

February 2021

Dear friend

The 1968 Olympic Games were held in Mexico. The winner of the marathon was Mamo Wolde from Ethiopia, but one other name has become forever associated with that marathon. John Stephen Akhwari, from Tanzania, who fell and injured his leg during the race, finished last.

Many of the spectators had already left the stadium when Akhwari made his way onto the track, his leg was bandaged and bleeding as he completed the last stage of the twenty-six-mile marathon. The people still in the stadium stood and applauded as he approached the finishing line. Later, when he was asked why he had continued running after his fall, he said, 'My country did not send me to start the race, they sent me to finish the race.'



The 1992 Olympic Games were held in Barcelona. The British sprinter, Derek Redmond, qualified, with the fastest time in his heat, for the semifinal of the 400 metres. However, during the semifinal, he tore his hamstring about 250 metres from the finish. He fell to his knees, but wanting to finish the race he struggled to his feet and began to hobble along the track. His father, who was a spectator in the stands, ran to his son and with his help they continued along the track. They were applauded and encouraged by the spectators. When Derek crossed the finishing line 65,000 people rose to give him a standing ovation.

People encouraged and supported John Stephen Akhwari and Derek Redmond as they persevered in their respective races. As we meet our own challenges and grasp opportunities, may we be encouraged by others and know their help and support, and may we be encouraged in knowing that people are praying for us.

As well as being people who receive encouragement, help and support from other people, let's be people, who in appropriate ways, offer help, support and encouragement to our family, friends, neighbours and other people. And of course, be people who pray for them.

John Stephen Akhwari and Derek Redmond were encouraged by the spectators as they completed their races. There are many verses in the Bible which encourage us to put our faith and trust in Christ as our Saviour and to persevere in living for Him and fulfilling His will.

In Hebrews 12:1-2 we read 'Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before Him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.'

The great cloud of witnesses is a reference to the great number of men and women of faith, past and present, who testify to God's absolute faithfulness, even in times of danger, difficulty or disaster.



In the challenges and opportunities of these days, let us throw off, set aside, the things that hold us back from listening to and responding to God, and the sin that so easily entangles us. Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. Fixing our eyes on Jesus includes recognising who He is and what He has made available to us through His crucifixion, death and resurrection. It includes repenting of our sin and trusting in Him as our Saviour, so that we can know a restored relationship with God, and it includes focusing our attention on Him, so that with the help of the Holy Spirit, we grow and mature in our faith and live out our faith.

Life has been challenging and continues to be challenging for us and for others. Although many of us have experienced setbacks and disappointments, heartache and pain, please don't give up and don't lose heart or lose hope. As you fix your eyes on Jesus, remember God's faithfulness, with the help of the Holy Spirit, grow, mature and live out your faith in Christ, pray for and encourage and support one another.

Yours for the sake of Christ

*Roderic*

(Please see overleaf and other leaflets for further information)

## **Church Services**

At the moment our services are online, please see the accompanying leaflet for further information about connecting to our services. Please do help family and friends who have access to the internet, but may be uncertain how to connect to the service, to join with us week by week. Please like and share our pages and encourage others to join us and follow us, as we seek to grow in God's love and share it with others.

Parishioners who are unable to connect to the services online can listen to the service using their telephone. The phone number is 028 4040 0345. Calls are charged at the standard network rate but, for many people, calls to this number may be included in their network package. Each Sunday service will be available until the following Sunday.

In person/'in-church' services will not recommence until the beginning of March, at the earliest. Information about the recommencement of 'in-church' services will be announced in due course, following discussions between the Executive and Church leaders. Our online services will continue to be available.

Joan and I celebrate Holy Communion each Sunday in Church at 9.00am. This service is available to the small number of people who have 'church radio receivers', but others can join with us, in their homes, using the abbreviated Holy Communion service sheet which is available on the parish website. Please contact the Parish Office if you would like to receive a copy of the service by post or email. Although parishioners will not receive bread and wine, they can, by faith, receive the benefits of Holy Communion.

## **Youth and Children's Ministry**

We encourage all our children and their families, to join with Ava and the team, to be part of our online Kid's programme which continues each Sunday at 11.30am. Please do share information about our Kid's programme with other families and invite them to join with us each week.

Inspire (Youth Fellowship) are having a Zoom Quiz Night on 21<sup>st</sup> February. All young people are welcome! Please contact Ava for the Zoom link. ([ava@bchurch.co.uk](mailto:ava@bchurch.co.uk)) In addition to the fun night, all young people are invited to join the weekly Bible study. Please contact Ava for more information about future youth programmes.

Please do help and encourage children and young people to connect with these ministries.

## **Ash Wednesday and Lent**

### **Zoom Ash Wednesday Service on 17<sup>th</sup> February at 7.30pm**

This is an online service. Please complete the Ash Wednesday Zoom Registration Form which is available on the parish website and Facebook as soon as possible or contact the Parish Office, so that we can send you information about connecting to Zoom and the meeting ID etc. Thank you. If you are unable to join us on Zoom, you may wish to read and reflect on Psalm 51.

### **Zoom Wednesday Services in Lent at 7.30pm**

On Wednesdays during Lent we are going to have a series of short reflections from the Gospel according to St John. We will be looking at aspects of Jesus' life and ministry as we prepare for Holy Week, Good Friday and Easter. Please complete the Zoom Registration Form which is available on the parish website and Facebook each week or contact the Office so that we can send you information about connecting to Zoom and the meeting ID etc. Thank you.

If you are unable to join us on Zoom, you may wish to read and reflect on the readings we will be using at the services. 24<sup>th</sup> Feb, John 2:23-3:15 | 3<sup>rd</sup> Mar, John 5:1-18 | 10<sup>th</sup> Mar, John 8:12-20 | 17<sup>th</sup> Mar, John 4:31-38 | 24<sup>th</sup> Mar, John 10:1-18.

## **Bishop David's Lent Film Series – 'Hand Me A Trowel'**

Bishop David has made a series of daily reflections which will be available online each day from Ash Wednesday, 17<sup>th</sup> February to Palm Sunday, 28<sup>th</sup> March. The film series focuses on the book of Nehemiah and is entitled 'Hand Me A Trowel'. Please see parish website or Facebook for further information.

## **Pastoral Care and Support**

Please contact me or the Parish Office (028 4062 2744/info@bchurch.co.uk) if you, or someone you know, need help or support, or phone me (028 4062 2612 or 07933096720) if you would like to talk or would like someone to pray with you.

## **Thank you!**

Thank you for your prayers and for your ongoing support and generosity to the ministry and mission of the parish.