

The Messenger



Monthly Newsletter of St John the Baptist Church,
Harrow

APRIL 2020

Message from Barry

Dear Church Family,

It is of course traditional for us to give up something for Lent. However, little did I suspect that we would all end up having to give up church! We set amidst the most amazing period in our history, arguably, certainly in my lifetime.

At the moment, we are still learning how to manage the situation. All physical events in the church calendar are cancelled now because there is no likelihood that this closure is short term. That means sadly, that we will have to imagine a new way of doing Easter week. Whether we can do all this online, or in other ways, the depth of Easter is still available to us.

For almost all of us that will mean celebrating Holy Week in social isolation, maintaining distance and separateness. What we need to remember is, this is only “physical distancing”; we do not need to self-isolate from God, and we can maintain our faith in other ways.

Let us recall what Holy Week represents and see how we can keep celebrating it, albeit privately and in a way we never imagined before. Let's consider how God, in Christ, literally gives Himself for us, and to us:

Palm Sunday: tells us of Jesus' entry as King into Jerusalem, redefining kingship as riding on a donkey. It also shows us how we sometimes misunderstand him and want to turn him to our own purposes as many in Jerusalem did. Jesus is King and has his own purposes, and we are invited to join in with them, not the other way around.

Maundy Thursday: normally I would be off to St Paul's Cathedral, and then back to Harrow to preside at the Eucharist and wash peoples' feet. Renewing my vows at St Paul's, and washing feet at St John's, firmly reminds me that this holy life is a servant's life. Jesus shows that his Kingdom is bound up in putting other people first. If holiness means anything, it means taking on the heart of Jesus.

Good Friday: Jesus proceeds from washing feet to hanging on a cross. This is the ultimate declaration of God that, when he came to share in human life in the Incarnation, he really meant it. He came to be one of us even unto death (Philippians 2:8). We need not concern ourselves with how Jesus' death affects salvation for mankind, just rejoice that it does - hence we call it “Good Friday”.

Easter Sunday: we may not give this the deep consideration it deserves, but the resurrection changes everything. Christ is the “firstborn of the

dead”, first to rise in new life and preeminent in that new life (Colossians 1:18). We cannot gloss over our fear of death, especially as it seems so near right now, but Christ has conquered death for us, and our resurrection bodies will be like his. That changes everything. If we can take it on board, it calms our fears (I know that is easily said).

The whole week, every picture in Holy Week, is God's humble, servant kingship. Riding on a donkey, washing dusty feet, dying on a terrible cross, and rising to new life not for himself, but for all humanity, shows us that God was, is and always will be, for us. He is on our side.

I am going to say, “Hallelujah!!!” a few weeks early.

God bless you all. Stay in touch and keep looking after each other as best you can.

Barry

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy
in this time of uncertainty and distress.
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may rejoice in your comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us
from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Amen.



**An Evening Prayer written by
Rev Lyndon North
St Andrew's, Roxbourne**

Heavenly Father as our church bell rings
to mark evening across our parish
we offer this day back to you.
We thank you for the glorious sunshine.
For spring and all its refreshing vitality,
life and power.

We give thanks tonight for the 405,000
who have volunteered to support the
NHS at this critical time.

Guard those who will be working through
this night.
Those that work on the frontline of
NHS.
Those who work in care homes or look
after those who live on the street.

We pray for call centres workers as they
give direction and advice.
For those that supply us with food, stock
supermarket shelves and produce our
energy.

For the people of Spain with increasing
numbers of infections.

We pray that all people will increasingly
comply fully with government
instructions and seek the common good.

In times of difficulty, O God, rain
showers of gentleness upon us,
that we may be kindly one to another
and also to ourselves.

Lord Jesus Christ we turn to you, you are
our salvation we come to you for hope
and for our healing.

Come Lord touch us and renew us.

Our Father....

Amen

Those of you reading paper copies of this will not be
receiving my emails. Please contact me at the vicarage
(020 8907 7956), Ajay (07868 662703), or the office
(020 8863 3690) if there is anything you need to speak
about. **Barry**



Palm Sunday

(5th April)

As mentioned earlier, Palm
Sunday commemorates Jesus'
entry into Jerusalem when people
proclaimed him "king" and laid
palms before him.

The tradition of handing out palm
crosses will not take place this
year. However, they will be
blessed by Barry during his
on-line Palm Sunday Service and
handed out when services
resume.

