

**Fourth Sunday Before Lent
Sunday, 6th January 2022**



Dear Friends,

‘Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.’ (Luke 5: 5)

I wonder how often you have worked hard for something which, despite your best intentions and determined effort, falters or fails? This thought will likely resonate with many of us as we reflect on periods of our lives which have not gone the way we might have hoped; times when our vision for a project or a relationship have been shattered.

Last Saturday, a service of Choral Evensong was held in Winchester Cathedral, during which Bishop Tim Dakin said his final goodbyes to the Diocese of Winchester, laying down his Mitre and Staff on the Cathedral altar. It was a deeply moving service, managed empathically by Dean Catherine and her team, with superb music echoing eternal tones. Revd Professor Elizabeth Stuart gave a thoughtful sermon using Candlemas themes to remind us of the good times we have shared together and reassure us how the light of Christ burns brightly, even when situations overwhelm us. By spiritual coincidence, I took a gift of a large church candle for the Dakin family on behalf of our Benefice, with the message: *‘May the light of Christ be with you always.’*



‘The Calling of the Apostles’ from the Maestà by Duccio di Buoninsegna

In our Gospel reading this week, we are given a glimpse of the powerful first encounter Simon Peter had with Jesus, as he and many others fished on the lake at Gennesaret. Sounding world weary after a gruelling physical night of trying to catch fish with little success, Simon finds the strength to respond to Jesus by trying one more time. The outcome is a spectacular catch, and gives us each hope that, even when we find ourselves beset by trials Jesus is alongside us, showing us a better way forward in His love.

This encounter reveals another important message to enlighten our lives. Simon, even in the depths of despair and exhaustion is capable of understanding his own human frailties and shortcomings. He has possibly reached a point of desperation as he searches for fish – his only means of sustenance for his family who will know the harsh realities of poverty and hunger. He falls before Jesus and praises Him for the miracle which has blessed his faithful trust in the One who has come to feed us, guide us and bring us peace.



'Healing' by Mike Moyers

As he knelt at the Cathedral altar on Saturday, Bishop Tim struggled with the deep emotion of all that had passed; yet was filled with faith enough to dwell in the present as Simon Peter had done before him. Being witnesses in the moment to Tim's evident sense of grief and bewilderment, we were, in turn, blessed by Tim's personal witness to Christ: understanding his own frailty, yet giving himself entirely into the Lord's care. Although it felt unbearable to experience Bishop Tim's deep agony, it was a moment of spiritual humility and truth which I hope I never forget. Tim showed us, in his final act as our diocesan bishop, how we cannot save ourselves. We must trust our lives to Jesus who is our help, our defence and our salvation.

Our prayers now are with Tim, Sally and their family as they move forward with their lives, and with our diocese and all those poised to lead us forward, as we let down spiritual nets and allow Jesus to fill us with the riches of His grace.

Jax

Rector, The Downs Benefice

Future of the Parish Magazine



'Psalm 23' by Mike Moyers

The Chair and Committee of the Parish Magazine which covers the parishes of Crawley, Littleton and Sparsholt are struggling and need more help if it is to continue. They too are laying down their nets and entrusting themselves into Jesus' care.

At their recent Committee meeting, the team came to the reluctant conclusion that they can no longer 'keep on keeping on' as they are. In order to help discern a future for the magazine, they have some important questions which we all felt would be best directed to those of you who read the magazine:

- Do you value the Parish Magazine?
- Would you miss it if it ceased to be printed?
- Would you be happy for it to be circulated mainly or exclusively on-line?
- Should it be more broadly community-based?
- Could you contribute by becoming one of the team of compilers, or the advertising manager, or by providing copy on local life and events, or photographs for a front cover, or by helping with distribution?

The Team very much look forward to hearing your thoughts. Please email your responses to Barbara Kingston by email at barbarakingston1@gmail.com or by telephone (01962 880903). Thank you.



Collect Prayer for the Fourth Sunday before Lent

O God, you know us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright: grant to us such strength and protection as may support us in all dangers, and carry us through all temptations; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Luke 5: 1-11 - Jesus Calls His First Disciples

One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.' Simon answered, 'Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.'

When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signalled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, 'Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!' For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.

Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.' So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

Schedule of Services

This schedule is correct at this time but may be subject to future alterations – please check on our website for the most up-to-date information.

All services start at 10am, unless marked differently on the table below.

We ask that you continue to wear masks and book services by contacting the Benefice Office on 01962 880 845 or office@downsbenefice.org.uk

<i>Date</i>	<i>Ch</i>	<i>Cr</i>	<i>Li</i>	<i>Sp</i>	<i>Wh</i>
<i>30th Jan</i>		Benefice Holy Communion			
<i>6th Feb</i>	Morning Prayer to mark 70 th Anniversary of HM The Queen’s accession to the throne	Holy Communion	4pm - Café Church – “Called to Serve”		
<i>13th Feb</i>			Holy Communion		Morning Prayer
<i>20th Feb</i>	Holy Communion	Morning Worship		8am – BCP Holy Communion	
<i>27th Feb</i>			Morning Prayer	Morning Worship	8am – BCP Holy Communion
<i>2nd March ASH WEDNESDAY</i>	12 noon - Holy Communion with Ashes		Holy Communion with Ashes		<i>With Chilbolton</i>
<i>4th March FRIDAY</i>	2pm – Women’s World Day of Prayer Service				
<i>6th March</i>	Morning Prayer	Holy Communion	4pm – Café Church		
<i>13th March</i>	4pm – Evening Prayer for Lent		Holy Communion		Morning Prayer
<i>20th March</i>	Holy Communion	Morning Worship		8am – BCP Holy Communion	

<i>23rd March</i> WEDNESDAY			Holy Communion		
<i>27th March</i>	Mothering Sunday Family Service	Mothering Sunday Family Service	Mothering Sunday Family Service	Mothering Sunday Family Service	Mothering Sunday Family Service