



Parish of St. Mary's Swynnerton & St. James' Cotes Heath
 Sunday April 11th 2021 (Easter 2)

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<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82172796502?pwd=dm9PandVL1l6YTgzOFFTQzQ1L0NqQT09>

Our Sunday service at St. Mary's will be at 10am.
 If you would like to join in from home, use the link above and log in from 9.50.



This Sunday in the Church's calendar is known in some traditions as "Thomas Sunday". The gospel reading concerns the appearance of the risen Christ to some of his disciples. Thomas was not with them on the first occasion and we hear of a further appearance, a week later, in which Jesus addresses Thomas's particular need to understand and believe the fact of the resurrection. In the vestry of St. Mary's is a medieval statue of Christ displaying his wounds, which reminds us of Thomas's declaration that he would not be satisfied until he had seen for himself what the others were proclaiming. Jesus came into the locked room in peace with a gentle invitation especially for Thomas – which drew from him the greatest confession of faith: "My Lord and my God!" Read the whole story in John chapter 20.

**"ALLELUIA, CHRIST IS RISEN"
 HE IS RISEN INDEED, ALLELUIA**

- 80-year-old Brian Barber, a lifelong member of Swan Bank church in The Potteries and founding inspiration behind the Saltbox, has received the Queen's Maundy money this year, along with five others from the Diocese. The Royal Maundy Service couldn't take place at St. George's Chapel in Windsor, so the money was blessed at the Chapel Royal in St. James' Palace and posted out along with a letter from the Queen. Each recipient is given two purses; one contains a small amount of ordinary coinage, this year specially created to commemorate Her Majesty's 95th birthday and the 50th anniversary of decimal day. The second contains Maundy coins up to the value of the Sovereign's age.
- The Maundy Thursday service at Lichfield Cathedral was led by the Bishop as usual – but this year the participants were all at home! Over 200 screens were visible as priests and lay ministers from all over the diocese "zoomed" in to take part and renew their commitment to ministry. Local vicar Adrian Stone and his wife Esther from Trentham church provided the music.
- Linda Mottram is co-ordinating the Spring Cleaning and tidying necessary for the Best Kept Village Competition in Swynnerton. This Saturday April 10th there'll be a socially distanced "Litter Pick" – equipment available from the Village Hall from 10am. (Same time as the Churchyard maintenance team are meeting). Linda is completing the entry form for the competition and would welcome news of community projects or events which could be included to boost our chances of an award this year. Wildflower planting in the church grounds is already in hand; any other ideas and offers of help, please contact Linda on 01782 796628.
- The Swynnerton and Yarnfield Women's Institute will be marking its Centenary on April 19th. There'll be a Zoom meeting and also a chance to join in by phone. Members are encouraged to make it an occasion by dressing up -hat or fascinator required – and having a glass on hand for a birthday toast.





The Church of England is supporting the 'VaccinAid' campaign which aims to help fund the biggest vaccination drive in history.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, has encouraged people and congregations to donate and to spread the word in the community, as a practical demonstration of Jesus's command to love our neighbour.

VaccinAid is being supported by other faith groups, businesses, celebrities and the NHS.

Bishop Michael Beasley, the Bishop of Hertford and an epidemiologist, who played a key role in helping set up the campaign, said: "Covid-19 has affected us all - every home, family, school, business and community all around the world. And because of the way this virus works we know that it won't be over for anyone until it's over for everyone. If, like me, you've had your jab, you'll know the feeling of relief, gratitude and thankfulness that happens when you've been protected from COVID.

I'd love the whole world to experience that feeling and protection too. So let's give the world a shot!"

For more information on the campaign go to www.vaccinaid.org to donate.



This year's **Annual Parochial Church Meeting** for St. Mary's and St. James' is on Tuesday April 20th. It will take place on "Zoom" (address on front page) and begins at 7pm.

Please join in as we share news and reflect together on the events of the last church year.

A Church Council meeting will follow with a chance to discuss plans for services and activities as we come slowly out of Lockdown. If you would like to serve on the Church Council, please contact Ray or Doreen for nomination details.

Have you come across the Anna Chaplains? They are ministers, lay or ordained, who work to meet the spiritual needs of older people. This could be within care homes and sheltered housing or in the wider community. Anna Chaplaincy is an initiative introduced by the Bible Reading Fellowship (who also came up with "Messy Church"), and the chaplains are connected to local churches. They seek to emphasise the role and the value of older people and to include carers and relatives, especially giving support to those living with dementia. More about their work on www.annachaplaincy.org.uk Their founder, Debbie Thrower, writes an interesting and informative blog which you can access on the address above.



- St. Luke's will be continuing their Sunday service on Zoom this week at 10am and their regular Thursday morning worship at 10am carries on. The link is :
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3558390555?pwd=ZINvRVcxbHZ1VWRaUzhGS1Vqcy9QZz09>

"Pray for each other" James 5 v16

As a demonstration of our concern for each other we hold in prayer those members of our church family who need God's comfort just now. Please pray for Tom Ewart who had a fall and for Helen Ladell who has been unwell, and for those who have been in hospital and are now recovering at home –

Doreen Green, George Edwards, Richard Wenger, Margaret Farr, Margaret Reid, Pat Johnson and Doreen English.

We think of friends more isolated than usual – Pat Lawrence, Pat Barley, Carol and Martyn Turner, and those who have continuing challenges- Fr. Paul Chavasse, Paul Bell, Wendy who is caring for Paul and for mother Peggy, Elaine Dulson, Geoff and Linda Foster, Jonquil and Nick Goacher and Margaret McKnight. Nicola's friend Jessica is improving – a miracle, says Nicola - and her family send grateful thanks for all the prayers. Please continue to pray for Alex's friend Karen Glasgow and for Jonathan's girlfriend Maddie. We think of Dot Sergeant in her care home and all of our Hebrews members. And in the coming week Chris's mum Valerie Stokes will be having an operation.

WORSHIP FOR EASTER 2

This is the day that the Lord has made.

Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

We have come together as the family of God in our Father's presence to offer him praise and thanksgiving, to hear and receive his holy word, to bring before him the needs of the world, to ask his forgiveness of our sins, and to seek his grace, that through his Son Jesus Christ we may give ourselves to his service.

God shows his love for us because, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Let us then show our love for him by confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

Confession: Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and repent. Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us from our sin. Renew a right spirit within us and restore to us the joy of your salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image, to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Creed: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Collect: Risen Christ, for whom no door is locked, no entrance barred: open the doors of our hearts, that we may seek the good of others and walk the joyful road of sacrifice and peace, to the praise of God the Father. Amen.

Father God we thank you for the realities of Easter which we continue to celebrate today, realities that make such a difference to life, the victory of good over evil, love over hate, life over death. The turning of weakness into strength, fear into courage, doubt into faith, a new beginning where it has seemed like the end, new hope where there has seemed despair and new confidence where there had been confusion.

Thankyou Lord for your guidance through this difficult year and for leading us safely through a time when the future looked dark and even now the present seems to some of us uncertain. We pray for those suffering from Covid 19 and we pray for all our doctors and nurses who are suffering physically and emotionally, that they will find your peace with them. We pray for the scientists who have worked so hard to produce vaccines and thank you for their talents and we thank you for all those who work so hard administering it to us.

We pray for our young people as they prepare to return to school and university. Those who are preparing for exams during this difficult time in their lives and under so much pressure. We pray for all teachers who give them guidance and reassurance and thank you for their patience and understanding.

Thankyou Lord for our ministry team who have organised all our Easter services. We pray too Lord that your hand is upon the choosing of our new vicar. Thank you for the invention of Zoom, where we can join in together for services, bible studies and fellowship.

We pray for the sick, those enduring physical pain , overwhelmed by disabling diseases , waiting for an operation or further treatment and those fearful of what their future may hold. We pray for all those on our News Sheet and their families too. Give them your peace in their pain, your strength in their weakness and comfort in their fear. We lift up to you those who mourn. Give them strength to face the days ahead and courage when life seems dark.

Finally, we pray for ourselves for one another and for our world, to bring the concerns of our daily lives before you, to lift out loved ones into your presence, to commit the affairs of our world into your hands.

And now Lord, we offer up to you our prayers, our reading and our thinking. We thank you for your constant kindness and your unfailing love, for joy and for hope.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers, for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

OUR FATHER

THE GRACE

Thanks to Ann Ramsey for the prayers today.



Gospel for Easter 2 - John 20:19-31

So, come on- who here can relate to Thomas? Who would need to ask Jesus if they could see his wounds? Thomas had not been there when Jesus appeared in the upper room the first time. All Thomas had to go on when they said, "Have you seen the Lord?" was their account of what had happened.

The facts were this. There is a bunch of disciples who had been so devoted to Jesus that they had been distraught at what they had just seen. They were probably even more disappointed at their own behaviour. They had not understood what Jesus had told them was going to happen and in a lot of ways had fallen short of the support you would have expected of them. Now here these disciples were, locked in a room in fear of their lives.

After all, they had seen what the Jews had been capable of with their treatment of Jesus, what would they do to his followers if they found them? Could it be that in their desperation for the truth of Jesus's death not to be true, that their minds could play tricks on them?

Thomas is now face to face with the disciples and they are saying to him "We have seen the Lord!" I can imagine his response, "Oh dear my friends have lost it".

If it had been me, I would have wanted to hug them and say "It's ok boys, I know you desperately want to see Jesus but we all know he has gone".

Thomas, I think, responded fairly with "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

What would your response to the disciples have been?

Jesus didn't only appear though, he uttered some words which may be easy to brush over.

Let's face it some of us may still be struggling with our concern at Thomas's attitude. But Jesus said to the disciples "Peace be with you!".

He followed it by showing them his wounds and then went on to say "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

Wow! Wow! Wow!

Now depending on whether we think that was just for those disciples or whether we think that was for us today will depend on what we do next.

How about we consider this, most of us would agree that the Bible is the word of God and the blueprint on which we base our faith. Terry always says that Bible is short for "Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth."

So, when Jesus said "Peace be with you", in reading, accepting and believing these words we acknowledge that Jesus would be speaking to us too. So, in speaking the words "Peace be with you" he is basically saying to everyone I'm here, I've got it, I have not left, I'm not dead, don't worry or be afraid, I arose from the grave like I said I would, so you can trust me and the things I tell you.

2 John 1:3 says "Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son, in truth and love."

So we know that having us living in peace is where God wants us to be. Having peace, knowledge and trust that Jesus and God are who they claim to be is at the very root of Jesus's message.

In John 20 Jesus continues with “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you”.

Some of us have just completed the Church of England Lent course, “#LiveLent” that was held over seven Sunday afternoon Zoom sessions.

It has been a joy, a challenge, a chance to grow, both personally and as a group and it has taken us out of our comfort zones. It then led us to supporting an outreach around the village which for a lot of people both inside and outside of the church has been a very successful and wonderful blessing.

It has shown that something we may have previously feared, with God on board can be an enjoyable and most rewarding experience. Jesus said “as the Father has sent me, I am sending you”.

Through this Lent course we have learned that evangelism is not thrusting a Bible down someone’s throat; it’s sharing our own story of what Jesus means to us and allowing others to ask questions, while living out of the knowledge that God himself through Jesus commissioned us to go out and talk to people. That excites me. Does it empower and excite you too?

What is possibly even more exciting though is that Jesus then breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

We do not do things in our own strength when we accept Jesus and move into that relationship of believing. In breathing out the Holy Spirit on them Jesus is effectively saying I want you to be my representatives, take my peace and my power and glorify God my Father in the same way that I have.

We too can accept and receive the Holy Spirit to be our helper and our guide in all we do especially when doing the work of Jesus.

Thomas needed to put his finger in the wound of Jesus in order to believe. He then responded with “My Lord, my God” to which Jesus replied, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

So, where are we? Are we going to be blessed today because we choose to believe even though we have not seen or are we going to continue to wrestle with the truth that Jesus IS alive and that the Holy Spirit dwells within us?

My prayer for us all going forwards is stolen from Philippians and it is this, that we live in the “Peace of God that passes all understanding and that our hearts and minds will be guarded in Christ Jesus and that, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things”.

I believe the blessings will then flow upon us as we rest in the knowledge and truth of Jesus Christ and his death and resurrection. Amen.



Doreen English