

Dear Friends

I wondered about adding a picture to this Bulletin - something suitable for Easter - but I'm concerned that some people might not be able to open it, and it's more important that everyone receives it. So imagine whatever picture you would like - eggs, flowers, lambs, an empty tomb, a wonderful sunrise... Maybe get some fresh flowers to look at, if you can, and let's worship together this Easter.....

He is Risen! - - - He is Risen Indeed!

Hymn: Christ the Lord is risen today. Alleluia! (R&S 232)

Prayer Risen Lord Jesus,  
We share in the joy of your resurrection.  
The stone has been rolled away!  
The tomb is empty!  
May we know your risen presence with us today.  
Amen.

Reading: Matthew 28: 1-10

Reflection:

At first light, Matthew tells us, the two women, 'went to look at the tomb'. That's just silly - they didn't go to see the tomb, like tourists. They went to grieve; to cry their hearts out in despair and to do what they could for the body of their dear dead friend. This isn't a story about viewing a rocky cave in a beautiful garden. It's a story about death... real, painful, shocking death... and then life. The death, the burial, the grief are all real. And familiar. But there is a twist to the story, which we are so familiar with that we too easily skim straight over it. The women, shockingly, find no body; but rather an earthquake and an angel which point them away from the tomb, away from death and despair, towards an encounter with the risen Christ. Towards new life.

Death and grief are real - and shattering - now as they were then. But because the women found an empty tomb, we know that death is not the end. Because the risen Christ appeared to them, and gently said, 'Greetings... do not be afraid', we don't need to be afraid either - of anything in life or death. Really - we don't!

Amen. And Alleluia!

Hymn: Too early for the blackbird (R&S 249)

Prayer            God of grace,  
we bring before you those who have no joy and no hope,  
those who see no future, no light at the end of the tunnel,  
those scarred by pain and sadness, those who grieve,  
those exhausted by caring, and by worrying,  
those struggling with illness,  
those afraid to contemplate death.....  
God of grace and resurrection power,  
bring your hope and your healing today,  
and may all share in the joy and reassurance of your resurrection.  
Amen.

Hymn:            Thine be the glory, risen conquering Son            (R&S 247)

Take the joy and hope of the risen Lord  
with you into the coming week  
and may the blessing of God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
be with you and with those you love  
now and always.    Amen

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News of our church family this week -

Better news of Nicky's brother-in-law, who is recovering and back with his family for Easter, thankfully. I have also been hearing of the support people are receiving from friends and neighbours, and especially from members of our church family. I think it's wonderful the way everyone is helping where and when they can, keeping in touch by phone to share concerns and cheer each other up, and holding each other in prayer.

The following is a prayer written to be used in a Communion service, or alternatively to be used as a grace before a meal, particularly perhaps today when we are all thinking of each other:

Send your Holy Spirit upon us and upon the gifts at this table,  
that we who eat and drink at this feast  
may share the life of Christ, our Lord.    Amen

Blessings - and best wishes for a very Happy Easter!  
Anne Lewitt