

Letter from Rev Jacqueline

This April edition of our Magazine is printed just as we begin to enter the final two weeks of Lent – where symbolically the dark is going to get darker – and even darker before the light breaks through on that glorious dawn of the new day of Easter. And if ever we needed to enter into a journey of hope of light in the dark it is now, isn't it?

The thing about the Easter story is that there is so much in it for us to identify with today – the agony of separation as we experienced during Covid and as many people from Ukraine are experiencing as we speak – the grief and pain of losing loved ones and the agony of the lost and lonely – and the agony of watching fellow human beings dehumanise their neighbours and reap a trail of carnage in order to prove a point and be the best. I wonder if, like me, you ask 'How on earth did it come to this?' We feel let down, betrayed, exhausted by the enormity of the brokenness – we feel helpless.

What we see in the first part of the Easter Story – the pre-resurrection – is not the greenwashing of all that is flawed in humanity, but an exposure of all that led to one person bearing the brunt of this pattern – it's nothing new – and for Jesus, it led to the conspiracies, denials, cruelty and humiliation of the day fuelling the subsequent kangaroo court and eventual death by the cross...

Engaging with suffering was nothing new for Jesus – he got alongside the marginalised and downtrodden and sick – he brought comfort and healing to the sick – sight to the blind – but when he engaged with the *spiritual suffering of humanity* – the insecurities and spiritual blindness that drives a person to think so darkly and act so brutally for their own gain – he stopped it in its tracks and showed that there is another way – a way of the light – a way of love.

In the story of the resurrection, Jesus literally showed us how to do what he did - that by living spiritually the best we can – we too can defeat the darker side of ourselves and humanity and die spiritually in order to rise spiritually and come to a new way of engaging in the world and with each other, shaped by the Easter light and the promise of all that is hopeful and good - with love and kindness being the language of the heart and the reasoner of the mind – and therefore the drive of our actions and interactions in the world. Right thought, right action, right result – peace!

And what's so good about the Good News of Easter is that this experience of dark to light can happen now, here on earth – in the mess, on the ground – now. We can be game-changers for good today – and actually, in the midst of all the sorrows of the world – and especially the tragic war in Ukraine, we are experiencing the evidence of God's loving and peaceable kingdom being lived out in our place today.

We see how the local community was mobilised by Fran and Ash to put together supplies to be sent to Poland – such an act and energy of true community spirit and solidarity. We see how local families are opening their homes to some Ukraine people as they find solace and comfort

and hope here in the UK, working out how on earth they are going to rebuild their lives – and hopefully one day return home to help build their cities that have been so brutally razed to the ground. We can see how people are donating what they can – praying however they can – growing closer together through shared painful experiences to be the catalysts of shared hopeful experiences and act of kindness.

And talking of shared experiences and community kindness, I celebrated the fourth anniversary of my induction here at Wrecclesham on 13th March and when I look back at my first Parish letter which was April 2018, I see that I wrote this:-

...My hope is that Wrecclesham's church and community will grow ever- closer together. My prayer is that those yet to visit St Peter's will do so and discover a space of peace and tranquillity amidst their busy lives, and I trust that all who come will experience that warm welcome and sense of belonging promised in Christ's name and find for themselves the joy that comes in belonging to a loving community that lives life through faith, fellowship and friendship. The word 'Church' with a capital 'C' means the people – and the people of the church tend to live in their local community first and then become part of their church community. So here in Wrecclesham, we really are in it together – working to build an even more caring, sharing and loving community – and I look forward to us finding ways to strengthen the peace, joy and fun we can have along the way – together. Please do pop into St Peter's sometime – it really is a special space in a special place...

I think that together we've done alright to hold that vision together, don't you? 😊
May you be richly blessed with springtime and Easter's promise of hope, healing, and new life.
Love and Blessings,

Jacqueline