

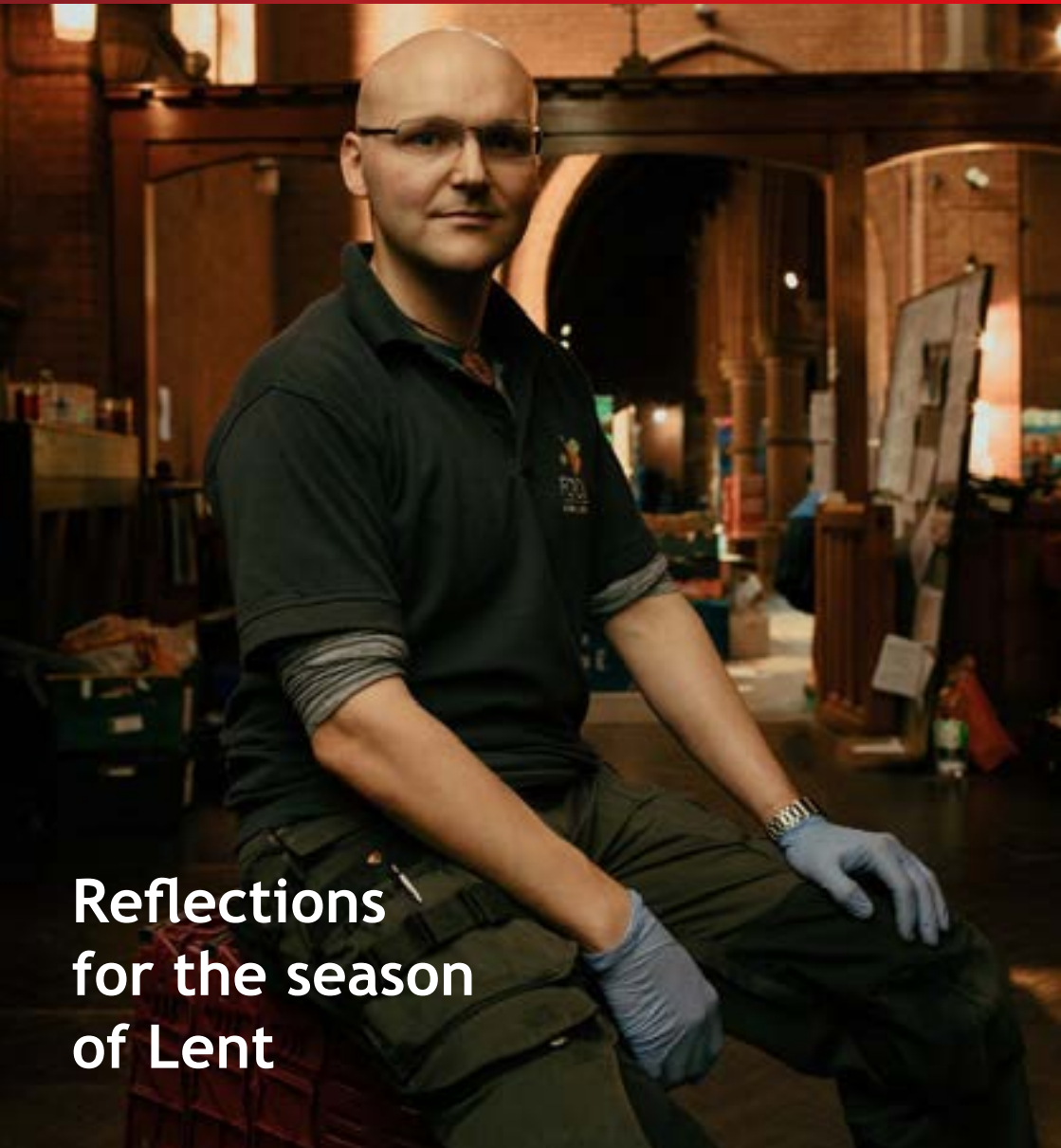


The Bishop of Southwark's

LENT CALL 2021

"... have compassion..."

Mark 8.2



Reflections for the season of Lent



Lent Call 2021
The Bishop of Southwark's Lent Fund Registered Charity No 1075122
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*Walking
Welcoming
Growing*

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Introduction

As part of our Lenten discipline, it is good to make time to study the Scriptures, to think and to pray, and possibly to follow a Lent Course.

If you find the material about Jerusalem interesting, you might like to consider using the Lent course which has been put together by the Revd Canon Richard Sewell, Dean of St George's College in Jerusalem (see details below). There are also many other helpful books and courses that you can use to make your Lent a purposeful and holy one.

Whether or not you follow a Lent course, you might find it helpful to reflect on the material contained in this Lent Call pack. Each week we are looking at food insecurity. The projects that we are considering are from this Diocese, where we are looking at food banks in each Episcopal Area, and in Zimbabwe and in Jerusalem.

"A Lenten Pilgrimage: Reflections for Lent from St George's College, Jerusalem" consists of six sessions for groups and individuals exploring the geography of the Holy Land, following Jesus from Galilee to Golgotha. Each session will reflect on the theme with questions for exploration and comes with links to short films from the Holy Land. Register to receive weekly sessions and for queries: resources@sgcjerusalem.org

Mark's Gospel

The Bible passage for this year's Lent Call is taken from Mark's Gospel:

"In those days when there was again a great crowd without anything to eat, he called his disciples and said to them, ²'I have compassion for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat.³If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way – and some of them have come from a great distance.'⁴His disciples replied, 'How can one feed these people with bread here in the desert?' ⁵He asked them, 'How many loaves do you have?' They said, 'Seven.'⁶Then he ordered the crowd to sit down on the ground; and he took the seven loaves, and after giving thanks he broke them and gave them to his disciples to distribute; and they distributed them to the crowd. ⁷They had also a few small fish; and after blessing them, he ordered that these too should be distributed. ⁸They ate and were filled; and they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full."

Mark 8. 1-8

We have chosen to use Mark's version of this story as the lectionary uses the Gospel of Mark at the Sunday Eucharist each week this year. The Gospels of Matthew and Mark both have the story of Jesus' feeding of the four thousand.

This story parallels the story of the feeding of the five thousand which is the only event to be recorded in all four Gospels. Many have asked why both Matthew and Mark record two versions of the story of the feeding of the multitude and whether these are the same story told twice in different ways.

Biblical scholars have written about this and it is likely that the same story is told in two different ways in the Gospels for a specific purpose. This is so that those who heard or read the stories would be helped to further understand that Jesus came to bring salvation to all: both Jew and Gentile. As we reflect on this passage, it is good to consider what this might mean for us today.

Just at the moment, it is hard to imagine being in a crowd. Sometimes we are faced with more people than we are expecting and, frankly, that can be a little scary right now. Generally, however, most of us are living in situations where we are rarely surrounded by groups of people.

For many, worship is online and feels less of a collective event than it usually is. This can be very hard, especially for those who live alone and those who are fearful of contracting the virus. There are those in our congregations and neighbourhoods who have other worries, too, and for some these concerns will be about whether they have enough to feed themselves and their families.

As we read the Gospels, we know that, when Jesus lived his earthly life, the crowds followed him, often and in great numbers. But even when Jesus was alone, just with his closest disciples or followed only by a few people, he was always concerned for their welfare. He healed those who had diseases and disabilities and, as we see in this passage, he cared for his followers' day-to-day needs as well.

You might want to think about what each of the weekly Project Sheets says to you in your context.

Weeks 1-3

Weeks 1-3 of the Lent Call cover some of the food banks in the Diocese of Southwark, and especially how they have responded to the effects of COVID-19. They make it clear that food poverty is very real for many here in Southwark, no matter where in the Diocese they live. Events, especially as a consequence of the pandemic, can all too easily leave people without work, money to live on, or a home.

The featured food banks are St Matthew, Redhill; the Norwood & Brixton Food Bank; the Wandsworth Food Bank; the Lunchbox Library run by Together Southwark; and LewCAS.

Each week, read the appropriate Project Sheet and then re-read the passage from Mark. Take a few moments to consider:

- whether anyone in your congregation or parish is suffering because of the pandemic or for other reasons
- what your parish is doing to help those in need
- what you can do to help
- praying for those in need in our Diocese (you could use the prayer on page 8 of this booklet)
- what God might be encouraging you and your parish to do to show compassion to those who need help.

Then consider:

- how do the stories that you have read in each project make you feel?
- how do you think Jesus would react to those who find themselves without food in the various situations about which you have read?
- what does the passage say to you about how you can show compassion to those in need here and in Zimbabwe and Jerusalem?
- what can you learn about helping to meet the needs of others?

Weeks 4-5

Week 4 of the Lent Call is all about food insecurity in our Link Dioceses in Zimbabwe. **Week 5** gives us information about a food security project in our Link Diocese of Jerusalem.

It is perhaps harder to think about what we can each do to affect the situation in places so far away from us. Yet, we are all part of one world, held together by bonds of friendship and shared faith.

Each week, read the appropriate Project Sheet and then re-read the passage from Mark. Take a few moments to consider:

- what can we each do, here in the Diocese, to help to affect the situation of our friends in the Holy Land and in Zimbabwe?
- is there anything that you and your church can do to help to slow the effects of climate change?
- what might you be able to do to help those who are affected by the situation of the Christians in the Holy Land and Zimbabwe? Might you be able to find a way of working to change the situation there? Is there someone you could write a letter to or might you be able to find out more about a project or charity that you could support?

Then consider:

- how do the stories that you have read in each project make you feel?
- how do you think Jesus would react to those who find themselves without food in the various situations about which you have read?
- what does the passage say to you about how you can show compassion to those in need here and in Zimbabwe and Jerusalem?
- what can you learn about helping to meet the needs of others?

A prayer for Lent



A maize field in Central Zimbabwe

A prayer for use with the Lent Call material:

Creator God,
we give thanks for all that you have given to us.
We pray for those who are experiencing food insecurity
in the places featured in the Lent Call and elsewhere.
Help us to show compassion for them.
Give us the will to work with others to help to bring about change.
Help us to show our care and concern for those around us who are
in need.
Bring justice and fullness of life to all your people.
We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord.
Amen.