**A message from Fr Paul, Interim Vicar

**'Peace be with you'** (John 20: 19)

***Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me***

***Make me a channel of your peace***

It has been a long 2 weeks of lockdown and there's more to come.

As we approach the most Holy Week in the church calendar we are getting more than a taste of what it meant for the disciples of Jesus, who, after the crucifixion on Good Friday, went into lockdown in the upper room where they had shared their last supper together on Maundy Thursday. They were frightened to venture out for fear that what had happened to their master might also happen to them. The virus of hatred and suspicion that had led to the arrest, trial and execution of their leader was now turned toward them, also.

But into the isolation of their lockdown, Jesus, after his resurrection on Easter Day, appeared to his disciples. And the first words he says to them are 'Peace be with you'.

Into the uncertainty and anxiety of their troubled lives Jesus offers and embodies everything that 'peace' is. He doesn't just *say* 'peace', he *is* 'peace' and *lives* 'peace'. He is a non-anxious presence in a place of deep tension. And his assuring, peaceful presence offers hope and encouragement for all that is to come.

In our own situation today we as disciples of Jesus draw on his non-anxious presence to sustain us just as it did those first disciples. And like them we are called to offer ourselves in what we say and how we are as a non-anxious presence to those with whom we are in contact, even from our 'upper rooms' of lockdown and isolation.

Now more than ever this phrase that we use each time we come together for Holy Communion takes on a deeper resonance and significance for our shared lives of faith ...

 ***We break this bread to share in the Body of Christ***

 ***Though we are many we are one Body, because we all share in One Bread.***

In the solidarity of our membership in the Body of Christ - his Church - we are called to embody the peace which Jesus offers the world through us. We are his active agents - his 'spies' - in the world, looking out for each other and looking out for the opportunities to offer all of what ***'Peace be with you'*** signifies.

I appreciate that at times like ours this task of discipleship is easier said than done. And I also appreciate that, in the words of two well know hymns, the challenge of establishing ***'...peace on earth...***', of being ***'a channel of...peace'***... needs to ***'...begin with me'***.

BUT, we are all in this together. We are not alone.

***Cast your burden upon the lord and he will sustain you (***Psalm 55 v22)

***And the one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone...(***John 8:29)

***…let all who are faithful offer prayer to you; at a time of distress the rush of mighty waters shall not reach them.***

***You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with glad cries of deliverance.*** (Psalm 32)

***For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation. He alone is my rock...my fortress. I shall never be shaken.*** (Psalm 55 vv1&2)

May the Peace of the Lord be always with you.

Paul

I have been doing my best to keep in contact with members of our congregation and I am aware that many of you have been using the telephone and social media platforms to do the same. Keep this up, if you can, especially as the days and weeks ahead have potential to become more challenging than they are proving already. If there is anyone you have concern for, prayer requests etc do not hesitate to contact me. Although I may not be physically 'there' for you I am, most definitely, 'here' for you.

On our website there are suggestions for Worship-at-Home to carry us through Holy Week. Make use of them if you can and share them with others.

Although we will be unable to gather on the most important day - Easter Day - I will be celebrating Holy Communion on that day for all of us at 9.30am. Join me in taking 'spiritual communion' from home as we share, as one body, in the Body of the risen Lord.

***The Lord is risen!***

***He is risen indeed. Alleluia!***

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**Blackburn DIOCESAN RESOURCES**

Worship videos

Via the medium of the Diocesan YouTube channel (link below) Bishop Julian will be leading:

 • Worship for Palm Sunday (released at 9am and available thereafter)

 • Good Friday Meditation (released at 2pm on Good Friday)

 • Worship for Easter morning with all three Bishops (released at 9am)

Before the lockdown, Bishop Philip also made three recordings at St Laurence Church in Chorley:

 • Maundy Thursday Eucharist of the Lord’s Supper

 • Good Friday Liturgy of the Day (with reading of St John’s Passion)

 • Easter Morning Eucharist with Renewal of Baptismal Promises

These will also be available on the St Laurence YouTube channel on the relevant days.

**A cross in the window (31/03/2020)**

Many will miss the blessing and distribution of Palm Crosses on Sunday.

In our Diocese we are encouraging every Christian home in the County to make a cross in the best way they can and place it in their window, leaving it there throughout Holy Week.

It can be of paper, card, wood – be as imaginative as you like!

You can also watch and then share [**this little video**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gcXvfzJZ09w) about it too to encourage others to make their own crosses. And visit the Diocesan [**Board of Education Pinterest page**](https://www.pinterest.co.uk/bdbeinspire/lent-easter-pentecost-and-ascension/) to get some inspiration when making your crosses.

Use the idea as a creative opportunity to witness to others about your faith. And creating a cross for your window will be a sign to our communities that, in the cross of Christ, all the world’s ills are healed.



Resources from the Board of Education – on the **Blackburn Diocese** website

For Children

Barefoot Easter Walk A sensory barefoot walk taking you on a journey from Palm Sunday to Good Friday which would be great for families to do at home. And you could also find more ideas for adapting at home with multi-sensory Easter resources.

Outdoor Easter - Two activity sheets for families to download and use together to help them understand and celebrate Easter.

Weekly@ Easter Sessions for 2020 – These were designed for churches but there’s lots of things in there that could be adapted for use at home, including Easter prayer stations and ideas for under 5s.

There is also the regular Weekly@ materials with adaptations for families on the Diocesan Board of Education social media pages; links at the top of the Board of Education website.

For Young People

Pick n Mix Easter - A youth work resource which helps you to build a session for your specific group, or individual young person. A video showing how this can be adapted for home is on the Facebook page currently.

Stable to the Tomb – 14 videos of 14 incredible people’s stories of how they came to faith and how they walk each day out with Jesus. The videos are free to download as is the accompanying sessions plans to help you unpack the story you have watched.

Videos:

• January Stable to the Tomb videos • February Stable to the Tomb videos • March Stable to the Tomb videos • April Stable to the Tomb videos • Session Plans for the videos are here.

**National resources for the young**

Rhema Theatre Company are launching their ‘Easter Tales’ which are normally £50 but being offered for free up until 17th April: https://talesfromthemiraclebook.co.uk/

ROOTS are currently offering free resources for families to use at home, including things for Holy Week and Easter: https://www.rootsontheweb.com/

The Reflectionary is also a good source of resources to follow the lectionary with all ages. In this time of crisis, it now provides ‘Together, Apart’ for households of all ages and all sizes to use: https://reflectionary.org/