



## Cheltenham United Reformed Church

*'The Pew sheet without any Pews'*

*Emergency Bulletin No 3 / 05.04.20 – Palm Sunday*

### Dear Friends

In company with all other organisations, our Church is following Government guidelines and not meeting for worship while the coronavirus emergency is on. So we are issuing a weekly bulletin with news, prayer requests, information about virtual services, plus anything else that might be 'in the notices' and as a separate attachment, you will find this week's edition of 'Live Your Faith' from Roots on the Web [rootsontheweb.com](http://rootsontheweb.com).

Whilst we cannot physically attend church we can share in worship virtually.

- Sunday 8am on Radio 4
- Sunday 8am on Radio Gloucestershire
- [www.stpetersleck.org](http://www.stpetersleck.org)
  - Sunday 10am
  - A Reflection every day in Holy Week 9pm
  - *The Final Hour* on Good Friday at 2pm
- Sunday 11.30 am on BBC 1
- <https://devotions.urc.org.uk/>

### Prayer Requests

The prayer requests for this week are:

- Hanne, Mary
- For all those with the virus and for all those who are looking after them.
- For all those who are self-isolating because of age or health conditions
- For all those stranded abroad and their families waiting for their repatriation.
- Our world as it confronts COVID 19, especially our NHS, carers, those who deliver goods and those who have to work to keep society functioning.

If you know of anyone who would like to be added to the prayer list, please let us know and they will be included in the next bulletin.

### This week's Lectionary Readings:

Isaiah 50 v4-9a Psalm 118 v1-2,19-29

Philippians 2 v5-11

Matthew 21 v1-11

## Thoughts for Holy Week - Rev. Richard Atkins 2020

Today is Palm Sunday but reflecting only on this one day is the same as only seeing the first act of a Shakespeare play.

This Holy Week, this extraordinary week of love and hope, betrayal and death lies open before us as if on a stage.



Jesus, of course, is at the centre of this drama of huge proportions, with its large supporting cast.

He enters a bustling overcrowded Jerusalem.

He is an icon, a celebrity.

His followers lap all this up as they walk in the reflected glory

Yet this story is about more than Palm Sunday.

It's about more than his disciples; so excited yet also fearful.

This drama is also about many individuals, speaking for the human experience.

By Friday Jesus has been arrested and Pilate wants to release him, as justice requires.

He tries everything to avoid responsibility for Jesus' fate.

But finally he gives in to the mob's demands, and those of the religious leaders.

Herod is thrilled to meet Jesus, because he has heard great things about this man of miracles, and wants to watch an entertaining magician.

But when Jesus refuses to perform, Herod loses interest, gets bored and sends him back.

Barabbas doesn't actually appear in person, but plays a significant role as a clearly guilty man, going free while Jesus dies in his place.

Simon of Cyrene just happens to be passing by; he could be you and I in the wrong time and place.

Simon is forced to carry Jesus' cross, so sharing in his sufferings.

The two criminals form a fascinating double-act. One gives in to that very human instinct, seeing himself as better than another person in the same situation.

But for the other one, all earthly hope is gone.

He turns to Jesus and seeks and receives grace.

The centurion, despite being an outsider to the Jewish religion has the faith to see the truth in Jesus, and the courage to speak it.

Then there is the chorus. Would we have been part of that chorus drawn along by the crowd? Now chanting "Crucify him!" when on Palm Sunday we'd sung loudly 'Hosanna! Hosanna!'

We had welcomed this fascinating man from Galilee now we turn against him.

Meanwhile, a much smaller group of women and disciples, watch the drama unfold, helpless to assist, giving all they can - their loyal presence and their grief.

The great drama unfolds before our eyes, as it does year after year at the heart of the Christian community.

But not this year, not this Holy Week, this will be different, so terribly different.

There will be no procession on Palm Sunday as Holy Week begins.

There will be no meeting on Maundy Thursday to commemorate the last hours of Jesus' life.

For me there will be no moving service on that night in Gloucester Cathedral, ending in silence and prayer in the Lady Chapel.

And there will be no walk of witness in the town on Good Friday.

There will be nothing of that sort.

For the darkness that covered the earth at the death of Jesus is with us now.

We are already living in the shadow of the cross.

We don't need a walk of witness to tell us that death is around us, touching us, shifting the axis of our society in ways that we have never known in our lifetime.

But are we alone? We may feel so in this wretched time.

But I don't believe that we are and the reason is because in that death on the cross is to be found a Christ who does not neglect his people.

In the Cross is to be found the true humanity of Jesus Christ.

Just as it was at Christmas; when the word becomes flesh and dwelt among us.

We may feel alone, many of us terribly alone, particularly this week, this Holy Week.

But we are not alone for in the darkness of our current state, God in Christ holds us.

He loves us, dies for us, each of us, to offer us life in its fullness.

And beyond the death, the Cross - appears the light.

Easter Sunday, Resurrection, death defeated and new hope, new life offered.

## **CHURCH NEWS**

### **St Andrew's**

The AGM will be held on 26th April by email. All papers will be sent out after Easter.

A 'polite' reminder to all those who have not yet sent their Annual Reports - these are now required asap. Thank you.

April Monthly Charity/Retiring Offering is for 'Age UK'. Donations should be sent to Donna or David.

### **Prestbury**

The Virtual AGM is underway and all questions, comments and responses are asked for by Saturday 11 April.

### Useful addresses if you or someone you know should need practical help at this time:

Gloucestershire CC Help Hub - <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gloucestershires-community-help-hub/>

[Cheltenham Mutual Aid Covid-19](#) (Facebook public group)

[COVID-19 Cheltenham Community Network](#) (Facebook public group)

[St. Peters and the Moors](#)

[Swindon Parish](#)

[Prestbury Parish Council](#)

[Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council](#)

[Charlton Kings](#) Parish Council

[Benhall Residents Association](#) (Facebook private group)

[Naunton Park Area](#) (Facebook private group)

[St. Philips and St. James area](#)

**Spring Harvest Home** is a completely free online event with content suitable for the whole family. Coming to a sofa near you through the week after Easter – April 13th to 17th, you can enjoy all-day content around the 2020 theme of *Unleashed - The Acts Church Today*. [Check out our launch video here.](#)

### An important anniversary for Cheltenham Churches

Dear Friends,

It is the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Cheltenham Passion Play. With everyone under lock-down it is an excellent opportunity to re-visit it.

To mark the occasion we have published all three of the videos telling the story of the Passion Play for the first time.

[Jesus for Today](#) is an hour's TV programme that tells the story of the Cheltenham Passion Play, the people who took part, the people who watched and the impact the story of Jesus continues to have on many people's lives. It can be found on the YouTube TV channel by searching for **Easter Passion Play Cheltenham - Jesus for Today**

[Jesus for Tomorrow](#) is a half-hour programme for schools. Matt Medhurst who played the part of Jesus meets students from Pittville School, Cheltenham to talk about his experience and his faith. It can be found on the YouTube TV channel by searching for **Easter Passion Play Schools - Jesus for Tomorrow**. It will be particularly useful for families to use at home especially with young people from Years 6,7 and 8 who are 10 to 14 years old.

[Jesus forever the same](#) is a collection of five prayer meditations created by those who took part on the five themes of the Passion Play: Friendship, Conflict, Betrayal, Death, Resurrection. It can be found on the YouTube TV channel by searching for Easter Passion Play Prayer - Jesus for Tomorrow.

On the website, [Jesusfortoday.co.uk](http://Jesusfortoday.co.uk) this web site the whole of the programme is broken down into short video clips that together tell the story of Jesus.

There's lots of material to help you find out more about Jesus and the difference he makes. There are resources for individuals, churches and schools to use. They will be specially useful this Easter for all who are home-schooling this Easter.

Please pass this message on as widely as you can and encourage as many people as possible to view the videos and visit the website. You may be able to invite people to watch Jesus for Today on Good Friday between 12-00 and 3-00 and perhaps return to the final Act, Resurrection, on Easter Sunday at 8-00!

Every blessing for Easter and all that lies ahead,

Jason Boyd (Minister, Highbury Congregational Church) ([revdjasoncboyd@gmail.com](mailto:revdjasoncboyd@gmail.com))  
Richard Cleaves (retired)

**A Prayer For Those Who Live Alone** by Revd Dee Brierley-Jones

I live alone, Dear Lord.  
Stay by my side.  
In all my daily needs,  
Please be my guide.  
Grant me good health,  
For that, indeed, I pray  
To carry on my work  
From day to day.  
Keep pure my mind,  
My thoughts, my every deed,  
Let me be kind, unselfish,  
In my neighbour's need.  
If sickness or an accident befall,  
Then humbly, Lord, I pray,  
Please hear my call.  
And when I'm feeling low  
Or in despair,  
Lift up my heart  
And help me in my prayer.  
I live alone, Dear Lord,  
Yet have no fear,  
Because I feel Your presence  
Ever near. AMEN

**A Message from Revd Gary**

Lent is a time of preparation, through words of love and self-sacrifice, for the celebration of our Lord's death and resurrection. On Palm Sunday we come together to begin this solemn celebration in union with the Church throughout the world. Christ enters his own city to complete his work as our Saviour, to suffer, to die, and to rise again. Let us go with him in faith and love, so that, united with him in his sufferings, we may share his risen life.

"The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you, the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you Peace"

**Janet. Fiona & Brian**