

Facebook Posts April 2023

Deacon Jen writes:



I have had a few phone calls today in which I have asked people how they are. The response from two of them was "The sun is shining so I'm feeling much happier". How true that is. There is something magical about a bright blue sky after series of grey skies.

I have begun to grow some poppy and cosmos seeds on a windowsill and there is also something magical about that. From these little tiny seeds there is so much growth each day and all I have to do is provide a little water and watch it happen.

I recently had the pleasure of leading one of the activities for 'Messy Church' in Toftwood. This activity involved planting some Chive seeds in a small pot. Each child carefully filled a pot with compost then very carefully sprinkled some seeds onto the compost. Then, equally carefully, covered the seeds with just a little more compost. They would be watered when they had taken them home. There was a fully grown pot of chives on the table and a special moment came when they realised what will hopefully happen to their seeds. There was a moment of awe at the wonder of creation. It was so special to witness.

Do we still hold that sense of awe? Yes, we appreciate when the sun shines. Yes, we appreciate when plants grow well. But do we hold a sense of awe? Perhaps, just perhaps we need to?

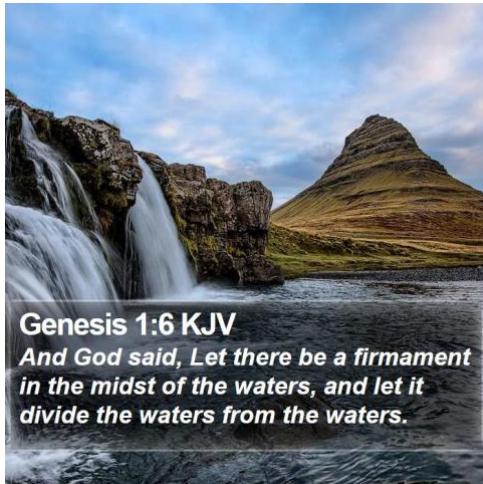
A thought from Sam Parfitt:

Wednesdays in our house are often referred to as 'hump day' as they're in the middle of the week and sometimes it seems that they have to be endured to reach the weekend!

As we travel through this most special of weeks, we perhaps find ourselves at the 'hump day' of Passion week, longing to celebrate as resurrection people after a long 40 days of Lenten observance. In some Christian denominations, today is known as Spy Wednesday - a day which remembers the agreement that Judas made to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. It's easy to portray Judas as the villain and easy to forget that he had travelled with Jesus for some time and was part of Jesus' inner circle - even being given the power to heal sickness. That must have made Judas' betrayal even harder (and indeed, the disciples all betrayed Jesus in a way - Peter's triad of denial, and their falling away and sleeping in Gethsemane)

It is easy for us to understand why Judas is a figure rarely seen in our Christian buildings (compounded by his actions following the betrayal, no doubt) One place where Judas can be found is in a Dorset village church, depicted in etched glass - it has been dubbed 'the forgiveness window', and is controversial as it depicts the final act of Judas. Interestingly, it can only be seen from outside at a certain angle, and the artist shows the silver coins turning into flowers before hitting the soil. The trustees of the church felt that it would be a comfort to those who felt that their loved ones were beyond redemption. Perhaps also as a comfort, I often reflect that although Jesus knew he was going to be betrayed at the Last supper, there was still a place for Judas. Perhaps today we might pray for all who feel they are beyond redemption, that they may know they too have a place at the table, which is set before them with love.





A Thought for Good Friday from Rev Rosemary:

One of the strangest and worst things about the events of Good Friday is that the hounding to death of Jesus was perpetrated by the good Church people of his day. The Roman Occupiers did not see him as a particular threat - no sign of swords or rebel armies. But to the religious hierarchy he was a threat to their authority. We are so familiar with the Gospel story that his outrageous indifference to the strict religious rules that controlled the population passes us by. The fact that the "common people" heard him gladly, and followed him eagerly, was also alarming to the religious leaders. He had a power that was outside their control, not only in his ability to sway crowds but which could heal and change people. He talked also of bringing in a Kingdom, yes of love, but they saw it as political and dangerous.



Judas recognised this. He always seems to me to be a bit different from the other disciples. Maybe he was better educated, came from a different background. I have no doubt that he loved and admired Jesus, recognising his power and intellect and huge potential. But as time went by and things got dangerous he was impatient to see some real action. He had no time for Jesus's talk of suffering and death, so maybe he came to the conclusion that Jesus needed a bit of help. He had complete faith in Jesus's authority and closeness to God, so why not put him in a position to display it? If actually confronted by the religious leaders arresting him surely he would pull out all the stops and demonstrate his superior power? So he set up his scheme. Jesus would be arrested and in a glorious show of divine energy and power the Kingdom would come - and Jesus would thank him. But it all went horribly wrong, and in an agony of remorse and realisation he hanged himself. That is a different spin on the usual take on Judas - not the usual betrayal - but just as evil and destructive. I'll leave you to work out where he went wrong!



Rev Jacqui writes:

Easter is about many things but, at its heart, it is about Transformation. Jesus was transformed from a dead corpse to a living Saviour; Death was transformed into Life; the disciples were transformed from frightened and despairing men and women into humble followers of Jesus with hope for the future; we can be transformed from ordinary people with ordinary lives into ordinary people with extra-ordinary lives as we let the power of the risen Jesus live in us. The Archbishop of Canterbury said on Sunday that the tomb was empty in order that we can be filled. That is transformation! Emptiness to fulfilment.

Some of our churches transform the Lenten cross on Easter Day by the congregation covering it with Spring flowers. Here are the crosses at both Toftwood and Swaffham.



A thought from Rev Rosemary Wakelin

It's all over - or is it?



So, Easter is over for another year, we've eaten the hot cross buns, the Easter eggs and the Simnel cake and put the cards in the recycling. We've sung the joyful hymns and next Sunday is Low Sunday as things get back to normal, so nothing has changed - or has it? Has the extraordinary message of Easter passed us by or are we changed by it? What was it that God affirmed on Easter Day?

For three years Jesus had demonstrated another way of being human which had proved to be so threatening that the powerful had manipulated a foreign death sentence to get rid of him. We are so familiar with the Gospels that we lose their revolutionary impact. Jesus overturned our priorities, our trust in wealth, power, status, position, possessions - and used his intellectual and physical powers to show how Love worked instead and demonstrated how it works out in daily life. His message is still there though ignored by most people. The sad history of the Church shows how hard it is. But across the world there are ordinary people who do make it work, we know some of them in our neighbourhood, family and Church. The Kingdom of Love is a reality, born in the travail of Good Friday and affirmed by God on Easter Day, the victory is won, not through violence or aggression but through you and me as we let in the Love that died on the Cross and was raised on Easter Day.

In Philippians 3:10 Paul says “I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection ...”

We celebrate Easter and sing “Christ the Lord is risen today, alleluia!” with great gusto - along with “Thine be the Glory” and other favourites. This is absolutely what we should do each year when Easter comes after the long journey through Lent.

But what happens afterwards? Do we go 'back to normal'?

In a sense, every day is Easter Day, for Christ is still risen every day! How do we really enter into this, in a new way?

How about counting the crosses? Crosses are everywhere!! They are in and on churches of course - they're easy to find! I regularly walk through a graveyard and again - rows of crosses. There are differences between them though. My favourite is in the picture. Not quite sure why, but it catches my eye every time!

Then there are the hidden crosses - the cross in a window frame, for example. How many can you spot?

You may be wondering how this may help? Every time you see a cross, remember that it's empty. It's empty because Christ is raised from death. It's empty because God's power is greater than death and any of the forces that may be against us. It's empty so we may know the power of his resurrection, each and every day. - **Rev Anne**



"Jesus the Lord said, I am the Life,
the Resurrection and the Life am I"
(the first two lines of the 5th verse, of hymn 252
in Singing the Faith.)

A reflection from Sam: It was Easter morning and I was in a bit of a hurry to load the car and get to Blakeney to set up for our service. As part of our worship, my husband had made a cross from a couple of small branches (based loosely on the high cross at Cliff College, which is simple yet beautiful). What I had failed to do was make sure that the cross would fit in the car! So, it was with much grunting and perhaps the odd word one doesn't find in the Bible that I realised it wouldn't fit in the boot - in order to fit it in I needed to take a back seat down, which I had just filled with things to take, and all of this whilst in a hurry, which put me in less than a glamorous mood as I drove to church.



As I was driving, a passage of scripture popped into my mind 'whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me' (Luke 9:23) "that's all well and good" I thought to myself, "but I couldn't get my cross in the boot, let alone carry it!!" it was at this moment that my mood lightened and I saw the lighter side of trying to wrestle a cross into the boot of a Ford Focus on Easter morning, leading on to reflecting on how many people are figuratively wrestling with their cross on a daily basis. Some of these people will be outside of our churches, wandering in the wilderness, but some of them will be the people we sit near on a Sunday morning - how often do we put on our best smiles as we cross over the church threshold?

I think back to those Disciples in the upper room, they were far from perfect - they were broken, scared, confused, they had doubts and worries about the future, yet Jesus chose to appear to them and it was this painfully human bunch of people who were tasked with taking the words of love and speaking them for all to hear. Even Thomas (who was, in my opinion, exceptionally brave). So, if you're wrestling with your cross, it's okay (really it is, lots of us are wrestling too) and I hope the resurrection experience of the disciples may offer you some comfort - may the spirit of Thomas the doubter, the questioner, the honest and the courageous give us all hope for the future.



Rev Jacqui writes:

Our District Synod meeting this last Saturday was enriched by the presence of the current President of the Methodist Conference, Rev Graham Thompson. Graham was the previous Chair of the East Anglia District and also has a home now in East Anglia so, in many ways, it was not a normal Presidential visit - Graham felt at home among many friends. However, that did not stop him leading some challenging devotions at the beginning of Synod and a stimulating Bible Study in the afternoon. In the latter, Graham was looking at the visionary writing in Revelation chapter 2 when the author is given a vision of seven letters to be written to seven 1st century churches. After specific messages to each church, there is written "Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches". Graham asked us to think about what the Spirit is saying to the churches NOW. What IS the Spirit saying to the churches now?!



A thought from Rev Rosemary Wakelin:



I love that story of the walk to Emmaus - and it's only with hindsight that the two friends realise who had been walking with them. When I look back on so many events in my own life I realise it has been my experience too.

When my husband retired early due to ill-health, we decided to take the honeymoon we had not had. (He'd discovered he had TB and spent our first year in the sanatorium) So we booked to stay in Fiesole, near Florence, so that we could enjoy the art galleries. Shortly before we

were due to leave Paul died from a heart attack. I was going to cancel, but my son said go and take Mary who was studying Art History.

So, grief-stricken we set off to go by the train journey already booked. My husband had disliked flying. We were ill-equipped emotionally to cope. I took a plentiful supply of food and drink. We got to Paris and took the train that went to Florence. We found we were booked into a sleeper compartment (as a Married couple) for 4 people. Our travelling companions were already there, and were two men in holiday gear. We discovered they were Franciscans, priests going on the same mission.

It's a long journey, I had brought ample provision and the train did drinks. At lunch time we discovered that our new friends had a Kit Kat bar between them. We enjoyed our picnic. It got to bedtime, and Francis suggested we say Compline. We slept and, in the morning, we said morning prayer. We arrived in Florence and said goodbye. To cut a long story short, Francis, who was staying nearby, met us each morning at the bus stop and accompanied us for the whole holiday. I could not have coped. As it was, we greatly enjoyed Florence and being looked after. I think there was Someone else with us.

A Thought for the Day from Deacon Jen:



It's great when it sparkles! These are the words I have heard spoken about the mosaic pyramid that has been created in Swaffham. Created to mark the centenary of Tutankhamun's tomb it is made of small ceramic pieces with a little bit of gold coloured edging to give it a bit of 'bling'. The first time I went to see it the sun had been shining but by the time I arrived the clouds had thickened so it was a little dull. Nevertheless, it was fascinating to see the detail on each triangle that had been created. Some had been designed to follow an Egyptian theme, some a random pattern or colour scheme and some to represent something significant in the person's life. In my case I attempted to recreate the diaconal cross. It didn't work quite as well as I hoped as I had not understood quite how it would be completed and so the cross was not so clear as it could have been. Still, the cross could still be seen by anyone who wanted to find it and I had enjoyed

the process of making it. On the following day I was passing and the sun was out so I stopped to look at the pyramid again. In some parts it looked quite different. The shiny parts dominated but, interestingly, the details were not quite so clear.

It seems to me life can be a little like these triangles. There are times when life doesn't turn out quite as you expected. But there is always some value in the experience, in the living of it. There are times in life when we seem to be jogging along in a random manner and other times we very definitely know where our focus is. There are times when our life is full of 'bling', shiny and glittery and other times

when life may seem a bit dull. Just as in the mosaic that has lots of different pieces put together, so our lives are made of different times and experiences that all make up our journey through life. What triangle would you make of your life right now?

Rev Jacqui follows up Jen's Thought from this morning:

People who haven't seen the Swaffham pyramid might be wondering what it looks like! So, two photos attached - taken in the sunshine... There are over 300 individual mosaic triangles: each one designed and produced by someone in the Swaffham town community. You may like to try and spot the representation of Swaffham Methodist Church that is quite high up on one of the four sides...



John White Alexander (American, 1856–1915), *Landscape, Cornish, N.H.*, ca. 1890.
Oil on canvas, 30 3/8 × 45 in. (77.2 × 114.2 cm).