From Simon

Trust that you are all keeping safe and managing to spend some time outside as this glorious weather continues? Perhaps that hardest part of the continuing restrictions is to find things to do with one's time. I hope you have managed to find things to do, in particular those things that maybe have been put to one side by the normal daily round.

I warmly commend to you the worship material that Nicola and I have put together. We would be very grateful for any feedback on content or presentation, also if you have any ideas about further things we could be doing, then please let us know.

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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: Christ the Lord is risen again!

1 Christ the Lord is risen again! Christ hath broken every chain!
Hark the angels shout for joy, singing evermore on high, Alleluia!

2 He who gave for us his life, who for us endured the strife,
Is our Paschal Lamb to-day! We too sing for joy, and say Alleluia!

3 He who bore all pain and loss comfortless upon the Cross,
Lives in glory now on high, pleads for us, and hears our cry. Alleluia!

4 He whose path no records tell, who descended into hell;
Who the strong man armed hath bound, now in highest heaven is crowned. Alleluia!

5 Now he bids us tell abroad how the lost may be restored,
How the penitent forgiven, how we too may enter heaven. Alleluia!

6 Thou our Paschal Lamb indeed, Christ, to-day thy people feed;
Take our sins and guilt away, that we all may sing for ay, Alleluia!

Hymn: Ye choirs of new Jerusalem

1 Ye choirs of new Jerusalem,
Your sweetest notes employ,
The Paschal victory to hymn
In strains of holy joy.

2 How Judah's Lion burst his chains,
And crushed the serpent's head;
And brought with him, from death's domains,
The long-imprisoned dead.

3 From hell's devouring jaws the prey
Alone our Leader bore;
His ransomed hosts pursue their way
Where he hath gone before.

Triumphant in his glory now
His sceptre ruleth all,
Earth, heaven, and hell before him bow,
And at his footstool fall.

While joyful thus his praise we sing,
His mercy we implore,
Into his palace bright to bring
And keep us evermore.

All glory to the Father be,
All glory to the Son,
All glory, Holy Ghost, to thee,
While endless ages run.
Alleluia! Amen.

Collect:
Almighty Father, who in your great mercy gladdened the disciples with the sight of the risen Lord: give us such knowledge of his presence with us, that we may be strengthened and sustained by his risen life and serve you continually in righteousness and truth; through Jesus Christ your Son 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, 36 - 41
On the day of Pentecost Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd, ‘Let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.’ Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what should we do?’ Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.’ And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.’ So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added to their number.

Second Reading: 1 Peter 1. 17 - 23
If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile. You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God. Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart. You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God.

On that same day two of the disciples were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, ‘What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?’ They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, ‘Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?’ Jesus asked them, ‘What things?’ They replied, ‘The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see Jesus.’ Then he said to them, ‘Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the
Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?’ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, ‘Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.’ So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized Jesus; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?’ That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, ‘The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!’ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Reflection on this Sunday’s readings:-

Have you ever noticed that some of the saddest words in our language begin with the letter D? For example, disappointment, doubt, disillusionment, defeat, discouragement, despondency, depression, despair and death.

Movie producer Woody Allen once gave the commencement address at Yale University. He said the following: "Our civilization stands at the crossroads. Down one road is despondency and despair. Down the other road is total annihilation. I hope we’ll take the right road." Woody Allen was obviously trying to be funny, but his statement reflects the despair and pessimism of our times.

Disappointment, doubt, disillusionment, defeat, discouragement, despair and death - all of these words sum up how Cleopas and his companion were feeling as they trudged up the road toward Emmaus. They had left the downhearted and confused band of disciples who were afraid and bewildered over what had happened to Jesus on Good Friday. The two men, as they travelled along, were also sad and disillusioned.

The Master they had loved and followed had been horribly put to death – a cruel and degrading death on a cross. Jesus had been made a public spectacle, exposed to the jeers of all who passed by. Only a week before, their hopes had risen to fever pitch when the excited crowds welcomed their Master waving palm branches and shouting ‘hosanna’. But now Jesus lay dead in a sealed tomb. Their hopes were dashed; the dream was over!

Even the report of the women that Christ's tomb was empty didn’t raise their spirits; it only confused them even more. The two despondent disciples walking the road to Emmaus summed up the situation very neatly when they said, "We had hoped that he would be the one who was going to set Israel free!"

Human hope is a fragile thing, and when it withers, it’s difficult to revive. We need to note the number of people who take their own life because despair and discouragement have sucked the last bit of hope out of their lives. When someone you love and care for is overtaken by a serious illness, which goes on, and on, despair sets in. It almost becomes impossible to hope for recovery. You may even be afraid to hope because you believe that you couldn’t cope with another letdown.

"We had hoped ... ", Cleopas and his friend had said. They were saying, "We don’t expect it now, but once we did. We had high hopes for the future, but now those hopes are gone and all we have left is disappointment." Can you identify with the feelings of these two disciples in any way? For each of us the cause of feeling down might be different, but it would be a rare person indeed who could claim that they were not affected by any of those D words - disappointment, doubt, disillusionment, defeat, discouragement, depression, despondency or despair.

As the two men walked along, a stranger joined them. This was going to be the most significant walk in their whole lives. The stranger asked them what they were discussing. And so they poured out their story to someone who seemed willing to listen. They tell the stranger all about their hopes and their disappointments. The last thing they needed was a brisk "cheer up" talk, or being told to "snap out of it". He simply provides a listening ear. As the three men talk of their misery and disappointment, the stranger walks with them. We know that the stranger was Jesus.

Isn't that a great picture – Jesus walking along the road with his despondent and confused disciples sharing their troubles? Suddenly this 2,000-year-old story is brought into the present. When disappointment, doubt, disillusionment, defeat, discouragement, despondency, depression, and despair fill our lives, Jesus is the unseen "stranger" walking alongside us, listening to us, and if we are willing to hear his voice, revealing
himself to us.

As Cleopas and his friend talked about the cross, their bewilderment and sorrow, Jesus reassured them and helped them. How did he do it? He pointed them to what God says in the Bible. Luke tells us, "Jesus explained to them what was said about himself in all the Scriptures, beginning with the books of Moses and the writings of all the prophets". Jesus must have given the Emmaus travellers the best ever lesson on the Old Testament, reminding them how sin came into the world through the disobedience of Adam and Eve, and how the prophets foreshadowed a saviour who would be obedient even to the point of death. He may have reminded them of Abraham - how he almost sacrificed his son - and how the heavenly Father did sacrifice his Son for the sin of all people. No doubt, he would have referred to Isaiah’s description of the Suffering Servant of God who "was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53). It's not that these men hadn’t read their Bibles, but that their understanding was clouded by the idea that the Messiah would come with glory and power and rain down fire on their enemies.

The two-hour walk to Emmaus must have seemed like five minutes. The two disciples could feel the despondency and sorrow they felt in their hearts change into understanding and hope as the "stranger" explained that Jesus’ death was a part of God's great plan of salvation.

When disillusionment, depression and defeat dominate our lives, Jesus walks with us just as he walked with the two men on the road to Emmaus. He points us to God's Word of promise in the Bible that tells us again that we are God’s dearly loved children and that he will stand by us through thick and thin. He turns our despair into hope.

Some years back I knew a woman who was dying of a brain tumour. She had struggled with the disease for a number of years. She went through surgery, radiation and chemotherapy, and all the ills associated with both the disease and its treatment.

I asked her about how she felt about the whole ordeal and where it was surely leading her. She said that it was very difficult at times; she knew she was dying, but even so she felt an astonishing amount of peace and joy. When I asked her if she was scared of what lay ahead in the future, she replied, "Why should I be afraid? I believe in Jesus, my Saviour. I know where I came from and where I am going." Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, she was comforted by her Saviour. Even though there were times when she was depressed and sad, she knew she wasn’t walking alone. He gave her hope for the future; a hope that only her risen Saviour could give. She was blessed and she felt it - and those who visited her knew it.

The two disciples asked the "stranger" to stop with them for the night and at the evening meal he "took the bread, and said the blessing; then he broke the bread and gave it to them". Suddenly it dawned on them who the stranger was. It was their Master raised from the dead. Jesus himself had ministered to them in their sadness. Now they knew why a change had come over them as they walked on the road. They now knew why their despondent hearts had been changed to hearts filled with hope and renewed faith. Jesus had revealed himself to them in his Word and through the sacrament.

I can imagine Cleopas and his friend standing in amazement; perhaps embracing in great joy, asking each other, "Wasn’t it like a fire burning in us when he talked to us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?" Their world had come together. They had experienced something of the grace of God. Because of his love for his despondent disciples, graciously Jesus came and met them on the road to Emmaus. Graciously he cleared away the fog of confusion; he showed to them the heart of God and his plan of salvation, and finally he revealed himself to them – he was alive, risen from the dead.

At the moment the "stranger" reveals who he was, he vanishes from their sight. But he has not gone; he is still visible to those who have the eyes of faith.

The road to Emmaus is a symbol of the Christian life. This story is about ordinary despair, and ordinary, Monday-morning drudgery. It is a story about meeting a stranger, hearing his words of comfort, sitting down at table and sharing a meal. This story is about the meaning of Easter for us. It enables us to see that the risen Lord gives hope and joy, when all we see is disappointment, discouragement and despair. It enables us to see the world, not as a place of death, decay, and defeat, but as a place waiting, groaning toward God's final victory.

The change that took place has been described like this.

"Their lives prior to this moment were like a smouldering fire that gives no light, just smoke to cloud things up. But once they came into the presence of the Risen Lord their hearts were ablaze! A burning fire gives light for
all to see, and they saw, understood and believed! All because of the Risen Lord! Jesus’ victory became their restoring hope. It became the anchor of their lives” (author unknown).

This story about the walk to Emmaus is a story for every day life in 2020. If you are walking the Emmaus road right now or when you will walk it in the future with those sad Ds - disappointment, doubt, disillusionment, defeat, discouragement, despondency, depression, and despair – let’s remember we are not walking alone. The unseen "stranger", the risen Jesus is walking with us.

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/UCTxJ8yVmoDeV0r4KAYy5UYw) 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/

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 regretfully visits will not be possible.

Vicar: Simon Talbott simon@thetalbotts.co.uk 01223 847068
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Contact Churchwarden: Stella Nettleton stella.nettleton@btinternet.com 07763 887953
Reader/Licensed Lay Minister: Maureen Dobson d-mdobson@hotmail.co.uk 01223 840076
Parish Administrator: 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.  26/04/20