

Virtual Church News

Sunday 19 April

2nd Sunday of Easter



Welcome to Virtual Church News for the 2nd 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

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!

A Reading for the Week:

John 20: 24-29

Jesus and Thomas

Now Thomas, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe."

Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Message from Rev Eric Lomax

Dear All,

In 2008 I visited Sri Lanka to spend a little time supporting a school there. Four years earlier in 2004, there had been a Tsunami which had originated just off the coast of Sumatra, and resulted in approximately 277,000 deaths in 14 countries around the Indian Ocean. In Galle, Sri Lanka, I visited an 80ft high statue of Buddha that had been donated by the Japanese Government as a memorial to the 1700 people that had died when the Tsunami had struck a train, close to the village of Peraliya, near to Telwatta. The Buddha still looks out across the ocean with uncertainty, a recognition that wisdom cannot predict what the world will throw at us. All the certainty these people had, was shattered in one terrible unpredictable event.

In our daily briefings on TV we hear how the politicians are bombarded with questions by journalists, demanding certainty over what will happen in this current crisis. It is clear that the politicians do not know. They are simply doing their best. There is no certainty, so we just have to wait to see how things unfold. Where then, do we find our hope? Where do we find certainty?

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Message from Rev Eric Lomax

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There is a prayer written by the American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, which it would do us all good to remember and recite from time to time; 'God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

Those of us who are courageously working to support and help at this time must be celebrated. Those who are researching and legislating to find solutions must be applauded, and those who have no resources, but to wait and trust, must be patient. In all of this, we need wisdom to discern what can and cannot be done.

The reading today is one of my favourite stories in the New Testament. It is about one of the disciples of Jesus, who was called Thomas. He, like the rest of the disciples, had witnessed the horrific death of Jesus on the cross and, like everybody else, to him it seemed like the end of all of his hope and certainty. The catastrophe that was the suffering of Jesus had changed their lives irrevocably, and they could do nothing about it.

It was then, while they were hiding away, that the risen Jesus appeared to the disciples. It was the significant marks of his suffering and death that convinced them to believe. Together, in the company of one another, they found the faith that they needed. Together they encountered the risen Christ, and together, they found faith and certainty.

The first thing Jesus did was to breathe his peace on them. This was to get rid of their fear, conflict and anxiety, and to give them courage for the days ahead. The community of believers driven by the peace of the risen Christ.

Thomas was different from them. He had moved on. He was not hiding away in a locked room, but was outside going about his faithless business.

When he came back, they tried desperately, to convince him that they had seen the Lord, but he was a realist who refused to believe without evidence; 'You are talking nonsense. Unless I see the marks of his suffering I will not believe.'

It was then, together with them, that he himself saw the risen Jesus. It was there that he encountered, again, the marks of Jesus' suffering. Jesus showed him the nail marks on his hands, and the wound in his side. Thomas fell to his knees and declared his faith; 'My Lord and My God.' In the company of others, he knew what the Lord had done for him.

One of the apocryphal stories that I heard about the Boxing day Tsunami, was of a father who was trying to hold onto his son with his teeth to prevent him from being washed away by the Tsunami. The boy still has the scars as evidence of his father's love for him. The real evidence to Thomas, was the wounds on Jesus' body, the marks that Jesus carried to show us his love for us.

I am convinced that because of what Jesus Christ has done for you, that there is nothing that can separate you from the Love of God. In these times of uncertainty, his love really is the only certainty.

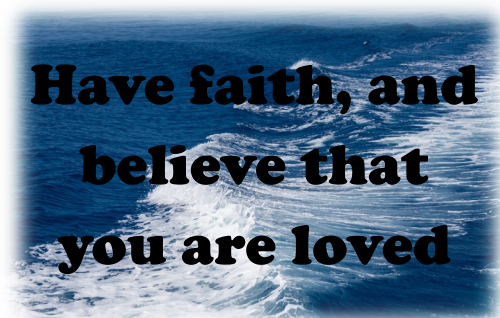
It does not matter who you are or what you have done. You are not alone, because he is there; it is not the end, because he is the God of new beginnings, and nothing is lost, because in him there is everything to gain. Have faith, and believe that you are loved.

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>

Spring Harvest Home

This past week has seen some great teaching, worship and other activities for all ages from Spring Harvest Home.



The majority of programmes will be available at least until the end of April.

Everything can be found on Youtube at <https://www.youtube.com/user/SpringHarvest>

Why not take a look and see for yourself what Spring Harvest is all about!

Online Services

Join the Church of England on its website or Facebook page for this week's 9am Virtual Service led by Rev Canon Leah Vasey-Saunders and her family from Wakefield, from their living room.

Many churches and cathedrals across the country are also providing online services including:

- St Albans Cathedral 10am
- All Souls, Langham Place 9.30am
- Holy Trinity, Brompton 9.30am
- Coventry Cathedral 9.15am/12noon

Search for their websites for more details.

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 - from Holy Trinity Platt, Manchester, reflecting on the experience of the disciples after Jesus' resurrection when Jesus came to them in the upper room.
- 10am on BBC 1 - Sunday Worship from St David's Cathedral in Pembrokeshire.
- 1.15pm on BBC 1 - Songs of Praise. Aled Jones connects the Beatles and Christianity at Strawberry Field in Liverpool.
- 3pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong from the Church of the Incarnation, Dallas, Texas

For the Children

Virtual Sunday School

The brilliant 4Front Theatre Group are doing a great Virtual Sunday School. Check it out on Youtube at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMu2bG8L2dp7ywUZVa9uXDA>

Duggie Dug Dug's Crazy Stay at Home Roadshows

Duggie is a big favourite with many kids. Find him on Youtube for lots of fun including puppets, crazy science, songs and lots more.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OFNZJrI7 IA>

Messy Church at Home

Messy Church at Home - great ideas for 'doing' church at home with the family. For more information and ideas go to <https://www.messychurch.org.uk/resources/messy-church-home-ideas> See also the Messy Church-BRF Facebook page.



Please pray with me

Risen Jesus

There is so much fear and uncertainty at this time.

In these times of doubt,

Give us hope and faith that we are not alone.

Help us to be your voice of hope

To those who are afraid at this time.

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ,

Our Lord

Amen.



Please Include in Your Prayers

- The late Barbara and her family;
- All those affected by the Coronavirus both in this country and internationally.

Our Prayer for St James, Biddenham and Beyond group is still meeting (virtually) so please do send in any particular prayer requests that you may have and these will be passed on to the group.

A Prayer for all those Affected by Coronavirus

Keep us, good Lord,

Under the shadow of your mercy.

Sustain and support the anxious,

Be with those who care for the sick,

And lift up all who are brought low;

That we may find comfort

Knowing that nothing can separate us from your love

In Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen

Bedford Foodbank

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

Donations of food can be taken direct to the Foodbank (off Manton Lane) or put in the boxes in the supermarkets. Unfortunately, as the Church is currently closed, we are unable to collect within the church at the moment

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