

Dear Friends

I hope that many of you will take the opportunity of Lent this year to engage in some spiritual reflection perhaps by joining a course of study. There are many different courses available. Here are details of just a few

The York course is 5 sessions entitled "Handing on the Torch - Sacred words for a secular world". It involves listening to talks on a CD and thinking about the issues that they raise. These courses have been running for a number of years and have a good track record.

The Big Bible Project's aim is to encourage Christians to read and to engage with their Bibles more. They have recently launched the Big Read 2012 which will be focusing on the gospel of St Mark using a book written by the recently retired Bishop of Durham, Tom Wright.

Christian Aid are using Lent as a way of raising money as we count our blessings and compare ourselves with people less fortunate in other parts of the world.

Churches Together will be using BBC Radio 4 and BBC Local Radio stations to explore themes from a poem by Dietrich Bonhoeffer "Stations on the way to Freedom" The aim is to use him for starting off points to reflect on the quest for freedom in our own experience, the life of our churches, and what's going on in our society and the world today - all in the light of our reading of the Bible.

The Bible Society is offering a free download of the New Testament (Contemporary English Version - CEV) recorded by the Riding Lights Theatre Company. There is also a plan so that you can listen to the whole New Testament in 40 days.

I hope that you can find something that suits you.

This quarter we will be reinstating the Easter Offering Service. This will be at 4.00pm at Chalkwell Park on 22nd April. I hope all churches will be represented at this service as I want to take that opportunity to launch our Beacon of Light initiative.

As we look forward to the Olympic torch travelling around the country so we will have our own Beacon of Light visiting each of our circuit churches and our Westerly Care Home. I would like each church to host our beacon for a few days, or even a week before passing it on to the next place. While it is in your care please take the opportunity to write a prayer or prayers for your community and place them inside. Before you pass it on please tie a ribbon to it (this will be supplied to you).

I also want to invite you to a short service and barbeque at Highlands Methodist Church on Friday 27th July where we can rejoice that our beacon has travelled the circuit. You will be welcome to stay and watch the Olympic opening ceremony on their new TV. Further details will come later.

God bless

