

Thursday April 16th

Dear Friends

As we enter another week of lockdown, we hope that this finds you all safe and well. Life has changed for all of us, in ways we could never have imagined but it looks as though this may become our “normal” for a few weeks still to come. Thank you to everyone for keeping in touch. We have heard from numerous people how grateful they are for all the phone calls, text messages and e mails from their church family. It is easy to think that there is nothing we can do about the situation but of course there is. We can continue to pray for each other and also for those who are physically vulnerable. Those who are financially insecure and worried about needing to take time off work. Those who live in countries without public healthcare systems. Those who do not have family or friends and are facing this situation alone. We can pray also for healthcare workers and political leaders who are responding to this crisis and bearing the incredible responsibility of trying to keep us safe. Every one of us can support each other by simply staying at home as requested. Every one of us can do something so please continue to support each other in any way you are able.

We hope that you were able to join in with our Easter worship. Ali lit a candle for each of us as a symbol of the light and we watched as the light shone ever brighter as one more candle was lit. Our thanks to Ali for all she does in preparing for leading worship. Ali is still working full time (from home) so we really appreciate her ministry at this time. We are all having to learn and adapt to the changes forced on us by the current situation but we are very thankful for the willingness of everyone to engage with a new way of worshipping and for the encouragement shown to the preaching and leading team. We are also greatly encouraged to hear that on Easter Sunday 144 people viewed the service online so it is clear that we are reaching wider than our immediate church family.

We hope you are enjoying the weekly quiz, the answers to last weeks and another one for this week is attached. Many of us are finding a variety of creative pastimes to keep us busy. We had heard that the Jessop Hospital were in need of blankets for their baby unit and some of us began knitting but we have since heard that the hospital cannot accept them at the moment. However, if you are still wanting to knit, please consider knitting angels which we will use at Christmas to leave all around Toley as we did in 2018. (If you need a pattern, please contact either of us and we can let you have one).

Beth Booth sent us a poem that her daughter Natalie wrote, which she said we could share with you. Natalie’s study group were asked to write a poem or psalm or song about how they’re all feeling now with the current difficulties in the world, inspired by the Songs of Solomon, this is one she wrote that was read out by their Pastor at the Easter celebration this morning.

PSALM FOR TROUBLED TIMES

*Lord sometimes it's hard
To find reasons to be grateful
When the world is dark
And its people cold and hateful
Surrounded by pain,
People starving, people dying
All that I can see
Are people suffering and crying.*

*Some will say "Have faith,
Because God will see you through it".
But that can be hard
When at the bottom of the pit.
So, it's easier
To scream and cry and curse and shout
And everything hurts
So you shut these feeling out*

*There is so much loss
There's so much misery and grief
There is too much death
Stealing our smiles like a thief
How can we have faith
When all our hope it seems is gone
It's the endless night
And we will never see the dawn*

*In the storms of life
When all we can feel is anger
And the burning rage
We can't hold in for any longer
We cry "It's not fair"
As we sink into our sadness
When it's all gone wrong
To feel 'right' again seems madness*

*Sometimes Lord it's true
That when we're all at our weakest
When all fight is gone
That is when we are the meekest
Help us understand
That somehow, we will get through this
You will give us strength
And heal our hurting with a kiss*

*Let us not forget
That no matter what, you're with us
In the darkest times
You're the light that shines upon us
You are always there
And you will hold us in your hand
When we feel alone
We see your footprints in the sand*

*You are by our side
When the world is dark and dreary
Through our time of need
When we're sad and tired and weary
When all hope seems lost
And when smiles are hard to form
You are by our side
And you will walk us through the storm.*

Amy Wrigglesworth has also sent us some good news and her thoughts during this difficult time. She writes...

Today I watched a short video of my two-and-a-half-year-old nieces and it really lifted my spirits. And what a wonderful gift children are from God. And I could also hear birds singing in my garden. And Lord in this difficult time of heartache and loss be with us. Hold us and comfort us. And we must pray for each other and be still and know that you're our God and your love for us is unconditional. Take care and God bless. From Amy

Birthday wishes to those of you who have celebrated birthdays recently, Chris Booth, Gay, John Hill-Wilson are ones we were aware of but if you have had a birthday recently or are due to celebrate one in the coming days the wishes are extended to you also. Monica Rorison as we mentioned last time, celebrated her 90th birthday. We sent her greetings and flowers on behalf of the church family and she has sent the following message to us all:

My heartfelt thanks for all the good wishes and blessings and lovely flowers at my birthday. To all the church family. I was quite overwhelmed with the signs of your love. Yours in love. Monica.

The way ahead is still unclear, there will be difficult days ahead but we have a sure and certain hope in Jesus. On Easter Sunday Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury, spoke of the hope that we as Christians can have. He called it an ambitious vision and "unreasonable hope"

Even in the dark days of this Easter we can feed on hope. We can dream of what our country and our world will look like after the pandemic. There will still be wickedness and war, poverty and persecution, greed and grasping. There always has been; always will be.

Yet in the resurrection of Jesus, God lights a fire which calls us to justice, to live in humble generosity, to transform our societies. After so much suffering, so much heroism from key workers and the NHS, so much effort, once this epidemic is conquered here and round the world, we cannot be content to go back to what was before as if all is normal. There needs to be a resurrection of our common life, something that links to the old, but is different and more beautiful. We must dream it because it is the gift of God. Then we must build it in partnership with God. In the new life of the resurrection of Jesus, we dare to have faith in life before death. We hope, because of the resurrection.

With love

Angela and Liz