

Faith in action



Lord God, thank you for the gift of faith and for the resources that you've given me to live it out. Show me how I can put my faith into action today. Amen.

Finding God on the smallholding

by Jeni Parsons

Almost every farm and smallholding has at least one resident barn cat. Until yesterday we had two; one who was here when we arrived called OurCat, and one from the local animal rescue called Roy. Barn cats are not indoor pets but working pest controllers who live outside. Roy began there but became also a lap cat, a personality who moved, at least during the day, into the

cottage and into my heart. But after six years here he developed a tumour in his guts. He gained an extra month of reasonable life, thanks to Helen the local vet, but yesterday made his final trip to the vet and we buried him by the polytunnel gate in God's good earth.

Roy made my life richer by his presence; I loved him for his gentle persistence and in time I, too, will be buried in God's good earth. It is enough. 🍀

Caroline Hodgson *reflects on* Romans 4:13-end and Matthew 9:9-13. 18-26

Writing to the church in Rome, Paul emphasises that the root of Abraham's righteousness was faith. As one of the great figures of faith, Abraham's example shows that our relationship with God is earned through trust in God's promises – even when those promises seem impossible.

Turning to Matthew's Gospel, in just a few, fast-paced verses Jesus calls Matthew to follow him, heals a woman who's been suffering for years with haemorrhages, and raises a girl from the dead. Here is faith in action, in the woman's simple, life-altering gesture of touching Jesus' cloak, and the leader's humble gesture.

In Christian theology, the concepts of "justification through faith" and "justification through works" are sometimes held to be at odds, representing two distinct approaches to how someone is "justified", or redeemed, before God. It's a subject that has been at the heart of theological debate for generations.

But perhaps it's not so hard to reconcile these ideas. Most Christians would now accept that salvation comes through a combination of the two. What we do is guided by what we believe. Faith is about belief, but not because we hold fast to a fixed idea of historical truth, or cling to a dogmatic viewpoint. Rather, faith is active, lived-out trust in God's mercy and power. Whether it is Abraham trusting in God's promises, or a woman reaching for Jesus' cloak, the transformative power of faith with action is truly awesome. 🍀

People of the Common Worship lectionary

Thomas Ken

by Alan Jefferies

Thomas Ken (1637-1711) is commemorated tomorrow. In the lectionary he is described as "bishop, nonjuror, hymn writer". Nonjuror? – a word of explanation might be called for! The term comes from the Latin *non jurare*, meaning "not to swear", and described somebody who refused to swear allegiance to William III and Mary II after the deposition

of James II and the Glorious Revolution of 1688. To remain in office, clergy and officials were required to swear an oath of allegiance to the new monarchs. A small but significant group – including Ken, who at the time was Bishop of Bath and Wells – refused, on the grounds that their original oath to James II was still binding. Ken lost his position and lived in retirement at Longleat in Wiltshire. He wrote the doxology (or liturgical refrain) "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow", on which the well-known hymn is based. 🍀

“O place my hands with yours, help me divine the wounded God whose wounds are healing mine.”

Malcolm Guite (born 1957), English poet, singer-songwriter, Anglican priest and academic