

'Keith's Article from April Magazine (that didn't get printed)

I am writing this on the Friday before Mothering Sunday. Usually I would have been at an assembly at Walsh Infant School, attended by the mums, and we would have had a great celebration to give thanks for all that they do, or have done for us. Not this year, of course. We are living through unprecedented times, and, with so much uncertainty, it is natural for many people to be extremely anxious about the future. The extreme measures being put in place to protect us have no 'end date' at present, and that makes us even more worried. So, what can we do to reassure ourselves, and those around us, at this difficult time.

Well, as Christians we have our faith. Faith in a God who has shown His willingness to see things from our point of view, in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. Lent and Easter are the seasons when, perhaps, more than ever this is apparent. At this time of year the Bible tells us of the events which are at the heart of our Faith. As Bishop Andrew has reminded us, Jesus himself went into voluntary self-isolation for forty days in the wilderness. True, that wasn't to help in the fight against a virus, but, in order to prepare himself for an even greater fight against Evil itself. He used that time to pray and seek His Father's will for His future ministry. And, in doing so, He would have known what it is to be lonely and afraid. After that He knew isolation again, when, even his friends deserted and denied him after his arrest in the Garden and subsequent trial. Jesus cried out in anguish from the isolation and pain of the cross, his isolation, even though watched by many, was complete. So, at this time, when so many of us may be feeling isolated and afraid, we must remember that God, in Jesus, really does understand exactly how we feel. As I have often said before, the God we worship is not 'up there', remote and lacking in understanding of our very human fears and anxieties. Our God has experienced for Himself what we are going through, and, therefore, we can approach Him with complete confidence for reassurance and, as Paul describes it, ask for that peace which surpasses our human understanding. He knows what to give us because he needed it Himself 2000 years ago.

It is going to seem almost surreal this year, if we are not able to be together for those three greatest days in our calendar - Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Day. The drama of the foot washing, the remembrance of the Last Supper gathered together around our own Lord's Table, our veneration of the Cross, then the drama as the light of Christ spreads out from our new Easter Candle followed by our Easter Communion - all of them not happening when they should. Where will be our Easter Joy? (Not even Crème Eggs on Easter Sunday morning!) Of course, we will all feel sad at what we will be missing. But, whether we can do all those things together or not, we still know that Christ is truly risen, that he has conquered sin and death for ever - and we can still be joyful about that, wherever we happen to be. As Paul writes in Romans 8 - 'nothing can separate us from the Love of God in Christ Jesus'. So, even in these dark times, we can still shout out on Easter morning - Alleluia, Christ is risen! And still feel joyous for all that He has done for us. On Good Friday the followers of Jesus felt they had come to the end of all that they had hoped for and been promised. They shut themselves away in despair. But on Easter Day confidence for the future returned in the very real presence of Jesus risen from the dead. That is a lesson for us never to give in to despair, but remember that our faith is all about affirming Life - both in this world and on into the next. And, of course, we always have Jesus' words spoken before He ascended back to heaven 'I am with you always, even to the end of time'. We take much comfort in that.

At our Baptism we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit to guide us, strengthen us and comfort us, and at times like this we must remember that we never have to face anything on our own. We can also remember what happened to the prophet Elijah. In the turmoil of his exile from a wicked King and Queen, he discovered

God, not in any lavish demonstration of mighty power, but as a still small voice of calm (1 Kings 19).

As H.M. The Queen has reminded us, we have a great history of coming together as a nation in the face of a crisis. At this time, although that might not be physically possible, we can still come together in many other ways. Those of you with skills in modern technology will be able to access many tools to help you stay connected online and through social media. But, even those (like me!), who are not so savvy, can still use the telephone. At St Peter's we are aiming to keep in touch with those who are isolated by phone, and encouraging one another to join together in prayer remotely. Each Sunday that our church is closed for public worship, I will be in church at 10 am lighting a candle and praying. I invite you to join in by lighting a candle in your own home and using the common prayers I shall be sending out online or on a sheet, through the letter box, to as many of the congregation as possible.

Here are some of the Bible readings for the next few Sundays, which you can use in your prayer time at home. Just read them slowly and let God speak to you through them, in the silence of your own room:

Palm Sunday 5th April – Matthew 21 v 1 – 11;

Good Friday – John chapters 18 & 19;

Easter Sunday 12th April – John 20 v 1 – 18;

2nd Sunday of Easter 19th April – John 20 v 19 – end;

3rd Sunday of Easter 26th April – Luke 24 v 13 – 35.

There are lots of other prayers and resources for worship on the Church of England website, if you have access to that. Also, there is a daily service on Radio 4 Long Wave at 9 – 45 am. In any case please just keep praying. In doing so we form part of a great company of voices which unites us, not only with those in this world, but with those who are already in the next. Distance is no barrier to fellowship in prayer.

I know that many of you will be keeping an eye on family, friends and neighbours, while taking into account the need to avoid physical contact, or too close proximity which could spread the disease. If you want a chat or have trouble getting food or medicines you can phone me on 01252 321517 and we will help.

If this crisis brings people closer together (even at a distance), and makes us all think more carefully about what our priorities ought to be, then, awful though it is, perhaps some lasting good will emerge. The onset of spring is a yearly reminder of renewal and fresh starts. As the world is refreshed and renewed in this most glorious of seasons, let us rejoice in the promise of refreshment and renewal that God offers us through the resurrection of Jesus.

I sincerely wish you a Happy Easter and pray that you will keep safe and in good health.

With my love, prayers and good wishes. Fr Keith.

April in the garden

As you read this we shall still be coping with the Corona virus. One of the best and safest places to be is out in the fresh air in the garden.

The lengthening days make this the perfect time to set up the garden for summer. Here's what to do now:

- As soon as the ground reaches 6°C (Stick a thermometer in the soil) you can start to sow salad, beetroot and annual herbs, such as dill and rocket. The same goes for hardy annuals such as larkspur and Nigella.

your soil still feels cold lay fleece directly over freshly sown seed to hold in the heat.

- Feed lawns with a slow-release organic fertilizer to get things off to a good start.
- Plant out seed potatoes once "chitted". Grow half a dozen in a dustbin if you have room in the greenhouse for a plate of earlies. Line out then just plunge onion sets and shallots into ground that has been firmed and raked. They like soil manure the previous year. Until they have formed their first leaves and have got their roots down, net onions to prevent blackbirds pulling them free.
- Evergreens, such as rosemary, lavender, bay, turtle, sage and thyme, can be pruned as soon as winter is over. Never cut into old wood and always leave enough foliage to help draw energy back into the limbs.
- Beware the scarlet Lily beetle. Hunt down the adults, which will be out in the first sunshine. Very carefully pick them off and squash them.
- Finally, although it may seem early, put supports in now for herbaceous perennials. Hazel twigs are excellent but steel hoops are most easily installed. Let the plants grow into the supports rather than wading amongst them and leaving the stems look bunched up.

Enjoy your garden and keep well.

Here is a photo I took on my walk the other evening. It was just before dark and I was desperate to visit the church! Hope you like it – lovely blossom on the tree and a wonderful sense of peace.

Hope everyone is keeping well.

Ceri



Boredom Busters!!

Spring Clean—great chance to really tidy and clean out those cupboards.

Enjoy some gardening - an opportunity to get the garden spring ready!

A walk - going out for a walk is fine. The fresh air and exercise will really help you feel better.

Bring out the board games—great chance if you don't live alone to play cards or a favourite board game.

Read - dig out that book you haven't had time to read!

Call a friend and stay connected - call a friend and then arrange the next chat so you both have something to look forward to. You can even have a cuppa whilst you chat just like a 'virtual coffee morning'.

Keep to a routine - its best to still get up at a regular time and get dressed. It gives the day a sense of purpose.

Look through old photos - so many lovely memories live in our cupboards, dig them out and bring a smile to your face.

Draw - when was the last time you drew a picture? Have a go, you might surprise yourself.

Can you contribute to the magazine??

During this strange time we find ourselves in, we have a lot of time on our hands. I would love to run some articles on people's reflections during their time of social distancing. Perhaps you could share what has brought you comfort, what you managed to do that you have been putting off or has there been a bible passage you have been drawn to?

Please drop me a line at churcombe@ntlworld.com or leave a message on my phone 07706 069991. Thanks in anticipation.

