From Simon

I am writing this brief piece as news comes through that the current 'lock-down' is set to last at least another three weeks. I'm sure this will be received with mixed emotions by many with the prospect of being alone at home or in close proximity to our core family members a strange and sometimes troubling experience. We have probably discovered quite a lot about ourselves and our families during the last three weeks and this may be either positive or negative; either way, we are undoubtedly being changed, whether we like it or not. One of the very positive things that has emerged is a greater sense of community and solidarity, two things that before this started we might have considered to be on the wane in recent times. The fact that neighbours are doing some very simple but deeply caring acts is a signal of hope in testing times. We must not be complacent, but the knowledge that just over 60 people have volunteered to take responsibility for every street in the village to offer any help with shopping or collecting prescriptions is really good news. On Thursday evenings we rightly acknowledge the role of the NHS and others providing our essential services, but maybe we should also celebrate the unsung heroes and heroines who are doing small things every day to help others.

Thank you for your appreciative comments on the worship material that we have been making available on the website and the links to other sources. Like many of our colleagues, Nicola and I have been on a steep learning curve in the last three weeks as we have tried to grasp the opportunities that digital communications offer. At times this has caused a few frustrations, but we are getting there, slowly!

We are going to provide the Sunday readings, Collect and hymns for you to reflect on at home, together with a reflection on the Sunday readings.

Hymn: This joyful Eastertide

1 This joyful Eastertide,
   Away with sin and sorrow.
   My Love, the Crucified,
   Hath sprung to life this morrow:
      Had Christ that once was slain,
      Ne’er burst his three-day prison,
      Our faith had been in vain:
      But now hath Christ arisen, arisen, arisen, arisen.

2 My flesh in hope shall rest,
   And for a season slumber:
   Till trump from east to west
   Shall wake the dead in number:
      Had Christ that once ...........

3 Death’s flood hath lost his chill,
   Since Jesus crossed the river:
   Lover of souls, from ill
   My passing soul deliver:
      Had Christ that once ...........
Hymn:  Now is eternal life

1 Now is eternal life, if risen with Christ we stand,
   In him to life reborn, and holden in his hand;
   No more we fear death’s ancient dread,
   In Christ arisen from the dead.

2 For God, the living God, stooped down to man’s estate;
   By death destroying death, Christ opened wide life’s gate:
   He lives, who died; he reigns on high;
   Who lives in him shall never die.

3 Unfathomed love divine, reign thou within my heart;
   From thee nor depth nor height, nor life nor death can part;
   Our life is hid with God in thee,
   Now and through all eternity.

Collect:
Almighty Father, you have given your only Son to die for our sins and to rise again for our justification: grant us so to put away the leaven of malice and wickedness that we may always serve you in pureness of living and truth; through the merits of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen

First Reading:  Acts 2. 14a, 22 - 32
On the day of Pentecost, Peter standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd, 'You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know— this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. For David says concerning him, “I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; moreover, my flesh will live in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One experience corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.” Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying, “He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh experience corruption.” This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.

Second Reading:  1 Peter 1. 3 - 9
Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Gospel:  John 20. 19 - 31
When it was evening on the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you. 'When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.' But Thomas (who was called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.' A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said
to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.’ Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.’ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

Reflection on this Sunday's readings:

Last week, on that strangest of Easters, we read of that wonderful moment when Mary Magdalene goes from the deepest of despair to extraordinary, unimaginable joy, meeting the risen Jesus in the early-morning garden. But perhaps her glad certainty - he who was dead is alive again! - was not so easy to hold onto. In this week's Gospel reading, the disciples are meeting behind locked doors, miserable and bereft, grieving and afraid. Perhaps the news that Mary Magdalene took to Jesus's followers was just too incredible, and the memories of his terrible death just too raw. After all, these were dangerous times for the disciples, and they were justifiably frightened of what might happen to them. Suddenly, Jesus appears in the room, bringing them rejoicing, promising them peace, and breathing onto them the Holy Spirit.

All three of our readings this week take us to times when Jesus' followers have badly needed hope and joy. Peter's sermon from Acts 2 takes place against the backdrop of a very dangerous situation for the apostles. When Peter speaks at the Temple, the authorities arrive to question him. Stephen is put to death, and the apostles are imprisoned. The opening of 1 Peter (not included in our reading) is addressed to the 'exiles of the dispersion': Christians scattered across Asia Minor, living in communities that neither understood nor accepted them. Peter himself was martyred in Rome in a period of cruel persecution of Christians. All three of our readings, then, take place against a dark backdrop - despair and grief, fear, danger, exile and persecution. Yet they speak of the gifts of peace, joy and hope. For these early Christians, the Resurrection was the central fact of their changed lives, the event that turned despair to joy, replaced fear and danger with peace, and lightened grief by hope, and defeated death by everlasting life.

We too are in a dark time. As I write this, the government has just announced a three-week extension to the lockdown, and restrictions may well go on for much longer than that. Many of us are finding the lockdown very hard. Even if we have enough to eat, people we can call upon to help and some means of getting outside, many of us are feeling lonely and restricted and bored. Even if we are safe and well, we know that others are not; and we know that too many are being asked to make enormous sacrifices for the well-being of others. Everyone I've spoken to has said how much they long to be able to meet together again, and how sad they are that we can't do so. How wonderful it would be to meet together, as those early disciples did, and have Jesus appear among us! In this time of social distancing, how extraordinary it would be to have him invite us to touch him! What joy, what peace, what hope he would bring us if we could gather round him!

We may not be able to meet, but we are still the body of Christ upon earth. We can't gather to worship together in person, but we are still joined together in that great body of all the followers of Christ throughout the world. We may be dispersed in our separate homes, feeling as if we are in exile from each other, but we are still part of one another through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. So although as Peter says in his letter, we 'suffer various trials,' we still have Christ's 'living hope'. And although we can't see each other or touch each other — as we cannot see or touch the risen Jesus — we can hold fast to the hope that separation will not be for ever, that fear and despair will not have the last word and that the defeat of death has been accomplished for us. And the love that Christ has for us, we can have for each other, holding that in faith until we can, rejoicing, meet again.

Hello Children  Mary Mouse has gone to ground until we can all meet together again, but she will be sending regular letters.

Sunday Club will not meet until further notice. We will be offering a regular Mary Mouse letter. For details contact Gillian, gillian.pett29@gmail.com
INTERCESSIONS
Please refer any pastoral concerns for members of the congregation or members of the local community to any member of the Ministry team including our Co-ordinator for Pastoral Services, Mrs Frances Simms. Please pray for the sick, frail, housebound and those in care. Please let the Vicar know about all cases of sickness and others for whom we should pray.

PLANNED GIVING: To join the planned giving scheme, please contact Mrs. Ann Seaman, mobile no. 07710 452647; email juliet.a.seaman@outlook.com

Giving During the 'Lock-down': We all deeply miss the opportunity to gather together for Sunday worship and the fellowship that this provides. One of the elements of our weekly coming together is the chance to making our regular offerings of money to support the work of the parish church. For some, donations will be continuing by arrangements with our banks, but a number of you give regularly by weekly envelope or open cash donation and no longer have this opportunity. We still have all our weekly costs to meet and your valuable and regular help is essential in seeing that this is funded. Please consider if you could continue to forward your envelopes and cash by asking a friend or neighbour to put them through the Vicarage letter box. Thank you in anticipation.

ST. MARY’S GREAT SHELFORD - WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

Praying together as a community
At a time when we are all missing meeting to worship together perhaps there are things that we can do to help us feel that we are still a worshipping community, and that we are all thinking of one another. Here are three simple things that we could all do to pray together for each other and our community.

1. At noon each day we could say the Lord’s Prayer. You might like to go to the front door and stand in the doorway because we are praying not just for ourselves but for the whole community.

2. If you have a candle, light it at 7pm on Sunday evenings and put it in your front window. Pray for all those who are ill, all those who are alone, and all those who are caring for others. This looks beautiful and is a sign to other people that we are keeping the light of hope for them.

3. In the evenings before bed we could pray for each other, perhaps by saying the wonderful collect for aid against all perils from the Book of Common Prayer.

Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord, and by thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night, for the love of thy only Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Services on video:
Simon and Nicola are continuing to celebrate Holy Communion and other services for the whole community. We hope to produce recordings or videos of the Parish Communion and Evensong each Sunday, and a midweek BCP Communion on Wednesdays. The videos and recordings will be on our web site. In addition you can see them on our Youtube channel (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTxJ8yVmoDeVor4KAyY5UYw) or on our Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/Stmarysgreatshelford/) - you don’t need to use facebook to see our posts).

Direct access to our services for Holy Week & Easter on the website is here: https://www.stmarysgreatshelford.org/services/holy-week-and-easter-online/

As you watch you can make a Spiritual Communion. The term ‘Spiritual Communion’ has been used historically to describe the means of grace by which a person, prevented for some serious reason from sharing in a celebration of the Eucharist, nonetheless shares in the communion of Jesus Christ. The form of prayer below offers Christians an opportunity to give thanks for their communion with him, particularly at times when they would ordinarily be present at the Eucharist.

The Book of Common Prayer instructs us that if we offer ourselves in penitence and faith, giving thanks for the redemption won by Christ crucified, we may truly ‘eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ’, although we cannot receive the sacrament physically in ourselves. Making a Spiritual Communion is particularly fitting for those who cannot receive the sacrament at the great feasts of the Church, and it fulfils the duty of receiving Holy Communion ‘regularly, and especially at the festivals of Christmas, Easter and Whitsun or Pentecost’ (Canon B 15).

The Church of which we are members is not defined by the walls of a building but by the Body of Christ of
which we are members. In making our communion spiritually, we are joining with Christians everywhere to be nourished by the one who tells us, ‘I am the Bread of Life’.

**Sincere thanks** to everyone who is involved in supporting our community at present. I am aware of so many small acts of kindness that are being given every day. All this is something that we should acknowledge and celebrate. Well done all!

**Cambridge City Foodbank:** The Foodbank still very much needs our support at this difficult time. As St Mary's is closed until further notice, and Great Shelford Free Church are offering a collection point outside their front door, please can food donations be left there for the time being. You can also donate money directly to the Foodbank; the details of how to do so are on the Cambridge City Foodbank website.

[https://cambridgecity.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-food/](https://cambridgecity.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-food/)

**APCM:** Under the current circumstances, the APCM has had to be postponed until further notice; in the meantime, the composition of the PCC remains as is.

**Kneelers:** A group of ladies, and at least one gentleman, have started work on some new kneelers for the church. The cost per kneeler is £54; if you would like to make a contribution, maybe with a dedication, please contact Mrs Margaret Stamper, 845134. Please also contact Margaret if you would like to sew a kneeler yourself; apparently it is very therapeutic!

Please note that the church is closed at present, so regrettably visits will not be possible.

**Vicar:**  
The Rev'd Simon Talbott  
simon@thetalbotts.co.uk  
01223 847068

**Assistant curate:**  
The Rev'd Dr Nicola Bown  
curate@stmarysgreatshelford.org  
07414 595160

**Contact Churchwarden:**  
Mrs. Stella Nettleton  
stella.nettleton@btinternet.com  
07763 887953

**Reader/Licensed Lay Minister:**  
Mrs. Maureen Dobson  
d-mdobson@hotmail.co.uk  
01223 840076

**Parish Administrator:**  
Mrs. Katharin Page  
pagekatharin@gmail.com  
07710 518220

**Pastoral Services Co-ordinator:**  
Mrs. Frances Simms  
francesjsimms47@gmail.com  
01223 845895

**Children's work contact:**  
Gillian Pett  
gillian.pett29@gmail.com

Applications for baptisms, marriages and the calling of Banns of marriage should be made please to the Parish Administrator.

Please note that at the moment we are unable to hold public services in church, so weddings and Baptisms are not permitted (unless in very specific emergency situations and probably only in a hospital or hospice setting). It is unclear at present when we can open the church again, so any forward dates agreed may have to be changed. 19/04/20