

Virtual Church News

Sunday 26 April

3rd Sunday of Easter

Welcome to Virtual Church News for the 3rd Sunday of Easter.

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:

Luke 24.13-35

The Walk to Emmaus

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴and talking with each other about all these things that had happened.

¹⁵While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

¹⁷And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, 'Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?'

¹⁹He asked them, 'What things?' They replied, 'The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him.

²¹But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. ²²Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. ²⁴Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.'

²⁵Then he said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared!

²⁶Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?' ²⁷Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.' So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. ³²They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?'

³³That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!'

³⁵Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.



Bluebells in Kempston Woods
Photo taken by Richard Moxon

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Message from Rev Eric Lomax

A wild card thrown on to the table has been a complete game changer; Easter, this year has been changed beyond recognition. For two long, I guess, life has been predictable, so Lent, Holy Week, and Easter, have all run as clockwork. I was only saying to my wife, Liz, last week, that the sermons and the rituals of Easter have become set-pieces that I could almost perform in my sleep, but now, this year, everything is different.

How do we, as Christians, cope with wild cards? Would we prefer God to function like clockwork, or would we prefer him to surprise, or even shock us, to do something new?

Good Friday, we forget, was the ultimate wild card. The disciples expected Jesus to stroll into Jerusalem and liberate it from Roman occupation. Jesus was then going to restore Israel and be seated on the throne with a crown on his head. That was the Jewish concept of Kingship, whereas Jesus ended up on a cross of shame, with a crown of thorns upon his head.

Good Friday was not what the followers of Jesus expected Good Friday to be. It was not, to them, the event, which to us, has become so predictable every year until now.

As for the miracle of Easter Sunday, it is almost as if we have read the same novel thirty or forty times, so that the dramatic conclusion no longer has any emotional impact. Is the shock and awe of the Easter story not something that we as a community of faith, should now try to rediscover?

The cross and the resurrection of Jesus were wild cards in history, game changers, truly amazing events that completely transformed our ideas of God. For the people around, at the time of Jesus, they saw God as a sort of scary old man in the sky who condemns people for almost everything they do. Then, for the first time in history, the crucified and risen Jesus, presented us with the idea of God, who loves, who forgives, who suffers for his people, and who can change *even you*.

We can see in our reading how these events impacted on some of Jesus' early followers. Mary and Cleopas were trudging home to Emmaus. All their hopes had been invested in Jesus and the old view of what their deliverer was meant to be. Jesus was meant to be a King, a ruler and victor. The wild card of good Friday, however, completely shattered these expectations, and these two people felt lost and confused.

As they walked, Jesus came and walked with them. He was not the person they recognised. He walked with them, and they asked him about those strange events that had happened in Jerusalem, just a few days earlier. The stranger then spoke to them about how the Messiah was meant to die, and how God's love was revealed on the cross. To them, the stranger's words revealed something new and beautiful about what the God of surprises had done, and his words filled Cleopas and Mary with a new hope. Finally, in the evening, this man sat down with them and broke fresh bread with them. They ate together, and when they saw the wounds in his hands, they recognised him as Jesus. 'See how his words burned within us,' they later said.

Be prepared, like them, to be surprised by Jesus. So often, as we are seeing now, events overtake us and disrupt our understanding and expectations. Then Christ comes alongside us, unrecognised, and uninvited to challenge our expectations and our fears. It is him who can surprise us, and truly make a difference to our lives and who we are. He is the new, fresh bread, when the old bread has become stale and familiar.

During this period of uncertainty. Place yourself and your family into his hands. Invite him into your home, and he will respond and transform your dreams, your lives, and your expectations.

God bless

Eric

Please contact me any time you need to.

My numbers are 01234 852241/07805 879537

EasterPilgrim: The Lord's Prayer

The Church of England invites you to take a 40 day journey through the prayer Jesus taught his followers - one which continues to shape the lives of Christians across the world.

Each day provides you with a short Bible reflection, an invitation to pray and a suggestion for responding to the vision of the Lord's Prayer itself.

Go to the Church of England website for more details. <https://www.churchofengland.org/our-faith/living-out-our-faith/lent-holy-week-and-easter/easterpilgrim-lords-prayer>

For the Children (& young at heart!)

Why not watch this version of this week's story from the Bible Society <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndtnZV-5QTo>

You could also listen to a song from 4Front Theatre Group called 'What's going on with Jesus' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MFe8PHePU8A>



Can you find the following words relating to this week's story?

Bread	Jesus	Sad
Emmaus	Prophet	Talking
God	Recognised	Walk
Jerusalem	Risen	Vision

R	G	S	H	B	E	U	K	E	Q	T	L
R	E	T	E	H	P	O	R	P	A	F	J
O	K	C	N	M	S	E	U	L	K	E	E
W	M	K	O	E	V	P	K	D	S	H	R
A	C	B	R	G	N	I	D	U	K	Y	U
N	N	R	L	W	N	V	S	H	D	A	S
J	R	E	E	G	S	I	D	I	R	O	A
R	L	A	M	X	V	K	S	L	O	N	L
G	O	D	E	M	N	V	K	E	E	N	E
K	S	P	E	K	A	M	S	A	D	B	M
O	W	A	L	K	N	U	R	U	G	P	M
E	H	S	B	N	R	I	S	E	N	O	R

Church Services on the TV/Radio

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

- 8.10am on BBC Radio 4 - Sunday Worship - Professor Jennifer Strawbridge of Mansfield College, Oxford and the Rev Dr Steve Nolan, Chaplain at Princess Alice Hospice lead a reflection on where we find hope in times of despair, exploring Jesus' appearance to his two disciples on the Road to Emmaus and how that encounter speaks to us today.
- 10.45am on BBC 1 - Sunday Worship from Hereford, led by the Bishop of Dover, the Rt Rev Rose Hudson-Wilkin.
- 1.15pm on BBC 1 - Songs of Praise. Sean Fletcher looks back on journeys to sacred places, including Mont St Michel in France.
- 3pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong from the Chapel of Royal Holloway, University of London.

Hymns and Devotional Music

Tim Grant-Jones, organist at All Saints, is recording himself performing hymns and other music, with his wife Irene singing along. Follow him at <https://www.facebook.com/tim.grantjones>

Joyce Cashman

We are sad to hear that Joyce, who used to live in Church End, passed away recently at the age of 100. She had been living in a care home in Leeds, near her daughter, for the past year or so. Joyce was always a supporter of St James's and could often be heard playing the organ there.

Online Services

Join the Church of England on its website or Facebook page for this week's 9am Virtual Service.

Many other churches and cathedrals across the country are also providing online services.

Please pray with me

Risen Christ,
you filled your disciples with boldness and fresh hope:
strengthen us to proclaim your risen life
and fill us with your peace,
to the glory of God the Father.
Amen



Join us for a Service on Sunday

The Zoom login details for the service at 11am on Sunday will be sent out in the covering email to members of our church community. If anyone else would like these, please do get in touch!

Supporting Good Mental Health

The Church of England has produced some reflections on good mental health to support people given the challenging times we are currently living in.

These can be found on the Church of England Website at <https://www.churchofengland.org/faith-action/mental-health-resources/supporting-good-mental-health/supporting-good-mental-health>

If you do not have access to the internet and would like a hard copy of these, please email jacqui.piper@btinternet.com to request a copy.

Bedford Foodbank

Please don't forget that we support the Bedford Foodbank, who need our donations now more than ever.

Donations of food can now be placed in a box which in St James's Church Porch, taken direct to the Foodbank (off Manton Lane) or put in the boxes in the supermarkets. Items currently needed include pasta, UHT fruit juice, rice pudding, tinned carrots, tinned peas, rice (1kg), tea bags (40) and UHT milk.

Alternatively please consider making a financial donation. More information can be found at <https://bedford.foodbank.org.uk/>



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