Migrant's Day (18 Dec)
24 Dec 23	Advent 4	Christmas	Isaiah 9:2-7	Luke 1:39-56	
25 Dec 23	Christmas Day		Luke 2:1-20	1 John 4:7-9,13-21	
31 Dec 23	Christmas 1		Matthew 2:1-15	Micah 5:1-5a	
7 Jan 24	Epiphany 1	Unwrapping	Luke 1:1-4	John 1:19-31	Beginnings, setting up calendars, Orthodox Christmas
14 Jan 24	Epiphany 2		Luke 4:16-30	Psalm 119:97-108	Flourishing, St Mungo
21 Jan 24	Epiphany 3		Luke 6:20-26	Psalm 1	Blessings, use "A Man's A Man" by Robert Burns
28 Jan 24	Epiphany 4		Luke 8:16-18	Jonah 1:1-17	Lighting, Up-Helly-Aa (30 Jan)
4 Feb 24	Epiphany 5		Luke 8:22-25	Psalm 139:1-12	Calming, World Cancer Day
11 Feb 24	Transfiguration		Luke 9:10-17	2 Kings 5:1-6	Feeding, International Day of Women/Girls in Science
14 Feb 24	Ash Wednesday	Social Justice	Luke 11:37-44	Isaiah 55:6-11	Valentine's Day
18 Feb 24	Lent 1		Isaiah 58:6-12	1 Samuel 21:1-6	World Day of Social Justice (20 Feb)
25 Feb 24	Lent 2		Luke 6:27-36	1 Peter 3:8-14	
3 Mar 24	Lent 3		Luke 7:1-17	Psalm 68:4-10	Whuppity Scoorie Day (1 Mar)
10 Mar 24	Lent 4		Luke 7:36-50	Micah 7:14-20	Mothering Sunday, International Women's Day (8 Mar)
17 Mar 24	Lent 5		Luke 8:26-39	Psalm 102:1-6,18-22	International Day of Happiness (20 Mar), Red Nose
24 Mar 24	Palms/Passion	Holy Week	Matthew 21:1-11	Psalm 22:1-11	
25 Mar 24	Monday		John 15:1-13	Psalm 36:5-11	The true vine
26 Mar 24	Tuesday		John 16:4b-24	Psalm 74:1-14	Work of the Spirit
27 Mar 24	Wednesday		John 17:1-11	Psalm 70	Praying for friends
28 Mar 24	Maundy Thurs		John 18:1-12	Psalm 116:1-2,12-19	Betrayal and arrest
29 Mar 24	Good Friday		John 19:1-30	Psalm 40:1-14	Jesus and Pilate
30 Mar 24	Holy Saturday	Resurrection and New Creation	John 19:38-42	Psalm 31:1-5	Jesus' burial
31 Mar 24	Easter Day		John 20:1-18	Psalm 18:16-21	Jesus and Mary in the garden
7 Apr 24	Easter 2		Isaiah 40:21-31	Matthew 6:25-34	Holy Humour Sunday, World Health Day
14 Apr 24	Easter 3		Isaiah 51:1-18	Matthew 13:24-29	National Gardening Day
21 Apr 24	Easter 4	Joy	Isaiah 61:1-11	Matthew 20:1-16	Mother Earth Day, Jelly Bean Day (both 22 Apr)
28 Apr 24	Easter 5		Psalm 30	Romans 12:9-21	International Dance Day (29 Apr), Beltane's Day (1 May)
5 May 24	Easter 6		Psalm 16	1 Peter 1:3-12	World Laughter Day, St Catherine of Siena (29 Apr)
12 May 24	Easter 7	Christian Aid	Acts 1:15-17,21-26	1 John 5:9-12	RCL readings used this week to link to Christian Aid
19 May 24	Pentecost		Acts 2:1-21	2 Samuel 6:14-19	World Baking Day (home bakes to raise money for work of Christian Aid)

Date	Liturgical	Theme	Primary Text	Support Text	Notes
26 May 24	Pentecost 1	Witness and Journey	Exodus 3:10-17	Matthew 28:16-20	
2 Jun 24	Pentecost 2		Genesis 20:1-13	Acts 21:1-6	
9 Jun 24	Pentecost 3		Exodus 34:4-8	1 Samuel 3	St Columba
16 Jun 24	Pentecost 4	Refugees and Asylum Seekers	Exodus 2:1-10	Luke 15:11-32	Father's Day
23 Jun 24	Pentecost 5		Exodus 5:1-14	1 Corinthians 4:1-13	World Refugee Day (20 Jun), International Widow's Day
30 Jun 24	Pentecost 6	Stories of Travelling	John 4:1-15,28-30,39-42	1 Kings 17:7-16	Hospitality
7 Jul 24	Pentecost 7		Matthew 15:21-28	Hebrews 13:1-3	Encounters with strangers
14 Jul 24	Pentecost 8		Leviticus 25:10-12,35-41	Galatians 3:26-28	Towards equal opportunities
21 Jul 24	Pentecost 9		Mark 2:18-28	Genesis 2:1-2	Holidays and refreshing Sabbaths, Ice Cream Day
28 Jul 24	Pentecost 10		Psalms 139:1-12,23-24	Romans 8:31-39	God with us on the journey
4 Aug 24	Pentecost 11		1 Kings 19:1-8	Mark 8:1-9	Food for the journey
11 Aug 24	Pentecost 12		Psalms 71:16-18	Ephesians 4:11-16	Journey from youth to age, Inter. Youth Day (12 Aug)
18 Aug 24	Pentecost 13		Telling Our Stories	Deuteronomy 6:20-25	John 9:13-25
25 Aug 24	Pentecost 14	Exodus 12:21-28		Acts 26:1,9-18	
1 Sep 24	Pentecost 15	Jeremiah 29:1-14		Philippians 4:10-20	World Letter Writing Day, Amnesty International Write for Rights
8 Sep 24	Pentecost 16	Peacemaking	Leviticus 26:1-6	Matthew 5:9	World Suicide Prevention Day (10 Sep)
15 Sep 24	Pentecost 17		Psalms 34	Colossians 3:12-17	International Day of Democracy, Hildegard De Bingen (17 Sep)
22 Sep 24	Pentecost 18		John 14:25-31	Philippians 4:4-9	International Day of Peace
29 Sep 24	Pentecost 19	Environment and Harvest	Deuteronomy 16:9-15	James 2:14-26	World Heart Day, building up to Sukkot
6 Oct 24	Pentecost 20		Psalms 126	Joel 2:15-19	Restoring the environment
13 Oct 24	Pentecost 21		Exodus 16:9-16	2 Corinthians 9:6-15	World Food Day
20 Oct 24	Pentecost 22	Faith Heroes	Hebrews 12:1-2	Hebrews 11:8-22	
27 Oct 24	Pentecost 23		Hebrews 12:1-2	Hebrews 11:23-28	
3 Nov 24	Pentecost 24		Hebrews 12:1-2	Hebrews 11:29-40	All Saints Day (1 Nov), link to any local saints
10 Nov 24	Pentecost 25	Hope	Job 17:1-5,11-16	Matthew 12:9-21	Remembrance Sunday, World Kindness Day (13 Nov), St Machar, St Gerardine
17 Nov 24	Pentecost 26		Lamentations 3:19-24	Romans 8:18-25	St Margaret (16 Nov), International Student's Day
24 Nov 24	Reign of Christ		John 3:11-21	Isaiah 42:1-10a	
<b>YEAR 2</b>					
1 Dec 24	Advent 1	Incarnating Love	Isaiah 11:1-9	Luke 5:12-13	World AIDS Day, St Aiden of May
8 Dec 24	Advent 2		Mark 1:1-8	Isaiah 2:2-4	International Anti-Corruption Day (9 Dec)
15 Dec 24	Advent 3		Isaiah 35	Galatians 5:13-16	
22 Dec 24	Advent 4		Luke 1:26-38	1 Corinthians 13:1-13	
24/5 Dec 24	Christmas Eve/Day		Luke 1:46-55 Matthew 1:18-25	Romans 13:11-12 1 John 3-11	
29 Dec 24	Christmas 1	Holocaust Memorial	John 1:1-14	Isaiah 43:1-7	Donald Caskie (died 27 Dec 1983)
5 Jan 25	Christmas 2		Daniel 2:8-23	Matthew 2:1-6	Thomas Aikenhead (died 8 Jan 1697)
12 Jan 25	Epiphany 1		Luke 11:14-28	Nehemiah 5:1-13	Awareness of evil
19 Jan 25	Epiphany 2		Exodus 1:15-22	Mark 9:42-48	Slaughter/protection of innocents, Jane Haining
26 Jan 25	Epiphany 3		Isaiah 61:5-11	Mark 15:33-34	International Holocaust Memorial Day (27 Jan)
2 Feb 25	Epiphany 4	Rediscovering Jesus	Luke 2:41-52	Proverbs 3:1-10	Jesus the Jew, Candlemass, Groundhog Day
9 Feb 25	Epiphany 5		Matthew 13:1-3,10-17	2 Samuel 12:1-7a	Jesus the Storyteller
16 Feb 25	Epiphany 6		Luke 4:38-41	Ezekiel 34:11-16	Jesus the Healer
23 Feb 25	Epiphany 7		Mark 6:45-52	Mark 8:11-14	Jesus the Wonder Worker
2 Mar 25	Transfiguration		Matthew 16:13-20	John 20:30-31	Jesus: the Christ?



Date	Liturgical	Theme	Primary Text	Support Text	Notes
5 Mar 25	Ash Wednesday	Health and Wellbeing	Matthew 6:1-6,16-21	2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10	Wellbeing
9 Mar 25	Lent 1		Romans 12:1-8	Proverbs 16:21-24	Self Care I
16 Mar 25	Lent 2		Romans 12:9-21	Psalms 1	Self Care II
23 Mar 25	Lent 3		John 6:35-40	Proverbs 3:5-8	Food
30 Mar 25	Lent 4		Hebrews 4:1-11	Matthew 11:28-29	Rest, Mothering Sunday
6 Apr 25	Lent 5		1 Timothy 4:6-16	Isaiah 40:25-30	Health
13 Apr 25	Palm/Passion	You want it darker	Mark 11:1-11	Isaiah 52:13-53:12	The Gate
14 Apr 25	Monday		Mark 11:15-19	Isaiah 48:6-11	The Temple Courtyard
15 Apr 25	Tuesday		Mark 11:12-14,20-25	Isaiah 34:1-4	The Mount of Olives
16 Apr 25	Wednesday		Mark 14:1-11	Isaiah 61:1-4	The Home at Bethany
17 Apr 25	Maundy Thurs		Mark 14:12-16	Isaiah 53:7-12	The Upper Room, Gethsemane
18 Apr 25	Good Friday		Mark 14:43-15:41	Joel 2:1-2	The Hill, Golgotha
19 Apr 25	Holy Saturday		Mark 15:42-47	Psalms 22:27-31	The Tomb
20 Apr 25	Easter Day		Mark 16:1-8	Luke 24:13-35	The Garden (use Emmaus story for an evening service)
27 Apr 25	Easter 2	Community Wellbeing	John 21:1-14	Mark 1:16-20	Back at the Beginning I
4 May 25	Easter 3		John 21:15-21	Mark 14:66-72	Back at the Beginning II, Mental Health Awareness Week, death of David Livingstone (1 May 1873)
11 May 25	Easter 4		Acts 9:36-43	Revelation 7:9-17	Christian Aid Week
18 May 25	Easter 5	Creative Communities	Micah 6:6-8	1 Corinthians 12:4-14	The Why Behind the How
25 May 25	Easter 6		Colossians 3:12-17	Micah 6:6-8	Creative People, death of Thomas Chalmers (31 May 1847)
1 Jun 25	Easter 7		Ephesians 5:1-20	Micah 6:6-8	Creative Living
8 Jun 25	Pentecost		Galatians 5:13-26	Micah 6:6-8 Acts 2:1-13	Creative Spirit
15 Jun 25	Pentecost 1	Thankful and Grateful	Psalms 100	Romans 5:1-11	Father's Day, National Beer Day
22 Jun 25	Pentecost 2		Psalms 118	1 Thessalonians 5:12-24	International Picnic Day (18 Jun)
29 Jun 25	Pentecost 3		Psalms 145	2 Corinthians 4:7-18	Death of George MacLeod (27 Jun 1991)
6 Jul 25	Pentecost 4		1 Chronicles 16:8-36	Romans 11:33-36	Thank You Day
13 Jul 25	Pentecost 5	Crossroads of Culture and Faith	Psalms 95	Luke 2:22-32	Music, St Swithin
20 Jul 25	Pentecost 6		2 Chronicles 1:1,7-13	Luke 3:7-18	Politics, St Thenew
27 Jul 25	Pentecost 7		Exodus 31:1-11	Luke 6:43-45	Art
3 Aug 25	Pentecost 8		2 Samuel 12:1-9	Luke 9:1-6	Literature
10 Aug 25	Pentecost 9		Song of Songs 2:8-17	Luke 12:49-53	Poetry
17 Aug 25	Pentecost 10		1 Kings 4:29-34	Luke 17:11-19	Science
24 Aug 25	Pentecost 11		1 Samuel 8:1-21	Luke 20:20-26	Civic Space, death of George Matheson (28 Aug 1906)
31 Aug 25	Pentecost 12	Prayer	Jeremiah 20:7-18	1 Samuel 1:1-18	Complaint
7 Sept 25	Pentecost 13		Luke 10:1-9,17-21	1 Samuel 2:1-10	Thanksgiving
14 Sept 25	Pentecost 14		Genesis 32:3-21	Luke 18:1-18	Protection
21 Sept 25	Pentecost 15		John 17:10-26	Luke 2:36-38	Intercession
28 Sept 25	Pentecost 16		2 Samuel 12:15b-23	Psalms 98	Unanswered
5 Oct 25	Pentecost 17	Reforming Our Faith	Psalms 96:1-9	1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 14:26	Songs and Liturgy
12 Oct 25	Pentecost 18		Ecclesiastes 3:1-8	Matthew 22:34-39	Times and Priorities
19 Oct 25	Pentecost 19		Joshua 10:36-43	2 Timothy 3:14-17	Lectionaries
26 Oct 25	Pentecost 20		Exodus 3:1-10	Ephesians 3:14-20	Experiences of God, Reformation Day (31 Oct)
2 Nov 25	Pentecost 21	Christ on the Edge	Mark 12:41-44	Deuteronomy 24:17-22	All Souls Day
9 Nov 25	Pentecost 22		Matthew 5:38-44	Genesis 22:1-14	Remembrance Sunday
16 Nov 25	Pentecost 23		Luke 10:25-37	Deuteronomy 10:17-22	Home Made Bread Day (17 Nov), St Margaret of Scotland
23 Nov 25	Reign of Christ		Mark 10:17-21	Luke 12:13-21	Stir Up Day, death of James Hogg (21 Nov 1835)

Note that the double-lined breaks in the table delineate between issues.





# justice in ashes

## Ash Wednesday

Wednesday 14 February 2024

## Theme

Social Justice

## Word

Luke 11:37-44

Isaiah 55:6-11

## World

Valentine's Day

*tell the story*

## Bible Notes

“To my valentine...” are words that can conjure wonder (and worry) if received anonymously. Who has sent the card with these words? Why? What are they expecting?

As with so many Christian festivals, the Feast of Saint Valentine as celebrated today amidst red heart shapes, chocolates and flowers, would likely be unrecognisable to a Christian of a millennia ago. There have been a number of Christian martyrs called Valentine. Officially, there are two associated with 14 February, Valentine of Rome and Valentine of Terni. Both martyred in the third century.

Of course, the original stories, only dimly observable now, have had numerous embellishments as the stories moved from martyrdom to healing to clandestine weddings for Roman soldiers to parchment hearts until we get to the association with love and relationships

that we know today. Chaucer and Shakespeare both reference Valentine's day with an assumption of romantic love in their writing.

This may seem a strange place in which to start our journey through the season of Lent, though this is, of course, just the date on which Ash Wednesday falls this year. But we can make helpful links from a feast day that began recognising the martyrdom of Valentine(s) and some of the stories that have grown up around Saint Valentine, particularly those in which Valentine was providing support for those who were being persecuted or pricking the bubbles of those who thought they were most important, even Emperors.

We start a series that explores matters of social justice in Lent. Implicit in seeking social justice is an understanding of the interrelatedness of creation and people on this planet. We are bound together and seeking to live well and in harmony with creation means recognising the relationships around us, nurturing them and encouraging them.

Amongst the numerous stories in the UK at the moment coming from the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic, among the most depressing are the stories of how wealthy individuals sought to make themselves even more wealthy in a time of national and international plight. At that moment when most people sought to look out for those around them, to ensure that they were well and cared for, there were some who only saw an opportunity to make easy money.

Jesus' clarity about issues of justice is on display in Luke's gospel. There is no doubting the strength of



Jesus condemnation of the hypocrisy of the powerful in his community. Jesus understands all too well the importance of right relationships for a healthy community, which is part of social justice. He does not, one notices, condemn the actions that the Pharisees do undertake (ritual cleansing or tithing) but rather he takes them on to the next logical step wherein their actions start to benefit all in society and not just themselves. Jesus recognises the good, for instance, in outward cleansing but points out the need for an inner purity too, which would be recognisable in deeds of charitable activity without demands for places of honour.

The struggle for social justice is long and hard, marked by the ashes of sorrow and pain amongst those who have borne the brunt of injustice. In these massively challenging times with global issues like climate change, economic inequity, an upsurge in the politics of populism, and anxiety about the future in younger generations, what message of hope and conviction does the church bring?

Can the church faithfully and humbly be an example of social justice itself? The church in many parts of the world is having to adapt and change. In Scotland this includes consolidation of church communities and the formation of new congregations. What an opportunity this provides for faithful Christians to show how much they value justice for all and the importance of encouraging and nurturing relationships between those within their own community of faith and those in the wider community. How, in other words, we can be a Valentine for all.

## Story Retelling

### You're A Pharisee

A Pharisee, a member of a movement that studied and interpreted the Jewish Law, invited Jesus to eat with him.

The Pharisee was surprised when Jesus broke the Law by not washing, as the Law said he should, before he sat down to eat.

Jesus was aware of what the Pharisee was thinking and how his behaviour was being judged.

He spoke to his host.

*You're a Pharisee.*

*You're in deep trouble.*

*It's going to be bad for you.*

*You know what you Pharisees do?*

*You clean the outside of a cup and dish  
but not the inside.*

*Outside you look good  
but inside you're wicked.*

*You're a Pharisee.*

*What are you like?*

*You let everyone see that you give to God  
offerings from your herb garden  
and at the same time  
you cheat the poor.*

*You choose not to love your neighbour.*

*You're a Pharisee.*

*Look at you.*

*You let everyone see that you  
have a reserved seat in the synagogue.  
You expect people to greet you with respect  
in the marketplace.*

*You lead people astray,  
You corrupt them.*

*You're a Pharisee.*

*Woe to you.*

*People do not realise  
how evil you are.*

There were other people at the meal and Jesus had hard words for them too.

I wonder what Jesus would say to us if we if invited him to dinner?



## Discussion Starters

Take some time in groups reading slowly through the Luke text, stopping frequently to unpack together what is happening and why Jesus is saying what he is saying. You may want to do a little research about the Pharisees themselves so that you have some understanding of their origins as a group, which would not have had the same negative associations at the time that we have following the critique that Jesus and others have offered.

- What stands out to you about the actions of the Pharisees?
- Why did Jesus criticise the Pharisees?
- Can you think of other groups that may have started out positively but gradually were undermined by selfish ways of thought and action?

Now turn to the imagery of the Isaiah text and again read this together, stopping to explore what is being said and why it resonates with readers today. Note that this text is from the time when the people of God were in servitude and exile, growing in their anxiety. Second Isaiah, the author of this part of the book, spends a lot of time in disputation with the exiled people, but does so from a position of faithfulness in God's activity which is clearly described in chapter 55.

•

- What are images we might conjure to describe social justice today?
- Who are the people who offer images of hopefulness in a time of great anxiety for the future?
- How do we tell apart the charlatans who peddle simple answers to complex problems from the faithful?

Having explored the texts, encourage people either to look through newspapers or magazines or to look online using mobile devices for stories that speak of relationships (broken or whole) or of issues of justice. Ask people to share with each other what they have found and explore together what they think their response should be.

- Who are the parties most affected in the stories you have found?
- What are the common factors that repeat in the different stories?
- Why is social justice important to you?
- Is there anything you can do as a church during the season of Lent to make a positive difference over a matter of social justice? (Some direct action, perhaps, or a campaign to write to your local politicians.)



# explore the story

## Engaging The Text

**You will need: lay a table with a white paper cloth that can be written on, set up a row of six purple candles (purple being the colour of the season) on a central table. Across the table scatter some fresh herbs such as mint or coriander or basil, or a mixture of bitter herbs, but ensure you use herbs with a strong smell.**

Read the passage a couple of times with different voices each time. The different inflections and emphasis might help hearing the passage more deeply.

Invite people to consider the words Jesus offers the Pharisees. Given Lent is a season for reflection and renewal, reflect on times when we have found ourselves doing just as the Pharisees have done.

Then ask people, in their own time to come to the table, pick a leaf from one of the herbs, rub it between their fingers so that they can smell it.

As they leave the worship space, they should still be able to smell the herb as a reminder of the confession they have made.

## Ash Art

**You will need: A4 purple card, white paper with a rough feel to it, glue sticks, scissors, charcoals.**

Ask each participant to cut the white paper about 2cm smaller than the purple card all round and then to glue the white paper onto the purple card so that there is a purple border. Ask the participants to draw a symbol onto the white card that speaks to them/for them at the beginning of this Lent, such as cross, roadway, heart, herbs, cup.

Participants could share with each other what their symbols mean, or pictures could be laid out on table or displayed on board and participants spend some time reflecting on the pictures while music is being played.

## Cups And Plates

**You will need: a selection of cups and plates from the back of cupboards, charity shops or wherever you can source these from, porcelain pens or Sharpies or other pens which will write on the surface of the cups and plates.**

Ask participants to choose a cup or plate that they like and ask them to decorate it using pens. They can use words, symbols or pictures. Ask them to write or draw things that are in their minds at the beginning of this season of Lent

Invite participants to take their decorated cup or plate home with them and to use it as a focal point for reflection during Lent.



# live the story

## Call To Worship

Within the purple shadows  
we find ourselves holding breath  
for the season changes  
and the road narrows.

We have turned from the mount of transfiguration  
to the valley of the cross.

The story is heavier,  
the questions louder,  
the footsteps slower,  
the words thinner  
and we meet  
waiting  
for a God who makes a choice  
and invites us  
to follow.

Let us worship.

## Prayer Of Dedication

Gracious God,  
whose generosity  
knows no bounds,  
we come with thankful hearts.  
We bring before you our offerings,  
of ourselves and our work,  
Trusting these gifts  
will accomplish  
that which you purpose  
in the world  
and not return to you empty.  
Thanks be to God.  
Amen.

## Prayer Of Adoration And Confession

Holy God,  
we gather this evening  
to mark the beginning of Lent:  
this season of waiting,  
this season of patience,  
this season of reflection  
as we journey to the cross.

We come to take our place at the table,  
recognising we are unclean,  
both inside and out.

We have neglected justice  
and we have not loved God.  
We have ignored others  
who need our attention,  
and failed to give  
with generous hearts.

Lord, in your mercy  
forgive us.

Help us to practise  
justice and love  
as we draw closer to you  
this Lenten season.

We long to renew our faith;  
to return to you.

Build our community  
as we build our relationship  
with you over the coming weeks.  
We pray in Jesus' name.  
Amen.



## Prayers For Others And Ourselves

Almighty God,  
Jesus showed us how to pray for others,  
And we follow his example.  
We have begun  
our Lenten observance together  
and so together  
we call upon You now  
for our neighbours:

Christians all around the globe  
gathering today to mark this  
fast day of repentance.

We pray for your church in the world,  
for the proclamation of the gospel  
and for the integrity  
of leaders and institutions.

We ask that our love of institution  
not block our love of neighbour;  
that our seat of honour  
be given to people  
needing Your justice.

We pray for new communities of faith,  
and witness to people who do not know you  
throughout this Lenten season.

Sadly, there are many opportunities  
to work for social justice  
on this earth of yours:  
for ecology and  
care of creation  
that is causing  
the poorest of the poor  
to suffer more,  
limiting food production and  
creating climate emergencies  
that are taking away  
people's lives and livelihoods.

For pointing out  
injustice  
in the justice system,  
or for calling out  
politicians who seem to live  
to a different standard  
than the rest of society;  
for standing up for the abused,  
and for supporting  
the migrant  
for fairer employment laws,  
holding companies that exhibit greed  
and refuse to share  
with the least of these  
to account.

There is so much  
work to be done,  
we pray for inspiration  
and fortitude

and guard against overwhelming thoughts  
which lead to paralysation  
hindering any forward movement.

We bring before you now  
our loved ones  
who need your tender care.  
Strengthen relationships  
and may this Lenten season  
be a time of reconciliation,  
bringing your children  
in closer relationship  
with each other and  
with you.

O God,  
Lent is a time of re-turning.  
During these 40 days,  
we pray for the renewal  
of your rightful place  
in people's lives.

Your ways are higher  
than our ways.  
We place our trust in you.  
Amen.

### Reflection

Ash  
like a phoenix  
on its burning day  
feeling the flame of passion  
then the flame of pain.  
Left with the ashes,  
ashes of grief,  
ashes of sorrow.

Ash  
like a phoenix  
rising from the ashes  
I am not ashamed of my grief  
for out of the ashes of each sorrow  
is a place of learning,  
a sign of growth.

Ash  
like a phoenix  
rising high and freely  
there is a beauty in ashes,  
painting a picture of hope in the ashes  
and out of the ashes  
I am left with only me  
and my God.

## Reflective Prayer

On this Saint Valentine's Day  
we recognise love,  
love of neighbour,  
love of self,  
and above all,  
love of God.

It is so easy to be hypocritical,  
to hold ourselves  
to a different  
set of standards  
than we hold others accountable.

Help us to be equitable  
in our justice;  
to identify  
assumptions we make  
concerning one another;  
to understand  
when we make judgements  
based on thoughtless expectations,  
because we forget  
to take the others' perspective.

O Lord,  
provide understanding and insight  
as we learn new ways  
of being church together.  
Prod us to recall  
saints in our lives  
who have showed us  
how to be faithful.  
Remind us of the need  
for sacrifice, as Valentine  
demonstrated care for others,  
who held the heart as sacred.

This Lenten season,  
we search  
for the heart of God.  
Amen.

## Sending

As we breath out  
let us go forward  
and be practical in what God want us to do  
not just words—  
empty meaningless words—  
but God's words of wisdom and hope.  
May we not assume anything  
but be open to those around us  
so that they can seek God  
and call upon God's name.

## Praise/Hymns

All over the world	ATAS 9
As a fire is meant for burning	CH4 252
For everyone born a place at the table	CH4 685
Forty days and forty nights	CH4 337 / MP 160
God weeps	CH4 168
He has showed you	MP 215
Heaven shall not wait	CH4 362
Jesus be the centre	ATAS 139
Jesus calls us here to meet him	CH4 510
Jesus Christ is waiting	CH4 360
Jesus hands were kind hands	ATAS 143 / CH4 351
Jesus, tempted in the desert	CH4 338
Oh the love of my Lord is the essence	STF 431
There's a time to laugh	ATAS 240
When the hungry who have nothing	CH4 258



# lifting the gloom

## Lent 1

Sunday 18 February 2024

## Theme

Social Justice

## Word

Isaiah 58:6-12

1 Samuel 21:1-6

## World

World Day of Social Justice (20 February)

*tell the story*

## Bible Notes

Isaiah's words of challenge and promise are addressed to people in a situation that is painfully easy for modern readers to visualise because we see it every day on the news: the streets are in ruins; ancient monuments have been destroyed; people are hungry and homeless; injustice and oppression are rife. At the time of writing, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent were dealing with no fewer than 32 ongoing emergency situations throughout the world: famine; flood; earthquake; war; mass migration and many more.

Suffering on this scale is hard for anyone to deal with, at an existential as well as a practical level, but it raises particular theological questions for those who believe, or who once believed, or who would like to believe in a powerful God who has the best interests of humanity at heart. "Why has God caused, or allowed this tragedy to happen?" "What do we have to do to win back God's favour so that 'shalom' (peace and wellbeing) may be restored?"



The Biblical book of Isaiah contains the insights of at least three different prophets, covering the period before, during and after the Babylonian exile (approx. 597-538 BCE). Our reading today addresses people who have been away from their homeland for several generations—many of them born in exile, who have never seen the Temple in Jerusalem or experienced worship there. They need to be reminded what really matters to God; what is the core and essence of their faith.

The temptation, when life in the world is just too hard, is to withdraw to the holy place, keeping yourself pure, observing the rituals to the letter and keeping God on side with extravagant offerings and sacrifice. The Third Isaiah, like the prophet Amos before him, and Jesus of Nazareth after him, made it clear that withdrawal from the world was not an option for those whose commitment was to the God of Israel; the one who had always been on the side of the poor and who valued justice and mercy above ritual purity and religious observance.

Lest there be any doubt about what this meant in practice, he spells out in no uncertain terms what God expects of them before they even think about offering prayers for themselves. If their own lives are to be rich and fulfilling, they need to stop thinking about themselves and focus on the needs of others: sharing their food with the hungry; giving decent clothing to those who are in rags; and welcoming the homeless poor into their own homes.

If they want to remain free from enemy oppression, then they have to be sure that they are not themselves guilty of perpetrating abuse on others. This includes psychological and emotional abuse: "the pointing



of the finger, the speaking of evil." What is needed is nothing less than a whole-scale revision of their attitudes to other people and of the way in which society is organised. Once all of that has been tackled, then everything else will fall into place, including their relationship with God. Not only will the ruined city be restored, but the whole of creation will burst into life once more.

The relevance of Isaiah's prophecy to modern times hardly needs to be spelt out, whether that be in terms of international politics, the ever-widening gap between rich and poor, or the free-falling decline of institutional religion in the western world. Perhaps the best response, as we enter the season of Lent, may be to listen in silence to these ancient words of wisdom and allow them to take root in us and change us.

## Story Retelling

### God's Social Justice

God, so the writer of this chapter of Isaiah tells us, has made it very clear what is expected of us.

We are to share our bread with those who are hungry.  
We are to give shelter to those without a home.  
We are to provide clothing for those who need it.  
We are to make sure we do not neglect the needs of our own family.

God chooses, we are told,  
to practice freedom and justice  
through the way we live our daily lives.

God has told us clearly what is expected of us.  
If we live this way God will be near us.  
If we call for help God will say  
Here I am.

If we live this way  
God will be our light,  
our guide,  
our healer  
God will help us  
to restore peace and justice  
to the streets of our broken world.

## Discussion Starters

Tuesday 20 February is World Day of Social Justice. This has its roots in a World Summit for Social Development that was held in Copenhagen in 1995. A Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Actions came out of that meeting with political leaders pledging to alleviate poverty, work towards full employment and create stable, safe, and just societies. People had to be at the centre of these plans. In 2007 the UN General Assembly announced that 20 February would be celebrated as the World Day of Social Justice.

There are four interrelated principles of social justice: equity, access, participation, and rights. All of these together are required in order to create a world in which all people can live together, justly.

- What do you make of the four principles of social justice: equity, access, participation, and rights?
- Which of these are most difficult to provide in today's world?
- What are the first steps towards creating a socially just world?

Using the Isaiah text as an inspiration, think of a social issue in your own society and take some time to talk about it together, doing some simple research if necessary. Try to take time to think about how other nations/communities are responding to a particular social injustice.

- How can you go about advocating for a particular social cause?
- What could the church do to promote a response to a particular social injustice?
- What would a fair world look like for you?

Take some time to think about what it means to live with dignity. Social injustice often affects both how others see certain groups of people and how those who are marginalised see themselves. This is harmful for individuals and for society.

- How does Isaiah offer hope for people to renew their sense of dignity?
- How did Jesus bring dignity back to people's lives?
- What can we do to bring a greater sense of dignity to people's lives today?

# explore the story

## Engaging The Text

**You will need: the same table used on Ash Wednesday (see previous notes), covered in white paper tablecloth with a line of six purple candles (all lit), a set of fibre pens, a rehearsal of the reading with many voices.**

Begin with a single voice reading the passage.

Once it is read, let the single voice read it again, but have a chorus of voices say together the words underlined so that these words are almost shouted and draw attention to them. The words to be shouted out could be worked out by a small group beforehand or use the suggestions below.

The idea is simply to let the passage be heard again, each time becoming more familiar and hearing different emphasis.

Once it has been read for a third time, invite people to write or draw or symbolise the word or phrase that jumped out at them round the first candle.

Once everyone who wants to have participated, blow out the candle.



As Tuesday is World Day of Social Justice you may wish to print out on credit sized cards an organisation linked with social justice and invite people, once they have written their words, to pick up a card and respond in their own way. A list of organisations can be found at <https://www.humanrightscareers.com/magazine/100-human-rights-organisations-in-uk/>.

This version is from 'The Message' but use whatever translation you wish and emphasis whatever words you feel are important for your own community to hear.

*This is the kind of fast day I'm after:  
to break the chains of injustice,  
get rid of exploitation in the workplace,  
free the oppressed,  
cancel debts.*

*What I'm interested in seeing you do is:  
sharing your food with the hungry,  
inviting the homeless poor into your homes,  
putting clothes on the shivering ill-clad,  
being available to your own families.*

*Do this and the lights will turn on,  
and your lives will turn around at once.*

*Your righteousness will pave your way.  
The God of glory will secure your passage.*

*Then when you pray, God will answer.  
You'll call out for help, and I'll say, 'Here I am.'*

*"If you get rid of unfair practices,  
quit blaming victims,  
quit gossiping about other people's sins,*

*if you are generous with the hungry  
and start giving yourselves to the down-and-out,  
your lives will begin to glow in the darkness,  
your shadowed lives will be bathed in sunlight.*

*I will always show you where to go.  
I'll give you a full life in the emptiest of places—  
firm muscles, strong bones.*

*You'll be like a well-watered garden,  
a gurgling spring that never runs dry.*

*You'll use the old rubble of past lives to build anew,  
rebuild the foundations from out of your past.*

*You'll be known as those who can fix anything,  
restore old ruins, rebuild and renovate,  
make the community liveable again.*

## Lent Calendars

**You will need: coloured pencils, print out Lent calendar which suits your group. Many resources are available online by searching for 'Lent Calendar'. Find one that is appropriate for your situation and print out. An example can be found at <https://www.catholicicing.com/printable-lenten-calendar-for-kids/>.**

Give out the Lent calendars and fill in the first few days.

Talk about the Season of Lent and discuss the idea of a Lent Journey in ways appropriate to those participating.

## Lent Hampers

**You will need: cardboard boxes (shoebox size or bigger), brown paper, scissors, sticky tape, luggage labels, purple paper, glue sticks.**

Ask participants to cover their box (and lid) with brown paper and then to decorate the box with simple symbols of Lent cut out from purple paper and stuck on to the outside of the box. Ask participants to write a 'good wishes... from NAME church' on the label. Over the weeks of Lent participants and others in the congregation could fill the boxes to give to older members of the church or community (such as shortbread, chocolate Easter egg, tea bags, paper hankies or with items for local foodbank or charity).

Talk about practical action that individuals and churches can take, to do the kind of fasting Isaiah talks about. Does your congregation already have partnerships/links with charities which could be developed further this Lent?

## Lent Paper Chains

**You will need: lilac A4 paper, pencils, rulers, scissors, sticky tape, felt tip pens.**

Ask participants to place A4 paper portrait wise and to draw lines, using pencil, about 2cm apart from top to bottom. Ask participants to cut along lines forming long paper strips. Ask participants to write or draw, using felt tip pens, onto the strips, words from the passage or charities in your area or things they can do to break the chains of injustice. Ask participants to form the strips into paper chains, sticking ends with sticky tape (as you would to make Christmas paper chains).

Link to the idea of "breaking the chains of injustice" from Isaiah 58:6 and World Day of Social Justice. Talk about the connection between these and discuss ways individuals and church groups can make a difference.

## Actions For Words

**You will need: fitness video, watering cans and small gardening forks, Duplo, Lego or other building brick.**

Linking with Isaiah 58:11-12 provide resources for activities which match the words and suit the group you are working with. This could be a short fitness video to follow along with links with firm muscles and strong bones, watering cans and forks to do a little tidying up in church or community gardens links with well-watered gardens, building models of houses or community spaces with bricks links with rebuilding on old foundations.

As people are participating in these activities have discussions linking these symbolic activities with how people might put these things into practice day by day.

## Lent Walk

**You will need: 40 pieces of purple card marked with numbers 1-40, scraps of paper and pencils.**

Lay the numbered cards around your meeting space and outside if weather and space allow (put stones on top of cards to stop them blowing away). Mix up the numbers so that people have to go backwards and forwards to reach them all. Give the participants a wee bit of paper and pencil and ask them to find all the cards, noting down the numbers they discover as they go along.

Talk about the 40 days of Lent and how we are at the beginning of the season. Talk about people's hopes for this season.



# live the story

## Call To Worship

We pause this day  
and look around  
into the world  
that needs this time,  
this season,  
this moment,  
to reflect,  
grieve,  
confess,  
repent.

May we gather  
and travel with the world  
through this time of cleansing  
and renewal.

Let us worship.

## Prayer Of Dedication

Loving God,  
take these gifts  
we bring before you  
to break bonds of injustice,  
to share bread with the hungry,  
to bring the homeless into our houses,  
to clothe the naked.

Let us work  
toward your justice now  
using the unique gifts  
you have gifted us.  
Let your light rise,  
and satisfy the needs  
in parched places  
of your world  
through Jesus' name we pray.  
Amen.

## Prayer Of Adoration And Confession

Almighty God,  
source of life and creative love,  
we come to worship you this day.  
We come together as a community  
to share our Lenten journey,  
to pray, to sing,  
to hear your Word,  
to rejoice  
that wherever two or three  
are gathered, there you are.

We come, too, to confess  
because we turn aside  
when we see someone in need,  
because we hide ourselves  
from even ourselves,  
because we do not  
guard our tongues,  
because we do not call  
upon you.  
Forgive our foolish ways.

Merciful God,  
we know we cannot  
keep the Lenten fast  
without your help,  
without your continual guidance.  
Turn us again with  
your loving care to  
follow Jesus' way  
of restoration and repair.  
Amen.

## Prayers For Others And Ourselves

God of relationship,  
on this first Sunday of Lent,  
we pray that we spend  
this time actively  
seeking a relationship with you  
and that we notice your  
presence acting  
across the world  
and in our communities.

We, too, choose the fast  
of losing the bonds of injustice  
and undoing the straps of the yoke  
for so many of your children  
who are oppressed  
and suffering from abuse  
as well as enduring  
unfair labour conditions  
across the world  
and in our communities.

This week marks the  
UN World Day of Social Justice,  
raising awareness  
by recognising that  
social development  
and social justice  
are crucial for  
peace and security  
within and among nations.

We cry out for peace  
among the nations,  
and for peace  
among neighbours,  
so, we plead  
for strength to work  
for social development  
and social justice  
across the world  
and in our communities.

Caring God,  
there are many people  
struggling with lack of food.  
People in South Sudan

forced to consume  
the bulbs of the water lily  
because they have no other source  
of food with their land flooded.  
Acute food insecurity  
is evident in Afghanistan  
and parts of Africa  
due to drought  
where people are relying on  
humanitarian aid,  
so, we petition  
for action in the face of  
the climate emergency  
and injustice  
across the world  
and in our communities.

God of presence  
across the world  
and in our communities,  
provoke us into  
seeking justice for  
your people.  
Amen.

### Reflective Prayer

God,  
remove the yoke from among us,  
the need to point the finger,  
the need to speak of evil,  
our proclivity to belittle others;  
the desire to be on top;  
our necessity to make sure  
we are secure before helping others.

Rebuild our ruins.  
Ancient indeed  
is the human need to compete;  
to be superior;  
to live in secrecy;  
and hide ourselves from our own kin.

Break our yokes,  
O glory of God.  
Be our rear guard.  
Renew us.  
Restore our streets to live in;  
repair the breach within our souls.  
Amen.

## Reflection

Living in a world of difference  
between the privileged and the deprived,  
poverty and inequalities are everywhere:  
Where do I come in?

Looking at a world of difference  
from what I see and perceive  
our culture is explosive with demands for justice:  
What can I do?

Making a world of difference  
we all have a choice,  
dumbing down real news  
or making a stand together.  
Yesterday is gone  
but we can try for better tomorrow  
so let us turn from the inside out  
with the help of our God  
and let our light shine.

## Sending

Share your bread with the hungry.  
Share your resources with the needy.  
Share your goodness with the despised.  
Go in peace.

## Praise/Hymns

Awake my soul and with the sun	CH4 210
Forth in thy name	CH4 529 / MP 159
God weeps	CH4 168
God whose almighty word	CH4 112
He has showed you	MP 215
How can we stand together	<i>Known Unknowns</i> , WGP 31
I will sing a song of love	WGP
Jesus Christ our living Lord	CH4 524
Let us share with one another	ATAS 160
Longing for light	CH4 543
Lord of all hopefulness	CH4 166
May the mind of Christ my Saviour	CH4 536 / MP 463
This we shall do, we walk his way	WGP
We are one family together	ATAS 256
When the hungry who have nothing	CH4 258

sampler



# sampler

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