

Virtual Church News

14 March 2021

4th Sunday of Lent

Welcome to Virtual Church News. 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 email stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com or call Jacqui on 356993.

Re-opening our Churches

There are currently no services in church at the moment due to the Covid restrictions. We hope to gradually re-open our churches from Easter, starting with small services to bring the Christ Light into the Churches on Easter Day. After that we will have services in each Church on alternate Sundays at 9.30am starting with All Saints Church on Sunday 11 April and then St James's Church on Sunday 18 April. If you need support in the meantime, please contact Rev Eric Lomax or email stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com.

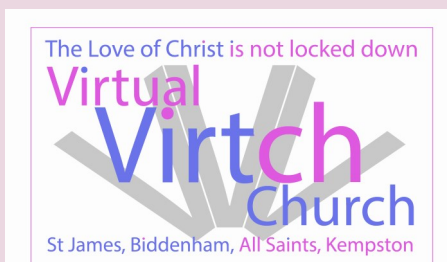
A Reading for the Week

John 19:25-27

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son," ²⁷and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

Virtch (Online Church)

Zoom services are held at 11am on Sunday and 6pm on Wednesday. Simply go to Zoom and enter meeting ID 998 074 6039.



Bible Study Groups

If you are interested in joining a bible study group please contact John Lambert by email at john.c.lambert@gmail.com



Message from Rev Eric Lomax

Mothering Sunday comes from a very ancient pagan festival, remembering the goddess Cybele. In the fourth century the first Christian emperor, Constantine, adapted it to celebrate Mary and the 'Mother Church.' The Church took it seriously as a festival in which domestic servants were set free once a year to go and see their own mothers and this was often the only time that these people could come together to be with their own families.

It was during that time that these people in servitude would be freed to attend the churches in the communities where they were born and baptised. The Church, which was referred to as 'mother church,' was to them the restoration of their own sense of self as being part of a community. It was freedom from servitude, and the restoration of their own sense of human identity. For one day a year, they could be completely themselves.

This, therefore, is really a significant time for us, as a nation, when so many people are separated from their families and loved ones during lockdown.

25 years ago, on 13th March 1996, a lone gunman, Thomas Hamilton, marched into a primary school in Dunblane, Scotland and shot sixteen pupils and one teacher, killing them all and injuring fifteen others, before killing himself. Still today, it is impossible to not think of the mothers who dressed their children, gave them their packed lunches, and dropped them off for the last time. How, as a mother or a parent do you ever get over such a loss? The other day I heard the story of a mother whose child complained of being ill that day and wanted to stay at home. I cannot conceive of the level of guilt that mother experiences, yet in truth, she did what she had to do.

Here, in today's reading, we experience the turmoil of a mother who is watching her son suffer and the agony of Jesus' death where our saviour, through his self-sacrifice mends our broken relationship with him.

Mary knew the experience of suffering.

continued on next page

Message from Rev Eric Lomax *continued*

It was her pain, like the pain of all mothers, which unlocked the Lord of life to the world, and she did this in the poverty of a room used to house animals. She had been, like other refugees, torn from her own home, her own mother, and all of this, while her life was under threat. Not only this, but in a strict religious society, her reputation was in tatters, because her childbirth took place outside wedlock. Now, at the foot of the cross, Mary suffered the beating and death of her son, a terrible and unmendable thing for any woman to experience.

Years before, in the Temple, an old man, Simeon, had told Mary what to expect; 'For a sword will pierce your heart' (Luke 2:33), but the old man also told her how important Jesus would be. It was not until all these years later that Mary understood what this man's words meant. In the cloud of this experience of watching her son die, however, it must have been so difficult for her to understand why this terrible thing had to happen.

For those mothers who have suffered the pain of loss, Mary is a powerful symbol of somebody who understood the deepest experiences of parenthood, and for those who on a day-to-day basis know the struggle often associated with motherhood, we can find, in the biblical stories, the narrative of empathy. God understands us, because he, like Mary, has witnessed the suffering and death of his only son.

Whatever you have known as a parent, you find the deepest understanding in the words of scripture.

There is a second thing that we can find in this reading as well.

Jesus, on the cross, had only a few people remaining when everybody else had fled. These were four women, which illustrates clearly what the writer of the fourth gospel thought about which gender was in possession of the most courage. One of the women was the mother of Jesus, who the writer of the fourth Gospel never names. The only male is also not named, but he is described as 'The disciple whom Jesus loved.' 'Woman,' he said, 'here is your son,' and to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.'

There is something profound going on here. Jesus creates a brand-new relationship between these two disparate people. Together they became a new family of believers which we know as the church. A new family is created in the foot of the cross. Through the death of Jesus, a new community of faith is born.

Our families are so important to us, and we should do all we can to preserve the riches of these relationships. Mothering Sunday, however, teaches us that an extended family is available to us as well. This is a rich and deep family that embraces not only our own families, but equally those who are burdened with loneliness and isolation, because in the church, the family of God, no one should ever be alone.

We, the church, like every family, have decided this year to be separate, like every other extended family during this Covid crisis. We do this because we want to demonstrate our solidarity with everybody else. We do meet, however, every Sunday on Zoom, at 11am and you are welcome to join us. The Zoom ID is 998 074 6039. Please pop in and be part of our family, the mother church. Please remember that this family of the church cares for you, for your family, and for your children, so together we pray for you with the following prayer from the Bible.

'For this reason, I kneel before the Father, from whom every family 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, 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.' (Ephesians 3)

God bless,

Eric



40 PENCE FOR 40 DAYS

Can you take part in our 40 for 40 challenge this Lent?

By giving up 40 pence a day for the 40 days of Lent you can raise enough to help support a local family in crisis this Easter.

Bedford.foodbank.org.uk



All you have to do is find an old jam jar, or similar container and start collecting!



Registered Charity in England & Wales 1179538.

Easter with All Saints & St James's Churches

Sunday 28 March

11am Palm Sunday service

Monday 29 March

9pm Complin with reflection

Tuesday 30 March

9pm Complin with reflection

Wednesday 31 March

6pm Holy Communion

9pm Complin with reflection

Thursday 1 April

11am Maundy Thursday service

7pm Maundy Thursday service

Please use our outdoor cross at St James's Church for prayer and reflection.

On Easter Day we will be decorating the cross with flowers. Please feel free to visit the cross during the day, bring some flowers to place on it, and celebrate the resurrection of Jesus.

Alleluia! He is Risen!



Friday 2 April (Good Friday)

12noon Stations of the Cross

10am – 3pm Church open

Sunday 4 April (Easter Day)

8.00am Christ Light carried into All Saints Church*

8.45am Christ Light carried into St James's Church*

9am – 12noon Church open

11am Easter Day Celebration

*All services except those marked * will be held on Zoom. Use Login ID 998 074 6039. Church open for private prayer only.*

Get Involved in the St James's Church Easter Egg Hunt

Be an Easter Egg Host!

Do you live in Biddenham/ Great Denham/St Mary's or St Andrews? Could you create a large (A4) size Easter egg picture and clearly display it in a window over the Easter weekend? If the answer is yes, then we would love you to take part as an Egg Host!

Please complete the Egg Host Form* and email it to stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com no later than Friday 26th March. We will then add your egg to the Easter Egg Hunt list.

Decorate your egg however you would like to and clearly display it along with a letter that we will give to you nearer the time.

Take part in the Hunt

Over the Easter weekend we will publicise a list of all addresses displaying Easter Eggs.

Walk/cycle/scoot around the parish hunting for the eggs and collecting the letters.

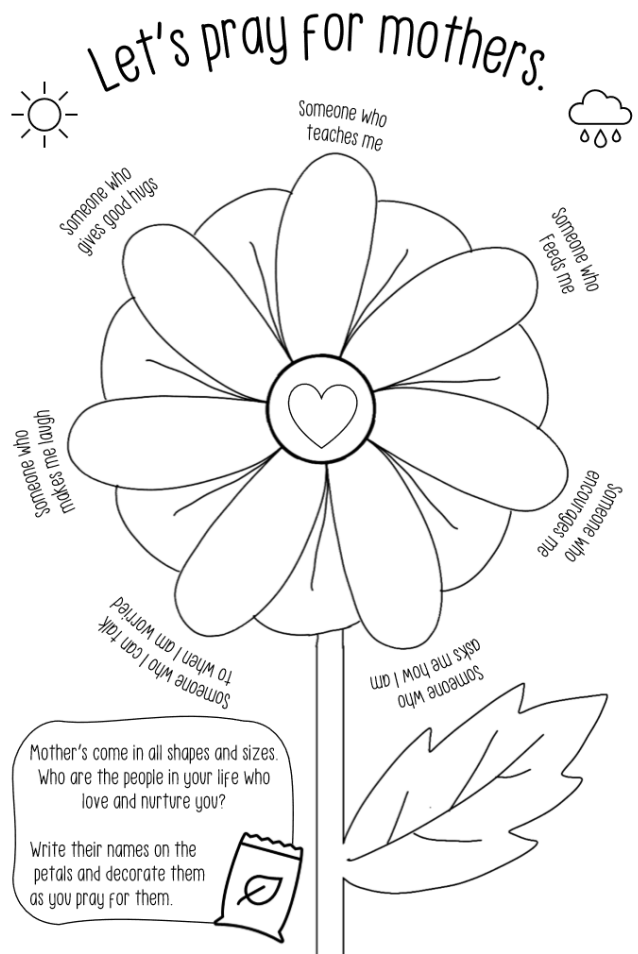
When you have collected all the letters, rearrange them to give a word or message associated with Easter.



* Available on our Social Media pages or by emailing us.

For the Children (& young at heart!)

This Sunday is Mothering Sunday, so instead of looking at a bible reading, let's just think about those who 'mother' or 'look after' us and pray for them.



Resources from Together at Home. For more free resources visit tath.co.uk.

Church Services etc. on TV/Radio

If you don't have access to the internet, try tuning in to the following:

Sunday 14 March

- 8.00am Three Counties Radio - weekly service.
- 8.10am BBC Radio 4 - Sunday Worship.
- 11.15am BBC 1 - Sunday Worship.
- 1.15pm BBC 2 - Songs of Praise.
- 4.00pm BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong .

Wednesday 17 March

- 3.30pm BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong.

Volunteer Vacancy

We are looking for a new Barn Bookings Officer. This is an unpaid voluntary role. If you would be interested in finding out more, please contact Jacqui on 0778 6886 710.

Prayer Group

Join our prayer group at 8pm on the 1st/3rd Thursdays of the month via Zoom. Everyone welcome.

Contact us for login details or if you have any prayer requests.



Suggested Music for this week

Ave Verum

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DsUWVVKJwBM>

I come with joy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UpBs0b8Nnzs&t=24s>

A mother's prayer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y20Sbe05HF0>

Mothering Sunday with All Saints & St James's Churches

A Floral Celebration at St James's Church

Over the Mothering Sunday weekend our main Churchyard gates at St James's Church will be adorned with flowers.

Do make sure you walk past on your daily exercise!



Children's Craft Packs

We would like to offer the children within our parishes a craft pack to make a Mothers' Day card and a posy of paper flowers.

Request a pack (see below) and join us at the 11am service on Mothering Sunday when we will have a group craft session to make these items.

To join the service just log in to Zoom with meeting ID 998 074 6039.



To request a craft pack or for further details, please email stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com or call/text Jacqui on 0778 6886 710.

#LIVE LENT



God's Story Our Story

The Church of England's Lent campaign. Six reflections for each week including a short bible passage, a brief exploration of the passage and a prayer. Download the free App, see the Church of England's social media or obtain a booklet from Church House Publishing for £1.99. If you would like a booklet but are unable to purchase one yourself, let us know and we will obtain one for you. Call Jacqui on 356993 or email stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com

Spring Harvest Home 4-8 April 2021

Sign up now to join in with Spring Harvest Home and enjoy the teaching, worship etc of Spring Harvest from your own sofa. For information and details of how to purchase your subscription go to <https://springharvest.org/springharvesthome21>

Please pray with me

God of love,
passionate and strong,
tender and careful:
watch over us and hold us
all the days of our life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen



Daily Hope

Music, prayers, reflections and full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a free telephone line. **0800 804 8044** Available 24 hours a day.



Rev Eric Lomax Contact Details

Tel: 01234 328452

Mob: 07805 879537

Email: Rev.ejlomax@gmail.com

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 01234 815393 (daytime only) or email help@biddenham.org.uk with your name/phone number/address.

If you can volunteer, please email help@biddenham.org.uk

Kempston:

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

Rev Eric Lomax: 328452 or 07805 879537

Alison/Brenda Walker: 851597

Alan/Anita Lowe: 857212 or 07751 659695