

All Saints' Church

Cottenham with Rampton



Pastoral Letter #5

8th April 2020

Dear Church Family,

Like many of you, I've been using a Lent resource to guide me through Lent. Mine is *'Take up your Cross'* by Vanessa Herrick and is written with church leaders in mind. Last Friday, the commentary said, *'Only a few days to go, and the demands of preparing for Holy Week are upon us. Are the palm crosses ready? Has the Paschal candle arrived? And how many services, sermons, talks and intercessions are there yet to prepare? To say nothing of the normal run of pastoral and practical demands ... For everyone – lay and ordained – it is a pressured time of year.'*

Well, the palm crosses *were* ready but will now become next year's. The Paschal candle *is* there in church but will remain unlit until we return. Who would have imagined a few weeks ago that Holy Week could look so different? That instead of planning services in church, I'd be learning how to livestream a service from my study, or negotiating how to use Zoom (a video conferencing service most commonly used for remote business meetings) to take part in a small group. My greatest regret however has to be the loss of face to face contact, particularly to those of you who are unwell or grieving at this time. When all you want to do is be there for someone, to hold a hand or give a hug, the telephone feels a poor substitute. I'm sure you're feeling the same. The Psalm reading for last Friday however was this from Psalm 18: 1-3:

'I love you, O Lord, my strength.

The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer;

my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge.

He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

I call to the Lord, who is worthy of praise.'

And that is so true. We have a loving Heavenly Father who is with us whatever we are going through, and on whom we can depend, even when the world looks and feels very different.

It is amazing that the Palm Sunday service recorded on Facebook received over 200 views. Wouldn't it be wonderful to see that many in church on a Sunday morning! Given the positive feedback, I will lead us in a virtual service of Holy Communion on Easter Day at 10.30am where I will receive the bread and wine on behalf of us all. Do be sure to find us on Facebook if you haven't already and join in. If you don't have access to a computer, can I encourage you instead to watch or listen to the Archbishop of Canterbury's Easter Day service being broadcast on radio and television. Sunday's sermon will be available to read as usual on All Saint's Church website from early Sunday morning.

Our young people are enjoying the material that Alison Wedgbury has been providing for them. I've heard various tales of children climbing through a piece of A4 paper! All of our church children will receive an Easter egg as usual from All Saints this year, plus a Christian book to enjoy through the coming weeks. Look out on your doorsteps!

It is with deep sadness that I have to inform you of the death of Martin Hudson on Monday of this week. Martin died peacefully at home with Janet at his side. Martin was always a tremendous support and encouragement to me and had such a positive outlook on life. I know that we, as a church family, will miss him greatly. Our thoughts and prayers are with Janet and the family at this sad time.

Please continue to remember in prayer those who are currently unwell: Jean Wilmshurst, Pat and John Easterling, Rona Gardner, Brenda Morphet, and Barbara Wilbourn Smith (Peter's cousin). Please also pray for Sue and Mike Smith following the funeral of Sue's mother this week. And, of course, continue to pray for all those affected by Covid-19.

For any who have ever thought about going to Spring Harvest (the Christian holiday held at Butlins each year), this year '*Spring Harvest Home*' will be available online via YouTube from Easter Monday to Friday with great worship and teaching every day. It's completely free and the theme is 'Unleashed – The Acts Church Today'. If you're interested, have a look at www.springharvest.org

Do keep in touch with each another, offering prayer and support as needed. There are many church members just itching to drop off shopping, collect a prescription, etc. Please don't be afraid to ask. As I said last week, these are times for us all to both give and receive.

I will be on leave as planned from Easter Monday to the following Monday so there won't be a pastoral letter or sermon during this period. I'm looking forward to joining in with Spring Harvest which had been our planned post-Easter break.

It just leaves me now to wish you all a Happy Easter!

With love and prayer,

Lynda

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