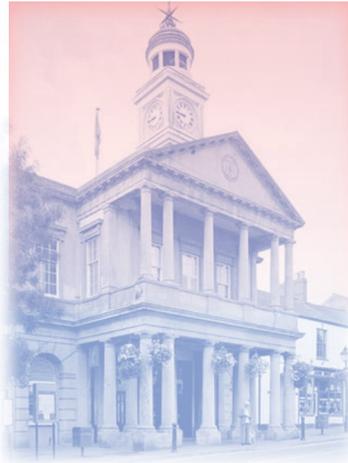




forefrontcommunitychurch

A caring community with every member equipped to demonstrate Christ, working with others to advance God's Kingdom in Chard and the world



Our values:

Seek God – in prayer, worship, study of the Scripture and fellowship, we value the pursuit of God in Jesus Christ;

Love Generously – in time, talent and treasure, to stimulate one another to good works and a lifestyle of generosity;

Expect transformation – to see God's Holy Spirit move in individual lives, in the church and across our community

You may have been coming to Forefront for years. Or maybe you just popped in for one Sunday. Either way, if you feel moved to act on the things mentioned in the talks, we would be pleased to pray with you. Ask someone in the service to point you in the right direction, or call in during the week at Forefront Community Centre (next to Chard Post Office sorting centre).

Seven themes from 1st Peter

Loving, practical guidance for Christians facing persecution

... live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear ...

Written in the early 60s AD, the eloquent Greek of 1st Peter probably indicates the help of a skilled literary secretary, Silas (see 5:12). The Apostle Peter, possibly now in Rome, is writing to Christians who have moved—or been driven by persecution—to the provinces in Asia Minor. He seeks to give their suffering a context and provide hope, to encourage individuals to live holy lives and the followers of Christ to be in unity, to suggest how to live in relation to authorities and in respectful, holy submission to one another.

You'll get the most from this series if you read and reflect on the whole letter of First Peter before we start.

To prepare specifically for each sermon, please read:

13 September (Christian hope in suffering): 1:1-12, 4:12-19, 5:8-14

20 September (Christian lifestyle): 1:13-2:3, 3:8-12, 4:1-11

27 September (A Christian people): 2:4-12, 3:18-22

4 October (The Christian and government): 2:13-17, 3:13-17

18 October (The Christian and Employment): 2:18-25

25 October (Christians and Church leaders): 5:1-7

1 November (Christian marriage): 3:1-7

6) Christians and church leaders

25 October: Tom Smith
5:1-7

Peter had heard Jesus using the metaphor of a good shepherd in reference to a Christian leader, and had witnessed Christ's suffering as the pre-eminent leader (5:1). That guides his appeal to fellow leaders to be willing and enthusiastic, honest and transparent, humble and servant-hearted.

Where there is stress and worry—and, in a persecuted church, where could there not be?—he counsels “cast all your anxiety on God, for he cares for you”. And he warns that the leader must be alert and sober, recognising that the devil is prowling around looking to pick off sheep from the flock.

7) Christian marriage

1 November: David Burfield
3:1-7

The pagan critic Celsus described Christianity in the second century as “a religion of women, children and slaves”. Like all attacks, it probably had a grain of truth, and that may explain why Peter uses slaves and masters, and wives with non-Christian husbands, as examples of Christian humility. Wives are to submit “in the same way” (3:1) as Jesus did to those with power over him—not as inferiors but as those with a clear view of God in control over their situation. Husbands, “in the same way” (v7) are to be considerate to their wives. Radically (for the time) they are reminded that women, though physically weaker, are equal heirs in God's gracious gift of life.



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Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, Roman emperor from 54 to 68 AD, persecutor of the church, under whose rule Peter was martyred

1) Hope in suffering

13 September: Keith Barnard
1:1-12, 4:12-19, 5:8-14

How to follow Christ faithfully in a world where persecution was coming from the government and the synagogue was a primary question for the scattered churches. There is a reference to suffering in every chapter of this letter. Peter exhorts believers to follow Christ's example of 'suffering for doing good', with faith, perseverance and humble submission.

Where was this written?

Peter says "in Babylon" (5:13). Although there are other possibilities, tradition is that this was code for Rome. Roman persecution was fierce, so there were good reasons to be cautious when referring to the city and Emperor.

2) Christian lifestyle

20 September: Tom Smith
1:13-2:3, 3:8-12, 4:1-11

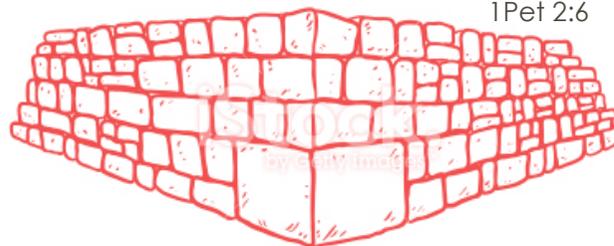
Peter is authoritative as he gives a series of exhortations on how to live an uncompromising Christian life in a difficult world. Be holy, distinct and pure, as befits those bought with the most precious sacrifice in history. Be alert and sober, he counsels, keeping yourself ready for Christ's return and the judgement day.

3) A Christian people

27 September: David Herring
2:4-12, 3:18-22

Peter describes in vivid terms the distinguishing marks of those who are called to follow Jesus—"a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession". Like living stones God's positioned together to create a temple, we must be aligned with Christ, the cornerstone, who "has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand."

See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.



4) The Christian and Government

4 October: David Burfield
2:13-17, 3:13-17

Any religion was possible in the Empire, so long as adherents acknowledged Caesar as Lord and a god. Christians risked punishment each time they declared "Jesus is Lord". Peter, wise and strategic, urges submission to the authorities. No-one should be able to accuse believers of bad behavior. But Christian testimony must be strong, as they live in the sure knowledge that God is their master. Be ready with a good answer if questioned, be respectful, keep a clear conscience, and embrace suffering for doing the right thing as part of your witness for Christ.

5) Christian employment

18 October: Jo Kerr
2:18-25

From 2:13 to 3:7, the subject is submission in social situations. Many slaves had become Christians, embracing the promise of moral freedom in God's kingdom, justice and a liberation to come when Jesus returned. Slavery does not equate to employment in the modern sense, yet the principles do apply to employer and employee, and all situations in which one party has power and the other must perform. Being "conscious of God" (2:19) implies remembering that, behind the human master, there is a divine ruler to whom we owe first allegiance. God is watching the attitudes, words and responses of both worker and employer.