



Alleluia, Christ is risen!

So we greet the Easter season with joy and confidence each year, renewed in our faith and encouraged that God is at work in the world. And so very often, my articles in Connect reflect this confidence, and perhaps have taken it too much for granted.

Not that it is in any way wrong to be confident in our faith or to take courage to proclaim and live it in the world, but my own confidence might just get a bit in the way of understanding other people, who haven't yet quite got the message, and who may be resistant to it.

Writing this after Easter Sunday, I notice that the confidence of those first disciples did not

come all at once – there were several post resurrection appearances, where different groups of disciples encountered Jesus real and alive. It wasn't just the fantasy of one or two, it became a reality for them. Even so it was not something they could tell outsiders about – at least not until the Holy Spirit came on the fiftieth day – Pentecost: somehow, then, they did have something to say, even though they knew that they would not have the physical presence of the risen Jesus to demonstrate to the crowds – for on the fortieth day – Ascension – Jesus had given a final farewell. Somehow they could not tell the story until they were ready and prepared, and even until after Jesus had gone. And somehow, their message did speak to the crowds, but it was not easy, obvious or straightforward.

And that is a big question for us in our context today – how does our message speak to the world. We may be confident and joyful, but those around us, who are not part of the Church, and who do not re-tell and re-live this story week by week know less and less of the history and of the facts on which our faith is based. Although our education and culture are based on what are now called Christian principles, the actual Christian content has been thinned out – we have more to explain and to tell to get the message across.

In previous generations an event like a pandemic would have been a faith crisis as well as a health crisis:



<https://www.etsy.com/uk/listing/1472808014/holy-spirit-dove-window-cling-faux>



the two world wars of the 20th Century had a big impact on faith – some asking how God could possibly be active when horrors like war were still part of the world; others turned to faith as the response to human evil, and to our part in that: as the source of hope in a dark world.

But in our own age, the faith component of the pandemic, and our response to it, seems to have been very much more muted – faith has not particularly been a response to the fear and devastation of this health crisis, just as it has been less a response, in our own nation, to the wars that are so much a part of our news at the moment – Ukraine and Gaza amongst them. It is as if we live in a world which does not know enough to comprehend that our Christian faith might be an option – a source of – a channel for – the perfect love that casts out all fear.

The world in which Jesus lived was not really ready for the resurrection. The first disciples did not quite know what to make of it, until they were strengthened by God. We seem to be living in a time closer to that first Easter than I have known in my lifetime. It is so easy to think that all we need to do is to shout louder – that seems perhaps necessary to raise our profile above the multitude of other voices that crave attention at the moment. But what if there is another issue too – that when people do hear us, they think, or assume, that what we have to say is no longer relevant? Then just shouting louder will have no impact, apart, perhaps, from making us seem less attractive.

The transforming event for those first disciples – the one which made their connection with the world around, made the message attractive and accessible and relevant – that event was not Easter, but Pentecost. We might say something like “Easter is a festival for the Church, Pentecost is an event for the world.” That too can be misleading, because Pentecost bore on the lives of Jesus’ followers at first, and it was they who engaged the world. It is perhaps better to reflect that Easter might be seen as bridging the gulf between heaven and earth, while Pentecost bridges the gap between the Church and the World.

So let us declare our Easter message with joy and confidence – but reflect also that we need Pentecost too, and pray in this season for the coming of – the new life of – the Spirit – and a refreshed connection between the Church and the world.

Alleluia, Christ is risen!

*Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your people,
and kindle in us the fire of your love.*

Mark



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C A M E O

(come and meet each other)

CAMEO is for anyone, lonely, bereaved, lives on their own, or would like to chat...

...every Monday 2pm to 4pm in St Mary’s Church Meeting Room for a chat over a cup of tea and cake.



Theresa Lucas
635923

Ann Dykes
863199

Viv Druce 820718

This Month's Prayers

Almighty God and Amazing Heavenly Father,

We recall Jesus' 1st commandment "to love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul and mind; to have no other gods before Me".

We may recognise that this isn't always the case and that we do sometimes stray and either consciously or unconsciously put other people and other things before you. For this we ask for your forgiveness and, trusting in your abundant mercy and grace, receive complete pardon for those times when we try to go it alone choosing you as a last resort instead of a first.

As we celebrate Easter, and all that it means to us, that absolution becomes even more meaningful, more tangible, more real as it demonstrates beyond measure the love shown by you for all humankind by the one-time never-to-be-repeated act of selfless sacrifice Jesus made for each of us on that first Good Friday.

And what's even more remarkable is that we neither deserve that love, cannot earn or buy it and that indeed you paid a debt you didn't owe to satisfy one that we could never pay.

Oh Lord, how truly grateful and thankful we are to be counted amongst those who are saved for eternity because of our God-given faith!

o-O-o

Help us, we pray Lord, to show the love that you have for us by showing it to someone else. Following Jesus' 2nd Commandment to "Love our neighbour as ourself" whether that be through prayer, a listening ear, quiet companionship or something practical.

Whatever we do, whether in word or deed, may it be to your glory as those we minister to recognise and acknowledge that this love comes not from us but from You.

Give us too the tools we need; energy, strength, time management and patience to help those we encounter as we are prompted and guided by your Holy Spirit.

o-O-o

We pray for the church and that all discussions held and decisions made by General Synod are underpinned by your wisdom and direction, working to build up and support to who have faith and those who do not. For our clergy and lay members of St. Mary and St. Barnabas churches. May all be blessed as they serve You, our living, loving Heavenly Father.

o-O-o

We pray for the world and especially all caught up in war or civil commotion. Lord, we long for peace but somehow that seems as elusive as ever as there are no signs that either the war in Ukraine or the Middle East are about to stop anytime soon. We may sometimes wonder Lord how and when it will all end and that peace will be restored. All we can and will do is pray and hope and trust that in the great scheme of things, you have it all in hand.

We pray for all who are hungry, the poor and those who cannot get the medicine or treatment they desperately need. For all who suffer in body, mind or spirit. For all carers, either paid or unpaid.

We look to you to help those who are disadvantaged by unfair trade laws or multi-national companies putting profit over people. We remember all caught up in slavery or human

(Continued on page 5)

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Who's Who in the Thatcham Team

Team Rector

Mark Bennet 867342

Team Vicar - St. Barnabas

Nicola Hulks 864916

Associate Clergy:

Brenda Harland 865064

Angela Brennan 07498 801479

Parish Administrator

Ann Watts 864567

(not Wednesdays)

Parish Office temporary address:

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Future copies

Connect is published ten times a year and is available from St. Mary's and St. Barnabas Churches, Thatcham, or by post from the Parish Office, tel. 864567.

Article Deadline

Please give articles for the **May** edition to Steve Rice (860431) or any of the clergy or churchwardens or email julie@dunwell.org by **15th April**.



Services at St. Mary's Church

Sundays

8.00 am **Sunday Service**

10.00 am **Sunday Service**

6.30 pm **Sung Evensong**
(1st Sundays only)

Wednesdays

9.45 am **Holy Communion**

10.30 am **'ABC'** (Adults, Babies, Children)

Every Weekday

9.30 am **Morning Prayer** (In the chapel)



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Inspired by the love of Christ to build God's kingdom



Services at St. Barnabas Church

(meeting in Thatcham Park School)

10.00 am Sunday Service

www.stbarnabasthatcham.weebly.com

Serving to Build Community



For the Record...

Baptism

none

Weddings

none

Funerals

19 March Leslie Goddard 91



Dates for your diary

- 21 Apr **Annual Parish Meetings**
- 27 Apr **Concert - Beenham Wind Orchestra** 7.30 pm
'Tribute to Natural Wonders of the World'
- 19 May **Pentecost**
- 8/9 Jun **'TEDDYFEST'** a fundraiser for St Mary's and URC
- 6 Jul **Concert - Watership Cantabile and St Mary's Choir**

(Continued from page 3)

trafficking and pray for a fairer, more equitable world where justice and decency prevail.

Finally Lord, we know that life is full of ups and downs with both good and bad days. Whatever our situation, struggle or pain, remind us that you are with us and that you know all that there is to know when it comes to suffering and so therefore you completely understand every situation, every trial, but also every joy and every hope.

Help us to take comfort and strength in the knowledge that we are indeed never alone and that you have our best interests at heart, even if we don't realise it at the time.

We do thank you for our blessings and the reassurance of eternal life to all who are saved and being saved. May all know your healing, wholeness and peace.

Amen

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**PLEASE SUPPORT
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SCHEME**

Speak to Chris Watts (01635) 864567

This year is focussed on helping sufferers of poverty in Burundi, for a province where 70% of people live in poverty, and 52% of children are underweight.

Most are reliant on finding casual work each day, in order to buy food for that evening, and many go to bed hungry.

The money raised will provide support to set up small businesses, so people can work towards a better future for their families.

Aline’s Story:

Aline felt the full force of extreme poverty when an early marriage ended in abuse and violence. Separated from her six children, she was forced to sleep on the streets of Burundi.

With no home, healthcare or security, Aline was pushed to the brink of survival.

But Aline transformed her life with a little help from Christian Aid.

Thanks to support from Christian Aid, Aline could nurture a small income: that in time enabled her to buy and grow nutritious food, set up a grocery store, build a home to call her own, and return her children to her side.

Aline was determined to push back against the inhumanity of poverty, driven by hope, faith, and the love of her children.

You can help by:

- Taking Gift Aid envelopes in Church, filling them yourself, and passing on spares to friends and family (a congregation member raised £60 that way last year).
- Volunteering for an hour from 10am-4pm on Saturday 18th May at our Collection Point in St Mary’s



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Church Porch.

- Having coffee and cake after the Service on Sunday 19th May and giving a donation, or even baking a cake yourself.

In addition, we are delighted that Phil Evans (Christian Aid's Home Counties Region Officer for Church Engagement & Fundraising) will preach for us on Sunday 12th May, and show the new Christian Aid Week video after the Service – please do come and be inspired, and invite your friends too, all are welcome.

The need is great – please do give as you are able, and if you can't give, please do continue to pray.

For further details, please see the Christian Aid Reps:

Mary Baker, Sarah Bennet & Steve Rice,

or contact Sarah on 07854 469043
sarah.bennet2@btinternet.com

Aline is pushing back against poverty.

Abused, homeless and hungry, Aline was on the brink of survival in Burundi. But she transformed her life with a little help from Christian Aid and secured a vital income and a home for her and her children.

Support more families like Aline's to push back against the inhumanity of poverty. **Donate today.**

Join us this Christian Aid Week **12-18 May**
Please donate at **CAWeek.org**

christian aid

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For any queries, contact enquiries@thatchamtowncouncil.gov.uk or call 01635 863592

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