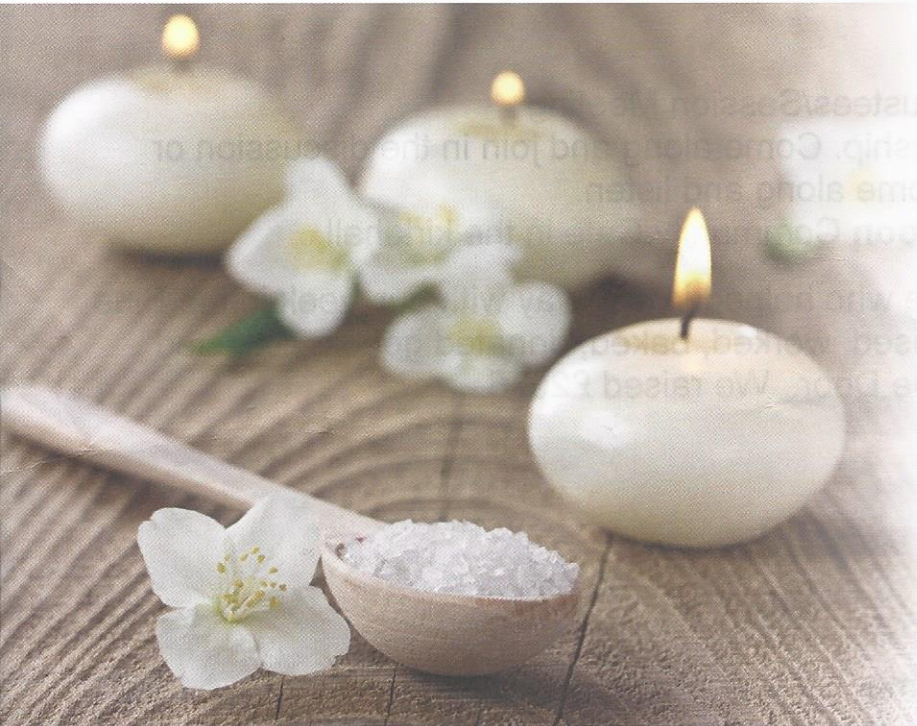


Salt and light



Janice Scott *reflects on* Matthew 5:13-20

In the first century both light and salt were precious commodities. Light came from the sun, with just a little being produced by fairly primitive oil lamps during the hours of darkness. Salt was reclaimed from the sea in salt pans, in which seawater was evaporated by the sun. Salt had many uses, including healing, flavouring, preserving and cleaning. Roman troops were often paid in salt, hence the word "salary", and the earliest of the great Roman roads was the "Via Salaria" – the salt road.

Only a little salt is necessary for life, but without salt the human body becomes chemically unbalanced, causing muscles and the nervous system to cease to function and eventually leading to death. When Jesus says that if salt loses its saltiness it is only fit to be thrown out and trampled underfoot, perhaps he is referring to the spiritual imbalance that occurs if we refuse to accept God. This would be like putting a bucket on top of a lamp so that the light is extinguished, leaving total darkness.

Nobody has to produce salt or light – that is provided for them by God. All they are required to do is allow the light to shine through them and to become salty for God. We too are light and salt for the world, right now, exactly as we are. We just have to be open to transmit God's light. As that happens, our tiny pinch of salt will increase until it begins to flavour life all around us. 🙏

Preparing for Lent at Coventry Cathedral

by John Witcombe

Preparing for Lent? But we've hardly finished celebrating Christmas! Shifting liturgical gears can be really challenging in the cathedral, but we have to be ready for the next great season of the Christian year. A cathedral is a bit like an ocean liner – it takes time to turn! Worship patterns and music need planning far in

advance, especially for big diocesan services. And we have to ready ourselves for an internal move from joyful celebration to penitential preparation. One thing to consider well in advance is the topic for our Lent study course. Last year we explored the TV series *Broken*, with its interweaving plot of human stories around the ministry of a priest, who is wrestling with the meaning of his own life. With our emphasis on reconciliation, we look for material that will challenge and equip us to understand the fractures in our world, and help us pray through and respond to those fractures. What will your focus be this year? 🙏

The Very Revd John Witcombe is Dean of Coventry, responsible for Coventry Cathedral, with its international ministry of reconciliation.

“So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

2 Corinthians 5:17

Lord, let your light shine through us just as though we were plain glass, and help us to live lives that are full of flavour. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Cities of the Bible

Capernaum

by Caroline Fletcher

Capernaum lies on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee and was Jesus' base for much of his ministry. He healed Peter's mother-in-law in Capernaum and the ruins of Peter's home remain visible there today.

It was an important town where the Roman centurion, whose servant Jesus healed,

was stationed. This centurion built the synagogue in which Jesus preached and performed miracles. Capernaum was also vital for collecting taxes, because it was a border town on a major Roman road, and it is where Matthew the tax collector was called to be a disciple.

Capernaum's houses were built of basalt rocks with little, if any, mortar. Roofs were light structures covered in straw, branches and soil for that was all such walls could support. This explains why people could break up a roof to lower a paralysed man down to Jesus for healing (Mark 2:1-12). 🙏

Church of Scotland: Orphir and Stenness Parish

Interim Moderator: Rev June Freeth 721449

Locum Minister Rev Martin Prentice **Session Clerk:** Nicol 811242

There is a loop system. Adjust hearing aids to benefit.

A warm invitation is extended to everyone to meet in the hall at the back of the church, after the service, for a cup of tea.

Intimations

Monday 10th February – 7pm Trustees/Session Meeting

Tuesday 11th Feb – 7pm – Fellowship. Come along and join in the discussion or just come along and listen.

Thursday 13th Feb – 10am – 12noon Community Café in the kirk hall

Blue Door: Thank you to everyone who helped in any way with our week in the Blue Door. Thanks to those who organised, worked, baked, donated goods, collected donations and bought from the Blue Door. We raised £2575.

Readings:

Isaiah 58: 1-9a

Matthew 5: 13-20

Hymns:

457 All hail the power of Jesus' name

252 As a fire is meant for burning

748 As stars adorn the night-veiled sky

JP 258 This little light of mine

396 And can it be that I should gain

Doxology Hymn 786