

April Wind

The wind was cold one April morning,
And the sun was hid in heaven.
They took a man one April morning,
And while he said goodbye,
Blew the wind in April.

They took a man one April morning,
And the sun was hid in heaven,
They drove the nails into his fingers,
And while he said goodbye,
Blew the wind in April.

They murdered love one April morning,
And the sun was hid in heaven,
The sky grew black, the rain came falling,
And while he said goodbye,
Blew the wind in April.

They laid his body in a garden,
And the sun was hid in heaven,
They went away till Sunday morning,
And while they said goodbye,
Blew the wind in April.

The sun shone high on Sunday morning,
Yes, the sun shone high in heaven,
He said goodbye, goodbye to sleeping,
And while he said goodbye,
Blew the wind in April.

And there he stood one April morning,
And the sun shone high in heaven,
He stood and smiled one April morning,
And when he smiled again,
Blew the wind in April.



Dear Friends,

The origins of All Fools' Day are lost in the mists of time. No-one really knows how or why it began but there are many theories. It's a time for playing jokes and tricks, and April 1st coinciding with Easter Day offers space for all sorts of mischievousness!!!!!! But there is something about the idea of the fool that might be worth exploring.

In the biblical wisdom literature the fool is the one who says in his (or her) heart "There is no God". The fool is the one who runs off after pleasure and self instead of focussing on God. There may be some sort of parallel with the story of the Lost Son in Luke's Gospel.

But there is another idea of foolishness, "being a fool for Christ" This idea finds its origin in 1 Corinthians 4.10 when Paul writes, with some degree of sarcasm, "We are fools for the sake of Christ, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honour, but we in disrepute."

There is something here about the turning over of expectations, the weak being lifted up and the powerful thrown down as in Mary's song, The Magnificat. The powerful and worldly see their status undermined by those whom they assume have no merit. This too may link with the idea in some of our more ancient cathedrals of one of the young choristers taking the role of Bishop for a day. Being a fool for Christ may be about allowing the world to be different, looking through new lenses and seeing what it looks like from a different perspective. Three years ago, on All Fools' Day April 1st 2015 I went for the recall mammogram which was to change life forever. It indicated an immediate biopsy and a couple of weeks later the diagnosis no one wants to hear. It happened that year that the 1st April was the middle of Holy Week and I spent most of Holy Week feeling as if I was sitting in the Garden of Gethsemane with Jesus gearing myself up for a possible future / not future. Two operations and some scans later I was greeted with the words, "we got it all" and "Your scans were clear". At that point I realised I might have a future even though the immediate outcome would be months of treatment to make as sure as it is possible to be that everything had gone.

This year the 1st April is Easter Day and what we face as a family is rather different and much more difficult. But the hope of Easter Day, the turning over of expectations, the undermining of grief and fear with a whole new perspective fits in with the idea of the fool, the jester, the clown who challenges preconceptions and turns things upside-down and may be a step towards learning to deal with the terrible, the ghastly and the worst things. (concluded over page)

Damian Lundy

God stands with us wherever and whoever we are. There are different sorts of hope and different sorts of foolishness.

The message of resurrection may seem ultimately the most foolish of them all and yet it is our story.

This hymn, written by June Boyce-Tillman and sung to the Londonderry Air is a wonderful exposition of hope.

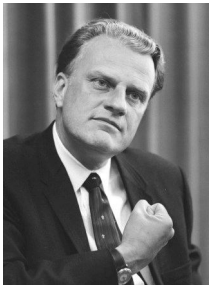
We shall go out

We shall go out with hope of resurrection,
We shall go out, from strength to strength go on,
We shall go out and tell our stories boldly,
Tales of a love that will not let us go.
We'll sing our songs of wrongs that can be righted,
We'll dream our dream of hurts that can be healed,
We'll weave a cloth of all the world united
Within the vision of a Christ who sets us free.

We'll give a voice to those who have not spoken,
We'll find the words for those whose lips are sealed,
We'll make the tunes for those who sing no longer,
Vibrating love alive in every heart.
We'll share our joy with those who are still weeping,
Chant hymns of strength for hearts that break in grief,
We'll leap and dance the resurrection story
Including all within the circles of our love.

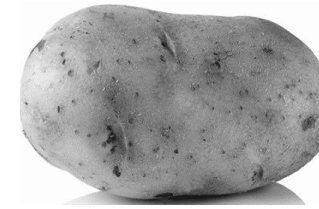
Hope in the midst of despair, love in grief, and resurrection despite everything.

Priscilla



"I have never converted anybody. Only Christ can change the course of a man's life" - Billy Graham

'TATERS'



Some people never seem motivated to participate, But are just content to watch while others do the work. They are called 'Speck Taters'.

Some people never do anything to help, But are gifted at finding fault with the way others do the work. They are called 'Comment Taters'.

Some people are very bossy and like to tell others what to do, But don't want to soil their own hands. They are called 'Dick Taters'.

Some people are always looking to cause problems. For them it's always too hot or too cold, too high or too low. They are called 'Agi Taters'.

There are those who say they are going to help, but never actually get round to doing anything. They are called 'Hezzie Taters'.

Some people are good at putting up a front And pretending to be someone they are not. They are called 'Emma Taters'.

Then there are those who love others, and do what they say they will. They will always stop what they are doing to lend a helping hand. They are called 'Sweet Taters'

So you think English is easy?

Read on:

- 1) The bandage was wound around the wound.
- 2) The farm was used to produce produce.
- 3) We must polish the Polish furniture.
- 4) The soldier decided to desert his dessert in the desert.
- 5) Since there is no time like the present, he thought it was time to present the present.
- 6) A sea bass was painted on the head of the bass drum.
- 7) The insurance was invalid for the invalid.
- 8) They were too close to the door to close it.
- 9) After going out after having done some sewing, a sewer fell into a sewer.

THE FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE

are holding
A COFFEE MORNING
SATURDAY, 28TH APRIL - 10.30PM - 12 NOON
ST. FAITH & ST LAURENCE CHURCH HALL
PROCEEDS WILL GO TO FISHER HOUSE.



Fisher House is a 'home away from home' for military patients at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham and their loved ones. This means that when military patients are being treated at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham, their families can stay at Fisher House.

On the screen

A new film, "Paul, Apostle of Christ" will be released in cinemas on 30th March, coinciding with Easter. It follows the last few months of Paul's time in a Roman prison, awaiting execution by Emperor Nero. He has gone from being Saul of Tarsus, a high ranking and infamous persecutor of Christians to one of Christ's most influential apostles. From prison he continues to work tirelessly to further the Gospel of Jesus Christ and is helped in this task by Luke, the physician, who bravely visits and smuggles out his letters to the growing community of believers who will spread the Gospel and change the world. This gripping film stars Jim Caviezel and James Faulkner ("Game of Thrones").

Jim Caviezel played Jesus in Mel Gibson's 2004 blockbuster "Passion of Christ" which covered the Easter story from the agony in the garden of Gethsemane to Jesus' burial in the tomb. He is going to reprise the role of Jesus in the sequel "The Passion of Christ: Resurrection", and said, "This is going to be the biggest film in history; it's that good". However, the film will not be released until either late 2019 or early 2020.

Race for life

In a moment of madness I have signed up to run/jog/walk the "Race for Life" run by Cancer Research UK in Solihull on 17th June. Donations are welcome and can be given either direct to me in cash or cheque payable to me and I will put in a block donation or via this link

<https://fundraise.cancerresearchuk.org/page/priscillas-race-for-life-5>

So many people from our church community have travelled with Cancer over the last 12 years that I have been here and too many have died. Standing up to cancer is a life-affirming step so let's go for it.

Run the straight race through God's good grace,
lift up thine eyes, and seek his face;
life with its way before us lies,
Christ is the path, and Christ the prize.

Priscilla

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

The meeting to elect churchwardens, and the APCM will be held on Tuesday 10th April at 7.30pm in church.
Please do come along and take part.

Elections

For the avoidance of doubt currently the PCC looks like this

2015-2018 Julia Reid, Ruth Jeavons, (2 vacancies)

2016-2019 David Arkell, Peter Thomson, (2 vacancies)

2017-2020 Perumal Anandakumar, Geoff Bennett, Natika Hamilton, Ian Longbottom,

Deanery Synod Alan Jones, Pauline Sitford, Chris Terry, Gill Hubble

There will this year be elections for

4 people to serve on the PCC for a three year term 2017-2020

2 extra people to fill casual vacancies, i.e. vacancies not filled in previous meetings.

Those standing down are all eligible to stand again.

Priscilla, Vicky, Sally, Bronwen and Malcolm are all ex officio on PCC

Aspects of life at St Faith and St Laurence

Morning prayer – is normally said Monday to Thursday and Saturday at 8.15 am in the Lady Chapel. We use Common Worship Daily Prayer, all are welcome to come and join in.

Reflections A chance to meet together over a cuppa and reflect on the Gospel reading for the previous Sunday. A group meets on Mondays from 1.45-3pm. Venues are listed in the Programme of the month.

Task Groups – The church has a number of task groups enabling areas of church life. These are listed in the magazine with the contact details of the chairs. If you would like to be a part of a groups please contact the relevant chair or Priscilla. All are welcome to join.

Stay and Play meets on Thursday between 9.30 and 11am in the Hall to give a chance for people with young children to meet and the children to play. All are welcome. Cost £1.50 per family.

Sunday Club meets on the first, third and fourth Sundays of each month except during the holidays. We hold an extra Sunday Club on days when there is a baptism. All are welcome to join in hearing and experiencing a Bible Story and learning together about what it means for our daily lives.

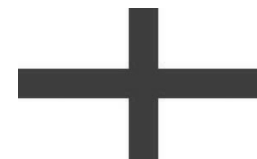
Messy Church takes place on the first Saturday of each month, most months. A chance for children and parents/ carers to have an informal time of worship, and discovering about a Bible story through song, craft, listening, cooking and so much more. Dates are published in advance and all are welcome to come along.

Planned Giving helps people make giving regular. You decide how much you can afford to give. You can join the envelope scheme weekly or monthly or pay by Standing Order or annually by cheque. Income tax payers are asked to Gift Aid their giving, so the Church can reclaim the tax on their donations at no extra cost to the donors. For details, contact Jackie Taylor or Brenda Stott

Call in for Coffee time together over a cuppa on a Wednesday morning from 10.30 -12.00. if needed we can arrange for someone to collect you and then take you home. Please ring Pauline Sitford (427 7005). If you are passing, do call in, or bring a friend, all are welcome.

We support **Recycling**. We have a special collection on the first Sunday of every month when we collect ALUMINIUM cans and foil which can be sold and the money raised is donated to our Mission Partners in Chile (through USPG) We also have envelopes for recycling mobile phones again supporting USPG. Pauline Sitford (427 7005).

St George's Day Dinner



The Socials Task Group are organising a St George's Day dinner for Saturday, 21st April. We have invited a special guest speaker from Fisher House for this event. Fisher House is a "Home Away From Home" at which military patients can stay while they are receiving treatment at the hospital. Their families can also stay at the house when they are visiting them.

We hope our guest will be Dave Watson who became a triple amputee from injuries received in Afganistan. Dave is a good friend of Prince Harry and won medals at the Invictus Games in 2017. Tickets are now available .

Socials Task Group.

God's plan for ageing?

Most senior citizens don't get enough exercise. In His wisdom, God decreed that senior citizens become forgetful so they would have to search for their glasses, keys and other things, thus doing more walking. And God looked down and saw that it was good.

Then God saw there was another need. In His wisdom He made senior citizens lose coordination so they would drop things requiring them to bend, reach and stretch. And God looked down and saw that it was good.

Then God considered the function of bladders, and decided senior citizens would have additional calls of nature, requiring more trips to the bathroom, thus providing more exercise. God looked down and saw that it was good.

So, if you find as you age, you are getting up and down more, remember it's God's will. It is all in your best interest, even though you might mutter under your breath!

INSPIRING QUOTES OF STEPHEN HAWKING

1. Look up at the stars and not down at your feet. Try to make sense of what you see and wonder about what makes the universe exist. Be curious.
2. My advice to other disabled people would be, concentrate on things your disability doesn't prevent you doing well, and don't regret the things it interferes with. Don't be disabled in spirit as well as physically.
3. Science is not only a disciple of reason but also one of romance and passion.
4. I believe alien life is quite common in the universe, although intelligent life is less so. Some say it has yet to appear on planet Earth.
5. However difficult life may seem, there is always something you can do and succeed at.
6. While physics and mathematics may tell us how the universe began, they are not much use in predicting human behaviour because there are far too many equations to solve. I'm no better than anyone else at understanding what makes people tick, particularly women.
7. We are all now connected by the internet, like neurons in a giant brain.

International Women's Day



This was on March 8th. On that day, the Bishop of Repton, Jan McFarlane tweeted 'My inspiration on International Women's Day? Has to be Hild, Anglo-Saxon Abbess of Whitby. By all accounts she was firm but fair; wise; holy; a reconciler; an adviser to kings and 'ordinary' people; a tough cookie who inspired affection. And she loved God'.

Jan McFarlane is the first female Bishop in Derbyshire and the East Midlands, and was the ninth female Bishop in the Church of England when she was appointed in 2016.

Home Communion We have a team of lay people trained and able to bring Home Communion usually on a monthly basis. This is for those who are unable to come to church long term. If the situation is more temporary for example after an operation you can also receive communion, usually from Priscilla. In either case please contact Priscilla.

Traidcraft

Traidcraft sells a range of fairly traded food, cards, clothes and accessories. We use Traidcraft tea and coffee and everything we buy helps fight poverty and supports our church. You can order seasonal gifts through the church at Christmas time when catalogues will be available. Any questions, please ask Ruth Jeavons or Bronwen Jones.

'easyfundraising'

Next time you shop online, think of St Faith and St Laurence and raise free donations with 3,000+ retailers:

<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/stfaithandstlaurence>

Women's Fellowship meets on the first Monday of the month from March to December. Meetings are held in the Committee Room 7.30 for 8pm. We have talks on a variety of subjects. See Programme of the Month for details.

Prayer Ministry Team

Prayer ministry is offered during the 10am Communion on Sundays. People can receive prayer for themselves or for any situation that is important to them. It takes place in the Lady Chapel during the distribution of communion.

Service with no name

This takes place on the first Thursday in the month in church at 7.30pm.

Foodbank

We collect food for the Quinton and Oldbury Foodbank. There is a box in church and food can be placed there at any time. The list of things that are needed is in church and in the hall. Food is distributed from St Boniface Church on Wednesdays and Paul and Barney's place on Fridays. Vouchers are required to receive food.

Choir and Music.

Choir Practice takes place weekly, normally on Thursdays 6-7pm. Anyone interested in singing in the choir should contact Simon Palmer, Organist & Choirmaster. (Contact details on page cover) We also like to encourage instrumentalists to perform in church, either in services or in concerts.

Prayer of the month

I was discussing with someone the state of the world and the way in which the world seems a very unstable and difficult place, notwithstanding any events that might be going on for us personally. I also saw the following prayer shared on Facebook by the Archbishop of Canterbury with the invitation to join in the prayer with him on March 14th. I've chosen this prayer for April because I think that the world won't have got any easier by then and because the message of the Easter story brings glimmers of light into the darkest places and offers us hope even when all around seems dire.

Our world leaders need great wisdom and huge amounts of prayer so let us pray.

A prayer at a time of international uncertainty

Lord of the Nations,
Who loves us faithfully in all our troubles,
We pray for our leaders:
In their struggles give them wisdom,
In their ambitions give them moderation,
In their fears give them courage,
So that the affairs of this world may be peaceful,
That justice may reign and Your Kingdom be seen,
Through Jesus Christ Our Lord.

Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury



A focus for our prayers

Christian anti-persecution charity, Open Doors, released recently its 2018 World Watch list. It ranked fifty countries where Christians face the most extreme persecution, with scores based on restrictions on private life, family life, community life, national life and church life, as well as violent acts. The ten worst places listed were: North Korea, Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan, Pakistan, Eritrea, Libya, Iraq, Yemen and Iran.

The Resurrection

I was the one who waited in the garden
Doubting the morning and the early light.
I watched the mist lift off its own soft burden,
Permitting not believing my own sight.
If there were sudden noises I dismissed
Them as a trick of sound, a sleight of hand.
Not by a natural joy could I be blessed
Or trust a thing I could not understand.
Maybe I was a shadow thrown by one
Who, weeping, came to lift away the stone.
Or was I but the path on which the sun,
Too heavy for itself, was loosed and thrown?
I heard the voices and the recognition
And love like kisses heard behind thin walls.
Were they my tears which fell, a real contrition?
Or simply April with its waterfalls?
It was by negatives I learned my place.
The garden went on growing and I sensed
A sudden breeze that blew across my face.
Despair returned, but now it danced, it danced.

Elizabeth Jennings

The Real Easter Egg

Out of the 80 million chocolate Easter eggs sold each year in the UK, The Real Easter Egg is the first and only Fairtrade chocolate Easter egg with a copy of the Easter story in the box. Launched in 2010, more than a million Real Easter Eggs have been sold with 750,000 of these sent through the post directly to churches and schools. The success of The Real Easter Egg has meant that the production of Fairtrade chocolate has moved to the UK. Over £250,000 has been raised from sales for charitable causes.

The Real Easter Egg is available from www.realeasteregg.co.uk in larger branches of Tesco, ASDA, Waitrose, Morrisons and independent retailers.

Bishop's Comment: Reimagining Britain

Freezing weather in Britain is temporary. We endure it in the hope that Spring is just around the corner. Archbishop Justin Welby's new book, 'Reimagining Britain', is subtitled 'Foundations for Hope'. In it he describes our national dilemmas and discomforts and provides ideas and practical pathways for ways forward.

Written from a Christian perspective, the reader is challenged to reconsider the values and virtues by which we live both personally and publicly. These are grouped under the headings of Community, Courage and Stability. The great themes of society including Health, Education, Housing and Finance are highlighted. Britain's place in the world and the environment are examined and there are rousing challenges to society and faiths for action. At a time of political confusion, economic uncertainty and penitence for wrongdoing in the Church, 'Reimagining Britain' offers a framework for urgent and passionate discussion, leading I pray to faithful opportunities for remaking our local and national purpose.

Many of the current intellectual perspectives take us along different routes, offered for example by Steven Pinker, John Gray or Robert Tombs. The evidence of parishioners, from the complexity of their daily lives, encourages me to argue for a Christian Way of travelling. Archbishop Justin provides a timely stimulus for strengthening this resolve, that, during Lent, counts the cost of following Jesus Christ in confession, repentance and forgiveness.

After the crucifixion and burial of Jesus, some of his disciples were going home to Emmaus, despondent. Their narrative was 'we had hoped' (Luke 24:21). On meeting the resurrected Lord they rushed back to Jerusalem to be with their fellow disciples. Together they were instructed 'stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high' (Luke 24:49) The film 'Risen', with Joseph Fiennes as sceptical Roman soldier, illustrates the wonder and faith that transforms oppressed individuals into flourishing community. Christians have that same power today. Noticing the crocuses pushing through the snow, the sunshine warming cold bones, and the freedom to speak and act, let us prepare to receive the Spirit gratefully and live Christ joyfully.

+David Birmingham

Love Wins

I look upon that body, writhing, pierced
and torn with nails, and see the battlefields
of time, the mangled dead, the gaping wounds,
the sweating, dazed survivors straggling back,
the widows worn and haggard, still dry-eyed,
because their weight of sorrow will not lift
and let them weep; I see the ravished maid,
the honest mother in her shame; I see
all history pass by, and through it all
still shines that face, the Christ face like a star
which pierces drifting clouds and tells the Truth ...

So through the clouds of Calvary there shines
his face, and I believe that Evil dies,
and good lives on, loves on, and conquers all.
All war must end in peace. These clouds are lies.
They cannot last. The blue sky is the Truth.
For God is Love. Such is my faith, and such
my reasons for it, and I find them strong
enough. And you? You want to argue? Well
I can't. It is a choice. I chose the Christ.

Rev. G.A. Studdert Kennedy

STRAPLINES

One of the greatest miracles is the fact that even though there are billions of people in the world, every person is unique.

Never complain about growing old – far too many people have been denied the privilege.

Lose your money and you lose much; lose a friend and you lose much more; lose faith and you lose everything.

A bad attitude is like a flat tyre – you'll get nowhere until you change it.



Holy Baptism

18th March Charlotte Elizabeth Beecroft

Funeral at the Crematorium

5th March Dawn Irene Whitlock

Funeral in Church

26th March Francis John Hubble

FACTS AND FIGURES

Week Beginning	Communicants	Loose Plate £	Planned Giving £	Gift Aid £
Feb 18	100	89.28	209.23	10.00
Feb 25	79	102.45	195.42	30.00
March 4	51	46.20	205.00	1.50
March 11	36	45.44	393.60	10.00
Standing Orders			662.50	21.42
Parish Giving			1310.00	327.50

A church treasurer received a cheque returned from the bank marked "Insufficient funds", so he replied saying, "Does this refer to us or you?"

CEILING SQUARES SALE IN AID OF THE CHURCH HALL ROOF FUND



I thank you so much to all of you who have purchased squares, but there are still more available to buy.

To make it easier, I have printed sheets for anyone who would like to purchase the squares. You can get one from me, the vicar or David Glanvill on which you can fill in the details required and pass the form to me or to whom you received it, together with the cash or cheque (payable to **St Faith and St Laurence Church**) for the amount for the squares (each square at £5). I will enter your squares on the map.

If you are a tax payer, and would you like to gift aid your purchase, please ask me or the person you received the sheet from, to ensure that the gift aid will go to the Church Hall Roof Fund.

On the 19 th February 2018 the amount banked was	£1,110.00
We have gift aid from £470.50 earning an extra	£116.87
Totalling	£1,226.87

I look forward to hearing from you, either as a new purchaser, or if you would like to buy more squares.

Len Myers

You can contact me on 0121 682 2830 or on lenmyers@blueyonder.co.uk

COVER STORY

This month's cover is sponsored by Len and Beryl Myers who celebrate their 57th wedding anniversary on Easter Sunday. They were married on Holy Saturday, April 1st 1961 at St. Michael's and All Angels Church, Smethwick.



St. Michael and All Angels Church was in Crockett's Lane, Smethwick and was begun in 1891 and consecrated in 1892. Much of the cost was met by J. H. Chance. The church was a red-brick building designed by A. E. Street of London in an Early English style. It consisted of chancel, north transept, aisled and clerestoried nave, and west baptistery flanked by porches; the interior brickwork was exposed. The chancel and transept were built as a raised platform to provide space for a parish room and a vestry beneath. About 1922, the organ was moved from the transept to the south side of the chancel, apparently in place of a Lady chapel, and a vestry and a chapel were formed in the transept. About 1933 the organ was moved to a platform above the vestry, and a Lady chapel was formed on the south side of the chancel as a memorial to Charlotte Louisa Evans, the caretaker for twenty-five years.

The organ case in our church was made from the oak pews of St. Michael and All Angels Church when it closed.

Our Lent Appeal to support Audrey and Colin Gibson, our CMS Mission Partners in Lebanon.

When Audrey and Colin Gibson became our Mission Partners, planning to go to Lebanon, we promised we would help to support them in their work, with our prayers and also with our giving.

They are based in Beirut working within the Lebanese Society for Educational and Social Development (LSESD) now celebrating its twentieth anniversary, It has continued development in Education and in its Publishing department, also in Leadership Development and in Relief and Community Development. The latter has grown rapidly with the Syria crisis and the needs of the many refugees in the country. It is also known as MERATH (Middle East Revive and Thrive).

Colin's main work is in fundraising and liaising with overseas partners and not least with the needs of local churches in direct contact with refugees. He has a special link with children's ministry, checking on some of the projects. It gives him a chance to get involved in the Kid's clubs and the many short term children's camps which also involve refugee children.

Audrey works in Education in the SKILD Centre (Smart Kids with Individual Learning Differences). The church is trying to change people's attitudes to children with learning difficulties, helping them realise they need different ways of learning and they don't have to be hidden away at home. She has made regular visits to some children in their schools in Beirut and has also spent last term after school as a 'life and social skills' supervisor with four very competent Lebanese ladies, providing support and encouragement to small groups of children gaining important social skills in a "failure free setting". She too has contact with a number of refugee children.

Of course Colin and Audrey do much more, some of which you can find in their newsletters, with those of LSESD, on the shelf at the back of the church.

We know many of our congregation like to make a special effort during Lent and indeed Audrey and Colin would greatly appreciate whatever support we can give them. Please could all contributions be given by **Sunday 15th April**.

They have already booked a date to come and see us during their home leave this summer. On April 22nd we shall be able to hear lots of interesting things about their work.

Mission Task Group

Risen with Christ

Easter Sunday this year is on April 1st. The last time this happened was 1956, and the next time will be 2029. St Bede, who wrote about these things, would have loved facts like these. When I was a choirboy, and sermons were longer than they are now, I would immerse myself in the *Book of Common Prayer* and try to make sense of the rules to calculate Easter. They had their epacts, (the period of time necessary to bring the solar calendar into harmony with the lunar calendar) dominical letters and golden numbers. The heady combination of mathematics, literature and religion fascinated me and still does. Why did *Common Worship* deprive of us that enjoyment, giving us only a table of answers but no method of getting there?

Perhaps to keep us guessing. It's true that with the Gregorian Calendar, and knowing about the phases of the moon, and precessions and millennial leap years, we can predict the date for centuries to come. But that doesn't mean that you can tell me when Easter falls in 2019 or 2020. It takes us by surprise each year. That is just like the resurrection itself. Surprise is at the very heart of the Easter story. Peter, John, Mary Magdalen, Thomas, the two walking to Emmaus, all of them had lived through Good Friday. They knew there was no way back from it: their Lord was crucified, dead and buried. So when the stone was rolled away and the tomb was empty, what did it mean? Jesus appearing to them, greeting them, calling them by name, what did it mean? How could these things not have taken them utterly by surprise and overturned their world?

What did it mean? What *does* it mean? If you had asked Peter or John or Mary, they might have answered: 'we can't know just yet, only that it a joyful mystery, something so wonderful that it will take a lifetime to understand'. For when the risen Jesus comes to us, and changes our lives, it takes time to absorb: even eternity's too short. I can remember hearing of an elderly priest, who woke up one morning and for no particular reason, found himself saying: 'yes, it's true, everything I have taught all my life, God's love, the words and works of Jesus, his cross and resurrection: I always believed it and trusted in it, but now I know in a new way that it is true, and I was right to stake my life on it, for what other life is worth living?' He died shortly afterwards in peace. Like Simeon, he had seen God's salvation. It would take an Augustine, a Luther or a Wesley to make sense of it, and even for them it took a lifetime.

Tue	17	2.00 pm	William Lench Court Service	
		7.30 pm	Churches together in Harborne	Committee Room
Wed	18	10.30 am	Call in for Coffee	Committee Room
		11.00 am	Holy Communion	Lady Chapel
			<i>Acts 8.1b-8; John 6.35-40</i>	
Thu	19	9.30 am	Stay and Play	Hall
		6.00 pm	Choir Practice	Church
Sat	21	1.00 pm	Wedding of Dan Evans and Anna Binns	Church
		6.30 pm	St. George's Day Dinner	Hall

SUN 22 FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

		8.00 am	Holy Communion <i>Acts 4.5-12;</i> <i>1 John 3.16-end; John 10.11-18</i>	
		10.00 am	Family Communion	
			<i>Readings as at 8am</i>	
		6.30 pm	Evensong <i>Psalms 81.8-16</i> <i>Exodus 16.4-15; Revelation 2.12-17</i>	

Mon	23	1.45 pm	Reflections	143 Balden Road
Wed	25	10.30 am	Call in for Coffee	Committee Room
		11.00 am	Holy Communion	Lady Chapel
			<i>Proverbs 15.28-end; Mark 13.5-13</i>	
Thu	26	9.30 am	Stay and Play	Hall
		6.00 pm	Choir Practice	Church

SUN 29 FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

		8.00 am	Holy Communion <i>Acts 8.26-end;</i> <i>1 John 4.7-end; John 15.1-8</i>	
		10.00 am	Family Communion with Baptism	
			<i>Readings as at 8am</i>	
		6.30 pm	Evensong <i>Psalms 96</i> <i>Isaiah 60.1-14; Revelation 3.1-13</i>	

Mon	30	1.45 pm	Reflections	143 Balden Road
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PROGRAMME FOR APRIL

SUN 1 EASTER DAY

- 8.00 am Holy Communion *Isaiah 25.6-9; Acts 10.34-43; John 20.1-18 (split)*
 10.00 am Family Communion
Acts 10.34-43; John 20.1-18 (split)
 6.30 pm Evensong *Psalm 66.1-11(TBC)*
Ezekiel 37.1-14; Luke 24.13-35

- Wed 4 10.30 am Call in for Coffee *Committee Room*
 11.00 am Holy Communion *Lady Chapel*
Acts 3.1-10; Luke 24.13-35
 Thu 5 9.30 am Stay and Play *Hall*
 Sat 7 10.30 am Messy Church *Hall*

SUN 8 SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

- 8.00 am Holy Communion *Acts 4.32-35; 1 John 1.1-22; John 20.19-end*
 10.00 am Morning Praise
 6.30 pm Sung Eucharist
Readings as at 8am

- Mon 9 1.45 pm Reflections *143 Balden Road*
 7.45 pm Women's Fellowship *Committee Room*
 Tue 10 7.30 pm APCM *Church*
 Wed 11 10.30 am Call in for Coffee *Committee Room*
 11.00 am Holy Communion *Lady Chapel*
Acts 5.17-26; John 3.16-21
 Thu 12 9.30 am Stay and Play *Hall*
 6.00 pm Choir Practice *Church*

SUN 15 THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

- 8.00 am Holy Communion *Acts 3.12-19; 1 John 3.1-7; Luke 24.36b-48*
 10.00 am Family Communion
Readings as at 8am
 6.30 pm Evensong *Psalm 142*
Deuteronomy 7.7-13; Revelation 2.1-11

- Mon 16 1.45 pm Reflections *143 Balden Road*
 Tue 17 10.30 am Queen Mother Gardens Service

What matters is the experience, God's work in us, so that we grow into a confident resurrection faith, for this is what Christianity is.

In the garden on the first Easter Day, Jesus comes to Mary and asks her whom she is looking for. He has asked that question three times before in St John's Gospel. On the last occasion it was in another garden, Gethsemane, where wicked men came to arrest him. Now he asks it of the woman in the dawning of a spring day, and for her, the winter of pain and loneliness is past. As we hear that moving encounter, and Jesus calling her by her own name, we can place ourselves inside the story in our own bewilderment and need. For he comes to us as he came to her. He asks us whom we are looking for. He calls us by our names, for resurrection is as intimate as that in its beginnings. This makes all the difference.

What difference? St Paul appeals to an early Christian community to live in the light of the truth that had taken hold of them so vividly and claimed their allegiance. 'If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.... for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God'. *If then you have been raised with Christ*. In those beautiful words, St Paul is saying that Easter is not simply something that happened *then*; it happens to us *now*, and goes on happening. Sometimes it happens *with* us, because we are looking for it and long for it more than anything; sometimes, indeed often, it happens *despite* us because we are sluggish and earthbound and sleep-walking through life, barely willing to entertain the thought that things could be different and better and richer, for us, for our society, for our world.

Easter Day holds out the promise that life can be different. Like the day itself, sometimes it comes early, sometimes late. Sometimes spring arrives while the year is in its infancy; sometimes it is as if it will never come. But it always does. When it comes, and however it happens, it brings joy and reminds us why it is worth being alive. Easter shows us where the sources of all life and love and joy belong: in Christ risen from the dead, in the welcome and embrace of his Easter greeting, in the conviction that grows within us from one Easter to the next, that nothing can separate us from the love of God. Christ is risen. We are risen. New possibilities are open to us. There is happiness and hope. We do not need to be afraid any longer. We have come home.

Peter Stokes