

Vicar's Letter for April 2018

Dear Friends

A very happy and joyful Easter to you all! The last time Easter Day fell on April 1st - All Fools Day - was in 1956!

Well, to many people Christianity, and the events of Holy Week and Easter do seem foolish; the story of Jesus, his death on the cross and his resurrection is a joke. What God would allow his Son to die? And to die such a cruel death? What God would then have that same Son to rise from the dead only to disappear some weeks later into heaven? What is it all about?

But for us who believe, we know the power of the cross and the power of Christ's resurrection. We know it is not a joke but the foundation of our faith, offering us hope, peace, joy and the promise of new life, which is not just some time in the future, but for us now, here, today, in whatever situation we find ourselves in. The risen Jesus is with us, walking with us, changing our despair to hope, our grief to joy, our fear to peace. In him we have life, and that life can never be taken away from us, no matter what happens. God has the last laugh - alleluia indeed!

April is the month when we have our Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) at which we review the past year, look to the coming year, elect our Churchwardens for the year as well as new members to PCC. We round it off with an enjoyable bring and share lunch! This year it will be held on Sunday April 22nd at 12noon in the Hall.

Over many years St Matthew's has supported the work of CMS (Church Missionary Society) through the work of Isobel Booth-Clibborn in Uganda and more recently David and Amy Roche in the Lebanon. CMS have informed us that David and Amy are now returning to the UK, and leaving CMS for ministry in Hampshire. At our recent PCC meeting we voted to continue to support CMS financially through our giving and wanted too to continue to support Christian mission and faith in the Middle East. We will be supporting our new Mission Partner, Anne Plested who is a mission partner in training, preparing to go out to Bethlehem Bible College that prepares people for leadership in ministry and is a hub for social action and peace studies. Anne writes:

"I am being called to serve the local people, the Church and Bethlehem Bible College (BBC) – to teach, talk about faith and share the love of the Lord. My knowledge of English will be used to help build capacity at the College through fundraising and other work as required, as well as to teach English. Fluency in English can improve students' educational and job prospects. I am also drawn to people living on the margins (such as those in the Occupied Palestinian Territories) – to share in their joys and struggles.

She asks for prayer:

- *For the people of the Holy Land – that they may live together in peace, with justice and dignity for all.*
- *For spiritual and physical protection for myself and those I live with."*

We have the pleasure of welcoming David and Amy to St Matthew's on Sunday 22nd April at our 10am service and they will share with us some of their experiences of their time in Lebanon and those to whom they have ministered. We very much look forward to their visit and do hope that many of you will come to meet them.

We have been looking at our 10am service on our 3rd Sunday, and after some experimentation, and taking into account the views of those who attend, we think we have landed on a service which seems to suit all: a Eucharist (Holy Communion) service which is more informal and which offers the opportunity for receiving the laying on of hands and anointing for healing for any who would wish at the end of the service in the side chapel.

Just a quick reminder that the Greater Manchester Marathon is being run on Sunday 8th April, so there will be no 10am service in church that day. as the Marathon cuts the access by car to the Church for many. Instead we will have a short service in the Hall followed by bacon butties and an opportunity to encourage the runners. Let's hope for good weather! The 8am Holy Communion service will be held as normal that day.

With every blessing
Kate