



ST ANDREW'S CHURCH *Mottingham*

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Rector: Rev Ian Welch M.A., B.Th. (Hons)

A HOLY WEEK & EASTER-TIDE MESSAGE FROM THE RECTOR, **REVD. IAN WELCH**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am writing now to assure you of my thoughts and prayers as we journey through Holy Week towards a celebration this Sunday of the glorious Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. We share in the assurance that although, as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic we are in a state of lock-down and social isolation, we are nonetheless, through faith in Christ Jesus, still in spiritual communion! The current health crisis has encouraged us to find new ways of being in 'virtual' fellowship – via the internet, the website, through services recorded or streamed on You-Tube, through Facebook, WhatsApp, Zoom, Skype, texting, telephone calls, and so on. We may indeed be closed off from one another physically and unable to worship together in our church buildings, but we are still very much in contact, and able to share the Gospel message of hope and redemption through the dazzling variety of means provided by modern technology.

Believers have always known that they are 'linked in' to God and to one another by prayer; but in this current age, more than ever before, we have great opportunities for remaining in relationship and fellowship. These opportunities for remaining in contact, despite the fear and anxiety caused by the corona virus, are a source of rich blessing, and a telling sign of how Christ's Resurrection has the power to bring new life and hope out of situations of darkness and despair, as indeed was the experience of our Lord's first disciples.

In this context, I pray that some of the resources for virtual worship and fellowship that I and many others have made available through modern technology may continue to be a source of encouragement and support to you in these hugely challenging times of 'lock-down' and grave concern for personal and social health and well-being. I pray also that you and your loved ones will keep safe, well and free from a burdensome sense of fear, isolation and spiritual oppression. I feel sure also that you will wish to join with me in offering heart-felt prayers for the souls of all those who have died in this pandemic, for the recovery of all who are gravely ill, and for the protection of doctors, nurses, emergency workers, carers, volunteers and all key workers who are very much on the 'front line' in combatting the corona virus.

These are unprecedented times and they call for new and creative ways of being in fellowship, so that we can continue to offer the resources of faith to one another, and all who may find these of comfort and inspiration in this time of 'lock-down'. In all the challenges we face, may we find, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ's Resurrection, opportunities for spiritual growth and the deepening of faith. A Christ-centred focus inspires us to be

outward-looking, despite social isolation, and to put the needs of others first. In the current context this entails following government guidelines in order to protect one another, protect the NHS and save lives. Our current sacrifices of self-isolation and social distancing (for those of us who are not medical and key workers) are the best way of following Christ's path of sacrifice at this time. May we follow this path in good heart, in prayerfulness and in full assurance of the great spiritual fact of our Lord's Resurrection, which gives ultimate hope for our souls in this life and the next!

May our Lord Jesus Christ richly bless you and your loved ones this Easter and in all that lies ahead and keep you safe in the palm of his hand!

With every blessing,

Ian

*Revd Ian Welch
Good Friday, 2020*