

STODDEN OUT OF LOCKDOWN

As from **Sunday 5th July** Churches can begin to engage again in public worship. We have a plan for the Stodden churches coming out of lockdown which will continue to keep people safe and ensure the safety of those who are more vulnerable whilst gradually beginning to open up. Initially we will offer a 9.00am service in the same format as we have been using on ZOOM. We will be using Melchbourne Church as it is large and allows for safe social distancing. Those attending will have to wash their hands with anti-bacterial gel before and after the service. Under current restriction there will be no hymn singing. At the moment it is not clear whether face masks will have to be worn but you may wish to do so for your own protection.

We will still offer the 10.30 ZOOM service with virtual hymns and if you are in a vulnerable category, or just have concerns, I would encourage you to continue to join the ZOOM service.

No doubt the Church of England will be issuing further guidelines before which we will pass via email and the website

ACCESS TO CHURCHES The Government have said the churches are open for private prayer, however the Church of England requirements on PCCs to keep the building "covid" free are a bit demanding on small rural parishes so if anyone would like to enter one of the church buildings for prayer at the moment the best thing to ask them to contact me

DO MAKE USE OF OUR WEBSITE Our website is THE STODDEN CHURCHES. There you will find service information. It is somewhere you can suggest people look for information who are new to the area.

VIRTUAL COLLECTION PLATE: If you wish to be able to give electronically here are the Stodden Churches bank detail: Stodden account number 10842168 sort code 20-74-81

PHONE CHURCH: *Daily Hope* offers music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a telephone line. The line is available 24 hours a day on **0800 804 8044**

The Stodden Churches **Prayers and Readings for the week beginning** **Sunday 28th June 2020 – St. Peter**

Our Vision Statement: As the Stodden Churches we seek to move forward together in love and service, sharing the good news of Christ with our neighbours

From the Stodden Villages please remember in your prayers : Teresa Allan, Pauline McManus, Steve Lemming, Trish Sizer, Frances Bratcher, Andy Langley, Andrew Seabrook, Rosemary Morgan, Anne Hauxwell. *If someone would like a visit or a prayer tell Stephen the Rector (709740)*

This week's Psalm: 113

1 Alleluia.

Give praise, you servants of the Lord,
O praise the name of the Lord.

2 Blessed be the name of the Lord,
from this time forth and for evermore.

3 **From the rising of the sun to its setting
let the name of the Lord be praised.**

4 The Lord is high above all nations
and his glory above the heavens.

5 **Who is like the Lord our God,
that has his throne so high,
yet humbles himself to behold
the things of heaven and earth?**

6 He raises the poor from the dust
and lifts the needy from the ashes,

7 To set them with princes,
with the princes of his people.

8 He gives the barren woman a place in the house
and makes her a joyful mother of children.

Alleluia.

The 1st Reading: Mark 1:14-20: ¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, ¹⁵and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.’ ¹⁶ As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake—for they were fishermen.

¹⁷ And Jesus said to them, ‘Follow me and I will make you fish for people.’

¹⁸ And immediately they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹ As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. ²⁰ Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

The 2nd Reading: Mark 8:27-38: ²⁷ Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, ‘Who do people say that I am?’ ²⁸ And they answered him, ‘John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.’ ²⁹ He asked them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Peter answered him, ‘You are the Messiah.’ ³⁰

³⁰ And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

³¹ Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³² He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³ But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, ‘Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.’

³⁴ He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, ‘If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵ For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, ³⁶ will save it. ³⁶ For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?

³⁷ Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? ³⁸ Those who are ashamed of me and of my words ³⁸ in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.’

A Reflection for Petertide: I like Peter because he is such a rich mixture of positive discipleship, and unmitigated failure. It is that mix, that is so human, that enables me as a church leader today to identify with him; and find encouragement. I would have to say that he is my New Testament hero, because every time I miss the mark and get something wrong, every time I let Jesus who called me into ministry down, I think of Peter. And when I think of Peter I feel encouraged and inspired to keep on going; rather than think, “Well, that’s it, messed up, time to call it a day!”

Peter was called by Jesus from running his fishing business in Galilee to the business of fishing for people early on in Jesus’ ministry. Peter was not a luke-warm person, he was passionate; he threw himself wholeheartedly in whatever he did. So when Jesus calls Peter to be a disciple there is no hanging about; Peter throws his life in with Jesus despite having no idea where this man is going to lead him.

We are always encouraged to read the small print before we commit ourselves. Peter’s enthusiasm says, “hang the consequences, this Jesus is special, and I will go with his flow and see what happens!” Peter is like the surfer who goes out with his board and just delights to ride the wave. Peter’s willingness to ride the “Jesus wave” and not hold back leads him to be the one who is willing to put his hand up for Jesus when Jesus asks his disciples after months of his teaching and healing; “Who do you say that I am?” Mark tells us Peter’s bold answer; “You are the Messiah!” Peter’s passionate, whole-hearted enthusiasm has him say aloud what the others, more reticent, may have been thinking. It is a great “Eureka” moment in the Gospel story. It is a great spiritual high, but it is the next part in the story that speaks to me. As soon as Jesus starts to explain the culmination of his mission that will mean his suffering and death on the Cross Peter tries to talk him out of it. Peter gets it, then again he doesn’t. He goes in moments from real positive discipleship to unmitigated disaster. I know from my many years in church leadership that you can go through a period when you think things are really going well, the church can be growing, people can be responding to a new initiative in ministry, and then it can all go wrong. You take a wrong turn, you say the wrong thing, or it just seems that you have missed the “Jesus wave” and you are just tossing about in the waves of misfortune. It is all too easy to think you have failed and that is it; but when I look to Peter and his relationship with Jesus I see that failure is not the end; that even through failure eventually Jesus’ kingdom can be extended.

Jesus did not give up on Peter; he valued and loved this man despite his faults. For me the moment at the end of John’s Gospel when Jesus restores a Peter all too aware of his failure is very moving when Jesus restores Peter by asking him; “Simon son of John, do you truly love me?” Peter responds each time to Jesus with, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you!” What really matters in being a Christian disciple, whether you are a leader or not, is that you love Jesus

I know that for me to keep going in my discipleship what matters above all is that I love Jesus as my Lord and Saviour. That is the encouragement that I get from Peter; Jesus forgives his failures and renews his service because he knows that, despite his failures and mistakes, Peter really loves him. And that is all that really matters, that we love Jesus.