

Virtual Church News

Sunday 10 May

5th Sunday of Easter

Welcome to Virtual Church News for the 5th 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:

John 14.1-14

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.' Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?' Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'

Message from Rev Eric Lomax

This week I would like to share with you a slightly shortened version of a reflection by Keeley Frampton, a member of our congregation, in Biddenham:

Before I re-discovered my faith in Christ, I remember being miserable, and stuck in a job that seemed to be suffocating me, and making me depressed. At the height of my depression, we booked a 5-star holiday to Oman, to the Shangri La hotel at Easter time. The Shangri La, seemed, the height of paradise to me. A child free hotel with a private beach, waiters who brought us everything we needed, while we sunbathed by the pool, or on the beach. I recall afternoon tea on the terrace, pre-dinner drinks and live music every evening in the courtyard.



Biddenham
Village Pond

Photo taken by
Richard Moxon

Hymns and Devotional Music



Tim Grant-Jones, organist at All Saints, and his wife Irene are live streaming hymns and other devotional music at 10am each Sunday (before the Zoom service). Find this and other music on Facebook by searching for Grant-Jones Musical Services or entering #gjmusicalservices. You can also request hymns in advance!

We ate lobster and champagne as we listened to Jazz and watched the moon rise over the ocean. Each day and evening, our beautiful room was 'prepared' for us to rest in and enjoy, crisp linen sheets and fresh fruit on the table. On Easter Day, we were gifted chocolate Easter Eggs and special mint and lemon drinks. I remember thinking 'ah this is the life, this is paradise'. Then we visited the Grand Mosque and I recall the tour guide telling us about Jesus as it was Easter time. I thought nothing more than how interesting it was that Islam also believed in Jesus (although I wasn't sure I believed). This kind of paradise is always fleeting. We could not stay in the Shangri La forever. Just like the paradise in Eden was a lost paradise, our Shangri La paradise was lost as soon as we boarded the plane, to land again in the drizzle of London. A few days later, I was in my suit again, and my soul destroying job.

The reading, John chapter 14, is often read at funerals, and I am sure that it was read at my dad's funeral. It talks about Jesus going to prepare a place for us, but I did not understand what that meant. I had images of a sort of guest house/posh hotel room being prepared with one's favourite items just like the Shangri La. In Islam, heaven is referred to as paradise, but I now understand that what John is saying is different because Jesus is different.

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Message from Rev Eric Lomax *continued...*

As Christians, we are unique in that God appeared to us as a human being. Jesus wasn't leaving to make up the heavenly hotel room for us, but rather that he died for us and went to be with God the Father, so that we could be with God as well. All we have to do to be there with him is believe in the truth that is him. That is why Jesus said; 'I am the way, the truth and the life.'

For us, this must seem very clear, but for the first disciples it must have been confusing. Jesus had just told them he was going to die, that his disciples were going to let him down. Imagine sitting with Jesus at that time. Without knowing about the resurrection, Jesus' words, then, must have been terrifying.

The words of Einstein resonate here – "The more I learn the more I realise what I don't know." The disciples *knew* Jesus – they had spent plenty of time with him and knew he was "the truth"– Jesus repeatedly says in this passage 'you know me'. But even they found it difficult to understand what Jesus was saying when he said "you know the way to the place I am going...if you know me you will know my Father also". When I was in Oman, I did not know Jesus and despite the luxury I experienced, I felt empty. Now I do know him, and it is a wonderful feeling to have him in my life. I no longer have the financial wealth I had then, but knowing Jesus, I am so much richer. I was sat in Oman thinking "ah this is the life" but that feeling lasted only a couple of weeks. Now I know that Jesus is "the life", the warmth and love I feel from acknowledging this is so strong and eternal.

Jesus also says "I am the way". We tend to think of the way as a physical route, like getting on a plane, going somewhere in the car or travelling to Oman in my example. However, if we allow Jesus to live in us and we believe in him we are already there. It's like arriving at the best destination but we don't even need to travel to get there. We are there, in a moment with Jesus. "You have arrived at your destination" as the SatNav might say.

It's hard to understand this if our lives are difficult and we are suffering but in Jesus he is right beside you. I was miserable in paradise, literally in the Shangri La (which means utopia), with Frankincense wafting through the air, at Easter time, whilst a Muslim educated me on Jesus' life, and yet I did not know Jesus at that time as "the truth." It is only now that I do, that those things seem relevant to me.

I see Jesus as God's heart that he exposed to us by sending his Son. Imagine a feeling of safety and comfort and being held. Hopefully that is something that many of you feel in your homes, or perhaps you have felt this when someone hugs you and tells you they love you, perhaps even a cuddle from a pet might give you that kind of warm feeling. God who comes to you in Jesus, loves you so much more than any of that. So, paradise is great and all, and we can travel and go on holidays in search of it if we like (except we can't at the moment!). But for now we must stay at home and find safety and comfort as best we can. Perhaps your home is a loving place, perhaps it is not, but one way you can all find immeasurable love is by getting to really *know* Jesus. I like to chat to him sometimes like a friend! He can be, for you, the best home of all where you can feel safe, loved and held and know Jesus for who he is, a loving Father who came to meet you in his Son. A Christian's idea of paradise is not a temporary holiday like Shangri La, but the unimaginable hope of being loved and held in God's arms, because of what Jesus did for you.

Book Review: What's So Amazing About Grace? by Philip Yancey

One of my favourite books is "What's so amazing about faith? by Philip Yancey". So why should I read it? Well, in this book author Philip Yancey explores grace at street level. If grace is God's love for the undeserving, he asks, then what does it look like in action? And if Christians are its sole dispensers, then how are we doing at lavishing grace on a world that knows far more of cruelty and unforgiveness than it does of mercy?

Yancey sets grace in the midst of life's stark images, tests its mettle against horrific "ungrace." Can grace survive in the midst of such atrocities as the Nazi holocaust? Can it triumph over the brutality of the Ku Klux Klan? Should any grace at all be shown to the likes of Jeffrey Dahmer, who killed and cannibalized seventeen young men? Grace does not excuse sin, says Yancey, but it treasures the sinner.

True grace is shocking, scandalous. It shakes our conventions with its insistence on getting close to sinners and touching them with mercy and hope. It forgives the unfaithful spouse, the racist, the child abuser. It loves today's AIDS-ridden addict as much as the tax collector of Jesus' day.

So, have a go and read it. You will enjoy it!

Edwin Martin

Book available on Amazon, Kindle and Audible.

Daily Hope

The Archbishop of Canterbury has launched a free national phone line as a simple new way to bring worship and prayer into people's homes while church buildings are closed because of the coronavirus. Daily Hope offers music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a telephone line.

The line – which is available 24 hours a day on **0800 804 8044** – has been set up particularly with those unable to join online church services during the period of restrictions in mind.



Hymns/Songs of the Week

Waymaker

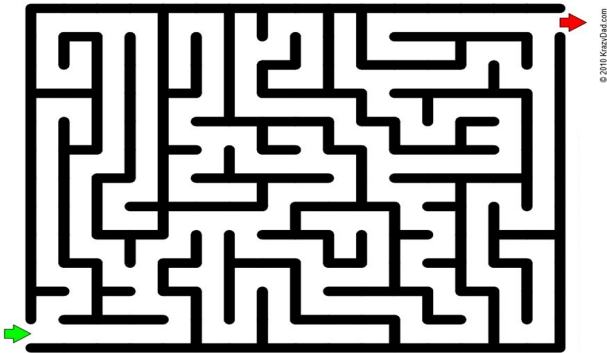
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=29IxnsqOkmQ>

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds

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

For the Children (& young at heart!)

Today's story is about Jesus saying to his disciples that he will always be with them - that he is the way, the truth and the life and that anyone who has seen him has seen the Father. Can you find your way through the maze?



Sing along:

One Way

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MNe4HCO4SuQ>

Jesus is the Way

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n32VS7HCB74>

Let's pray:

God, you know our every thought,
Every feeling in our hearts,
Every passion in our souls,
Every burden that we carry;
Thank you for loving us just as we are. Amen

Church Services etc. on TV/Radio

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

- 6:05am on BBC Radio 4 - Grace - explores the deep concepts of grace and laments other English words which were once so rich in religious meaning.
 - 8.10am on BBC Radio 4 - Sunday Worship - What sort of victory? Dr Rowan Williams asks how our nation can rise to the challenges as it seeks to emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic.
 - 10.45am on BBC 1 - Sunday Worship from Hereford Cathedral with the bishop of Dover, the Right Reverend Rose Hudson-Wilkin.
 - 11.15am on BBC 1 - Sunday Morning Stories - Courage - Rev Kate Bottley talks to people who have found the faith and courage to change their lives.
 - 1.15pm on BBC 1 - Songs of Praise. 75th Anniversary of VE Day. Katherine Jenkins hears from those who experienced the testing times of WWII.
 - 3.00pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong from Tewkesbury Abbey.
- Wednesday 13th May:
- 3.30pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong from St Pancras Church, London.

Online Services

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

You can also download the order of service and the sermon in pdf format from the Church of England website.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/church-online>

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

Discovery Group

Meeting via Zoom on the 2nd & 4th Thursdays of the month at 8pm (after the clap!). Get in touch if you would like the login details.

Please pray with me

Risen Jesus,
Through your wounds we see your love for us, and for the world.
Give us hope and courage in these difficult times,
help us to know that in you,
we are never alone or isolated.
We are always loved,
And in that love, help us to reach out to others.
In Jesus Christ's name,
Amen.



Join us for Services

Zoom services are now at 11am on a Sunday and also 6pm on a Wednesday.

Login details 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! Everyone is welcome to join us.

Rev Eric Lomax Contact Details

Tel: 01234 852241

Mob: 07805 879537

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/faiht-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 call Jacqui on 356993 to request a copy.

For your prayers

- All key workers
- The late Graham H and his family.
- Our leaders, in the UK and internationally.

Our prayer group meets at 8pm (after the clap!) on the 1st & 3rd Thursdays of the month via Zoom. Get in touch if you would like the login details or have any prayer requests.

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