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### **Weekly Letter - 5 February 2023**

From early January right through to Advent Sunday the gospel readings will be from Matthew's gospel.

As with the other three gospels Matthew's gospel is a story of Jesus, which can only be understood within the context of its original readers, i.e. their cultural context plus their everyday concerns. So I would encourage you to read this gospel - not all in one sitting, but yes, from beginning to the end, because then you will get a 'feel' for this gospel. Just two small observations. Firstly, it was written for a group of Jews who did not see Christianity as a new religion, but the fulfilment of their Jewish faith. Secondly, Matthew's gospel is full of devotional passages, which were there to enrich the lives of this small community. So, like all the other gospels, it has its distinctive style, key words and richness. I hope this gospel helps you continue to get to know Jesus Christ, and assist you in your devotional life.

Matthew 5.13-20

I'm sure you can see how 'Jewish' the first audience was, for they would have had to know about the Law of Moses, and understand how Christ expected them to improve on the moral standards set down by the Pharisees and teachers of the Law, A big ask!

#### You are called to give flavour to those you meet in your daily life

You chefs will know how much salt adds flavour to your very tasty dishes. Christ uses this image of salt to say how vital it is that you add something positive to the lives of people you meet. You will be aware how much the world needs the truth of Christ. For the 'Good News' has the potential to draw the best out of people, and to bring back order into people's lives. Christ is therefore asking you to add flavour to people's lives by sharing the spirit and the heavenly wisdom you have been given.

God in his mysterious wisdom has placed you where you are, with your skills and talents, as well as your limitations. If you know you are 'the salt of the earth', and 'a light in the world', the best question you can ask of yourself in 2023, is "What should I do?"

For Christ plays in ten thousand places,  
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his.

Gerard Manley Hopkins

### **Stephen**

Sunday Morning Worship in Christ Well, and on Zoom, will be led by Rev Dr Noel Davies when the Induction of Elders will take place, and we will celebrate Communion.

Bible Readings: Isaiah 58.5-12: Matthew 5.13-16

Cycle of Prayer in the Swansea Region – we will pray for

Tea/Coffee Rota – Elaine and Moira

Tea and Chat/Warm Hub – Tuesday, 7<sup>th</sup> - 2 pm

SAVE THE DATE

Saturday, 25<sup>th</sup> February - Quiet Day 10.00 am-2 pm

Call in to the Church for a time of personal reflection. Prayer Stations available to help your prayer time, plus opportunity to sign up to prayers for the Church

**Being true to our calling** (Isaiah 58.1-9a (9b-12): Psalm 112.1-9 (10): 1 Corinthians 2.1-12 (13-16): Matthew 5.13-20) Sometimes we find ourselves compromising in order to fit in with society, to somehow become more acceptable to the world we live in. But this is not how you call us to live Lord. You call us to be bold and unshakeable in our faith and in the message, we proclaim, to act as salt and light in a world that sometimes needs the status quo challenging.

You teach us to look out for our neighbour and this is not always easy, sometimes we simply struggle with those whom you draw alongside us, and we find ourselves deviating from that commandment by saying horrible things or wishing something unpleasant might happen to them. Help us Lord to honour those brothers and sisters who are also made in your image.

When we say we will help those within our communities, guide us to avoid the desire to pick and choose who, how and why we might offer support. As followers of Christ we are meant to model our lives on the one whom we profess to follow and that is a radical thing to sign up to. It means stepping outside of our comfort zone and trusting in the empowering nature of The Spirit to guide us to the places, people, and situations you desire us to work alongside. We are grateful for the wisdom endowed to us through the Holy Spirit and we know that this wisdom is granted to those who dare to ask for it.

Let us not lose sight of our mission as your people Lord, grant us wisdom to stand up and be counted when that is what is needed in our world. Give us courage, to step out in faith in order to serve those whom you call us to serve, and give us strength to follow your commandments and to love neighbour as ourselves. Amen.

**Josh Thomas** (URC Prayer Handbook 2023)



## Winter Warmer Afternoons at Christ Well URC

A Winter Warmer afternoon began at Christ Well URC, Swansea, in November 2022. At the time the church ran a Tea & Chat once a month for a couple of hours, for members of the church and the community.

The Elders and CRCW Adella Pritchard decided to increase the Tea & Chat sessions to every week and to open the church for a further two hours to support the Winter Warmers initiative that was being coordinated in the area by local community activist David Jones.

Christ Well is one of several locations in the area of Manselton and Brynhyfyd in East Swansea supporting the community with the Winter Warmer initiative. After Tea & Chat David Jones and another community volunteer host various other community activities as required.

Christ Well was successful in gaining funding from the Synod to be able to buy refreshments and resources for the Tea & Chat sessions at Winter Warmers which has allowed for a varied programme of activities to be provided, for church and community members every Tuesday afternoon.

In the pictures below you can see a community volunteer about to have a hand massage by a local holistic therapist and in the other picture one of the attendees at the Tea & Chat sessions is overseeing the melting of wax ready for a candle making activity; two different activities that have been available.



*With thanks to Adella Pritchard who provided this article for the URC Wales Synod website.*