



### **Easter Message 2020**

At sunrise on Easter Day, we can proclaim, "Alleluia! Christ is risen!"

This is my first Easter among you in the Merton Priory Team and it is far from how I imagined it: no Palm procession, no Watch of the Passion, no veneration of the cross, no decorating of the church, no Dawn Eucharist followed by a feast fit for kings...

Is Easter, then, unavailable? is He not risen? Yes, it is very different for us all, but it is still Easter and I have blessings to count in these days of coronavirus lockdown. I have wonderful colleagues in ministry with whom I have enjoyed the challenge of producing liturgical materials online. With them and other church leaders, I have (like many of us) learnt about Zoom, enabling parish life to be maintained. I have been inspired by many parishioners, who have volunteered practical help for those in need or have offered to stay in regular phone contact with another church member. I have been encouraged whenever I myself have spoken to church members on the phone, hearing how you are making the best of this, how you are keeping alive faith, hope and love.

We heard back on Ash Wednesday Jesus' instruction to His followers:

'Whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you' (Matthew 6.6).

I am finding this to be true in these days; that I am praying more often and more earnestly; and I am sure it is true of others.

Dear friends, in the light of Easter, I invite us to thank God for what is sustaining us now in these days and even, dare I say it, to look forward to how we will come out of this in good heart. Our resources for Sundays and also our Monday Prayers for the Week and Wednesday Thought for the Week are already doing this; thank you to all of those who are contributing towards these. But now is also the time to fling wide the gates and invite all of you to ponder and potentially share what is nourishing you and how together we can celebrate our many gifts when we meet again.

Here are a few excellent ideas people have had:

people sending in reflections of what lockdown is like for them and how they are spending their time (perhaps to be shared on website and social media);

different people learning the same piece of music to then perform together;

folk sending in favourite recipes to produce a book (whose proceeds might support a worthy cause, such as our key-workers);

people learning poetry to recite or making art to exhibit;

church members sharing a favourite memory of church life or their Christian journey; and any of your own ideas...

Do get those creative juices flowing and feel free to send in any ideas and submissions to us. More details will follow, but let's simply give it a go.

Finally, here is a tender, hopeful poem-prayer I found on the Church of England website, in the context of "Looking forward":

**A locked church**

Ah my dear Lord, the church is locked  
but let my heart be open to your presence;  
there let us make, you and I,  
your Easter garden;  
plant it with flowers,  
and let the heavy stone be rolled away.

*by Alan Amos*

He is risen indeed, alleluia!

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On behalf of the Merton Priory Coronavirus Task Group  
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