

THE MUSTARD SEED

The Parish **newsletter** of the church of St James, Brownhills

A Family Following Jesus

www.stjameschurchbrownhills.co.uk

Grief
is the
price
we pay
for
Love

50P
November 2023

*Called by name & empowered by the Holy Spirit to share
God's love with words and actions*



JUKES & ASTON

**OUR FAMILY, CARING
FOR YOUR FAMILY**

AN INDEPENDENT FAMILY COMPANY

- WITH YOU EVERYSTEP OF THE WAY
- TRUSTED TO CARE, HERE TO HELP
- A TRULY PERSONAL SERVICE
- BURIAL & CREMATION SERVICES
- HORSE DRAWN FUNERALS
- PRE PAID FUNERAL PLANS
- ALTERNATIVE & TRADITIONAL FUNERAL SERVICES
- FLORISTRY
- CHAPELS OF REST
- 24 HOUR SERVICE
- RELIGIOUS & NON RELIGIOUS SERVICES

TEL: 01543 522 300

WWW.JUKESANDASTONFUNERALSERVICES.COM

ASTON HOUSE
117-119 HIGH STREET
BROWNHILLS
WS8 6HL

What does it mean to be a Prophetic Church?



An icon of the Prophet Isaiah

As part of our JSP programme as a whole church family, we're looking at Jesus' prophetic streak at the moment, and our calling to develop our prophetic streak both as individuals and as a whole church. **But what does it mean to be prophetic?** The word is thrown around a lot, but depending on which circles you run in, it means something quite different. If you're in the charismatic crowd, *being prophetic means speaking the 'now' word of God* – bringing 'fresh revelation', and possibly even doing it in a way that is spontaneous and disruptive to the plan or the schedule. Yet if you run with *justice-oriented Christ-followers, being prophetic is being bold, confrontational, and possibly disruptive not to a plan but to an order, a societal framework.* How could the same word have such different connotations?

What can we recover from the Biblical roots of the prophetic role? In the Old Testament, two words are used to describe the prophet. The earlier of the two is the word *ro'eh*, which roughly means, 'the one who sees'. Later, the more common word used for a prophet is *nabi*, which can be loosely translated as, 'the one who speaks', particularly, on behalf of another.

A prophet is one who sees a different world, and says a different word. Specifically, a prophet is able to speak a revealing word because he sees something others don't, something hidden to others. This is why the woman at the well in John 4 called Jesus a prophet he revealed the truth about the number of men who had married and abandoned her. And this is why Paul is a prophet because the mystery of the Gospel has been revealed to him. If we bring all this together, we can outline a sketch of what it means to be a prophetic church.

Right then, so a Prophetic Church: -

1. Sees Jesus as King and His Kingdom arriving here and now.

One of the major themes in the Old Testament is that the Creator-God is the King of His Creation (many of the Psalms praise God in this way). When we read the first few chapters of the Bible through that lens, we begin to understand that human beings were created to reflect the wise and loving rule of God the Creator-King into His creation. This is what having 'dominion' means.

Yet, the fall was a rebellion that forfeited that privilege.

When Jesus announced His Kingdom mission in Luke 4, He quoted Isaiah 61, where the anointing of the Spirit is the empowerment to bring good news to the poor, freedom for the prisoner, and more. In Luke's 'Volume 2' – the Book of Acts – the Spirit is poured out on the Church so that this Kingdom mission can continue.

Paul argues through his letters in different ways that the Church participates in the Kingdom by confessing Jesus as 'Lord' – the true sovereign of the world – and by living under His reign by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Church is at its prophetic best when it lives in a way the would make no sense unless Jesus is King, and His Kingdom really were arriving here and now. That is why a prophetic church does not divide up evangelism and miracles and justice. We see them as a threefold cord. A prophetic church announces the forgiveness of sins, healing for the sick, and justice for the oppressed in Jesus' name.

2. Speaks the truth to power.

Our image of the prophet has to be shaped by the Old Testament's regard for Moses as the greatest prophet in Israel. We don't usually think of Moses as a prophet, but when we do, we understand that part of the prophetic call is speaking truth to power. In that light, Nathan's rebuke of David and Elijah's confrontation with Ahab and Jezebel all begin to make sense. Sometimes the prophet does the truth-telling through the voice of lament, as Jeremiah did.

Thus Jesus is prophetic not only because of His revealing the marriage history of the woman at the well, but also because of His confrontations with power.

When Jesus overturned the tables of money-changers in the Temple, and when He defied Pilate – by reshaping his questions, refuting his claims to power, and even by refusing to answer – He was living out the prophetic vocation by speaking the truth to both religious and political powers. (Paul echoes these behaviours in his conversations with various religious and political rulers in the latter half of the Book of Acts.)

The early Christians were not killed because Christianity was a religion Rome did not like. Rome welcomed any and all religions, but they were particularly threatened by Christianity. Why? Because Christianity made a radical, new and exclusive claim: ***Jesus alone is the Lord of all, worthy of worship; all other gods must be renounced as false.*** Rome viewed this as a dangerous belief. And every time the Church gathered to worship, there were speaking the truth to power by confessing Jesus as the True Lord – using terms Caesar had applied to himself as political propaganda – and thus declaring the gods of Empire as false.

Every time we show the gods of our age to be false, and expose their claims as a lie, we are speaking the truth to power. We denounce the lie that economic prosperity is the source of joy, that sexual pleasure is the highest end of every relationship, that violence is the path to peace, that a people-group or nation matters more than another. Sometimes our voice is the voice of proclamation and confession; others it is the voice of lament. Both are forms of prophetic truth-telling.

3. Signposts toward the future.

Activism has many appealing qualities. It is better than doing nothing; it unites and mobilizes people toward a common cause. It can raise awareness and even adjust a widely-held cultural paradigm.

And yet, **activism is not the same thing as being prophetic.** The Church does not care for the poor or feed the hungry or speak for the marginalized for the same reason an activist does. They may be in the same march or use the same hashtag, but the Christian is motivated by something different than the activist. The Christian is not in this – ultimately – to create change or to solve problems. If this were so, then a Christian may weigh the odds of actually changing a situation before speaking up or acting. **A Christian is driven to act and speak because they have seen a different future.** Remember: a prophet says a different word because he sees a different world.

Every time the Church ‘welcomes the stranger’, forgives an enemy, shows mercy to the offender, or protects the vulnerable, we are a signpost to the future. We don’t do these things to be a good humanitarian or to solve a global crisis. We do it to point toward the day when the Kingdom comes in fullness, on earth as it is in heaven, when every tear will be wiped away, when suffering is no more.

Now more than ever, we need the Holy Spirit to help us live as a witness in the world of a different kind of King and a different kind of Kingdom, arriving on earth as it is in heaven.

May God give us at St James the power and the grace to live as a prophetic church here in Brownhills and Clayhanger.

With love and many prayers for us as we each become more and more open to being prophetic followers of Jesus who work to see the Kingdom of God breaking more and more into the everyday,

Rev’d Gayle



How to Deal with Enemies

In the season of Remembrance, we consider those who have heroically given their lives in war. However, Jesus calls all of us to a radical heroism in our daily lives: 'You have heard that it was said, "Love your neighbour and hate your enemy." But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven.' (Matt 5:43-45).

Love Your Enemies:

Our 'enemies' are rarely life-threatening; they can simply be impatient, judgmental, selfrighteous or just plain disagreeable! Whether the conflict is with a family or church member, work colleague or neighbour, our attitude toward them should be one of love. We will naturally want to retaliate, but Jesus commands us to love!

Pray for Your Persecutors:

It's only when we are ready to pray for someone whom we find difficult, that God can soften our attitude towards them. Like us, they are those in need of God's forgiveness and grace. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German pastor executed by the Nazis at the end of World War 2, wrote:

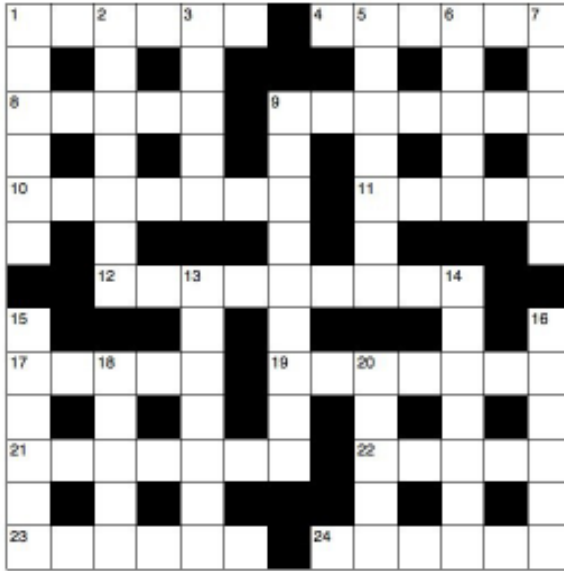
'This is the supreme demand. Through the medium of prayer, we go to our enemy, stand by his side, and plead for him to God. For if we pray for them, we are taking their distress and poverty, their guilt and perdition upon ourselves and pleading to God for them.'

Become More Like Jesus:

When we start loving our enemies and praying for our persecutors, we become more like Jesus Himself. He willingly laid down His life for us, prayed for His persecutors and gives us the power to love our enemies as He did.

At a time when we recognise that we all need heroes; how will we respond to this call to radical heroism in our own life?

The Bible tells us to love our neighbours, and also to love our enemies; probably because they are generally the same people. - GK Chesterton



Across

- 1 'The Lord Jesus... took bread, and when he had given -, he broke it' (1 Corinthians 11:24) (6)
- 4 'He has taken me to the banquet hall, and his - over me is love' (Song of Songs 2:4) (6)
- 8 Surrey town that hosts the National Christian Resources Exhibition (5)
- 9 Also known as Abednego (Daniel 1:7) (7)
- 10 Liken (Isaiah 40:18) (7)
- 11 A son of Etam, descendant of Judah (1 Chronicles 4:3) (5)
- 12 A part of the temple where the blood of a young bull was to be smeared (Ezekiel 45:19) (9)
- 17 'They make many promises, take false - and make agreements' (Hosea 10:4) (5)
- 19 Roman province to which Paul returned after evangelizing it on his first missionary journey (Acts 16:6) (7)
- 21 Material used to make baby Moses' basket (Exodus 2:3) (7)
- 22 'And feeble as -, in thee do we trust, nor find thee to fail' (5)
- 23 'The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep - to his voice' (John 10:3) (6)
- 24 Stalk carrying the sponge of wine vinegar given to Christ on the cross (John 19:29) (6)

Down

- 1 Elijah dug one round the altar he built on Mount Carmel and filled it with water (1 Kings 18:32) (6)
- 2 'I am not - of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes' (Romans 1:16) (7)
- 3 Buddhist term relating to belief in reincarnation (5)
- 5 Damascus disciple who, at God's command, restored the sight of the blinded Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:12) (7)
- 6 and 16 Horses: their sound (Jeremiah 50:11) (5) and their gait (Joel 2:4) (6)
- 7 A three (anag.) (6)
- 9 Athenian council addressed memorably by Paul (Acts 17:22) (9)
- 13 Abide by (Galatians 3:5) (7)
- 14 Persian princes (Daniel 3:2) (7)
- 15 Force (Galatians 6:12) (6)
- 16 See 6 Down (6)
- 18 Paste (anag.) (5)
- 20 How the cedars of Lebanon are described (Isaiah 2:13) (5)

Historically, the Church of England has had its share of eccentric clergy. Even nowadays, hiding away in remote parishes, there are still some colourful clergy about. Clergy such as the elderly, Anglo-Catholic Uncle Eustace, who is incumbent in the small parish of St James-the-Least-of-All, somewhere in Very Rural England. Eustace despairs of his nephew, Darren, who has become an Evangelical curate in a busy urban parish... and so he writes letters, to try and properly 'educate' Darren in parish life.

On using Glebe land for allotments

The Rectory
St. James the Least

My dear Nephew Darren

I hear you have joined the committee which wants to convert the waste land between the abandoned soap factory and canal in your parish into allotments – although I would have thought there were holier sorts of conversions you could have concentrated on. I am sure you will soon be caught up in arguments which make that little disagreement over an apple in the Garden of Eden seem quite trivial.

Some years ago, we similarly decided to let part of our Glebe land become allotments; the outcome was not wholly as may have been anticipated. Colonel Wainwright saw it as an opportunity of re-living his War years and was only just restrained from digging trenches around his plot; no doubt he would have offered to play football with neighbouring allotment holders on Christmas Day.

It caused some surprise when the Earl of Stowe applied for a plot, but it has become something of an attraction to see his daily procession, preceded by his gardener pushing the wheelbarrow, the under-gardener carrying the tools and following him, his butler with the newspaper, a

deckchair, and a flask of coffee. He then settles down for a comfortable hour while occasionally supervising the work, once reports on the local hunt have been read.

Miss Simpson managed to unite everyone in communal outrage by using her plot to encourage fluffy bunnies, darling foxes, and sweet squirrels. She seemed to be particularly grateful to everyone else for providing fruit and vegetables for their happiness. Resolution was only achieved when she was convinced to grow potatoes, helping the Colonel in his War Effort. Fortunately, he did not ask her to arrive equipped with the regulation gas mask.

Our local architect seems to spend most of his time beautifying his garden shed, rather than growing produce. With its gothic arched windows, Norman tower and flying buttresses, I do wonder if he may have spent rather too much of his time renovating ancient churches. Neighbouring plot-holders look forward to the agricultural equivalent of the Dissolution of the Monasteries.

I am sure you will find you have committed yourself to many hours of unnecessary work. Just make sure you get a percentage of their produce for your Harvest Festival.

Your loving uncle,

Eustace

Always remember . . .

***There are no strangers in our church –
just friends you haven't met yet.***

Readings for November

The readings are the ones we will use in church and online.

5th November 2023 – Morning Service -
Job 1 v 20–22

5th November 2023 – Evening Service -
Micah 3 v 5–12 & 1 Thessalonians 2 v 9–13

12th November 2023 – Morning Service -
Isaiah 25 v 1–10 & John 15 v 9–17

12th November 2023 – Evening Service -
Amos 5 v 18–24 & 1 Thessalonians 4 v 13–18

19th November 2023 – Morning Service -
Proverbs 31 v 1–9 & Matthew 18 v 1–5

19th November 2023 – Evening Service -
Ezekiel 34 v 11–16, 20–24 & Ephesians 1 v 15–23

26th November 2023 – Morning Service -
Isaiah 58 v 6–12 & Matthew 25 v 31–46

26th November 2023 – Evening Service -
Zephaniah 1 v 7, 12–18 & 1 Thessalonians 5 v 1–11

*Let men who delight in the cruelties of war remember
that their day is coming – Louis Mumford*

Be a Barnabas - encourage one another

'You'll never amount to much' said a Munich schoolteacher to the ten-year-old Albert Einstein. Good thing that he did not listen – and instead went on to prove his teacher wrong!

Just as children need encouragement, so do God's children. St Paul urged the Christians in his young churches to '*encourage one another*.' (1 Thess 5:11). In the Upper Room, Jesus used the same word to describe the Holy Spirit, meaning one 'called alongside to help'.

When we encourage others, we exercise a ministry like that of the Spirit to each other. In Acts we read of Joseph, a wealthy Levite from Cyprus. We know him better by his nickname Barnabas, which means 'Son of Encouragement' (Acts 4:36). How did Barnabas encourage others?

He was an example of generous giving (Acts 4:36-7), when he sold property and offered the money to the church for those in need. In the midst of a caring and sharing community, he was singled out as a symbol of generosity. Are we prepared to be generous to those in need around us?

He later gave encouragement to a new Christian in the person of Paul (Acts 9:27). After Paul's conversion and aware of his reputation, Barnabas came alongside Paul and brought him into the fellowship of the Church. Are we ready to help those who are new to the faith to find a place in our church?

Finally, Barnabas was sent to the church in Antioch and there '*saw the evidence of the grace of God*' (Acts 11:23). Here was a church which brought together Jewish and Gentile believers together for the first time. Like Barnabas, are we able to rejoice when we see God doing new things? Are we also willing to encourage others to embrace these things and facilitate change?

Don't forget, '*In the middle of every difficulty lies opportunity*.' (Albert Einstein).

Quick Reminder

Just a quick reminder that our evening services now start at 6.15pm

Spiritual Disciplines: Generosity

'It is more blessed to give than to receive' (Acts 20:35).

What does generosity look like for us? The practice of generosity is about more than finance, as we recognise that everything we possess belongs to God (Ps 24:1). We are stewards of all our resources, including time, possessions, gifts, as well as our love and compassion for others. God enables us to be generous, because of all that He has given us:

'You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.' (2 Cor 9:11).

Here are some practical ways of practising generosity:

Give consistently: Planning our financial giving ensures that it isn't an afterthought, but carefully considered (2 Cor 9:7). We can offer time to volunteer in church or in the wider community. We might open our home to others for a meal or coffee.

Give spontaneously: God often brings opportunities across our path where we can respond spontaneously. This might be prompted by a text from a friend in crisis or giving a neighbour a helping hand. Acting spontaneously reminds us that God is always working in and through us.

Give sacrificially: Being generous also involves making sacrifices with our time and priorities, as we help others, share our possessions, or use our gifts. How can we simplify our busy lives, in order to free up space to practise more life transforming generosity?

To engage in generosity is an invitation to experience more of God's provision in our lives:

'Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you' (Luke 6:38).

The trouble with referees is that they just don't care which side wins. - T Canterbury

Prayers & Poems

Watch, Wait

(Mk 13:31-37, Rev 21:3,4,22:20)

Help us to watch, Lord,
While we wait.
To watch as we serve You,
On the margins,
In the mainstream,
In the mix-up of this world.
Yet always preparing,
Building for Your kingdom
Ready for Your return.

Help us to respond, Lord,
To the signs,
While we wait.
Not demanding details,
But trusting Your word,
Holding Your promise
To wipe away tears and suffering
When You make all things new
On that day.

Help us Lord, oh help us
While we watch
In the darkness,
While we wait
Through the between times
For You
To come,
To be our God,
Our glorious, victorious King.

Come Lord Jesus.

By Daphne Kitching

Making melody unto the Lord

Miriam plays her tambourine
In tribute to her Lord,
The harpists play their melodies
Their sound is heard abroad.

The trumpets and the cymbals too
Ring out throughout the earth,
Extolling God our Saviour
And telling of His worth.

So let there be a paeon of praise
To Him who set us free,
Forgiveness and His gift of life
He gives to you and me.

This gift was bought by Christ's own
blood,
A cost none could afford,
So let us join with heaven and earth
To praise our Risen Lord.

By Megan Carter

Places of Welcome

Place of Welcome is an open invitation to come and join us for a cup of tea or coffee and a friendly chat every Tuesday morning. You are equally welcome if you just want to spend a few moments of quiet in church alone.

We also have our Knit & Natter group at the same time – 10-12 noon every Tuesday.

Life Groups

There are now five Life Groups which are meeting on a regular basis. It would be good to think we could increase the number meeting, so if you would like to be involved, please speak to Revd Gayle in the first instance.

Telephone Prayer

If you would like any prayer ministry via the telephone, please contact Gayle on 07545 657 636, or Liz Corbett on 01543 370162.

Magazine Articles

If, in your reading, you find an article that you think bears repeating in the parish magazine, please let us know and we will try our best to include it in a future issue.

Do more, learn more and be more.

Girls & boys aged 6 to 18.

Based at Group HQ, Barnetts Lane, WS8 6HZ

For info: www.brownhills-scouts.org.uk

Call: Sue 01543 276953 or Mary 01543 453293



John Short & Son

The Independent, Family-Owned
Firm of Funeral Directors

*Amid the confusion of bereavement we
provide calmness, order and a sense of
dignity – so that life, as it must, can go on
with hope for the future as well as
respect for the past.*

At times of bereavement we have served the local communities in and around this area since 1866. We personally know many of the families we have assisted. Whatever the time of day or night, we have given them the sympathy, advice and help they have needed.

Only an independent family firm, we believe, with its roots in the community, can offer this service with understanding and commitment.

4x Award Winning Agents for

Golden Charter

Funeral Plans

3 High Street
Chasetown

Burntwood WS7 3XE

Tel: 01543 686204

Email:

johnshortandson@outlook.com



THE PARISH OF BROWNHILLS WITH OGLE HAY

Called by name & empowered by the Holy Spirit to share
God's love with words and actions

Vicar:

Revd Gayle Greenway 07545 657636

Lay Ministers:

Pete Biggs 01922 692163

Liz Corbett 01543 370162

Graham Sutherland (Reader with Permission to Officiate) 01543 671020

Community & Children's Worker:

Mel Pearce 07794 753210

OFFICERS

Wardens:

Margaret Powell 01543 371396

Roger Corbett 01543 370162

Lay Chair:

Dennis Powell 01543 820513

Secretary:

Brenda Stanford 01543 373063

Treasurer:

Joy Powell 01543 820513

Deanery Synod Representative:

Roger Corbett 01543 370162

Organist and Worship Leader:

Pete Biggs, BEd(Hons), AMusCAM 01922 692163

Memorials Application Administrator:

Roger Corbett 01543 370162

Church Hall Bookings Co-ordinator:

Margaret Powell 01543 371396

Safeguarding Co-ordinator:

Roger Corbett 01543 370162