

Reaching out

Caroline Fletcher *reflects on* Matthew 9:35 – 10:8 [9-23]

Despite opposition from the Pharisees, Christ heads out, driven by heartfelt compassion, to take the good news to the cities and villages. The actual word translated as “compassion” in our reading is the strongest word the Greek language has for this feeling, denoting deep emotion. Unlike the Pharisees, whose attitude was one of judgement towards those they considered sinners, Christ was moved by love for people who were distant from God. And, rather than condemning ordinary folk for their lack of godliness, he held the religious leaders responsible for how they had drifted from God. He recognised the crowds as “sheep without a shepherd” – an unprotected, unguided and abandoned flock, as helpless

and vulnerable as sheep before wolves.

Jesus’ mission was to reach out to these lost people and bring them back to God. He believed vast numbers would be open to his message, proclaiming the harvest to be plentiful. But he needed help, and so he prayed for more people to join him in his work, before commissioning and sending out his twelve disciples. Indeed, Matthew emphasises that by doing this the disciples were actually continuing Christ’s work.

When we feel daunted by the task of continuing Christ’s mission, let us be encouraged by Jesus’ optimistic belief in the transforming power of the Gospel and God’s ability to work through and protect us, as we reach out with the good news. ☺



Lord God, thank you for your faith in us and the transforming power of the Gospel. Grant us strength, compassion and resourcefulness as we reach out to others with the good news. Amen.

Climbing Kilimanjaro – part 1 – the decision to go

by John Witcombe

Kilimanjaro is a 5,895-metre-high mass of volcanic rock thrusting out of the plains of Tanzania and Kenya to form the “roof of Africa”. I first thought of climbing it when I turned fifty. It would be another ten years before I stood on Uhuru Peak.

My day job is Dean of Coventry, and in 2019 I was granted a

sabbatical which coincided with my sixtieth birthday. Some of it was to be spent in libraries, exploring how God invites us into the universal work of reconciliation. But it was also about physical refreshment. I love to walk – what better way of marking a transition into a new decade than fulfilling a long-held dream?

Planning the adventure was both a spiritual and a practical challenge. How was I going to negotiate the inward journey, the spiritual discipline of maintaining my personal prayer life? What journey might God lead me on? This was a journey into the unknown, but, like jumping off a diving board, once I’d committed there was no turning back. ☺

World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought

by Christine Clark

Wednesday is World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought. Factors such as climate change and the over-exploitation of land are the main causes of desertification, which is where land loses its bodies of water, vegetation and wildlife. Sub-Saharan Africa and the Gobi Desert in China are two of the biggest and worst-hit examples.

God gave us our wonderful world: it is up to us to look

after it. Rather than wait for a complete reversal of human activity that contributes to climate change and the exploitation of land, measures to combat desertification are being implemented on large and small scales. Examples are reforestation – the Green Wall of China will be 4,500 kilometres long by its completion in 2050. Farmer-managed natural regeneration (mulching to increase water retention and reduce evaporation) has produced successful results in Niger.

Charities such as Action against Hunger (www.actionagainsthunger.org.uk) help farmers and smallholders adapt their farming methods to get the best from the land. ☺

“Open wide the door of our hearts, that we may receive and entertain Thee with all our powers of adoration and love.

Christina Georgina Rossetti (1830-1894), English poet