



Aston and Cote Community Church

Keeping in touch

September 2021

Dear church family,

As we embark on another school year, we have an exciting teaching series ahead of us and a full programme of Sunday and midweek activities, which, God-willing and Covid-permitting, we will be able to run relatively normally! I have included two calendars here – one for Sundays and one for all other meetings. I'm sure things will change here and there, but please print this/keep it somewhere easy to find and hopefully it will keep you up to date on all that is going on.

I've also written a short section explaining why we are studying Isaiah, which I hope will whet your appetite for it!

Autumn Sundays

Date		Theme	Speaker
5 September	Worship, teaching and Sunday School	Introduction to the series - 'Isaiah - the fifth gospel?'	Alastair Barnett
12 September	Worship, teaching and Sunday School, with communion	Comfort, hope and strength (Isaiah 40)	Steve Neal
19 September	Family Service	Helper and protector of Israel (Isaiah 41)	Alastair Barnett
26 September	Worship, teaching and Sunday School	Israel, the servant of the Lord (Isaiah 42)	Tom England
3 October	Worship, teaching and Sunday School	Fear not, for I have redeemed you (Isaiah 43)	Hazel Barnett
10 October	Celebration at the King's Centre, Oxford	Ron and Mary McLean from Winnipeg, Canada	
17 October	Worship, teaching and Sunday School	Renewal and restoration (Isaiah 44)	Tom England
24 October	Worship, teaching and Sunday School, with communion	Lord of the nations (Isaiah 45-48)	Ruth Morton
31 October	Family Service	The servant and the Lord's favour (Isaiah 49)	Ruth Smith
7 November	Worship, teaching and Sunday School	Awake! Clothe yourself with strength (Isaiah 52:1-12)	Stephen Young
14 November	Worship, teaching and Sunday School, with communion	The suffering servant (Isaiah 52:12-53:12)	Alastair Barnett
21 November	Regional Celebration, The King's School, Witney	Meeting with our sister churches in the Roots and Rivers network.	
28 November	Family Service	Fruitful, expanding and secure (Isaiah 54)	Alastair Barnett
5 December	Worship, teaching and Sunday School	Come to the waters! (Isaiah 55)	Alastair Barnett
12 December	Worship, teaching and Sunday School, with communion	Advent in Isaiah 9 & 11	Tom England
19 December	Family Service	Carol Service	Alastair Barnett
25 December	Joint family worship with St James Church	Christmas Day	



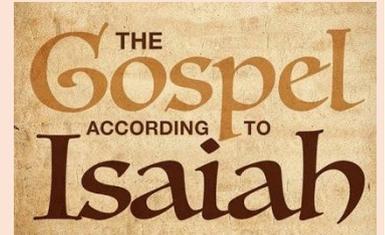
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Isaiah: the Fifth Gospel

Between now and Christmas we are going to be studying a key section (chapters 40-55) of the book of Isaiah in our Sunday preaching series. Research shows that, while Isaiah is the most read of all the prophetic books in the Bible, the prophetic books are the least understood of all the types of biblical literature, so if we take seriously the need to teach and preach the scriptures, we need to include these books and grapple with their meaning.



In Isaiah, we can see both history and God's view of history. Isaiah prophesies to encourage and challenge the people of God in a moment when life isn't going as they expect. He helps people get God's view of their exile and see that He is in control of global historical events. We too are in a tricky historical moment and we need God's view. Isaiah invites the people of God to "wake up" their spiritual eyes and see what God is doing in their day - rather than just drifting with the tide. A big theme of Isaiah is hope and we all need that!

In addition, the NT often looks back at Isaiah, as does Jesus himself, so reading Isaiah helps us understand the NT better. 20% of the NT references to the OT come from Isaiah, which only forms 7% of the OT. Why this focus on Isaiah? N T Wright suggests: *"Some of the early church Fathers saw the book as 'A Fifth Gospel'. It's easy to see why. ... These chapters constitute one of the greatest poems ever written, touching the heights and depths of human and spiritual experience, reaching a sustained climax which opens a vista on creation itself renewed and restored."* ([The Fifth Gospel: Why Isaiah Matters - N.T. Wright Online \(ntwrightonline.org\)](http://ntwrightonline.org))

In Isaiah, there is some of the clearest and most detailed messianic prophecy about Jesus, so reading it will help us understand the mission of Jesus and God's big, sweeping purposes in salvation for all creation.

And then, quite apart from all it tells us about how God is at work in history and how it looks forward to Jesus, there are so many amazing, famous passages in these chapters, which most of us will recognise, but have maybe never read in their context e.g.

- Comfort, comfort my people
- They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength
- Fear not for I have redeemed you
- I am doing a new thing
- Awake, clothe yourself with strength
- Sing, O barren one, who did not bear .. enlarge the place of your tent
- Seek the Lord while he may be found
- You shall go out with joy and be led forth in peace ... etc, etc.

There is so much that we can learn from these chapters about our sovereign, saving God and also so many words of encouragement, comfort and hope in difficult times. I'm praying this will be a rich and rewarding preaching series. If you want to study Isaiah yourself alongside our preaching, there are some good, accessible commentaries - maybe the most obvious of which is *'Isaiah for Everyone'* by John Goldingay. *'Isaiah - the People's Bible Commentary'* by Jo Bailey Wells is also good and not academic in style!



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Midweek activities for autumn

Although Covid has not gone away, it's great to be able to open up and enjoy the revival of midweek groups, prayer meetings (and breakfasts), men's curry nights, women's meetings, Tearfund Big Quiz night, Chillax and hopefully more! This is how things look at the moment - and I'll send out updates if and when anything changes along the way.

	Date	Time	Activity
September			
	Wed 8	20.00	Wheelwright midweek group
	Tue 14	14.30	Penny Black midweek group
	Tue 21	19.45	Whole church prayer meeting
	Tue 28	14.30	Penny Black midweek group
	Wed 29	20.00	Wheelwright midweek group
October	Tue 5	19.30	Men's curry night – Curry Paradise Witney
	Sat 9	8.00	Prayer breakfast
MONTH	Tue 12	14.30	Penny Black midweek group
OF	Wed 13	20.00	Wheelwright midweek group
PRAYER	Tue 19	19.45	Whole church prayer meeting
	Tue 26	14.30	Penny Black midweek group
	Wed 27	20.00	Wheelwright midweek group
November	Tue 2/ Wed 3	tbc	Men's and women's activities
	Sat 6	8.00	Prayer breakfast
	Tue 9	14.30	Penny Black midweek group
	Wed 10	20.00	Wheelwright midweek group
	Tue 16	19.45	Whole church prayer meeting
	Sat 20	19.30	TEARFUND Big Quiz Night
	Tue 23	14.30	Penny Black midweek group
	Wed 24	20.00	Wheelwright midweek group
December	Sat 4	8.00	Prayer breakfast
	Tue 7/ Wed 8	tbc	Men's curry night and women's activities
	Tue 14	14.30	Penny Black midweek group
	Wed 15	20.00	Wheelwright midweek group