



I grew up attending non-conformist churches that didn't engage much with the Christian calendar and thus remained largely unaware of seasons such as Advent, Epiphany and Lent. This has meant that the last few years have been a wonderful learning experience providing a reflective and spiritual structure – giving a rhythm of life in my role as vicar of Widcombe.

This year, the first day of March marks the start of the Lenten Season (a forty-day period before Easter, mirroring the 40 days that Jesus spent in the desert being tempted.) It begins with Ash Wednesday, which derives its name from the practice of blessing ashes made from palm branches blessed on the previous year's Palm Sunday and placing them on the heads of participants.

So what is Lent, and particularly Ash Wednesday, all about?

When I was at 'vicar school' some years back, I attended my first Ash Wednesday service, where I was marked with ash, while hearing the words, "From dust you came, and to dust you will return." It really felt like someone had knocked the wind out of me; it was a reminder of the reality of death and therefore really discomfoting. The truth is, I rarely ever think about my own finiteness or the fragility and wonder of life, yet as that declaration was spoken over me, I felt humbled – but in the best of ways.

"We are stardust," Joni Mitchell famously sang back in the 70's – which sounds like simply a great lyric – but, funnily enough, it turns out that there's some solid science behind the statement, as almost every element on Earth was formed at the heart of a star. Actually, we shouldn't be surprised, God told us several thousands of years ago! Psalm 103 says: *"As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust."*

I love life, love my job, love my family and live life to the full. But there are times for all of us when life can be tough, painful or simply exhausting and I know that apart from God, I'm just dust. I am nothing and intrinsically have nothing. But because of His great love, my life is worth much more than just dust. Psalm 103 goes on to say: *"...from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him..."*

Lent, then, is a season of reflection – even of mourning, honestly reflecting on our lives, admitting and confronting our own brokenness, sin, dustiness and need of transformation. It's necessary, in order that we can fully embrace the staggering hope and power offered through the death and resurrection of God's Son. Necessary, if we want to celebrate the miraculous and life-altering message of Easter.

If we aren't aware of our own brokenness and need, we won't be able to comprehend the desolation of Good Friday or the world-changing truth of the Easter Sunday Resurrection.

Put simply, knowing our true nature, knowing our real need for Jesus – makes Easter the best and most necessary Good News we and this world could ever hear.



Widcombe

ST THOMAS & ST MATT'S

www.widcombe.church

APCM

This year's **Annual Parochial Church Meeting** is on Tuesday, 25th April, 7.30pm at St Thomas. We need volunteers to replace those whose term of office on the PCC is coming to an end, so if you would like to help shape the life of our churches and are prepared to stand as a **PCC member** or **Churchwarden**, please contact Angie Frith (447005).

We are also looking for **assistant churchwardens** and **sidespeople** for St Thomas. The responsibility of running our churches is lessened when it is shared so please do give thought to whether you could volunteer this year.

Finally, we also need two **Deanery Synod reps**. They attend four local meetings a year and are also ex officio members of the PCC. Deanery Synod is a forum for parish reps to exchange views on issues affecting the deanery, the diocese and the wider Church and to feed back to Diocesan Synod.



St. Matt's

**Pastorate
&
Life Hubs**

No Pastorates in March. Life Hubs will be meeting in homes around the parish on Wednesdays, 15th, 22nd, 29th March.

For more information about joining a Life Hub, please contact the office.

NOTICES

Coffee Morning Wednesday 10am-noon
Parish Hall, St Matthew's. Drop in for tea, coffee, biscuits and a chat. All welcome!

Lunch & Natter from 12noon, Parish Hall, St Matthew's, Wednesday 8th March

An informal and friendly lunch. A £5 contribution is invited but you can bring a friend for free! To secure your place, arrange transport or more information, call Trudy on 07732 626986.

An amended plan to add more parking spaces to Church St has been drawn up with the fire service and local councillors and submitted to BANES in hope of a resolution to our parking issues. In the meantime, remember anyone can park in 'Resident Permit Only' bays on a Sunday and after 6pm on weekdays.

Community outreach facilitator and administrator required. 10 hours a week based in the St Matt's office. Must be computer/web literate and keen to engage with our hirers, the local community and businesses. Please talk to Tim if interested.



St Thomas
à Becket

**Lent Course
&**

Parish Communion

Starting Ash Wednesday 1st March and continuing on Thursdays, 9th, 16th, 23rd and 30th March.

12noon, all welcome!



Got questions about life?

Alpha @ St Matt's

Final session
7.30pm Wednesday
1st March

**Widcombe Baptist
Church**

Sunday Services March 2017

Date	Time	Service		Venue
5th March 1st of Lent	10.30am	Sung Eucharist (CW)	Rev'd Tim Buckley	 St Thomas à Becket
	5-7pm	Contemporary service (Toast café from 4.30pm)		 St. Matt's
12th March 2nd of Lent	8am	Holy Communion (BCP)	Rev'd Caroline O'Neill	 St Thomas à Becket
	10.30am	Morning Prayer (CW)	Team Service	
	5-7pm	Contemporary service (Toast café from 4.30pm)		 St. Matt's
19th March 3rd of Lent	10.30am	Holy Communion (CW)	Rev'd Tim Buckley	 St Thomas à Becket
	5-7pm	Contemporary service (Toast café from 4.30pm)		 St. Matt's
26th March 4th of Lent Mothering Sunday	8am	Holy Communion (BCP)	Rev'd Tim Buckley	 St Thomas à Becket
	10.30am	Family Worship		
	5-7pm	Contemporary service (Toast café from 4.30pm)		 St. Matt's

Join us for tea and coffee after the 10.30am service every Sunday

OUR CHURCHES



St Thomas à Becket
Church Street
Bath
BA2 6AZ



St Matthew's
Widcombe Hill
Bath
BA2 6AA

Contact us

If you have any general queries about services, opening times, or any other matters, please see our website www.widcombe.church

Vicar: Revd Tim Buckley 07810 543209 (vicar@widcombe.church)

Churchwardens St Thomas à Becket: Angela Frith & Sian Lewis
Chapelwardens St Matthew's: Andrew Udale-Smith & Bill James

To book our buildings or for information about getting married, baptisms or to make donations, please contact the office:

Parish Administrator: Mary Udale-Smith

Church Office, St Matthew's Church, Widcombe Hill, Bath, BA2 6AA

Email: admin@widcombe.church

Phone: 01225 465065 (answer service out of hours)



We extend a warm welcome to the Orthodox and Lutheran congregations who also meet in our Widcombe churches

The Orthodox Parish of Saint John of Kronstadt

Services at St Matthew's:

Saturday Vigil 5pm

Sunday Divine Liturgy 10.30am.

www.bath-orthodox.org.uk

The German Lutheran Church

Occasional services at St Thomas à Becket
The next services will be on 5th March and 16th April.

www.evsynode.org.uk/bristol.html
