

The Parish of Christchurch

The Priory Church of the Holy Trinity, Christchurch
St George, Jumpers • St John at Purewell



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Dear Friends

What do you think that it was really like for those first followers of Jesus as they were locked away together in the upper room on that first Easter Sunday? St John tells us that the doors to the room were locked for fear of the Jews. Despite having been told by Mary that she had seen the risen Lord, somehow the threat that they were facing from those who wished to do them harm was more pressing and real than coming to terms with the fact that Jesus had risen from the dead. Together, shut away in a single room, they must have been full of fear and anxiety as they tried to agree on just what their next course of action should be.

They were in “lockdown” and self-preservation was their top priority. They had time for reflection, to think about what had happened during the last months and years as they had journeyed physically in the presence of Jesus, they had time also to focus upon what they were to do now without their earthly master and guide. Yes they had time, perhaps too much time to consider these matters, and I dare say that they experienced just about every human emotion at one point or another.

Well I am sure that by now you have realised why I have chosen to focus upon the experience in the upper room in the pastoral letter this week. As our current enforced lockdown continues, and in all probability will remain in place in some form for the foreseeable future, we can this year feel far more empathy with just how those first followers of Jesus themselves must have felt. Isolation can be good for meditation, reflection and inner soul searching, but it can likewise be harmful for our physical, mental and spiritual health if we allow its negative qualities to take a hold within us. We can become irritable with those we love the most, especially if we have not been used to spending every minute of every day with them. We can view the world as the enemy outside causing this inconvenience to our preferred lifestyles, and we can become despondent as we watch or read about the devastating loss of human life this virus is resulting in, seemingly anywhere and everywhere. We can almost feel the hope drain from us and be replaced with feelings of utter doom and gloom. And perhaps the longer this lockdown continues, so too those feelings of despondency taking root within us will also become.

Well if that is true, look again at what happened next to those locked in that upper room. At quite possibly their lowest moment, at the point when they thought it couldn't get any worse, the risen Jesus appeared in their presence and simply spoke these words to them, “Peace be with you.” I have often felt that this was the precise moment when faith, hope and love collided head on with each other and became a single living reality.

The way that we have been almost forced to encounter, experience and witness Jesus' eternal peace have been new this year. New yes, uncomfortable to some at least, but also surely full of the Easter hope that Jesus would choose for us to both engage with and to encounter for ourselves. As I make phone calls and send and receive emails, I have been truly amazed by the goodwill and acts of kindness that so many within

our Church family have been showing to others. Shopping, collecting medicines, writing letters, speaking with vulnerable neighbours and perhaps most special of all, using the telephone to stay in touch with one another and to offer the true hope and love which underpins our very faith in the risen Jesus. These are the moments when we have most powerfully heard Jesus himself say to us, “Peace be with you” and also to know and truly feel exactly what he meant and still means by and with those words of comfort and reassurance. When this virus has finally departed from the world, let us make it our prayer that these simple acts of kindness will not depart with it, but rather may they remain ever present in the Church and the world, and may we be reminded of them and of their power and significance each and every time that we share the Peace with each other. May the peace of the risen Lord be always with you.

With my love and my prayers,
Richard.

Reverend Richard Partridge.
Associate Priest: Parish of Christchurch.

This week Archbishop Justin launched Daily Hope, a free national phone line offering music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services by telephone. The new free phone line – which is available 24 hours a day on **0800 804 8044** – has been set up particularly with those unable to join online church services during the period of restrictions in mind. Callers will hear a special greeting from the Archbishop before being able to choose from a range of options, including hymns, prayers, reflections and advice on COVID-19.

You might be interested to know that we have 102 households in the Church family who do not have internet access and are receiving these pastoral letters each week through the postal system. Might you be willing to sponsor the cost of the postage stamps for a week which is currently £65 thus reducing the need to use Church funds for this purpose?

If so, please do contact Ian Penny our Administrator, prioryhouse@christchurchpriory.org or 01202 485804 option 6.

Ian will tell you the best way to transfer your donation to the Church.

Alternatively, you can send a cheque payable to the “PCC of Christchurch” and send to
The Parish of Christchurch, Priory House, Quay Road, Christchurch. BH23 1BX.