

Virtual Church News

Sunday 29 March

Passion Sunday

5th Sunday of Lent



Welcome to Virtual Church News for this week which is being distributed electronically to most people.

Hard copies will be circulated to those without access to email/social media. If you know of anyone without email who you think would benefit from a hard copy, please call Jacqui on 356993 or email Jacqui.piper@btinternet.com

A Reading for the Week:

Romans 8: 35 - end

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Online Resources:

If you have access to Facebook, keep an eye on the Church of England page for some useful resources including:

- Sunday 29 March at 9am - ‘Front Room’ service led by the Archbishop of York
- Learn to say the Lord’s prayer in British Sign Language.

<https://www.facebook.com/thechurchofengland>

Unfortunately as a result of the Government’s instructions this week, both our churches are now closed and are no longer accessible for private prayer.

Whilst the buildings are locked, however, we as a church community are very much still “open”!

Message from Rev Eric Lomax

Dear All,

I love them to death, we cannot get to them, and they cannot get to us. Some people we know have kids in New York, in Spain, and even in Australia, but in these times, that makes little difference. Ours are only in Guildford, London, Dunstable, Stamford and York, but they may as well be on the moon, because we are not allowed to see any of them. This is especially felt at these great family times of year; Liz, like many felt the isolation of Mothering Sunday, not being able to see all her children. I feel like I have abandoned my mother, 180 miles away, in a Nursing home, with Alzheimer’s, on the Wirral.

Then there is Holy Week, just a week away, the remembrance of the cross of Christ on Good Friday, and that great day, Easter Sunday, when we celebrate the risen Christ bursting into life from the tomb. The immense distance between life and death is conquered. The trouble is, we who feel we have the most reason for gratitude are, on that day, unable to meet. ... Continued overleaf

Message from Rev Eric Lomax

...Continued from previous page

We miss the contact of our friends and loved ones. We miss the kiss, or the hugs, the immeasurable treasure of touch.

Several days ago, I conducted a funeral at the crematorium. It felt unsettled. Only close family could be there, and no hymns of hope could be sung. Almost overnight, the world has grown, borders closed, busy traffic silenced, airlines are grounded, pubs and cafés are shut, lovers can no longer hold one another's hands, and declare their undying love in a wedding service, and those who grieve must grieve alone, when all they long for, is for death itself to be defeated by the touch of love. The streams that once divided us, have now become oceans.

This Sunday is called 'Passion Sunday,' and it is a profound reminder of the distance between us, and ultimately, the distance between ourselves and God. Passion is a word that is often associated with sex, but it is actually the word from which we derive the term 'passive'; to be out of control, or to be subject to others. Passion is the word we use to describe the suffering of Christ, who died on the cross for us. God emptied himself of his power in heaven, to become a servant, subject to our world. Our Great God, in Jesus, stepped into the shoes of human experience and walked amongst us.

He wept the tears that we weep, felt the pain that we feel, had to labour for food, (see how, in the wilderness, he refused to turn stones into bread, to satisfy his own hunger). He experienced, and like us shed tears of grief (John 11: 1-65). Ultimately, the Christ of faith experienced despair, fear and doubt. (We see his fear in Gethsemane, and how he felt abandoned by God on the cross.).

Why does God, in Christ let go of so much, to experience what it is like to be human, in this way?

The simple answer is, that it is out of love for us. Jesus Christ lived this life for the simple

reason that he recognises how impossible it is for us to reach out across the sea of human separation, across the boundaries between ourselves and those who have died, and across the greater distance that separates us all from God the God who loves us. Quite simply, it is only a God who suffers in Jesus, who is able to help the healing of all things.

I love this passage in Romans. The writer, Paul was in the Creek city of Corinth "and he wanted to send a simple message of hope to the church, 1,100km away in Rome. He wanted to encourage their faith in God, in difficult times. God seemed so distant from them and they were struggling to do all that they could to stay close to God.


Paul wanted them to know that it was not about what they were doing, it was about what God was doing for them. He wanted us to know that, although at times we mess up, or are broken, we may feel powerless and isolated, we may face anxiety and are unable to even support the people we are closest to, we are still loved by the perfect God, the perfect friend, and the perfect lover. Neither death nor life, angels nor things out of your control, neither the past, present nor the future, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Jesus Christ. Do not be afraid because he quite literally loves you to life.

God bless

Eric

Please contact me any time you need to.

My numbers are: 01234 852241/07805879537



**Nothing can separate us
from the love of God that
is in Christ Jesus our
Lord**

Please pray with me

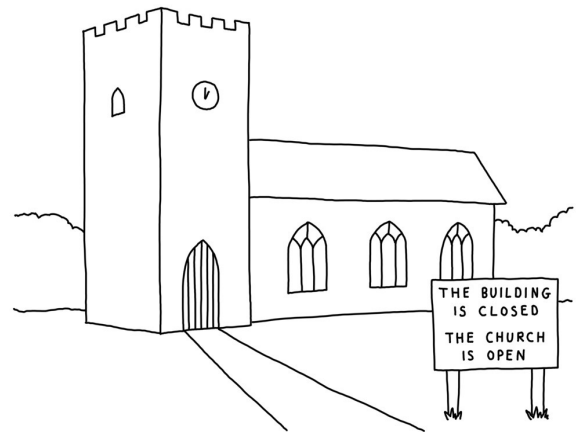
Loving Father,
In this time of need,
We thank you that you love us,
And have not abandoned us.
In Christ, you reached out to us,
And your love transcends the distances that divide us.
Bring healing to our world, and our communities,
And build you kingdom of love.
In Christ's name.
Amen



Church Services on the TV/Radio

If you don't have access to the internet, try tuning in to the following on Sunday 29th:

- 8.10am on BBC Radio 4 - Sunday Worship broadcast from Wesley's Chapel, London
- 11.30am on BBC 1 - Sunday Worship from Bangor Cathedral.
- 1.15pm on BBC 1 - Songs of Praise with the Bishop of York designate, Stephen Cottrell on Christian Hope and Reflection.
- 3pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong from Temple Church, London



CartoonChurch.com

Time to Pray App

Access prayers and short readings for each day. Free to download from your usual app store.

Time
to Pray

Bedford Foodbank

Please don't forget that we support the Bedford Foodbank, who will need our donations now more than ever. Please consider making a financial donation. More information can be found at <https://>



Community Support Groups

Do you need support? We can help with shopping and companionship (via regular phone calls).

Can you volunteer to help? Let us know if you are DBS checked (for any organisation). It doesn't matter if you aren't, we still need your help, but safeguarding is important!

Biddenham:

If you need support, ring 01234 815393 (daytime only) or email help@biddenham.org.uk with your name/phone number/address.

If you can volunteer, please email help@biddenham.org.uk

Kempston:

If you need support or can volunteer to help, contact:

Rev Eric Lomax: 852241 or 07805 879537

Alison/Brenda Walker: 851597

Alan/Anita Lowe: 857212 or 07751 659695