

The life of God

CRACKED WIDE OPEN

Diocesan Lent Course 2021

in the paschal mystery

The suffering, death, resurrection
and glorification of Jesus

Diocese of Chichester Lent Course 2021

Introduction

Introduction to the Diocesan Lent course

Lent is the time when many Christians seek to prepare for the annual celebration of Easter by works of fasting, prayer, study and service. For the whole of 2021 the Diocese will take as its theme MORE OPEN: A SIGN OF BEING ONE the first of a four-year programme addressing the implications for our lives and witness of the adjectives used to describe the Church in the Nicæan Creed.



The Course

So the Lent Course, Cracked Wide Open, seeks to help disciples prepare for the coming Paschal Mystery within the wider theme of what it means to describe ourselves as part of the one church. It has been compiled with a view to enabling discussion and reflection concerning how we, as pilgrims within the Diocese of Chichester, might be more open to the demands of the Paschal Mystery and how, being so open, requires careful

attention to the mission of God and to the unity which is critical to that mission and so clearly commanded by Jesus.

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused us to face up to fundamental questions about life, its meaning and purpose. A lot of people have found this to be a time when there has been a real need to return to basics. When we have been locked down, with many of the usual activities and

distractions that occupy our time unavailable, we have had to face questions concerning the very essence of our lives. What are the basics? What is the minimum a person needs in order to live – and not only in monetary terms? How can I sustain myself? What of those who have no one to care for them? For most of us it has been a salutary experience to have to face these and many other questions. We are still living with these questions and will be for the foreseeable future. However, I suspect that most of us have been challenged by some of the possible answers and many of us have found that the questioning process has brought new insights and raised renewed visions concerning how life might be.

During Lent I hope Cracked Wide Open might have a similar effect on how we view our pilgrimage of faith in union with our sisters and brothers across the Diocese. The life of God broken open in the events of that first Easter is something that we can only just about begin to understand – hence the use of the term ‘cracked’. We can only hope to see, “through a glass darkly” (1 Cor 13:12). Although God, in Christ, has acted definitively, uniquely and sufficiently that we might be brought into communion and fellowship with him, eternally; although the fullness of eternal life is offered by him in every moment of our lives; we are blinded by that beauty and dazzled by the vision of his glory.



Therefore, in the further generosity of his love in the power of the Spirit, he enables us to glimpse images and reflections of, and to hear rumours and whispers concerning, this perfect life and thereby adjust ourselves, or be re-tuned by him, in preparation for the fullness of the life he has given us. In many ways it is this adjustment or re-tuning that form the basis of all Lent courses as we seek to approach the annual celebration of Easter with hearts, minds and wills turned towards Christ in his risen life and ready to continue our journey as his disciples.

The renewed life of God’s holy people flows from Calvary, through the Ascension and Pentecost (the end of our annual Paschal celebration) to the work and witness of the Body of Christ throughout the world and across time. The Church receives from Christ the gift of his Spirit and the commission in his name to continue his mission and ministry. We inherit our share in this life of worship and witness as disciples in the part of the Body called the Diocese of Chichester.



Although it might be said by some to be an over-simplification, a diocese is basically relational before it takes on any further characteristics related to formal structure or geography. At root, a diocese comprises those disciples of Christ who are formed and shaped, led and taught, fed and nurtured and, above all journey in expectation, by and with a bishop.

As Covid-19 has required many of us to return to basics in terms of what is essential for human life and flourishing, Cracked Wide Open asks us to do the same in relation to our understanding of what it means to be a diocese and how that brings us into further relationships raised by the wider diocesan theme for 2021 – more open: a sign of being One.

In addition to a bishop and disciples a diocese also needs the Scriptures,

water bread and wine and (part of) the world in which to witness and serve. Quite obviously there are other ministries, bits of organizational structure and support that are needed in particular places and times but, at the very least there are five vital elements essential to what it is to be a diocese: a bishop, the bible, water/bread/wine, disciples and the world in which to live and witness. In theory, if one was setting up a diocese in a part of the world totally unevangelised, it is hard to see what else would be needed. Of course, needs would grow but, in essence, this would be sufficient.

For a number of years now there has been a growing ecumenical consensus that the life and witness of the Church is to be – a sign, an instrument and a foretaste of the Kingdom, for the world. So it is vital for we , as disciples to know about these five essentials to be an effective witness to the world.

Study

For the study part of Cracked Wide Open each week takes one of these elements from what is essential for a diocese and the description of what the Church is called to be and asks for reflection on them, consideration of how we should view our unity and mission as a result of this reflection and discussion with prayer about opportunities that may arise if we were to do things differently in the future.

The vital elements of being a diocese

All of the elements of Cracked Wide Open are offered as ways in which we as the local Church in Chichester Diocese can develop and grow in our relationship with God the Holy Trinity, who invites every human being to join this perfect community of love. The internal relationships of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit have sometimes been described as a dance. The 'partners' in this dance are open in such a way that everyone is able to join. The revelation unfolded by Christ and his mission is a specific invitation to every person to join in the dance. It is by discovering the steps of this dance that we experience more clearly our unity with him and, in being so formed and shaped, we are invited to dance with others as we



I hope this explanation of what Cracked Wide Open is trying to achieve has been helpful.

I pray that all who use this course may grow closer to the Father's love in this Lenten season and, by being more one with him, be responsive to the call of Jesus that we all might be one by the power of the Spirit, that the world may believe.

As it is the time of preparation for the Easter celebrations, the disciplines and opportunities of Lent ought to engage every disciple in as many ways as possible.

To supplement whatever prayer disciplines people might adopt and to stand alongside personal decisions about fasting, almsgiving and the service of others,

Cracked Wide Open offers

the following:

For you to select from:

- This introductory leaflet.
- Bible study notes for the gospel readings set for the Sundays Lent 1 to Lent 5. These can be used alone or as part of any group that might be able to assemble whether physically or virtually gathered.
- A filmed reflection by Bishop Martin for use in liturgical worship on each of the Sundays from Lent 1 to Lent 5. These are short (about 5 minutes) and intended to be used as post-communion reflections. In non-eucharistic liturgies, they should be included at an appropriate time of quiet contemplation. A sound recording will also be available as will the text of the reflection so that the material can be applied everywhere.

- Guidance notes with background reading for the following conversion with the Bishop Ruth and Bishop Will
- A filmed conversation between Bishop Ruth and Bishop Will as discussion starters for each week. These are intended to provide input into study groups be they physical or virtual. If groups are meeting virtually you might like to consider issuing invitations to the bishops so that they can join in. Obviously, they won't be able to join every group but they have indicated that they would welcome the chance to drop in on some! You should make these arrangements through their respective offices: for Bishop Ruth, [Amanda Belcher, PA](#) and/ or for Bishop Will, [Sophie Perring, PA](#).

A sound only version of these conversations will also be available. If you would like this, please [contact Amber Jackson, Communications Assistant](#).

- A prayer diary for the weeks Lent 1 to Lent 5. This diary can be used by people in their homes as well as at prayer groups and within public liturgy. The diary will include requests for prayer for specific things and/or situations from the diaries of each of the three bishops.



- Outline liturgies – one for each week that provide a way of using the filmed conversations between the two bishops for a larger group within a worshipping context. Can be easily led by a lay person.
- Each of the above elements will be posted on the Diocesan website in ways that are easily downloaded. Parishes should feel free to reproduce the material as best suits the local need and opportunity.



Bishop John Ford

Should you need help with downloading any of the session materials please contact: Amber Jackson, Communications Assistant on amber.jackson@chichester.anglican.org

If you do not have access to online facilities, please contact neighbouring parishes and help ought to be forthcoming!

