

Additions to June Mag 2024

A letter from Street Pastors

I am contacting you on behalf of the trustees to let you know that we have made the difficult decision to close Dacorum Street Pastors. In recent years we have seen a significant reduction of footfall in the areas that we patrol and have found it very difficult to recruit new Street Pastors to the team.

Looking to the future we have considered changes to patrol times and locations but do not think that these would lead to more community engagement or solve the challenge of recruitment. Without a viable vision for the future we have concluded that the season for Street Pastors in our community has come to an end.

Our patrols will continue up until the end of our current rota which means that our last patrol will be on Friday 24th May in Hemel Town Centre.

We are incredibly grateful to everyone that has supported Street Pastors over the years which has enabled us to be a visible presence of peace, kindness and Christ's love in our community.



The following is an assignment that Penny recently had to write towards the end of the two-year preaching course she has been on.

We were present when she magnificently passed her final preaching assessment in May.

The Special Ordinary

Jesus anointed at Bethany

Mark 14:1-9

The story of Jesus being anointed by a woman at Bethany has always fascinated me because Jesus considered it so important that He said that: "... *wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.*" (Mark 14:9 NIV). Why would this story, told in only a few verses, be so highly significant to Jesus and how could it be important for us today?

For those unfamiliar with the story: Jesus is eating a meal when a woman enters, breaks open a bottle of expensive nard perfume and pours it over Jesus' head in an act known as 'anointing'. Those in the room are critical of her, seeing it as a waste of money, but Jesus' response is totally different, showing the impact of an ordinary person performing a special act.

Mark writes the story simply, giving no explanation to what happens so it is helpful to have some background to the setting of the story so we can understand it better.



Bethany, a town close to Jerusalem, was familiar to Jesus as it was the home of his friends Lazarus, Mary and Martha. It is very close to Passover, a busy time when many people would travel to Jerusalem to celebrate. Jesus has recently attracted more attention in general, but also more animosity from the Jewish leaders. Although others were unaware, Jesus would have known that His time to die was approaching. The meal takes place at the home of Simon the leper, so this is likely to be a different incident to the one told in John's gospel. The woman is not named in this account, but she was able to identify Jesus so may have had a previous encounter with Him, prompting her to anoint Him. Although guests may have oil poured on their hair before eating, anointing usually occurred when someone was set apart for a specific purpose and anointing with nard happened after death. Perfume was expensive and this jar would have been valuable to the woman. Judging from the critical response from the people in the room, it is unlikely that she was a regular part of the group of people who accompanied Jesus on his travels. Although they may have thought critically of her, as in all things, what Jesus thinks is the most important - let's look at Jesus' response.

Firstly, **Jesus defended her** by telling everyone to leave her alone and stop bothering her. Jesus heard the criticism, saying how wasteful she was with her perfume. He didn't

ignore it or join in, but firmly defended her. The woman had anointed Him so it was not about what others thought but about how He perceived her actions. It is so easy to be critical and judgemental of people when it has nothing to do with us and we don't know (or need to know!) the full story. This is especially true when it comes to how we worship, use our possessions or time, any sacrifice we make for Jesus or in our service for the Kingdom of God.

Secondly, **Jesus affirmed her** and her actions by saying that she had done “a beautiful thing” and “what she could”. How amazing this woman must have felt as Jesus turned the critical tone of the encounter into one of affirmation, encouragement and acceptance of her loving, sacrificial gift and act of anointing. It couldn't have been easy for her to enter a home where she might not have been welcome, to approach the celebrated and controversial Rabbi and perform such an act during a meal. Yet Jesus publicly accepted her anointing in a way that recognised what she had done for Him - giving something of great personal value and generously using it to honour Jesus. If we are being obedient to what we feel Jesus is asking us to do, say or be, then our only concern should be to please Him and do all that we can, to the best of our ability as an act of worship to Him, not others.

Thirdly, **Jesus placed honouring Himself above good deeds**. Jesus acknowledged the criticism of not helping the poor but claimed that the woman had done something better this time - she had honoured Jesus, with something precious. We do not know her motivation to anoint Jesus, if it was gratitude for forgiveness, an extravagant act of devotion or love, but Jesus saw her heart and accepted the honour. Is it concerning that nobody else present considered Jesus worthy of being anointed? We need to remember that our obedience is always honoured by God, regardless of the criticism of others who do not understand our motivation of placing Jesus above all else. It is easier to accept if we are misunderstood by non-Christians, but much harder being criticised by church family.

Fourthly, **Jesus gave eternal significance to her action** revealing not only a foretelling of His death, but also that she would be remembered wherever the gospel was preached. Jesus knew that He was going to die but nobody else understood that this anointing was in preparation for what was to happen in the next few days, even though nard was used for anointing the dead. She would not have understood why she was anointing Jesus, but we do know that Jesus accepted it as a special tribute and affirmed her for it, declaring that her loving, sacrificial act would be remembered throughout the years.



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Like this woman, we do not know the future significance of the things we do, say or give. What is He asking us to give Him - our hopes, dreams or things that are precious to us? How can we best honour Jesus today? I encourage you to ask Him to show you how to honour Him, remembering that when we sacrificially give our best it will always be a “beautiful thing” to Jesus. Jesus can turn our ordinary, our generosity and our sacrifices into something special and significant for His Kingdom.

Fundraising Events for DENS

Sunday 23rd June

Afternoon Communi-tea

Time: 2-4pm or 5-7pm

Location: Liberty Tea Rooms & Community Hub, Hemel Hempstead

Secure your booking via our website - www.dens.org.uk/afternoontea. Choose between reservations for parties of 2 or 4 £25 per person, or £30 including a glass of bubbly Prosecco.

Saturday 14th September

Castle Walk

Location: Berkhamsted Castle, Berkhamsted

10-mile walk or a 2-mile dog walk Register your interest and be the first to receive event updates by entering your details on our website www.dens.org.uk/event/castle-walk.

Monday 23rd September

Summer Draw

Date of Draw: Monday 23rd September

Ticket Price: £2 each

Over 15 prizes, including a Victorian manor house getaway with dinner, bed, and breakfast at Shendish Manor, accompanied by a Michael Bubl  tribute and two-course lunch experience. Additionally, there's a  50 M&S voucher and tickets to local family attractions available!

Secure your tickets online at www.dens.org.uk/summerdraw or reach out if you'd like us to provide physical tickets for you to sell.

Your support in promoting these events is invaluable in our mission to support those in need within our community. Thank you for your consideration.

Warm regards,

Shiv, Charlotte & The DENS Fundraising Team

Synod Eco Day

Some reasons to come to our Green Eco Day on June 8th

This year's TNS Green Eco event held on Saturday June 8th is part of this year's **Great Big Green Week** - <https://greatbiggreenweek.com/get-involved/>

Here at **the Vine in Ilford** we are working hard to get our buildings insulated . Below is a link to a video we produced in December 2022 before the building work started.

Please have a look at our video - **Vine Goes Green**, and then come on the day to see how far we have gone and how far we have still to go, with our building work

Here's some more things you can do in the afternoon, in our small group workshop sessions

There are the activities we are planning in the afternoon programme.

Choose two you like

- How to apply for Synod Eco grants,
 - The ABC of carbon literacy,
- Getting started as Eco Church, with Arocha
- Practical Green activities -Using urban church land as spaces for wild friendly plants and insects,
- Energy café, (How to do simple energy efficiency measures in your homes)
 - Speaking up for the planet (action tools for you and your community,
 - Talking Climate, Poverty and the General Election - with Christian Aid

When you get back home, these are all activities you can do in your own church or faith group and the workshops will help you to find out how you can help to get to Net Zero

Stalls and exhibitions

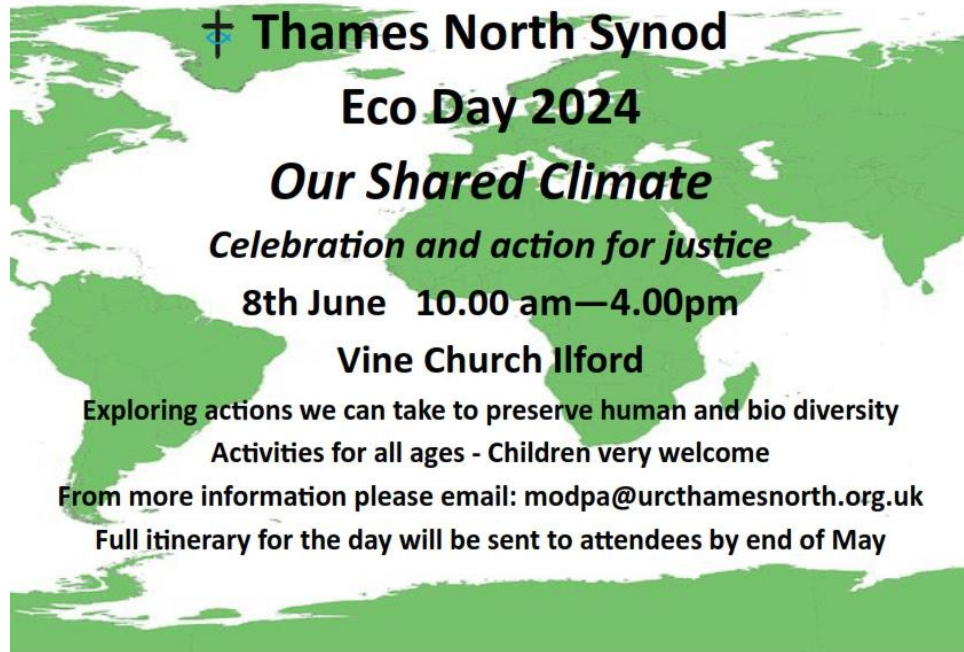
- Fair trade stall
- Green Christian Stall - with literature about Operation Noah and Christian Climate Action
 - Other free environmental literature
- Photo exhibition of climate change and the environment in Bangladesh-
 - You too could bring a stall of your own concerns

So don't delay

Register now

Food served on the day will be vegetarian but to help us with catering please let Colleen modpa@urcthamesnorth.org.uk know whether you prefer Vegetable Curry or Vegetable Pasta Bake.

Please register here <https://forms.office.com/r/3wc6zQgP0C>



The final **Synod Discipleship Matters** will be on Wednesday 3rd July 3pm or 7.30pm usual zoom details.

Zoom

Meeting <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/96647460063?pwd=dnhRWGtlK2tQdUpPUGo0OXRwTWRMUT09>

Meeting ID: 966 4746 0063 Passcode: 498125

Please contact Eddie via disc.enab@urcthamesnorth.org.uk for more details or to say you are coming – or just turn up on the day!