

# Discovering God Through transformed people

During the month of April Sanctuary First will concentrate on telling stories of hope renewal and forgiveness. All very appropriate as we prepare for Easter. The power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is that it is transformational. Today politicians and philosophers and the so called opinion formers often ask how we can become transformational communities?

It seems to us that the answer to this key idea is found within the gospels. These stories may help us as Christians begin to make authentic connections with a society that is in search of meaning and purpose. It is as individuals are transformed that we find communities eventually transformed. This is the work of the church today in parishes up and down the land.

Within the theme we will often emphasize the role of woman in sustaining the ministry of Jesus. We will also use this connection to help us understand the significance that woman often play in transforming our present communities. This idea will be developed more in the month of May when we consider the theme "Discovering God Through Transformational Communities". The Gospel stories themselves tell of people who were transformed by encountering Jesus Christ. Women like Mary Magdalene, Martha and Mary all add to the rich texture of the gospel's transforming power.

The story of the empty tomb and the resurrection of Jesus still causes people to ask questions. As well as looking at biblical characters whose lives were changed by Jesus there are people all over the world today who have similar stories to tell. Meeting Jesus turned their lives around. During this month we hope to meet some of these people and explore what it is that has brought about transformation.

Easter allows Christians to explain why belief in the resurrection of Jesus can have significance for 21st century people we hope you will engage with us this month and discover for yourself the transforming power and presence of God in the world today.

## Themes for April

- wk1 An Extra ordinary woman - Forgiven and full of faith - John 8. 1-11  
Meet Zacchaeus despised and rejected - Rehabilitated and Generous - Luke 19. 1-10
- wk2 Meet Judas as Jesus weeps over Jerusalem - A lost opportunity - Luke 19. 41-44  
Meet Simon of Cyrene compelled to carry the cross - Luke 23. 26-56
- wk3 Meet Mary Magdalene the first evangelist - John 20 . 1-20
- wk4 Meet Peter forgiven and faithful - Commissioned to serve - John 21. 1-22  
Meet Cleopas doubting and disappointed - returning on fire - Luke 24. 13-27

## Week 1

Themes - Forgiven, Rehabilitated, despised, rejected, Accepted Transformation

Prayers exploring the feelings, thoughts and reflections of people who met Jesus in their darkest moments and found forgiveness and hope and were transformed. The prayers should reflect the joy of forgiveness and how it feels to have a heart filled with gratitude. Could you think yourself into the mind of the woman brought to be stoned because of her adultery. Could you reflect the mind of a Zaccheaus and how he was feeling about being rehabilitated. The theme for the seven prayers centres around forgiveness, rehabilitation, feelings of rejection.

## Week 2

Themes - Feelings of being misunderstood, frustrations that others can't see what you see. The times we're forced to carry a cross.

From the perspective of Judas how might he pray and feel as Jesus approaches Jerusalem riding a donkey, did he want a war horse for Jesus? Prayers reflect the way we want to see Jesus and on the way Jesus sees us. Can you think of the lost opportunities? Judas got it wrong. How did Simon the Cyrenian feel when he was forced to carry the cross? He never expected it to happen, yet it changed his life.

## Week 3

The prayers reflect the complete and utter surprise of Easter Sunday morning. The prayers reflect the idea of transformation. The story of resurrection came from the mouth of a woman. Resurrection changes the whole of history. Prayers focused around the emotions and the meaning of resurrection, the perspective of Mary, Peter, John and being on the Emmaus Road. Facing your doubts and asking what does all this mean for us today.

## Week 4

Prayers based around the readings in Romans 8. 31-39. The prayers this week reflect the need for us to believe we are loved by Christ. The past the present and the future have been transformed for us by the power of the resurrection.