

#LIVE
LENT



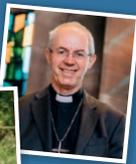
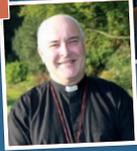
God's Story
Our Story



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

Foreword

by the Archbishops of
Canterbury and York



Stories take us out of ourselves.

It's not that stories give us an escape. In fact, the best stories are ones we find ourselves in, as they tell of relating and loving, suffering and hoping, facing dangers and difficulties, holding out for change.

As Christians we have been given the most wonderful story of all. A story which on the one hand is like our own – it's about people like us. But, on the other hand, it tells us about a God we can hardly grasp.

The invitation of this year's #LiveLent to all of us is to participate in God's story. To make it so much part of our own stories that our own lives become impossible to understand without it.

And then to be tellers of this story, and the change it has brought to us, to those who fear all they will ever have is their own drama.

**Archbishop Justin Welby &
Archbishop Stephen Cottrell**

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Introduction

Everybody has a story.

Your story includes the things you have done, the places you have lived your life, the experiences which have made you who you are, the people who have been most important to you.

Your story is not yours alone, but is also part of lots of other stories – the story of your family, your group of friends, your town or village, your church, even your country.

God has a story too. This is the story of God's loving and creative engagement with the world, which finds its high point in the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. From one perspective, to be a Christian is to

be someone who lives their story in the light of God's story.

Story is an important concept in these Lent reflections. So is witness, which for our purposes is the joyful call to each of us to share our own story of God. So too is evangelism, which is the particular ability God gives to some of us to be able to tell the story of God in a way that stirs faith in those who might not call themselves Christians. All of this will become clearer over the next few weeks.

You have a story to tell, and so do I. Your story is unique, and it is powerful, because it is authentic, because it is yours, because it is God's. So let's dive in.

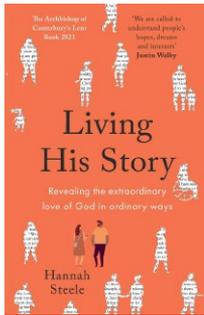
How to Use these Reflections

Each day, Monday to Saturday, try to find 8 to 10 minutes. Read the short Bible passage, perhaps more than once. Sometimes the reflections will encourage you to read a longer passage of the Bible if you have time, to get the full context. Then read the reflection and have a think about what is said. Finally, say your own prayers, using the brief

prayer which is given at the end of each day's reflection.

At the start of each week, there is a brief introduction to set the scene for the whole week, with an action for the week. Don't neglect the action! That's how all of this becomes real.

If you would like to dig a bit deeper, there are also resources for small groups, available via: churchofengland.org/livent.



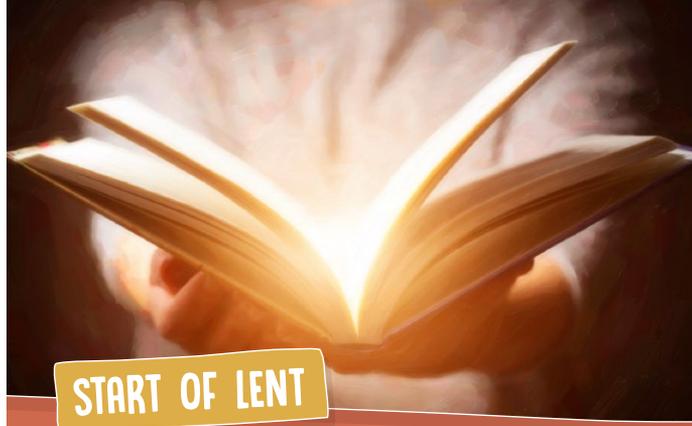
I would also encourage you to consider reading the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent book for 2021, *Living His Story* by Hannah Steele, on which these reflections are based.

Church House Publishing and I would like to express

warmest thanks to Hannah and to SPCK Publishing for allowing me to develop these reflections and to include short extracts from the book in several of them.

Stephen Hance

The Revd Dr Stephen Hance is Evangelism and Discipleship Lead for the Church of England.



START OF LENT

The Greatest Story of all Time

This is not a Lent course. Or rather, it's not a plan to take on something difficult as a Lenten discipline, like giving up chocolate or alcohol, something we thankfully lay down on Easter Sunday. Rather, it's an invitation, to find ourselves in the greatest story ever told, and then to invite others into that story with us.

This week, take time to reflect on how your own story of faith began. How did God become real to you? You might like to get a journal or notebook and write this down.

ACTION

Beautiful Feet

READING Romans 10.13-16

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

Not many of us think about our feet as our loveliest feature. Leaders of local churches that include footwashing in their Maundy Thursday services know how difficult it can be to find volunteers. Those who do agree

to have their feet washed have probably already given their feet a pretty good wash before they came out!

Yet Paul, quoting Isaiah, says that feet can be beautiful because of the news they bring. If you have ever waited for someone to come and tell you that the baby has been born safely, or the test result has come back clear, or that you got the job you longed for, you probably have a sense of what he means.

Today we begin a journey of discovery, a journey which takes us deep into good news for ourselves and those around us. Our prayer is that by the end of the journey we too might have “beautiful feet”!

PRAYER

Thank you, God, for the people who have brought good news to me, especially those who helped me to understand the good news of your love. Please bless them today.
Amen.