

# The Vicar Writes...

Dear All

No "Yes" to God is given without cost. Mary was told a sword will pierce your heart as she saw her son ridiculed, rejected and cruelly killed.

Jesus on the very eve of torture and execution had to face the heart-stopping struggle with his own "Yes" to God. In the garden, his own agonised prayer to his Father was that he might be relieved of this cup of suffering, could be exempt from the call to endurance and death.

That struggle of Jesus with the Father's call to say "yes" is one of the grimmest of all times yet it offers great consolation- the realisation that Jesus himself had to grapple his way through human weakness, doubt and despair, is consoling and strengthening.

It can speak to all of us in those moments when we wonder if we can say "Yes" to God, and see our "Yes" through to its end.

The cry from the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" is a cry of agony but it is also a quotation from Psalm 22, which Jesus would have known as he and his disciples often said the Psalms. Psalm 22 transforms into great faith in God's help in the past and describes `the situation of Jesus on the cross.

v16 they pierced my hands and my feet.

v18 they divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.

This changes the meaning of his human agony to knowledge of his loving Father in the agony.

v24. For he has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help.

v30 Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord.

v31 They will proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn- for he has done it.

If and when we suffer, it is to the cross we look, remembering that his suffering saved the world and ours, too, is never wasted or in vain - God uses it and he is with us, alongside us, in it with us.

Wishing you are very Happy Easter,  
Andrew

### ***With all your soul, strength and mind***

This month I'm thinking about what we are all 'doing' in times of 'waiting'. It's very easy to just sit quietly and let the time pass by or just fill it in. Not exactly wasting time, but not using it for any useful purpose either.

But as Christians we live in expectation all the time, don't we? We live in the hope and promise of Christ's return - even though we don't know the 'when' or the 'where'.

Of course, there's waiting and there's waiting. I won't say I'm the most patient person I know! If the internet goes down or something mechanical takes a few seconds too long to process, you can often hear me chuntering. But there are other times when the waiting itself is precious.

I'm thinking this month of when we receive the bread and wine at the distribution of Holy Communion.

Perhaps you have avoided church since the original lockdown in March, or been going but not receiving communion, or indeed you have been participating with an online service with your own equivalents at home. Whichever it is for you, cast your mind back to when you were last in that position – or indeed look forward to when we are all able to gather together again and we 'queue' to approach the altar.

Actually, we don't 'queue'. We 'process' to the altar. We join the procession – a line of like-minded people with a similar intention to receive Christ. A time of physical movement and spiritual anticipation for holding those elements of Christ Himself: God being placed into our hands. How amazing is that!

*The Rev'd Dr. Jo White*

### ***Beware the cost of supermarket convenience stores***

*If you do your weekly food shop at a supermarket convenience store, you will be paying up to £320 more a year than if you had used one of the bigger branches.*

*According to a recent study by Which? Tesco Express costs £5.37 more a week, or £279 a year, while Sainsbury's Local stores cost £6.18 more a week, or £322 a year.*

*Tesco points to higher rents, rates and operating costs in Tesco Express stores, while Sainsburys points to 'a range of factors' including varying promotions.*

## **JOST VAN DYKE MORNING SERVICE**



A few years ago we were enjoying a lovely, hot boating holiday on some friends beautiful boat in the British Virgin Islands. Practically on the beach was Jost Van Dyke's chapel, a small building painted white with the roof and shuttered windows painted a rust colour. On a Friday evening we were anchored off the shore opposite the chapel. All the windows were wide open and the sound of the choir coming across the waves was so uplifting, the four of us felt very moved. We decided to stay at anchor for a couple of nights as the island was lovely and there was a good restaurant on the beach. Sunday came and I decided I had to go to morning service. Mike said that I couldn't as I did not have a dress. Fortunately I had packed one so all was well. Luckily there was a pontoon close to the chapel so I was dropped in the dinghy with instructions for the others to come and collect me when the service ended.

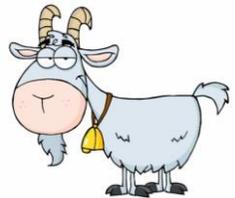
The minister met me at the open door where I was warmly welcomed and interrogated as to who I was and where from. Having satisfied her she ushered me to a pew in the chapel. It was packed with everyone in their Sunday best. Mothers and Grandmas in brightly coloured dresses and hats that were more flowers than the hat itself. The men in suits, some clearly fitted a few years back! The children, especially the girls who wore pretty white dresses and hairstyles to die for and lots of big, white bows in their hair. Nearly all the boys wore smart bow ties. In the pew opposite was a large family squashed together chatting away with the exception of a girl of about twelve who was

having a major wobbly with Grandpa trying to calm her down. Nothing he said seemed to pacify her.

The choir filed in in flowing robes in brilliant purple garnished with gold glitter, men and women. The organist played loudly on an old harmonium with foot pumps and with each strike on the keyboard dust shot in the air. She carried on blissfully unaware. The minister then took centre stage and the congregation hushed.

"And now sisters I must introduce you to our sister Johanna who has come from England to worship with us today. Hallelujah, Praise the Lord, Amen." Embarrassing to say the least, but so heartwarming and sincere.

The minister gave the parish notices followed by an introduction of the preacher that day. "The preacher today you might recognise as it is Dolores who does the check-out in the supermarket, praise to her, Hallelujah". The service started and you were carried along on a feeling of friendship and sincerity with their devotion. The minister welcomed the reader who was the young girl from the pew opposite. She was gently pushed into the aisle, looking thunderous. She made her way to the lectern then burst into tears crying, "I won't do it!", more sobbing. The situation was saved by grandpa who put his arms round her and together they read the lesson.



The service continued when a typical Caribbean rain storm started with the rain drumming on the tin roof. All the shutters were closed rapidly. From the open door a goat and a duck came running and waddling in for shelter. No one batted an eyelid. The service continued with the goat, by now eyeing up the altar cloth, as quickly as the storm came, it passed just as suddenly. The shutters were

opened and there to my horror was Mike and our friends looking in. "Go away", I mouthed several times to them which fortunately they did, thank heavens.

The service ended and we all filed out not before everyone shook my hand. They were such friendly people and so generous of themselves. I came away with a feeling of all is good in this world and being with devout Christians. It was an experience I will never forget.  
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!, Praise the Lord. Amen.

*Jo Tombs*

## **FOOTBALL CLUB TAKES FAITH TO THE AIRWAVES**

Thousands of BBC local radio listeners across England recently tuned in to an unusual sporting-themed church service.

It wasn't broadcast from a typical place of worship, a church or a cathedral, but from Wycombe Wanderers FC – a football club in the Championship, the second rung of English soccer.

Four of the team's leading players joined the Buckinghamshire club's chaplain Benedict Musola for the special act of worship broadcast across the country's 38 BBC local radio stations.

Professional footballers Adebayo Akinfenwa, Jason McCarthy, Alex Samuel and Cameron Yates spoke of their Christian faith during the 30-minute service broadcast in January.

Chaplain Benedict Musola explained how the team prayed on the pitch before matches and held regular Bible studies at their training ground.

He told listeners: "I am grateful for the opportunity to serve God in this role, which uniquely combines my passion for God and my passion for football."

The service featuring Wycombe Wanderers underlined the close links between football and faith.

In 'Thank God for Football,' (SPCK, 2006), author Peter Lupson featured chapters on the Christian roots of soccer clubs including Aston Villa, Barnsley, Birmingham City, Bolton Wanderers, Everton, Fulham, Liverpool, Manchester City, Queen's Park Rangers, Southampton, Swindon Town and Tottenham Hotspur.

Last December, League Two side Bradford City FC hosted an online carol service with Bradford Cathedral.

It included readings and contributions from City manager Stuart McCall, and players Billy Clarke, Clayton Donaldson and Richard O'Donnell. The service was streamed across all the Yorkshire club's social media channels.

A spokesperson for the club explained: "An online carol service has been a possibility for a while now, and 2020 presented the perfect opportunity to do so.

"This year has been far from straightforward in every sense, but we hope our service brought some much-needed festive cheer as we approached a 2021 full of promise and positivity."

The Wycombe Wanderers service is one of a series of Christian acts of worship broadcast on BBC local radio stations at 8am on Sundays since the onset of the pandemic last March.

The services have included speakers and musicians from a wide range of denominations and have won praise for easing feelings of loneliness and isolation.

The Sunday services have formed part of the important role played by local media during the series of lockdowns. Callers to BBC local radio stations – often older people – have been expressing their thanks for keeping them in touch and raising their spirits during the pandemic. Commenting on the church services, Chris Burns, Head of Local Radio for the BBC, said: “We know from personal testament just how important these broadcasts have proved to be. They have played an important role in bringing communities together virtually so no one need feel they are on their own.

“We expanded our religious programming on the first weekend of lockdown in March and will continue to broadcast services and reflections until life returns to normal.”

*The Rev'd Peter Crumpler*

## **GOOD FRIDAY, JESUS AND THE THIEVES** **ON THE CROSS**

Luke's account of the crucifixion (Luke 23:32-43) emphasises the mocking of the crowd, *'If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself'* (35,37,39). In their view a Messiah does not hang on a cross and suffer. In considering the two men who were crucified with Jesus, we are also confronted with the issue of how Jesus secures salvation for us.

The words of one of those crucified with Jesus reflected the crowd's taunts: *'Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us.'* He highlights the question of Jesus' identity: how can He save others, when He cannot save Himself from death? He failed to see that the cross itself was the means of salvation.

So – what kind of Messiah was Jesus?

The other criminal's response in his last moments is a moving expression of faith. When challenging the other man, he spoke of the utter injustice of the crucifixion: *'this man has done nothing wrong.'* He perceived the truth that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. In a wonderful picture of grace, *'remember me when You come into Your kingdom'*, the second thief confessed his guilt and secured Jesus' forgiveness and mercy.

In reply, Jesus promised the man life from the moment of death; *'Today you will be with Me in paradise.'* Jesus used the picture of a *walled garden* to help the man understand His promise of protection and security in God's love and acceptance eternally.

Each one of us has to choose how we react to Jesus on the cross. Do we want Him to 'remember' us when He comes into His kingdom, or not? If you were to die tonight, how confident would you be of going to be with Jesus? *'For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God'* (1 Peter 3:18).

## **EASTER - THE MOST JOYFUL DAY OF THE YEAR**

Easter is the most joyful day of the year for Christians. Christ has died for our sins. We are forgiven. Christ has risen! We are redeemed! We can look forward to an eternity in His joy! Hallelujah!

The Good News of Jesus Christ is a message so simple that you can explain it to someone in a few minutes. It is so profound that for the rest of their lives they will still be 'growing' in their Christian walk with God.

Why does the date move around so much? Because the date of Passover moves around, and according to the biblical account, Easter is tied to the Passover. Passover celebrates the Israelites' exodus from Egypt, and it lasts for seven days, from the middle of the Hebrew month of Nisan, which equates to late March or early April.

Sir Isaac Newton was one of the first to use the Hebrew lunar calendar to come up with firm dates for the first Good Friday: Friday 7th April 30 AD or Friday 3rd April, 33 AD with Easter Day falling two days later. Modern scholars continue to think these two Fridays to be the most likely. Most people will tell you that Easter falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Spring Equinox, which is broadly true. But the precise calculations are complicated and involve something called an 'ecclesiastical full moon', which is not the same as the moon in the sky. The earliest possible date for Easter in the West is 22nd March, which last fell in 1818. The latest is 25th April, which last happened in 1943.

Why the name, 'Easter'? In almost every European language, the festival's name comes from 'Pesach', the Hebrew word for Passover. The Germanic word 'Easter', however, seems to come from *Eostre*, a Saxon fertility goddess mentioned by the Venerable Bede. He thought that the Saxons worshipped her in 'Eostur month,' but may have confused her with the classical dawn goddesses like *Eos* and *Aurora*, whose names mean 'shining in the east'. So, Easter might have meant simply 'beginning month' – a good time for starting up again after a long winter. Finally, why Easter eggs? On one hand, they are an ancient symbol of birth in most European cultures. On the other hand, hens start laying regularly again each Spring. Since eggs were forbidden during Lent, it's easy to see how decorating and eating them became a practical way to celebrate Easter.



## CALENDAR FOR APRIL

Thurs 1        7.00 pm  
 Fri    2        12 noon  
 Sat    3        6.00 pm

Holy Communion for  
 Maundy Thursday  
 Stations of the Cross  
 Service of Light

### **EASTER DAY**

Sun    4        8.00 am  
                  10.30 am

Holy Communion  
 Parish Communion

Wed    7

NO SERVICE *at St. Nicolas*

### **EASTER 2**

Sun    11        8.00 am  
                  10.30 am

Holy Communion  
 Matins

Wed    14        10.30 am

Holy Communion *at St. Nicolas*

### **EASTER 3**

Sun    18        8.00 am  
                  9.30 am  
                  10.30 am

Holy Communion  
 Family Service  
 Parish Communion

Wed    21        10.30 am

Holy Communion *at St. Nicolas*

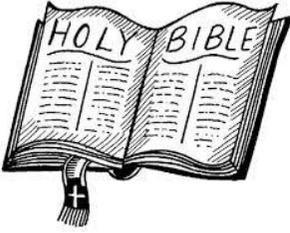
### **EASTER 4**

Sun    25        8.00 am  
                  10.30 am

Holy Communion  
 Matins

Wed    28        10.30 am

Holy Communion *at St. Nicolas*



## **SUNDAY READINGS** **IN APRIL**

### **Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> April - EASTER DAY**

OLD TESTAMENT: Isaiah 25.6-9

*Isaiah's prophecy comprises a vision of the Messianic banquet at which God, the host, reveals himself to his guests as their saviour and messiah.*

NEW TESTAMENT: Acts 10.34-43

*Peter says that deeds, not nationality, constitute the means by which God accepts his disciples and the Jews have no exclusive claim upon God's love.*

GOSPEL: Mark 16.1-8

*When Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James, and Salome go to the tomb to anoint Jesus they meet an angel and find the tomb empty.*

### **Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> April - Easter 2**

FIRST READING: Acts 4.32-35

*The company of believers shared their possessions, holding everything in common. Thus they testified to their belief in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.*

NEW TESTAMENT: John 20.19-end

*The other disciples tell Thomas they have seen Jesus but he doubts them. When Jesus appears again this time Thomas sees him and believes.*

### **Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> April - Easter 3**

FIRST READING: Acts 3.12-19

*Peter tells the people who were amazed at the healing of a lame man that it is the power of God through the name of Jesus which healed him.*

NEW TESTAMENT: 1 John 3.1-7

*God lavishes his love on us as we are children of God.*

GOSPEL: Luke 24.36-48

*Jesus appears to his disciples after the resurrection and shows them his hands and his feet.*

### **Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> April - Easter 4**

FIRST READING: Acts 4.5-12

*When he is charged by the High Priest, Peter gives credit for healing the sick to Jesus, the crucified and risen Christ who is the only means of salvation.*

NEW TESTAMENT: John 10.11-18

*Jesus is the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep.*

### *All in the month of April*

It was:

125 years ago, from 6th to 15th April 1896 that the first modern Summer Olympic Games were held in Athens. The original Olympics were banned by the Roman Emperor Theodosius (I or II) in either 393 or 426 AD.

95 years ago, on 21st April 1926 that Queen Elizabeth II was born in Mayfair, London. Elizabeth Alexandra Mary Windsor was the first child of the Duke and Duchess of York. Her father became King on the abdication of his brother King Edward VIII in 1936, from which time Elizabeth was the heir presumptive.

90 years ago, on 14th April 1931 that the first edition of the Highway Code was published in the UK.

## **EASTER HOPE**

*"So many people right across the country are anxious about employment, anxious about food, isolated from loved ones and feel that the future looks dark."* These are words from the Archbishop of Canterbury's sermon on Easter Day 2020. Who would have thought that we are experiencing the same uncertainties this Easter!

Yet the Easter story remains one of hope overcoming darkness and despair. The women arrived at the tomb on Easter morning with mixed emotions, as they came to anoint Jesus' body. *'But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away.'* (Mark 16:4). They were confused, as they tried to make sense of Jesus' death. Their hopes were dashed with an uncertain future. In the current pandemic, we too are left asking: *Where is God in all this?*

The young man at the tomb reminds them that God is still in control: *"Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him."* (Mark 16:6).

The women had forgotten Jesus' promise to the disciples that He would die and rise from the dead. Jesus' resurrection is also the sure foundation of hope for us in the present crisis. He turns our confusion and fear into joy and wonder! We can trust Jesus' plan for the future of our world and lives, despite the fact that things can't return to the way they were: *"There needs to be a resurrection of our common life, a new normal, something that links to the old, but is different and more beautiful. We must dream it, build it, make it, grasp it, because it is the gift of God and the call of God."* (Justin Welby).

*Canon Paul Hardingham*

## **TO MAKE YOU SMILE.....**

### **Saying good-bye**

An inexperienced curate was sent to do a graveside burial for a homeless man with no family or friends. Not knowing where the cemetery was, he made several wrong turns and got lost. When he eventually arrived, the hearse was nowhere in sight, the backhoe was next to the open hole, and the workmen were sitting under a tree eating lunch.

When the curate looked into the open grave and even found the vault lid was already in place, he felt very guilty. The homeless man deserved something, even though it was late. And so, the curate delivered an impassioned burial service, sending the deceased into the great beyond in some style. The workmen looked on in silence, but as the curate returned to his car, he overheard one of the workmen remark: 'I've been putting in septic tanks for 20 years and I never seen anything like that!'

### **Expensive boat**

A vicar was planning an Easter pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and was aghast when she found it would cost her £50 an hour to rent a boat on the Sea of Galilee. She protested to the travel agent that the cost was ridiculous. 'That might be true,' replied the travel agent, 'but you have to take into account that the Sea of Galilee is water on which our Lord himself walked.'

'Well, at £50 an hour for a boat,' she replied, 'I am not surprised!'

## **THE THIRTY-NINE ARTICLES CONTINUED**

### **IX. OF ORIGINAL OR BIRTH-SIN**

*ORIGINAL Sin standeth not in the following of Adam, (as the Pelagians do vainly talk;) but it is the fault and corruption of the Nature of every man, that naturally is ingendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit; and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation. And this infection of nature doth remain, yea in them that are regenerated; whereby the lust of the flesh, called in the Greek, "Phronema Sarkos", which some do expound the wisdom, some sensuality, some the affection, some the desire, of the flesh, is not subject to the Law of God. And although there is no condemnation for them that believe and are baptized, yet the Apostle doth confess, that concupiscence and lust hath of itself the nature of sin.*

There is a shift here in the focus of the 39 articles: They started by dealing with who God is, then we thought about how we can know him in the scriptures. Immediately before the present article, article 8 tells us that there are a number of statements (the creeds) in which the basic, essential ideas about God have been summed up, and which all Christians agree witness to the truth revealed in the scriptures.

We now turn from the abstract to the concrete: the human condition. We will be working our way to the Good news in Christ later in the list, but first we've got to start where we are: the sad state of humanity. Original sin is a hard thing to deal with: it's not easy to think that each one of us, indeed, every human save one (Christ Jesus) was born not

as a blank slate, but already in debt. This is a hard truth in an age where self-satisfaction and self-identification rule, and the post-modernist world tells us that it is the individual, subjective truth which matters.

Original, or 'birth' sin strikes hard at the foundations of this modern utopia, for it tells us that the 'self' part is flawed: how can anyone be truly subjective, truly impartial, truly 'right'? The doctrine of original sin calls us to humility and humble acceptance that without something outside of ourselves – without objective truth, the truth of God – we can't start knowing anything properly.

Of interest is the mention of the Pelagians, who 'vainly talk' of sin being in the following of Adam. The Pelagians were a group of early Christians named after the British monk Pelagius, who thought that it should be possible, once baptised, to live a sin-free life. To them, the idea that we were unable to avoid sinning was abhorrent: surely it would be a sign of faith that Christians wouldn't sin.

St. Augustine had a real problem with this idea, because to him, original sin was something that was twisted in each of us by Adam's own sin, a problem which continued even after baptism and regeneration: according to him the Pelagians were denying the constant necessity of God's grace, and therefore diminishing the need for Christ.

## **X. OF FREE-WILL**

*THE condition of Man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith, and calling upon God: Wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will.*

Article 10 deals with the consequences of original sin: our will is twisted away from God's, in a sense, whilst we have free will, the scales are weighted against us, imagine an old-fashioned kitchen scales which doesn't start balanced: it can still weigh, but the results would be twisted. The only remedy for this is Christ: without him we have not even got the ability to do good works, 'pleasant and acceptable to God.' This leads to a bit of a quandary: are we really to claim that no-one outside of the church (in the widest sense) can do good works? It depends what we mean by good – certainly people can be kind and nice, loving and loved without being a Christian, but their works won't be good before God – how could they be? If they don't know Him, they can't offer them to him.

## **XI. OF THE JUSTIFICATION OF MAN**

*WE are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by Faith, and not for our own works or deservings: Wherefore, that we are justified by Faith only is a most wholesome Doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the Homily of Justification.*

"By Faith alone" is one of the four 'solas' of the reformation, and here we see the doctrine stated in a slightly more lengthy way: it is not what we do, nor what we have, nor who we are that accounts us as righteous before God: as article IX told us, our original sin prevents us from being the people who God wants us to be, in perfect relationship with us. But it is our Faith that brings us justification – salvation – our Faith in Christ alone. And as the article proclaims this is both wholesome and comforting: you don't have to do something, or live up to something, or be someone, but just trust and believe in Christ Jesus.

*The Rev'd Tom Pelham*

## Mothering

'Above them, his empty cross, stark, stands.  
From a discreet distance, I can see what they do,  
gently, and with loving hands:  
the winding sheet shrouds his broken body,  
hides his pierced, flayed flesh from view.

My son, strung up, choking, sore afflicted;  
his dying— blameful, shameful, slow.  
My own soul is pierced; heart broken, too,  
just as that old man in the Temple predicted,  
all those thirty odd years ago.

I never knew it would hurt— the pain— like this;  
he, whose forehead I touched with many a kiss,  
hoisted so high I could no longer reach him.  
His parched and rasping voice gasping,  
clasping John and me in new roles;  
we saw ourselves re-defined— our pining,  
our memories, our grief, vivid, aligning.

Beneath his grave clothes he is naked;  
but now decently, devoutly wrapped.  
A sudden memory of swaddling  
stabs my heart again. Then, the strong smell  
of the stabled beasts;  
now, on this feast of feasts,  
there are sweet spices, coddling  
my son, my son, his life done,  
his battle won.'

*Wendy Fellingham*

## **FROM THE REGISTERS**

### **Funerals**

10<sup>th</sup> March    Edwina Warburton-Gray (92)  
11<sup>th</sup> March    Joyce Saunders (99)  
18<sup>th</sup> March    Charles Pounds (92)

## **ALTAR FLOWERS**

Easter Sunday	Wendy Bales/Susanne King
Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup> April	Wendy Bales
Sunday 18 <sup>th</sup> April	Michael Wright
Sunday 25 <sup>th</sup> April	Michael Wright



## **MAGAZINE DEADLINE**

The deadline for the May issue of the  
Church Magazine is  
**Friday 16<sup>th</sup> April**