

Letter to WSAM churches

8th April 2020

Dear Friends

One of the things that has impressed me over the last couple of weeks is the way our communities have come together, offering help to neighbours and others, and also sharing ideas and ways to communicate our love and care that go beyond words - candles on windowsills; clapping in the street; rainbows and even teddy bears in windows where people (especially children, but most adults are children at heart!) can see them as they walk past... In this new, quieter world, I am also enjoying hearing more of my neighbours, whether that is children playing on their trampoline or their parents mowing the lawn. It is good to have time to be aware of each other, and to include our whole communities in our thoughts and prayers.

Holy Week

I don't know whether any of you decided to make use of the Prayer Stations which I mentioned in my letter last week, but I have a couple of other ideas which some might enjoy. When my children were small we loved creating an Easter Garden on a tray or big dish of some sort, using small plants and stones, building a hill and a tomb and making crosses out of twigs. There are all sorts of things you can include - you can find more ideas online or just use your own imagination! The other thing I thought of for Friday was hot cross buns. Don't have any? Could you bake some, or if you don't have the ingredients could you improvise? What about biscuits, toast or jacket potatoes with a cross on top? Perhaps if you do any of these things you could take a photo of it and share it. Both Billingshurst and Pulborough URCs have Facebook pages. We could liven them up with pictures of Easter Gardens or use them to communicate more with church friends and the wider community.

Friday is Good Friday, and for friends who want to follow it, Colin's Good Friday service will be uploaded to the Trinity URC website shortly. There will also be a service of music and readings from King's College, Cambridge, scheduled for BBC 2 on Saturday at 7pm, and other religious programmes at various points over the weekend; and for those who subscribe to the URC's Daily Devotions emails, there will be special worship sent out on both Good Friday and Easter Sunday (go to <https://devotions.urc.org.uk> to subscribe).

Communion

Normally we would share in Communion together at Easter - a sharing which is extremely important to many people of faith at this time. But how can we do so this year, when we are each separated in our own homes? In some Christian traditions, Communion, or Eucharist, requires a priest, and without one is not possible. This is not the case for us.

Others, such as the Quakers, find the presence of God in everyday objects and actions and feel that these are sacramental without explicit Sacraments; but many of us do find comfort and meaning in explicitly sharing Communion together.

In our tradition it is important that Communion is a visual enactment of the Gospel; so the story (1 Corinthians 11: 23-26, or equivalent) is always read and the actions of taking, breaking and sharing are clearly enacted. Then we trust to the Spirit to unite us with each other and with Christ. With these proviso's it may well be possible for those of us who want to, and feel comfortable doing so, to share in Easter Communion, using bread and 'wine' (this can be whatever you have which you think suitable) and joining with others in services on TV, or online, or on paper. There will be various options available for this - hopefully making it possible for everybody who wants to to share in Communion somehow. We all know that this isn't ideal, or what we would have wished for in more 'normal' times; but we also know that God is with us everywhere and always - in our own homes just as much as in our church buildings. May we be aware of God's presence this week especially.

Church family news

Thank you to all those who have been in touch this week to share their news and to ask after me and my family. It is great that we have friends who can weave a web of care and concern, as well as of love and laughter! Please stay in touch with me and each other.

Audrey's funeral will be held this Thursday (9th) at 12.30 and it may be possible for friends to follow it online if they have the technology. If you would like the details, please contact Anne.

From Billingshurst, both Jane and Brenda have asked me to mention that they are able to help with collecting prescriptions etc. for friends who aren't able to get out. Get in touch with them if you need help. We are so fortunate that both the professionals and the community volunteers are working hard for the good of all - the front line key workers are, I'm sure, in all our prayers, as well as those affected by the virus. Please pray especially for Nicky's brother-in-law and his family.

These letters and Bulletins, with some details removed for confidentiality, are now being added to our church websites so that they are more easily and widely accessible.

God Bless you all, and please, keep safe and keep everyone else safe.

Anne Lewitt