



Cheltenham United Reformed Church

'The Pew sheet without any Pews'

*Bulletin No 5 / 12.04.20 – **Easter Sunday***

Dear Friends

In company with all other organisations, the Church is following Government guidelines and not meeting for worship while the coronavirus emergency is on.

This weekly bulletin has worship, news, prayer requests, information about virtual services, plus anything else that might be 'in the notices'.

Prayer Requests

It is with sadness that we record the deaths of

- Bill Farrell, aged 100 on 8th April
- Jean Williams aged 96 on 10th April

Please pray for their families, also for:

- Barry
- For all those with the virus and for all those who are looking after them.
- 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 news or of anyone who would like to be added to the prayer list please let us know.

Virtual Services

- Easter from King's – Saturday BBC2 7pm
- Sunday 10 am - Our Moderator, [Steve Faber is leading Easter Sunday worship at Solihull URC](#)
- Easter Sunday - Radio 4 8.10am & Radio Gloucestershire 8.am
- www.stpetersleck.org
- Easter Sunday from Bangor – BBC1 11.25am
- <https://devotions.urc.org.uk/>
- [All Soul's, Langham Place](#)
- [1st Congregational, United Church of Christ, Wisconsin](#) - Livestream at 3.30pm BST (suggested by Sally March whose brother attends there)
- [URC Churches](#) which are streaming services

A prayer for NOW: The Loneliness of Coronavirus

Walk with your heavenly Father.

Talk with your heavenly Father.

Turn your eyes to Him, because He is standing next to you, to support you in case your weakness causes you to fall.

Your loving and caring Father God wants you to talk to Him as a child to a father, He will hear you in that holy and comforting love.

Walk with Him and talk with Him and pray without ceasing.

Cling to His side in your worry and loneliness, and your Father God will look down on you and take your hand in His. AMEN

Rev Dee Brierley Jones

Easter Sunday Lectionary Readings

Jeremiah 31 v1-6

Psalms 118 v1-2, 14-24

Acts 10 v34-43

Matthew 28 v1-10



Easter Day 2000, The Cheltenham Passion Play.

In last week's Bulletin 3, we gave you the link to the videos of the [Cheltenham Passion Play in 2000](#)

St Andrew's had a big interest in this production. Glyn played the part of Caiaphas and a number of our ladies took the roles of Women of Jerusalem in costume, presenting prophetic words to the crowd and suffering ridicule and abuse.

On Easter Sunday morning at 8am, the final act was presented in Imperial Gardens – the Empty Tomb and Mary Magdalene's encounter with the Risen Christ. There was a big crowd and after the drama and devotions, many of those present came back to St Andrew's for breakfast. They came in through the main doors at the back of Church and queued up the aisle to get into the Hall (This was before the rebuild).

Margaret Harmsworth was in charge of the catering and had provided for about 80 people but there were far more than that. But, as Margaret will testify, there was enough. It was not 5000 but a feeding miracle none the less.

The Easter Experience transcends the normal. Pray that it will be so again this year in a time of crisis

Tony Jeans 8th April 2020

Meditation for Easter Sunday

How are you with surprises?

Some people love them others can't stand being surprised.

Imagine how Mary Magdalene felt when she came round the corner on that first Easter morning only to find that the tomb was empty.

An empty tomb wasn't what she was expecting.

She stepped back, surprised, amazed.

Then as the realisation of what had happened kicked in there was deepening horror, bewilderment, and a sense of utter despair.

Mary was in a state of grief and bereavement; she had come to be with her Lord.

But what she encountered is simply not what she expected.

She turned and ran to tell others the dreadful news: his body has been stolen.

The stone rolled away, the linen wrappings removed, the clothes of the grave lie neatly folded.

The disciples who return with her to the tomb don't linger, perhaps fearful of what might happen to them if they are found in the garden.

They look in and depart.

So, Mary is left alone once again, in her despair. She sits and weeps.

All she knows is pain and grief, the despair of not even knowing where Jesus' physical body is located.

She can't be with him, can't touch him, and talk to him.

Her friend, the man she loves and who loved her, the man who offered her life and hope instead of despair.

He is nowhere to be seen. She is bereft.

Yet into this scene of despair God breaks in, unrecognisable to Mary until he speaks her name.

Death is not the final answer.

The illogical, the impossible, the unimaginable has taken place.

The one who was dead is alive.

The established rules are forever changed.

Like Mary, our deep desire is to hold onto the risen Christ.

"Do not hold onto me", says Jesus, when our human desire is to possess, to cling to what we have discovered deeply afraid of letting go.

Mary learns something we all need to hear: the risen Christ cannot be contained or controlled.

The instructions from Jesus are incisive: Mary is commanded to tell "my brothers" of his impending ascension.

Mary goes to the disciples immediately, her profession is simple and profound, "I have seen the Lord".

As we hear or read these familiar words, we are invited into this altered reality.

As witnesses to the resurrected Christ, we are invited to see differently, to embrace a vision of new life.

The resurrection of Jesus is not simply a creed that we recite.

It is God's address to us as we face our present circumstances, in the pestilence of Coronavirus.

Good Friday, darkness, death, pain and bereavement is not the end.

Easter Day offers us light, new life and hope.

Far from saying "No" this resurrected Christ is God's 'Yes' to the world.

His birth in the dirt and squalor of a stable, the brutal death of the cross, the burial in a borrowed tomb says to me that he is not absent from his suffering and broken world.

Rather he is and remains with us in the midst of our pain, confusion and sadness.

As he spoke to Mary in the garden on that first Easter Day so he speaks to each of us by name; holding us, loving us, leading us through the darkness and light of our life.

The old story of death, grief and emptiness is not the final word.

"Christ is risen, Alleluia, Alleluia, he is risen indeed".

Rev Richard Atkins

The Garden Tomb, Jerusalem, a possible site of the Resurrection.

Janet Kemp



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

Gloucestershire CC [Community Help Hub](#)

Cheltenham Borough Council Coronavirus – [Community Advice and Support](#)

ST ANDREW'S

The AGM will be held electronically over the next two weeks (for 26th April). Papers will be sent out after Easter. Please read all the instructions on the Agenda.

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

PRESTBURY

Thank you to all who responded to Phase 1 of the Virtual AGM. The papers for the next stage will be sent out shortly.

Read REFORM free online:

For as long as people are shut up indoors, the URC is making *Reform* magazine free online. Digital editions can be read on tablets, computers and smartphones, including monthly issues going back to the start of 2014. Enjoy classics like the interview with Terry Waite in July 2018's edition. Terry, who spent 1,763 days in isolation, said: "Solitude forces you to face yourself as you are." Start reading [here](#)

Prestbury Parish Cross garlanded for
Easter Sunday- *Fiona Hall*



Easter Thoughts from Revd Gary

The last 3 weeks have been hugely challenging for all of us as we have found ourselves having to innovate, adapt and respond to the ever-changing world about us. We have had the opportunity to feel something of the bleakness that courses through Holy Week through being locked away and kept socially distant from each other. But we should also be aware and have a sense of the liberating power of the Holy Spirit, none more so than on Easter Day. Christ bursts forth from the tomb and nothing will ever be the same again. When we too burst forth, what stories will we tell? Perhaps stories of people growing in their faith, maybe ones about people coming to faith, or even a story about how the church has adapted and become something new? Every Blessing

'Lord Jesus, risen from the dead and alive for evermore; stand in our midst as in the upper room; show us thy hands and thy side; speak thy peace to our hearts and minds; and send us forth into the world as thy witnesses; for the glory of thy name'. Amen

Rev John R.W.Stott

Janet, Fiona & Brian