



St Peter
& St Paul
ABINGTON



Abington Pastoral Letter #7 08.04.2020

Dear friends

First of all, a big thank you to everyone who joined our Worship Online on Palm Sunday and to all those who made it possible. It was so good to see so many people not just from the parish but from other parts of the country and even from abroad joining in to worship together. We felt the Spirit of God present in our midst and in our worship indeed. Thank you so much for all prayers and encouragements. I also would like to thank to all those who are helping those who haven't got access to the internet to worship with our Worship at Home Resources.

If you have missed it, you can still watch it. Just [Click Here](#) (The worship starts at around 8'30") You can also watch the wonderful production by the choir [Here](#) and the very creative Bible Drama by the Canfields [Here](#).

Thank you also for your responses to the Crosses of Abington Challenge. We are still receiving photos from people. I will create a new video with additional photos and will share it with you on this Easter Sunday during our worship.

We are now in the Holy Week, one of the most significant time for Christians. It is also one of the busiest time for many churches and the clergy. There would have been services every evening in Abington. I would have been travelling to the Cathedral tomorrow to renew my vows as Priest together with all other clergy in the Diocese. All this stopped. It might feel strange and sad not to have any of those during this Holy Week and indeed during the Holy Triduum (which means the time between Maundy Thursday and Easter Sunday). But there is a strange resemblance between our situation and the very first Holy Week two thousand years ago, the final week in Jesus' life.

If there is one message that the Bible gives us on the Holy Week, it is this: What did really matter to Jesus Christ? What does really matter to him? If you had one week left to live, what

would matter to you? How would you spend those days?

Jesus knew he had one week left to live. And he dedicated that one week to spend more time with his disciples. Why would he do that? To give them more teachings? To equip them for what is to happen? Yes but I think there is one more, one thing that is more important than teaching or equipping. Jesus dedicated that one week to spend more time with his disciples because he wanted them to know how much he loved them. He wanted them to know that what really mattered to him was not the glorious entry into Jerusalem or all the achievements he has achieved in his life but them even though he knew they were going to leave him soon.

What does really matter to Christ now? What would Christ do when he has one week left to live on this earth? The Bible tells us, He will choose to be with us. He will dedicate that time to just let us know how much he loves us.

Jesus said, "My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and what I told the Jews, I tell you now: Where I am going you cannot come.

"I give you a new command: Love each other. You must love each other as I have loved you. All people will know that you are my followers if you love each other." (John 13.33-34)

Friends, we may not be gathering in the same building during this Holy Week but Christ is near to us, perhaps nearer than we can ever imagine in this time. And I do believe that this could be the moment where we can choose to spend time with Christ through praying, reading the Bible or even through just spending time with the person next to you, knowing that Christ is with you in that love and support that you share with each other. Because it is you that matters the most to him. He chooses to dedicate this Holy week to spend time with you. Would we choose to do the same?

Here are some useful resources you might use:

- Stations of the Cross with Archbishop and Archdeacon of Canterbury:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/our-faith/living-out-our-faith/lent-holy-week-and-easter/stations-cross>

There are audio recordings of Archbishop and Archdeacon of Canterbury leading prayers and Stations of the Cross during the Holy Week in 2019. They reflect on five biblical stations of the

Cross. You can just simply listen to the audio while you are doing washing up or folding the laundry or cooking. You can spend time with Christ in all sorts of ways.

- An online retreat for Holy Week by Launde Abbey

<https://laundeabbey.org.uk/laundeathome/holy-week-2020/>

You can find reflections on each day of Holy Week delivered by excellent speakers.

- A virtual Easter Vigil led by the Precentor of Christ Church, Oxford from 8 pm on 11 April

<https://www.rumoursofhope.co.uk/>

- Using our Worship at Home with different bible readings each day

Maundy Thursday: John 13.1-17, 31b-35

Good Friday: John 18.1-19.end

Easter Eve: John 19.38-end

- I have attached a lovely colouring page for Easter from Illustrated Ministry. Perhaps you can do it together with children or on your own and share it on your social media and send it to me?

Please stay safe. May God bless you and your family. May he encourage you and strengthen you in his love each day.

With love in Christ

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P.S. 1. Bishop Donald has sent a video message for this Holy Week. I have attached the link below. <https://youtu.be/vc1skkRyfKY>

P.S. 2. A prayer request from Cathy. Please find her message below. If you have any prayer request, please do not hesitate to send it to me. We will pray for you and together with you.

'I visited the Holy Land on pilgrimage in January this year. It was a very moving and inspirational experience. It also seems a long time ago, what with all that has happened since, not only in this country but around the world. The Holy Land has not escaped the effects of Covid-19.'

The following information is from the website of 'The Friends of the Holy Land', an organisation whose purpose is to support and encourage the minority Christians living in this divided country.

'Tourism is Bethlehem's main industry. More than 30% of the working population is employed in the industry with many more reliant on visitors' business in shops, cafes, taxis etc. Tourism accounts for approximately 65% of the city's economy with around 2 million visitors last year. Employment conditions for most in the industry are fragile, hand to mouth with no safety net of social support. As reported this morning by our office, this lockdown is already having a devastating impact on the lives of most Christians in Bethlehem.

Our office staff provide front line support to the most needy every week. We ask you to help us gear up our levels of this support to offset those immediately affected by this lockdown in the weeks ahead - just £40 per week can put food on the table to feed a typical family whose breadwinner is now unemployed.'

The Friends of the Holy Land have launched an appeal for the Christians in Bethlehem where they are in lockdown due to the Coronavirus. The website address is <https://www.friendsoftheholylan.org.uk/>

I know we are all feeling the impact of the restrictions here in the UK but please do pray for our brothers and sisters in Bethlehem, and if you are able to give something, however small, your gift would be gratefully received.