



A Letter from the Rector

(dated 02/04/20)

Holy Week and Easter



We find ourselves moving into Holy Week and Easter, a very significant period in the Church calendar. However, due to the current circumstances caused by COVID-19, the normal observances and traditions associated with Holy Week and Easter are not taking place due to various restriction placed upon us all. For some the only Easter tradition they will be concerned about is if they can still get their Easter Eggs. Currently it seems that toilet paper is the only commodity in short supply, so hopefully Easter Eggs will be available when required.

There will be people who will face hardship, pain and grief as a result of this crisis, and we should help in whatever way we can to bring relief to their suffering where and when possible. We should be thankful and pray for all those who are supporting our society in various ways, the people who deliver the supplies to the hospitals and supermarkets, who work in the supply and retail industry, for those who work in the NHS and those who support a neighbour in need, may God bless them in their work and keep them safe.

Although I understand the reasons the lockdown restrictions are deemed necessary, I and many others will lament not being able to celebrate Palm Sunday, commemorate Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. To be able to shout with joy 'Alleluia, Jesus Christ is risen!' and hear the joyful response 'He is risen indeed, alleluia!' on Easter morning. I am saddened that we have come to a point that people are unable to peacefully gather to celebrate the most significant event in human history, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, when all of humanity has been given the opportunity to be reconciled with God through the love and Grace of Christ.

Regardless if we can celebrate Easter in church in the traditional way or not, the historic fact that Jesus rose from the dead on that wondrous Easter morning will not change. As St Paul wrote in his first letter to the Corinthians 1:18; 'For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God'. This is what gives Christians faith and the assurance to face the future. As the chorus of an old hymn reminds us;

Because He lives, I can face tomorrow.
Because He lives, All fear is gone.
Because I know He holds the future,
And life is worth the living just because He lives.

In times of uncertainty, when we can be bombarded with tales of doom and calamity and the shortage of toilet paper, Christians are the people of hope. We are supposed to stand out like a light in the darkness or a city on a hill. Let us as Christians show the love of Christ to our neighbours and reflect his glory to the world.

On Easter Sunday we can all proclaim with confidence 'Alleluia, Jesus is risen'. For we know 'He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken' (Psalm 62:6).

Here are a few inspirational and comforting scripture references for those who are interested; Psalms 23, 91, 103, 121. Isaiah 6:8, Jeremiah 29:11, Matthew 11:28-30, John 3:16, John 14:1-6, Romans 8: 38-39 & 10: 9-11. Hebrews 11:1,2. If you would like more, just open the bible on any page and you're likely to find something.

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.

Rev Mark

If you would like to commemorate Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, we would recommend the following scripture readings that would traditionally be used in Church on those occasions are given below.

Maundy Thursday Reading: Matthew 26:17- 56

Good Friday Readings: 1st Reading Isaiah 53

2nd Reading Psalm 22:1-11

3rd Reading John 16 16-24

4th Reading John 19:28-37

5th Reading John 19:38-42

The hymn below by **Isaac Watts**, *pub.1707*, was inspired by the St Paul's letter to the Galatians 6:14, for me it sums up the passion narrative.

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

1. When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.
2. Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God!
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.
3. See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?
4. Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

Why not join spiritually at 9am every morning for Morning Prayer from your own homes (isolation capsules). The wonderful thing about prayer is that, we can pray at all times and in all places, we don't need to be in church to do it. There are many websites, TV and radio channels that may be helpful if you need them. I would recommend downloading the C of E Daily Prayer phone app. It gives the liturgy for the daily prayer and the scripture readings in a simple easy to follow format.

For those of you who have access to the internet there are many useful resources available that also have interesting links to information and video services.

Useful websites.

Church of England website - <https://www.churchofengland.org>

C of E Facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/thechurchofengland>

C of E Daily Prayer - <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer>

C of E guidance COVID-19 - <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches>

Southwell & Nottingham Diocese - <https://southwell.anglican.org>

Diocesan YouTube account - <https://www.youtube.com/user/dioceseofsouthwell>

Benefice website - <http://www.stjohnscil.org.uk/home>

Online Bible recuses - <https://www.biblegateway.com>

Over the period of the 'Lockdown' I will be providing the Sunday scriptures readings with some of my thoughts on the readings in the form of a short commentary, don't worry it is not a sermon. If you or someone you know would like to receive the Sunday Scripture Readings and Commentary, please send me an e-mail stating 'Commentary request' so that I can add you to my list.

If you need to discuss anything or communicate with me, please do not hesitate to do so using my contact detail below.

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