

Virtual Church News

Sunday 22 March 2020

Mothering Sunday

4th Sunday of Lent



Welcome to our 'temporary' new look Church News which will be distributed electronically for the next few weeks/months.

Hard copies will be circulated to those without access to email/social media. If you know of anyone without email who you think would benefit from a hard copy, please call Jacqui on 356993 or email Jacqui.piper@btinternet.com

Although services and groups are suspended, both Churches currently remain open as usual and you are welcome to visit them for individual prayer and reflection.

We do ask however that you sanitize your hands on entering and leaving the church.

These are early days, and there has been little time to establish a system of bringing worship to you. Please remember that the place of worship has little significance compared to the worship we have in Spirit and truth (John 4:24).

I will be praying on Sunday morning at 10am for all of you. Please pray, in Spirit, with me, using your own prayers, or the short liturgy (see link below). It includes a reading for every day of the week, including Sunday.

https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/midweek_worship_at_home_0.pdf

In addition, the Archbishop of Canterbury will stream a live Anglican Service at 9am on Sunday morning from his Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/archbishopofcanterbury>

A Reading for the Week: Ephesians 3:14-21

'For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family^[a] in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.'

Message from Rev Eric Lomax

I remember my first day at school. I began late, and I arrived in a classroom filled with children who already seemed to know their place. I remember the smell of plasticine, the water tub filled with toys and plastic boats. I remember the sand, with half buried things to play with, and the teacher, a young woman with long black hair, and gentle eyes. She took my hand, but in order to take her hand, I had to let go of another. I had to let go of my mum, and my eyes followed her as she walked away. I will never forget the teacher's words to me; 'Be brave.'

I did not feel brave.

My mum had to walk away. She had to go to work, to put food on the table, but at no point did I feel that she did not love me.

Many of us have, in the past, drawn strength from that ancient building at the end of the road, where we meet with our brothers and sisters in Christ and draw strength from them. Now the doors appear closed to worship. We cannot embrace one another with the peace, or eat the broken bread that God has given us for our journey. We, like children, feel alone, afraid and disorientated.

Equally, like every family in our nation, at this time, we do not feel brave. Surrounded by the storm, we share a common boat with them. Many of us are afraid and isolated. Many of us fear for our children and our families at this difficult time. We feel powerless to help them and support them.

I love this passage from Ephesians. The writer, Paul, was imprisoned in a damp, stone cell in Rome. You can feel, in this passage, his love for God's people, and the sense that he had no power to help any of them. Paul had a simple solution. He could not resort to social media or live streaming. What he did was get down on his knees, on the stone-cold floor of his cell, and pray to our Father in Heaven. He prayed to his divine parent, 'from whom every family on heaven and earth gets its name.'

Despite the fact that the family of God was dispersed and broken, the writer tells us that he wanted them to have courage, in the knowledge that even though they were dispersed and fearful, their power comes through the Spirit of God their Father, living within them. Paul prays that the presence and love of Jesus will be at the core of their hearts, so that rather than being filled with fear, they may be grounded with the love of Christ, dwelling in their hearts.

Paul reminds these people of their Father's capacity to love them, even through times of isolation and loneliness.

Paul's prayer in Ephesians tells us that the ocean of fear is transformed into an ocean of love; 'Look at the breadth, the length and the depth of this love, which is deeper than we could ever begin to understand.'

We are children of the same heavenly parent, who has not abandoned you, and he will provide for all of your daily needs.

May God give you his blessing and his peace.

Eric

Please contact me any time you need to.

My number is:

01234 852241 and 07805879537



Could I invite you to pray this prayer with me

God our Father

*We believe that your Spirit of love is with us in this time of darkness.
Since we cannot share our worship in buildings of stone,
Bring us together in spirit and truth.*

*We pray for those alone at this time,
for those who cannot find the food that they need,
for those who fear for their families and their children.
and for those who cry out; 'God, why have you abandoned me?'*

*Maranatha, come Lord Jesus into our hearts and homes.
We embrace you as if you were already here with us
Unite us completely with you and with one another.
and through us, let your Kingdome come.
Amen.*



News

Memorial Service: Please note that the Memorial Service which was due to be held on Sunday 29 March at All Saints has been postponed to later in the year.

Annual Meetings: The Annual Church Meetings will now be held later in the year.

Please don't forget that we support the Bedford Foodbank, who will need our donations now more than ever. You can donate food by leaving it at the back of the church or please consider making a financial donation. More information can be found at <https://bedford.foodbank.org.uk/>



**Light a candle of hope
at 7pm this Sunday:
A national call to prayer**



In the midst of the Coronavirus pandemic, Presidents of CTE are calling all churches to a National Day of Prayer & Action on Sunday 22nd March



cte.org.uk/calltoprayer

Community Support Groups

Do you need support? We can help with shopping and companionship (via regular phone calls).

Can you volunteer to help? Let us know if you are DBS checked (for any organisation). It doesn't matter if you aren't, we still need your help, but safeguarding is important!

Biddenham:

If you need support, ring Kate: 07969 419574 with your name/phone number/address.

If you can volunteer, email kate-smith278@btinternet.com

Kempston:

If you need support or can volunteer to help, contact:

Rev Eric Lomax: 852241 or 07805 879537

Alison/Brenda Walker: 851597

Alan/Anita Lowe: 857212 or 07751 659695