



Dear friends

The Prince Philip and Jesus Christ

A few weeks ago, on Saturday, many of us watched the funeral of the Duke of Edinburgh. It was very moving and powerful service. The day before that, we at Abington had a small service for the Prince Philip. About 10 of us gathered together in the church building and we prayed for the Queen and for all those who lost their lifelong partners.

During the service we had a time to share our personal experiences and memories about the Prince Philip. And we were amazed by how many of us actually saw him, talked to him, shook his hand. He was there when a husband of our friend was at an event while he was in the Navy. He was there when a friend of ours was invited to Buckingham Palace for the Duke of Edinburgh Award. He talked to her and shook her hand. He was there when a son of our friend was awarded Ph.D. He awarded the seal to him. He seemed to have been everywhere.

My friend, this is so interesting to me because, as you know, as a foreigner (I am South Korean by the way in case you haven't noticed), at first I didn't understand what it is all about the Monarchy. South Korea had a king about 100 years ago but the Japanese who occupied Korea during the Second World War made him abdicate. And when the war was over, we had Americans who implanted their Republic system. When I first came to this country, I didn't really understand the Monarchy and the Royal Family as I grew in a republic. Now of course, I have a huge respect and admiration toward the Queen and the Monarchy which is why I led that service on the eve of the Prince Philip's funeral. Do you know how I came to understand and to have respect for the Monarchy?

I have never met the Queen or the Prince Philip. But what I met were the people who met them or were touched by them. In my ministry, I met many people who would tell me about why they respect the Queen and how they were touched or inspired by the couple. And on Friday at that service before the funeral, it was again another amazing discovery, how a single person could encourage and inspire so many lives. Those people who shared their stories with me, those lives that were encouraged by the Prince Philip and the Queen, eventually made me understand and believe the importance and the real impact that the Monarchy has even though I have never

met the Queen or the Prince Philip.

This made think. The Prince Philip touched so many lives and there are so many people who would tell all those wonderful stories about him so people like me could also understand what a great job he did and what a great life he lived. Then how true it is when the Bible tells us about Jesus Christ with the countless lives who were, have been and are willing to share their stories about him. Philip was a prince. Everyone knew he was the prince. But Jesus was from Nazareth, a rural nameless village. He was born in a stable with animals. His parents were simple ordinary people. And yet so many lives were touched by him. So many people came forward to tell the stories about him not only about what a great job he did or a great life he lived but they came forward to tell how he died, how he rose again and how he is still alive! And more amazing thing is so many people believed. Not hundreds, not thousands, but billions and billions of people throughout the history came to believe Christ. Their lives were transformed and they saw other lives transformed because of Christ.

How is this possible? Well, perhaps it is just the same as how I came to respect and admire the Prince Philip. I came to respect and admire the Prince Philip because I saw the people who were inspired and encouraged by him. Their lives and their witnesses made me trust their stories about Philip because they were credible people. In the same way, what leads people to come to faith in Jesus Christ is not an argument or assertion but the sight of human lives touched, inspired and transformed by Jesus Christ.

The story in the Acts 4 is one example of countless lives throughout the history that made the resurrection credible.

It is interesting that the writer of the Acts chose Peter out of all other disciples for this particular story. It was a frightening moment. Peter and John were arrested because they healed a person. They were brought to the high priests, Annas and other elders Caiaphas and so on.

The next day of their arrest their rulers, elders and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John and Alexander and all who were of the high priestly family. When they had made the prisoners stand in their midst they inquired, 'By what power or by what name did you do this?' (Acts 4.5)

Wait, isn't this a bit familiar scene? Remember the night when Jesus was arrested before his crucifixion? Remember where they brought Jesus first after arresting him? They brought him to the high priest's house, the same high priests that are in this story in the Acts.

Then they seized Jesus and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house. (Luke 22.54)

And guess who else was there following them at a distance on the night before the crucifixion? Peter. We know what happened on that night at that house.

54 But Peter was following at a distance. 55 When they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. 56 Then a servant-girl, seeing him in the firelight, stared at him and said, "This man also was with him." 57 But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him." 58 A little later someone else, on seeing him, said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not!" 59 Then about an hour later still another kept insisting, "Surely this man also was with him; for he is a Galilean." 60 But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about!" At that moment, while he was still speaking, the cock crowed. 61 The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times." 62 And he went out and wept bitterly. (Luke 22.54-62)

Remember, the Luke who wrote the Luke's gospel also wrote the Acts. Luke and Acts were written by the same person. See what Luke is trying to tell us here? Now Peter is standing in front of the same people who killed Jesus on that night. And he remembers that night as he recognises the same faces that were surrounding Jesus whom he denied so fiercely three times. Imagine the shame, the guilt that he must have felt and the fear. These people killed Jesus before. They could kill him too. Would he give in? Would he make the same mistake as he did?

8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, 9 if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this man has been healed, 10 let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. 11 This Jesus is 'the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone.' 12 There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved." (Acts 4.8-12)

What has changed the old afraid Peter to this new Peter full of confidence, faith with no fear? One thing. He met the risen Christ. And when people saw this Peter who was no longer afraid, who was full of confidence in Christ, people came to believe in Christ.

All the evidences, stories and witnesses of followers of Christ tell us that Christ is risen and he is risen indeed Alleluia. But If the resurrection is going to be credible, the witnesses of the resurrection must be human beings who are credible, who are inspired, encouraged by the risen Lord.

The Prince Philip is now buried together with his ancestors. He will be greatly missed and be remembered by his legacy from now on. That is the difference between the truth about the Prince Philip and the truth about Jesus Christ. Because Jesus Christ is alive right now. He is not some kind of a hero who did a great thing in the past. He is not a good person who lived a great exemplary life. What the Christian faith and the countless followers of Christ all say in one voice is that Christ is alive right now, right here. He is working in our midst even now. He still comes to you and talks to you as a living presence wherever you are because he is no longer bound by his physical body. This risen Christ gave Peter the strength and faith to stand before the high priests and proclaim the gospel. The same Christ gave the strength, gifts and humility to the Prince Philip to serve his duty for the nation and for the Queen. In the same way, the same risen Christ gives you the strength and wisdom you need today as you continue to walk in this long journey of Pandemic. Amen.

Prayer Trail in the Churchyard and Thy Kingdom Come

I mentioned about Thy Kingdom Come in the previous letter. From yesterday, the 11 days prayer journey began until 23 May, the Pentecost Sunday. It is a global prayer movement where we are invited to pray every day for people whom we know, especially for them to come to faith in Christ. It is my hope that we as the people of Abington will be able to take part in this great movement in the years to come in a more proactive way.

I am so grateful that we can take our first step toward that goal thanks to the faithful and generous offer made by Susie. Susie has been the creator of a number of trails in the churchyard over the last year which were hugely appreciated by everyone who visited our beautiful churchyard. Susie has now created the "Panda Prayer Trail" based on the resourced provided by the Church of England. It is something that everyone, children and grownups alike, can try while exploring the churchyard during this summer and spend some time in prayer. I have attached the poster made by Susie.

The trail will be installed in the churchyard shortly. It will stay there for a while beyond Pentecost Sunday. Please do feel free to spread the word to your friends and neighbours so they could

also enjoy this lovely experience. A big thank you to Susie!

More information about Thy Kindom Come can be found here:

<https://www.thykingdomcome.global/>

You can even light a star of yours on the map as a sign of your support and commitment to this great movement of prayer.

APCM

Our APCM will take place on Sunday the 23rd May at 11 am right after the Sunday service as announced previously. Those who book their seats for the service on 23 May are encouraged to stay on for the APCM which shouldn't take long. We should have more available seats for this as the further relaxation of social distancing rules are expected from 17th May. So please may I encourage you to make bookings so that you can be present for our APCM? You can book with Dianne (01604 281264) or Liz (lizmk@outlook.com)

Those who wish to stand or re-stand for election for the PCC membership or Deanery Synod, please do be in touch with Melissa (at mTallack2@anglianwater.co.uk) or with me (on 01604 621265) in advance so that we would be aware who are standing and make appropriate preparations.

The 2019 and 2020 reports have been now approved by the PCC and they are now available on our website www.abingtonchurch.org.uk. The hard copies of the reports will be also available in the church building. If you don't have access to the electronic versions then please take them with you. A big thank you to Melissa and Bob who put these together and all the chairs of the committees who provided their reports on time.

Junior Church

I am delighted to inform you that we will reopen our Junior Church for children and young people from Sunday the 30th of May. It will start at 10 am. Parents may stay with their children or if we have enough helpers then they may join for the Eucharist while children are having fun and good time with friends. If the weather is good, the children can go outside but if the weather is bad then they may stay inside. The Junior Church will be offered every last Sunday of the month for the time being.

Please do let me or Cathy know at cathytinsley18@gmail.com if you would like to book your place for your child and yourself so we would make preparations.

Supporting Children at our local school

I am going to visit Abington Vale Primary School in our parish in June to meet with children who will be leaving the school to join the secondary school. It could be a very scary moment for children who are about to make that big transition. I am working with the Light House Trust who support mission in schools for that event. We will meet about 30 children at the school and want to let them know that there are people who want to pray for them and support them. There is this lovely book called *"It's your move: Your Secondary School Survival Guide"* published by the Scripture Union. We would like to give this book to the children with a short message included in the book. Would you be interested in supporting this and write a message for a child so that s/he would know that there will be someone who will be praying for them as they make that big move? You can also contribute to the cost of giving a book to a child. The cost is only £1.50. Please would you let me know if this is something you would be interested in? I will also mention this during the Sunday service. The books will be placed in the church so you can write down your own message for children.

Christian Aid Week

This week (10-16 May) is the Christian Aid Week. The focus of this year's campaign is on the Climate Change and the people whose lives are most affected by it; those who struggle to get clean water for their basic need; those have to fight hunger every days because their crops are drying and dying out because of draughts. You can read more about their stories on the website, <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/> You can also make direct donations for their good work. There are posters in the church notice cases and on the notice board. You may also put cash in an envelope marked as Christian Aid and put it in the wall-safe in the church which then can be collected and passed on to Christian Aid.

Praying for the Holy Land and for India

Please remember the people in the Holy Land as the tension grows in that region. Let's pray for all the families and children there who must be living in fear and a real threat to the lives of

themselves and their loved ones. Please also remember the people of India who lost so many lives and who are still living in a vicious grip of the second wave. If you wish to support the families in the Holy Land, the church previously supported the Parents Circle which works to end the cycle of bloodshed in the Holy Land. You can find more information and practical ways to help them here: <https://www.theparentscircle.org/en/pcf-home-page-en/>

The church also previously supported the Mission India which works to support the most vulnerable people in India. You can find more information about their work and practical ways to help them here: <https://missionindia.org.uk/>

Scam warning

It appears that some of our friends email accounts (including mine I am afraid) or social media accounts (such as Facebook) have been exposed to the threats of hacking. This morning I was informed that an email signed with my name has been sent out to a parishioner, saying that I am in trouble and I need the person to send me money immediately. I do NOT ask for money to people. If I am in trouble then you will hear from the Diocese or from the leaders of the church like our Churchwardens or Lay Chair of the PCC or one of our Lay Ministers. If you receive any strange emails or messages from me or anyone from the church, saying we are in trouble and we need help, then please immediately contact me by ringing the Rectory (01604 621265) or at least check with one of the church leaders to verify the claim. Please do NOT respond to the strange email directly as this might put your social media account at risk.

Ascension Day

We will celebrate the Eucharist this Sunday as the Sunday after Ascension day while we keep some elements of the Ascension day service so that we can still mark one of the important days in our liturgical calendar.

With love in Christ

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