



Parish Communication – Easter 2020

Dear friends

Welcome to this Easter Newsletter as we begin by wishing you all a very Happy Easter. May you find joy and peace in your lives at a time when we are all facing such change to our lives that it may be difficult to see how things will ever return to something like normal. But this is a time to rest assured in the never-ending love of God as we rejoice in the resurrection light of this season.

During Holy Week, we walked the Way of the Cross with Jesus through his Passion, his suffering, and his death. Jesus prayed, both in the garden of Gethsemane and in his darkest hour on the cross. He doubted as he cried out to God “Why have you forsaken me?”. Jesus shared in our humanity and recognises the situations we face that may appear hopeless,



times when we may doubt, when we may be feeling alone, when we may be looking for a way out. But Jesus knew this was the way it had to be. And then, through his glorious resurrection, Jesus opened the gates of glory to reveal God's faithful promises of hope and everlasting life. Jesus brings life; Jesus *is* life; even though that life may be different from the way it was before, but life nonetheless.

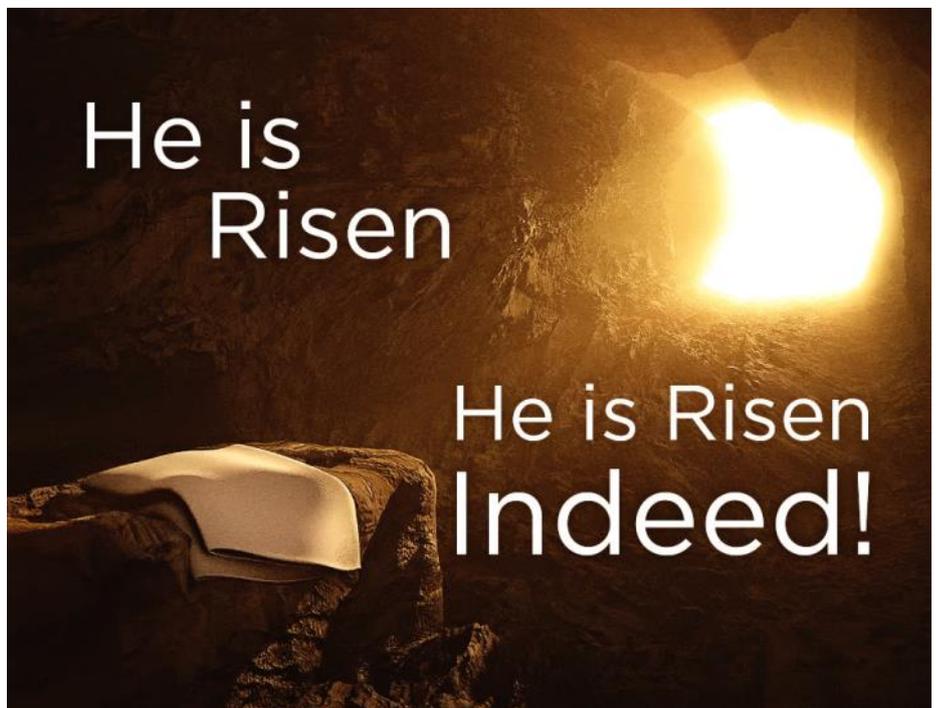
And, yes, we are having to live differently just now and we have to 'do Church' differently. But we are still 'church'; the body of Christ. Even though we cannot gather together, we

can still be in community with each other, now more than ever before. Our Lent group this year were exploring various 'Signs of Life' and the final theme was that of Community. Included at the end of this letter is the handout for your reflection. It includes the very famous icon by Rublev of the Trinity – a perfect image of 'being in communion'.

And we can still be in communion at this time. We can be kind to each other and show our love for each other in many different ways. We can call others; we can send a card to someone; we can sup-

port each other; and we can pray for each other. In the past weeks, we have been putting together various resources to help you to continue to feel part of St Mary's. These include a prayer and music for each day of the week; short forms of morning, evening and night prayer; and intercessions for use at this time. We have also recorded services (from home) for each week overlaid with music and pictures (of Church) with the aim of helping you to feel 'at home' maintaining some degree of continuity with the 'familiar'. These are available on our website 'What's On' CoVid and This Week pages, and we are keeping in touch with our young people through school with resources being posted out using Class dojo.

We are also continuing to enable you to celebrate the Eucharist. On Mothering Sunday, a Eucharist was filmed in Church before the lockdown started, and a filmed Eucharist will also be available for Easter Day. It may seem strange as



we are unable to gather together in the building. But we can still gather around the Lord's table in acts of sacramental participation. As Bishop David says, we can still benefit from it even if we can't receive it. It is still an act of community as the Eucharist is offered, not for an individual, but on behalf of the Parish as an expression of the shared life of the Body of Christ.

Please do tune in by watching the video and celebrating the Easter Feast in your own homes. The Collect, Readings and Post-Communion sheet will be available as usual, again on the website.

We are all getting used to

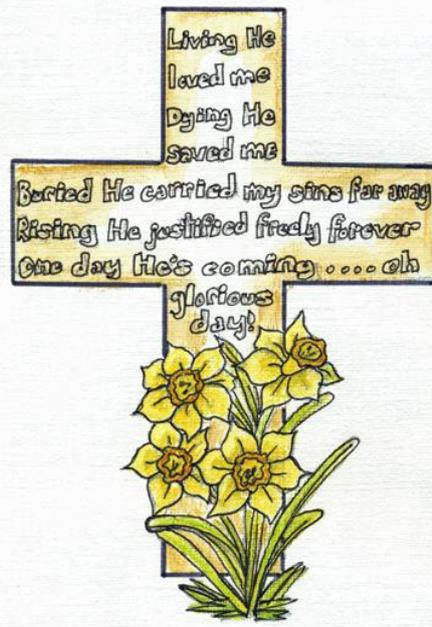
'doing church' differently and that includes those of us who minister here. Please be patient as we try to work this out. In particular, we are trying to keep in touch with as many people of the Parish as possible over the course of the coming weeks. In particular, we would like to reach out to those who do not have access to, or are not technology 'savvy'.

However, we are aware that we do not have contact details for a number of members of our congregation. Please, please, do let us know if you think there is anybody we may have missed. Our contact details are set out below.

As the Queen said in her broadcast the other night – we will come out of this; we will meet with family and friends; and we will be able to gather again in our communities. We will gather together again in our church building. And, we look forward with great joy and anticipation to that time when we can celebrate being physically in communion again. Until that time, remember, we are never alone with God by our side. He is our hope, our peace, our comfort and our joy. By his resurrection, Jesus brings new life and hope for the future.

At this Eastertide, may God bless you all. Please do pray for yourselves, for us and for each other, as we, too, pray for you. In love and prayer

Carole, Adele, Stewart and Susie



Eastertide Prayers

On this day that the Lord has made, let us pray for the people he has redeemed.

That we may live as those who believe in the triumph of the cross.

That all people may receive the good news of his victory
That those born to new life in the waters of baptism may know the power of his resurrection

That those who suffer pain and anguish may find healing and peace in the wounds of Christ.

That in the undying love of Christ we may be united with all who have died in the faith of Christ

Let us commend the world, in which Christ rose from the dead, to the mercy and protection of God.

Amen.



Please do not hesitate to contact the wardens or clergy using the contact details below if you require any help, support or information during this time of uncertainty.

Church Wardens:

Susie Mapledoram

07710 557833; susiemapledoram@googlemail.com

Stewart Barnet

07950 354445; stewartmbarnet@gmail.com

Curates:

Rev'd Carole Barnet

0161 766 2774; caroleabarnet@gmail.com

Rev'd Adele McKie

07946 383024;

k.adele.mckie@btinternet.com

Web:

www.stmarysprestwich.org

Twitter: @stmarysprestwich

SIGNS OF LIFE

Signs of Life - Week 5

This week, we consider the sign of Community, at a time when our own regular communities are disrupted. Many of us might be struggling with feelings of isolation or, on the other hand, a challenging proximity to those with whom we dwell. We've certainly never been more aware of how closely our lives are linked with others. May this reflection help us to embrace how life in community is a sign of God's presence with us and within us.

Practice: Find new ways to be fully present with others this week. Put away distractions, and ask them to do the same. Remember that Jesus dwells in each of us and is manifest among community, even if we cannot be physically together. We don't do church alone because God isn't alone. God is community and invites us into community. The Christian story is one of families and of communities. Jesus says, "I am the vine; you are the branch-

es." Who is your community here and now?

We all value living in community but there is something about the gift of silence that allows us to open our hearts to greater compassion for other people as we take time to reflect on our own and seek to recognise and revere the mystery of every person. Each person is a mystery to us, and there are aspects of that person's life that we will never know, no matter how well we know them. Only God alone can know this person as they truly are. Invite silence into all your interactions today.

Community can offer a container that is safe enough and supportive enough to help other people – and ourselves – to heal, especially at times like these, when many are feeling confused and lost. Call a friend

just to catch up.

Reflection: Consider this Rublev icon as a help for your own reflection and prayer.

We see Three Persons, all with a halo, depicting their holiness. On the left is the image of the Father; on the right, is the Spirit; and, in the centre, is Christ; an image of companionship. What captures *your* attention in this scene?



Prayer: Almighty Triune God, we thank you for the gift of community, by which we share life's journey and grow together. May we follow your example of mutual self-giving and love to bless each other with an ever-widening embrace, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who dances with you and the Holy Spirit, one God in Trinity of persons now and forever. Amen.