

Letter from the Vicar

Easter Friday
April 2020

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

**Alleluia! Christ is risen.
He is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

The Easter greeting of the Church never ceases to bring joy, life, and hope – even in these difficult times. In the early Church that greeting would have often been accompanied by the kiss of peace between believers. How I long to see you all again and share this greeting together: to share in the joy of the risen Lord; to share in the meal of the New Covenant recalling Jesus' act of love for each of us; to rejoice in the gift of new life which nothing can destroy or overpower; to share this new and living hope with others, and to embrace each other – shaking hands, hugging, even sharing a kiss of peace.

Many of us are longing for social interaction. As an extrovert, I am fortunate to have my family with whom to share lock-down but that doesn't mean that I don't both crave interaction and engagement with others whilst simultaneously secretly longing for some time on my own. Our new situation has given rise to some wonderful ways to interact: family quizzes via Zoom and Facebook; virtual choir practices; neighbours meeting for the first time as they stand (2 metres apart) on a Thursday night to cheer-on our key workers; telephones coming back to the fore *it's good to talk!*

Some, though, are craving their own company: families in flats and with no outside space; people living in/with broken or failed relationships; children exhausted from home schooling; family pets not used to their humans being around all the time. With the rise in 24-hour news and social media it can often feel like we are being bombarded by 'noise' and yet nothing is really being said. There are pros and cons to everything, and for some of us this 'new normal' is tolerable whilst for others it is agony. I hope and pray that you are finding it tolerable. If not, both Ruth and I are here to listen and offer what help we can. We know that many are anxious – both over contracting the virus and over their economic security. We know that many are lonely. Let us help you.

Some of you will know that I am a BIG fan of Dad's Army. I must have watched every episode countless times and can probably recall most of the scripts verbatim. One of the things that has struck me in recent days is the same solidarity, affection, and sense of humour that was evident in those dark days of World War II is present now. That sense of duty to others, do the best you can, and laugh often. You will no doubt have heard of Captain Tom Moore – a World War II veteran – who has raised over £20 million for NHS charities. He didn't have to do this but he chose to do something for others. What a wonderful inspiration he is. And there are many more like him who, in their own way, are also contributing and inspiring: those who are making scrub bags so that medical staff can put their scrubs into a bag to take home and wash without having to touch them again; those who are delivering prescriptions and vital medication to folk unable to get out; those who are feeding our key workers – especially in hospitals – often putting themselves at risk just so the medics have the energy to cope with the demands of Covid-19.

It is possible also that some of us are also feeling guilty at not doing more to help others. In short, all I want to say is "don't!" Guilt will get you nowhere other than to destroy your mental health and consume your energy. No matter how much we do there is always more to be done but not necessarily by us. Staying at home is helping – more than we possibly know. Praying for people is helping. Calling folk on the phone is helping. Donating money (if you are able) is helping. Guilt does not help.

St Peter knew this only too well. He, who denied knowing Jesus three times, felt immense guilt upon the death of Jesus. It took away some of the joy of the resurrection. But Jesus, knowing this, simply asked Peter three times if he loved him. A threefold denial met by a threefold declaration of love.

Let us love rather than be weighed down with guilt, for...

**Alleluia! Christ is risen.
He is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

Stay well. Stay Safe. And in the joy of the risen Christ blessings be upon you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

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