



Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

Easter is the greatest festival of the Christian year – the time when we remember and celebrate the events that made all the difference to the future of the world and its people. Jesus showed us that God's love is stronger than death and that life extends beyond the physical life we share here on earth. In his resurrection, Jesus returns from beyond death to make good his promises to his closest followers – promises that are also made to us. So we celebrate with joy.

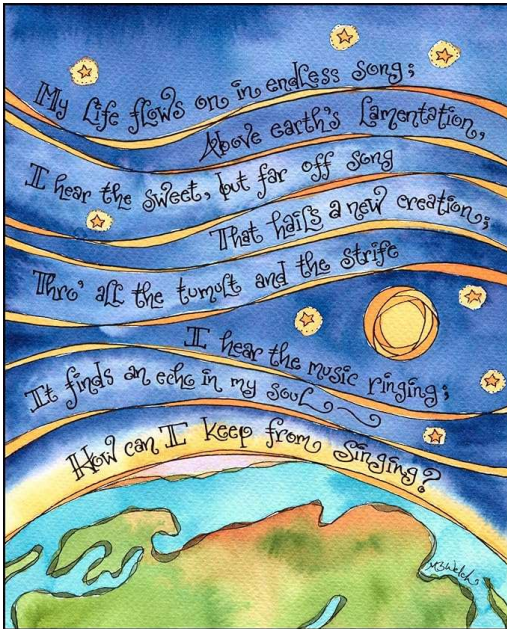
But in our human reality there is also reserve – the world does not seem to know that everything has changed – war, disease, famine, poverty, death – all remain as scars on a world that should be shaped by love. As we celebrate, we are conscious that many people throughout the world seemingly have little to be joyful about. The kingdom of God has been announced – it is breaking in, but it is not yet here in its fulness.

And if truth be told, there is likely reserve in us too – face to face with pure holiness and infinite love, it is easy to be aware that I am imperfect, to hold something back, because I cannot quite believe it.

And in the midst of this, there are new people here in Thatcham, people who know a little about our Christian faith who wonder whether there might be more to it. With cautious steps and tentative questions, they want to explore, to understand whether this might mean something to them – a different possibility for life: for faith.

This great celebration – this story of Jesus, and our own possible reserve, meet these questions in a helpful and hopeful place. We cannot magic away our own failings or the tragedies of the world – but we can tell of how our own failings are no barrier to us – they may get in our way, but they don't get in God's way. Through death and resurrection, Jesus offers us the free forgiveness of sin: not cheap forgiveness or cheap grace, but a freedom bought at the price of his blood, and requiring our (sometimes painful) humility. A freedom to live well, and not selfishly – not a bargain we make, but a gift we receive. It is tempting to say that it requires of us our own effort and restoration and repair, but this would be wrong – that may be what it looks like from one angle, but as we become more fully part



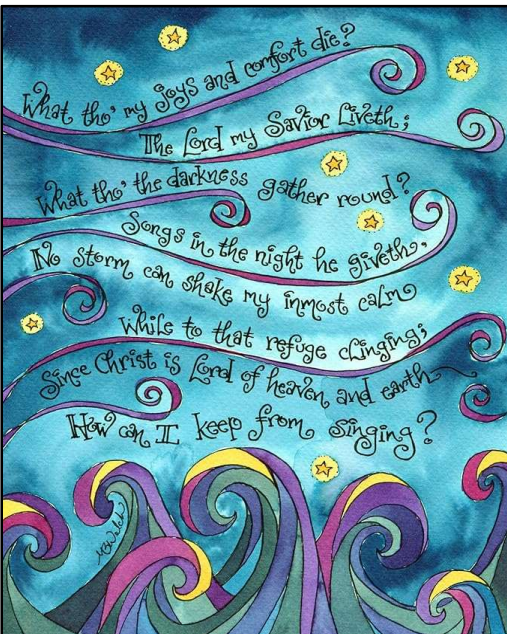


of God's plan, restoration and repair become ever more natural – not borne by the effort of our will, and carried as a burden, but a joyful part of the people we are becoming.

Jesus, who shattered the power of death, reaches through our own barriers not with terror, but with love. The failings of this world were present and complicit in Jesus' death, but that was not the end of his story, and it is not the end of ours – creation has an eternal destiny, not a bleak future – a destiny in the hands of our loving creator God.

That destiny is not just a cosmic hope – out there, beyond us. At the last supper Jesus washed the feet of the reluctant disciples – the kingdom, the hope, the love was there in an act of careful, attentive service. It was there, all the time, right in front of the disciples, but they only understood that later.

I shared a song with the Lent Group this year – one I learned when I was a curate on a visit to Iona. It has been special ever since – it touches on these themes, not scared to join them together or acknowledge them – various versions are available online. It calls us to a celebration which draws on the deep wells of God's love for us.



How can I keep from singing?

My life flows on in endless song
above earth's lamentation.
I catch the sweet, though far off, hymn
that hails a new creation.

*No storm can shake my inmost calm
while to that rock I'm clinging.
Since love is Lord of heaven and earth,
how can I keep from singing?*

Through all the tumult and the strife,
I hear that music ringing.

It finds an echo in my soul.

How can I keep from singing?

What though my joys and comforts die?

The Lord my saviour liveth.

What though the darkness round me close?

Songs in the night he giveth.

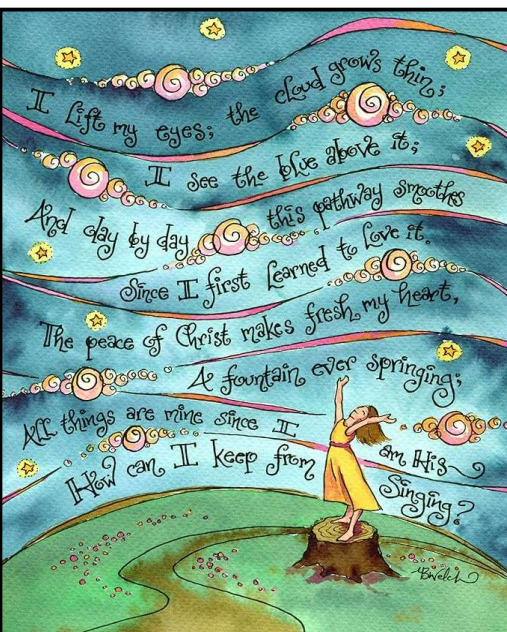
The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart,
a fountain ever springing.

All things are mine since I am his!

How can I keep from singing?

Words: Robert Lowry and Doris Plenn

Music: Robert Lowry



How Can I Keep From Singing?

<https://www.etsy.com/uk/listing/1219556295/how-can-i-keep-from-singing-hymn-art-set>

The song speaks, in the final verse, of peace. Often I refer to the love of God, as I have done already in this piece, but the Kingdom of God is announced not merely as a kingdom of love and joy, but of peace too. There was little peace in Jesus' day, and there seems so little prospect of peace in our own. The "fountain ever springing" reminds us that the Holy Spirit is ever present to strengthen and guide us – if we try to do it all in our own strength, we will exhaust ourselves. But the Holy Spirit, unleashed at Pentecost, is an infinite resource, and the fruit of love, joy and peace are outworkings of the Spirit's action.

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

Mark

An update on money

Our Church Council regularly discusses the subject of money – what it takes to keep our church going. At the moment we are some way off paying our way, though the position has stabilised. We will have accurate figures for our annual meeting, but we have been unable to pay our "parish share" – the money that pays for our clergy – for the last two years, and this year we will likely fall short too. Partly this is because some key supporters have moved away; some have died, and we have given thanks for their lives and rejoice that they are now in glory with our Lord. Another reason is that we have had many fewer baptisms, weddings and funerals since COVID as social customs have taken a major shift – the fees from these were a major source of income. So life is a challenge.

Many people make a contribution via the Parish Giving Scheme, which allows for the automatic recovery of tax through the gift-aid scheme. Some pay by standing order or bank transfer. Relatively few of us now use cash. And that makes our giving less visible – I do not really notice that I am giving to the church.

And that means that our thanksgiving for the gifts of money can seem rather muted and understated. Each Sunday we do give thanks, at the offertory, not just for bread and wine, but for what we are all able to give, and what we receive as gifts from each other to the common cause of the kingdom. We dedicate our gifts to God's service too. But the words we use do not always make this obvious, and in the absence of the offering plate there is no visible signal.

So a huge thank-you to all of you who support our church in any way, through gifts of time, labour and money. It all makes a difference and helps us to serve our community in the name of Christ.

Following a discussion at the PCC, we will not be bringing back the offering plate, but I will be looking for ways to make our thanksgiving and dedication of gifts more "present", so that we have these things properly in mind.

Mark



Who's Who in the Thatcham Team Ministry

Team Rector

Mark Bennet 867342

Team Vicar - St. Barnabas

Vacant

Associate Clergy:

Brenda Harland 865064

Angela Brennan 07498801479

Parish Administrator

Vacant

Parish Office

Email:

office.stmarysthattham@gmail.com

Churchwardens

Mike Watson 07766531038

Colin Waters 07985430769



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)



St Mary's is fitted with an Induction Loop.
If you wear a hearing aid, switch to the 'T' position to benefit from the system

www.stmarysthattham.org.uk

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



Future copies

Connect is published throughout the 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 **next June/July** edition to Steve Rice (860431) or any of the clergy or churchwardens or email julie@dunwell.org



Services at St. Barnabas Church

(Meeting in Thatcham Park School)

10.00 am Sunday Service

www.stbarnabasthattham.weebly.com

Serving to Build Community



For the Record...

February and March 2026

Baptism

28 February Clara Rose Paredes-Walker

Weddings

None

Funerals

12 February Joan Farmer (99)

17 February Terence (Terry) Cook (69)

16 March Sonya Moss (51)



Dates for your diary

13 Apr **CAMEO** - 2 pm (every Monday)

14 Apr **Baby Café** - 10.30-12.00pm, Old Bluecoat School (every Tuesday, term time only)

15 Apr **A B C** - 10.30-11.45 am (every Wednesday, **no meeting 9 Apr**)

16 Apr **Vintage Adventure** - 2.30-4.00pm, Thatcham Methodist Church

18 Apr **Organ recital** - 3.00pm, St Georges Church, Wash Common

10-16 May **CHRISTIAN AID WEEK 2026**



West Berkshire Food Bank Shopping list

Urgently needed items

Sponge puddings

Tinned peas/carrots/sweetcorn

UHT milk

Fruit Juice

Tinned Fish

Tinned Tomatoes

Prayers

Hallelujah He is Risen. He is Risen Indeed. Hallelujah!

Loving Heavenly Father,

In this glorious season we praise Your Holy Name giving thanks for sending Your Son to live, to die and to rise again in splendour, atoning for our sins and reconciling us to our Father in Heaven.

There aren't enough words in the dictionary to fully express our emotions so we just say THANKYOU for all that it means to be called by you and to be saved by you, not that we deserve any of this of course, but only because your grace and mercy was poured out to us through Jesus's broken body and blood shed at Calvary.

So we pause and come before you in stillness and peace as we soak up just what it means to be saved for all eternity through the once and for all sacrifice of Jesus.

o-O-o

We lift to you the church, that is, the people with all their different expressions of worship; from quiet reflection through to charismatic concerts and everything in-between. We give thanks for the music of our churches; the organists, the choir and the musicians, the bells and the handbells. May our voices proclaim your greatness and majesty each and every time we sing!

o-O-o

Again Lord we pray for peace in our troubled, fractured world. As the troubles in the Middle East continue to dominate the news, we also remember those places such as Ukraine, South Sudan, Eritrea and Myanmar which seem to have fallen off the radar but nonetheless still suffer with millions affected every day.

With no end in sight we mourn with them and ask that you do what is impossible it seems for man but completely possible with you and that is to bring a complete cessation of fighting and with it healing and hope to the nations.

We give thanks and pray for the ongoing work of all charities and organisations seeking to alleviate the effects of war, famine and pestilence. Lord, bless and guide their efforts.

o-O-o

We pray for all who suffer in any way, for all who struggle with mental, physical or spiritual disability, for all who are lonely and won't see anyone this Easter. We pray for those in hospital giving thanks for the West Berkshire Community Hospital virtually on our doorstep. We pray for all patients; in-patients and out-patients alike. May each know your healing, wholeness and peace,

o-O-o

And we do give thanks for all we do have;

Our Families, Friends, Finances, Freedoms and Faith.

So many in the world don't have anywhere as near as much as we enjoy so we are truly grateful for everything given to us.

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

Amen





CHRISTIAN AID WEEK 2026 is from Sunday 10th – Saturday 16th May

This year is focussed on helping urban farmers in Nairobi, Kenya.

This allows them to grow food in small spaces, to feed their families and sell the surplus to fund other necessities.

Fridah's story

In the informal settlement of Dagoretti in Nairobi, many parents wake each morning knowing they must earn money that day.

If they do not, their children may not eat that night.

For Fridah Moraa, this pressure is constant. She is a recently widowed grandmother and the sole provider for her family. Rent, school costs, water and food all depend on what she can earn.



Fridah takes Quillan to school, before she sets off to the market. (All photos Copyright Christian Aid)

‘When I wake up, I have a lot of worries. Sometimes I don’t have food. Now I’m responsible for everything’.

Life in Dagoretti

Fridah lives with her children and grandson in a rented corrugated metal shelter. There is no running water and space is extremely limited. Many families in Dagoretti manage just two meals a day. Some manage only one.

To support her family, Fridah sells vegetables at a market stall. With no refrigeration or storage, she travels long distances to buy produce, six days a week. Some days she earns enough. Some days she does not.

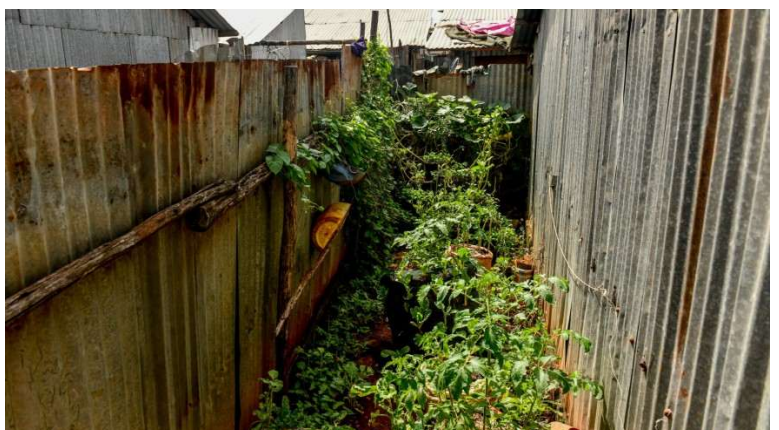
‘Sometimes I don’t know how I’ll buy food. I don’t know how I’ll feed my family.’

A small plot with big impact

Fridah’s situation began to change when she joined Imarisha Kilimo, an urban farming project run by Christian Aid’s partner, Beacon of Hope.

At first, the idea felt impossible. ‘I was wondering, where can someone farm here in Nairobi?’, she said.

Through training, tools and seeds, Fridah learned how to grow food in small city spaces. She learned how to use cone gardens, make compost and conserve water.



At the end of a narrow alley near her home, Fridah now tends her own urban farm. She grows kale, tomatoes and indigenous vegetables. Some feed her family. Some she sells.

‘I discovered I could sow here. Right where I stand.’

For Fridah, this means more than food. It means stability and choice.

'Now I can plan. I can buy this; I can buy that. I can help my family.'



With no running water available for her plants, Fridah must carefully conserve every drop

Faith and determination

Fridah's faith sustains her through difficult days. It strengthens her resolve to keep going and to provide for her children.

It's hard, but in God I trust, for the strength to keep going every day.

Her urban farm is small, but it carries big hopes. Hopes for education, independence and a future beyond daily uncertainty.

<https://caw.christianaid.org.uk/uk/about/what-christian-aid-week/growing-hope-small-city-space>

You can help by:

- Taking **Gift Aid envelopes** in Church, filling them yourself, and passing on spares to friends and family
- Having **Coffee and Cake** after the Service on Sunday 10th May and giving a donation, or even baking a cake yourself.
- **Praying for us**

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 Church Christian Aid Reps: Mary Baker, Sarah Bennet, Steve Rice, and Mary Stagg or contact Sarah on 07854 469043 sarah.bennet2@btinternet.com

Thank you
Sarah



We invite you to join us at

Vintage Adventure

A time of fun, making friends, singing, informal Christian worship, activities, drinks and homemade cakes

For the young at heart in our community

Inclusive and dementia friendly

Led by the Churches in Thatcham



Thursday, 16 April 2026

2.30pm – 4.00pm

Thatcham Methodist Church (RG18 4QL)

Come along or contact Karen on 07444 851606 or email karen.f@bhbcircuit.org.uk

St George's Wash Common hosts

A Spring Organ Recital by Gill Blythman

3pm, Saturday 18th April
St George's Church, Wash Common

Recital followed by refreshments

No charge, retiring collection for St Mary's Pipedream Organ project Thatcham

Includes works by Bach, Boëllmann, Daquin & Takle

