

This Week at St Mary's

19 December 2021

THE INSIGHTFUL KINDNESS OF MOTHERHOOD

All of us experience frustration, disappointment, impatience, and despair at times. We all feel that we have the capacity to give birth to something beautiful and good and needed and wonderful in the world. But our potential goes unfulfilled, or our promising hopes miscarry. So we live on one side and then on the other of the border of despair.

In Luke's telling of the birth of Jesus, God aligns with the creative feminine power of womanhood rather than the violent masculine power of statehood. The virgin birth, it turns out, isn't about bypassing sex but about subverting violence. The violent power of top-down patriarchy is subverted not by counterviolence but by the creative power of pregnancy. It is through what proud men have considered "the weaker sex" that God's true power enters and changes the world. That, it turns out, is exactly what Mary understood the Angel Gabriel to be saying.

Mary presents herself to the Holy Spirit to receive and cooperate with God's creative power. She surrenders and receives, she nurtures and gives her all, because she dares to believe the impossible is possible. Her son Jesus will consistently model her self-surrender and receptivity to God, and he will consistently prefer the insightful kindness of motherhood to the violent blindness of statehood.

That's what it means to be alive in the adventure of Jesus. We present ourselves to God—our bodies, our stories, our futures, our possibilities, even our limitations. "Here I am," we say with Mary, "the Lord's servant. Let it be with me according to your will." Let us, in our own hearts, dare to believe the impossible by surrendering ourselves to God, courageously cooperating with God's creative, pregnant power—in us, for us, and through us. If we do, then we, like Mary, will become pregnant with holy aliveness. . . .

(Brian D. McLaren, *We Make the Road by Walking: A Year-Long Quest for Spiritual Formation, Reorientation, and Activation* (Jericho Books: 2014), 68, 69-70.)

Tom Gillman

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF MOSES

My recent trip to Jordan brought many delights, from hiking the ancient desert city of Petra to floating in the Dead Sea and sleeping in the desert. It also brought many surprises, not least being the excitement I felt in recognising places from the bible and actually walking in the footsteps of the early prophets. Hearing our knowledgeable guide talking about Moses and Aaron in the same factually informative and accepting way as when he was describing the wonderful cuisine or the archaeological ruins of Roman civilisations, somehow validated that early Bible teaching for me.

Mount Nebo is in the area where Moses stood and looked down towards his vision of the promised land. Today when the haze lifts you can see the outline of the Dead Sea, the valley of the Jordan river and over towards the holy land. To stand on that mountain and think about Moses being promised the land that I was looking towards, brought excitement and wonder.

Whilst walking the rocky paths of Petra, the glistening white shrine to Aaron perched atop a mountain there became a constant reminder of the biblical heritage of the land. Local belief that his burial place is nearby brought me close to something that had previously seemed distant. As I reflected on these things my perspective of time shifted. In a region where the Old Testament played out, the times of Jesus 2000 years ago seemed more recent.

My experiences at Petra and Mount Nebo have intensified my desire to visit Israel and walk in the footsteps of Jesus. To visit Jerusalem and the Sea of Galilee has become a new dream. When politics and Covid allows, I see that tours there with a Christian focus are available to church groups.....

Now THAT is something to think about!.....

Julia Williams

LAST WEEK AT ST MARY'S

FUNERAL OF OSMUND DUNK - on Friday 10th, aka 'Doctor'. Much loved and respected, the Doctor came from Jamaica in 1956 and played a significant part in the promotion of blues music in Nottingham.

CHRISTINGLE SERVICE - on Sunday 12th, a festive atmosphere and lots of children at the end held up their decorated oranges.

**PLEASE NOTE NEITHER THE CHURCH NOR THE OFFICE
ARE OPEN DURING 27 DEC - 3 JAN**

EXPLORING FAITH. We will be forming a group in the New Year with those who are exploring the Christian faith. If interested, and/or perhaps considering baptism or confirmation, contact Tom for more details.

NEW YEAR PRAYER at St Mary's, Tuesday 4th January 7.30pm - Nottingham City Prayer, all welcome. Guest speaker Rachel Hickson from Heartcry For Change (heartcryforchange.com)

ST MARY'S BOOK GROUP Thursday 6 January 11 am discussing a 1950s classic by Nottingham writer Alan Sillitoe, **Saturday Night and Sunday Morning**. Copies are available for under £3.50 online (we can arrange to lend). The group is very informal - we look at extracts to focus our ideas and memories. You can just turn up on the day and there's no commitment to attend every session. If you have any questions or to be added to the email list, please contact Di in the office.

GIVING TO ST MARY'S - we are not taking up collections at this time, but we still very much rely on your financial support. Either use online banking (NatWest 56-00-61, St Mary's PCC a/c 00834602) cash or cheque in the donations chest, the card reader next to the chest, or via the Donate button on the website. Please use Gift Aid if you are a UK tax-payer. Standing order forms are by the south porch.

FROM MEADOWS FOODBANK - please choose us as your local cause on the Co-op Members' website. Log in & select Meadows Foodbank on 'your local causes'. Currently needed - **UHT milk; 500g bags sugar; hot chocolate; jam; small bottles cooking oil; tinned meat, fruit, potatoes; toilet rolls; shampoo; shower gel; toothpaste; laundry tabs; washing-up liquid; or cash donations.** Tues 5.30-7.15, Fri 10-12, Sat 11-1pm NG2 2JD

Wherever you are, we extend a very warm greeting to you,
especially if you've recently discovered St Mary's

FORTHCOMING SERVICES

WEDNESDAY 22 nd	1.00pm	Lace Market Carols
CHRISTMAS EVE	7.00pm	Nine Lessons and Carols
	11.30pm	Midnight Communion
CHRISTMAS DAY	10.45am	Sung Eucharist
BOXING DAY	10.45am	Parish Communion
SUNDAY 2nd Jan	10.45am	Epiphany Eucharist (BCP)

CURRENT COVID GUIDELINES

Masks to be worn in St Mary's, please.
Distancing and sanitising as before.
We regret we are suspending refreshments.

PLEASE CONTINUE TO PRAY FOR

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