

Into all the world – Reflections for Lent 2021

Week 1 – 21st February

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Journeys and Encounters

We are constantly making journeys in our lives for many different purposes. Some may be short, others considerably longer; sometimes with company or alone. There was a television programme entitled 'Race Across the World' in which the ultimate goal for the contestants was to reach their destination in Singapore as quickly as they possibly could without taking a flight but with only the cost of that flight in their pockets. There was no time to notice the beauty, the poverty, the results of climate change or to meet people and to have conversations.

Our most interesting journeys have been when we've had accidental encounters and been the recipients of kindness. On boarding a bus in New York, the driver would only accept coins and we only had notes but the passengers took pity on us and had a 'whip round' to pay our fares. On arriving in Wroclaw, Poland, an elderly lady, who spoke no English, helped us to find our hotel by showing us the right bus and escorting us to the door, even though she needed to travel in the opposite direction.

Jesus sent out his disciples on a journey. He equipped them by giving them the gifts of healing and authority, instructing them not to take any luggage. They must have been apprehensive, wondering what kind of reception they would receive but the whole purpose was to spread the good news by encounter. They were told that if they did not receive a welcome, they should shake the dust off their feet and move on.

'Sanctus', a drop-in centre, based at St. Mark's in Stoke-on-Trent, works with the community to support asylum seekers and refugees. The volunteers provide a listening ear. They aim to 'walk alongside people who find their way to them, from all around the world, in a non-judgmental and safe environment'.

The journeys we now make may take us much further across the world than the disciples travelled but whether we are journeying abroad or within our own country we need to take time to notice, to encounter, to understand and follow in the footsteps of Jesus.



To Ponder: Do you know how to find your nearest drop-in centre for asylum seekers and refugees?

- How welcoming are we to people seeking refuge in our country?
- How can we become more welcoming?

Prayer: *Loving and Compassionate Lord, we pray for those who have made difficult journeys to seek refuge, may they find a welcome as we help them to rebuild their lives. As we journey, help us to listen and to share your love with the people we meet. In the name of Christ, Amen.*

Bible Link: Luke 9: 1–6

Hymn: Singing the Faith 615 Let love be real