

Message from Bishop Rachel, 4 March 2025



Last week, as I watched those extraordinary scenes of Trump, Vance and Zelensky in the Oval Office, I was struck by all the pointing. There was the physical pointing of fingers as well as the metaphorical pointing of fingers in the words of exchange.

Of course, not all pointing is destructive. There is certainly a need for things to be pointed out for us, not least in the activity of media, organisations and individuals who point us beyond ourselves to people and places experiencing conflict and deep injustice. This feels very different from the activity of those keen to point things out in strident acts of blame and accusation.

The Scripture readings set for The Liturgy of Ash Wednesday include those words from Isaiah 58 in which the people of God are challenged about their acts of oppression and injustice. The people are challenged to remove ‘the pointing of the finger’ (Isaiah 58:9) and to repent. In the gospel reading from John 8, we encounter the woman who is hauled before Jesus by the Scribes and Pharisees because she has committed adultery. There is much pointing of fingers, literally and in words. However, Jesus, after taking his pointed finger to write in the dust of the earth, then points the finger at those who are gathered, and in his words he points at their hearts, minds and motives: ‘Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone’ (v.7).

On Friday I had the privilege of observing the work of our local Crown Court, and I was struck by Judge Lawrie’s gift of pointing to people’s humanity and brokenness, and in his point-making to hold together both justice and mercy, with an ability to inhabit hope and a belief in the possibility of transformation.

This week we will enter into Lent, and for me, Ash Wednesday is a day of pointing and the offer of transformation and hope. As we submit to crosses of ash being marked on our foreheads, we will be pointing at ourselves – at our sin and our participation in the brokenness of our world; yet we will also be pointing ourselves to God’s unchanging love, forgiveness and mercy, revealed in Jesus Christ. Our Lent journey will take us to the foot of the cross, yet even now it points us beyond to the empty tomb.

This Lent, I will be endeavouring to make space to do that deep inner reflection, allowing the Holy Spirit to be at work to point to the broken places within me which require God’s healing and transformative touch, such that my life might better point to

the love, mercy and hope of Jesus Christ. During the coming days of Lent I also intend to spend time praying for places of injustice in our world which too often seem invisible, and people who long to be pointed out, named, spoken about and prayed for.

It seems apt to me that this Friday many people across the world will mark [International Women's Day](#) which has been celebrated on 8 March for over 50 years to point to the deep injustices and inequalities which face so many girls and women across our world. I pray that they will be pointed out, not in condemnation but in a commitment to change and transformation.

It is my hope and prayer that all the pointing we do this Lent will begin in a place of humility, and will be about change and transformation – within ourselves, the Church, our communities and our world, rooted in the love and mercy of God.

With my thanks and prayers as we walk together into Lent.

+ Rachel