

Dear Friends

'God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.' (Psalm 46.1, NIV)

It is a beautiful sunny day today and it is lovely outside. Everything looks so normal but, of course, we know that is not the case. As I walked in the garden earlier, and saw more buds appearing on the plants and shrubs, I was struck by just how quiet it was. The birds were in fine voice but there was no distant 'white' noise – a good sign that people are obeying the States directive to stay at home and stay safe.

The period of lockdown goes on and this means that we have the extraordinary situation of not being able to join together to commemorate Holy Week in our churches. This Easter will be unlike any other that we have known. However, we may still make the same journey, albeit within our own homes and in our own hearts.

This Sunday is Palm Sunday. I cannot distribute Palm crosses but you might like to try making one for yourself. If this appeals to you then please click on the link below to get full directions:

<https://mommynippets.com/paper-palm-crosses/>

I have prepared some suggested forms of worship for this coming week which you might like to use. The first of these – an Order of Service for Palm Sunday, is attached to this email. Orders of Service for Holy Week will be circulated next week. I also signpost some other resources below which I hope might be useful.

Worship

On Sunday, I will be celebrating the Eucharist at 9.30am in private on behalf of both our churches. I suggest that you follow a form of service (perhaps the Palm Sunday Order of Service which is attached) at 10.30am so that we are offering our worship in solidarity although we are apart.

On Palm Sunday we usually have a dramatic reading of the Passion. The Order of Service contains the Bible reference for the Passion in St. Matthew's Gospel – please do join in, if you can.

Early next week, I will send round suggested worship for Holy Week, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday.

You might like to access the Roots 'Worship at home' resources which have been specially prepared for adults and young people.

The adult resource can be found at <https://www.rootsontheweb.com/lectionary/2020/106-march-april-2020-a/palm-sunday/adultsathome>

And the families resource at <https://www.rootsontheweb.com/lectionary/2020/106-march-april-2020-a/palm-sunday/familiesathome>

Another excellent set of resources for Holy Week has been produced by the Diocese of Chelmsford. These can be accessed at: <https://www.chelmsford.anglican.org/holyweekathome>
These resources contain interactive ideas to help you engage with the momentous events of Jesus' journey from Palm Sunday to Easter Day.

I would also like to signpost you to the following religious broadcasts on TV and radio in the first part of Holy Week:

TELEVISION:

Sunday 1.15pm (BBC1) *Songs of Praise* Sean Fletcher visits Lodging House, Mission, in Glasgow, and meets an artist who is working on a series of paintings of St Luke's Gospel.

RADIO:

Sunday 8.10am (R4) *Sunday Worship* Reflections on times of trial, suffering, and bereavement.

3pm (R3) *Choral Evensong* A repeat of last week's archive recording from Magdalen College, Oxford, first broadcast in March 2016.

6.45pm (R3) *Sunday Feature: Wordsworth — Poet of the people* Jenny Uglow looks at the poet's response to the Industrial Revolution and contrasts his view with that of Adam Smith, the Enlightenment moral philosopher.

Monday-Wednesday 9.45am R4FM: The Passion in Plants Bob Gilbert makes a pilgrimage in Holy Week, tracing the associations of British wildflowers with the events of Christ's Passion (1-3/5).

Monday 4.30pm (R4) *Beyond Belief* A discussion about sin (1/7).

3.30pm (R3) *Choral Evensong* An archive recording of Choral Vespers for Holy Week, from Westminster Cathedral, first broadcast on 8 April 1998.

The BBC are broadcasting a number of religious programmes during the week. Please click on the link below for further details:

[https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2020/easter?xtor=ES-211-\[30921_PANUK_NLT_13_ENG_ACT_0-3Months_HowToMake\]-20200331-\[bbcmediacentre_easterprogramming2020revealed_factualreligious&fbclid=IwAR3h75hCcbYcR4Hj9hA6S0rOlf7-Cxz5qZDTJ_xxOR0EJxumUhHdljrggGc](https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2020/easter?xtor=ES-211-[30921_PANUK_NLT_13_ENG_ACT_0-3Months_HowToMake]-20200331-[bbcmediacentre_easterprogramming2020revealed_factualreligious&fbclid=IwAR3h75hCcbYcR4Hj9hA6S0rOlf7-Cxz5qZDTJ_xxOR0EJxumUhHdljrggGc)

WhatsApp Prayer Group

Would you like to be part of a small WhatsApp Prayer Group?

I would suggest three or four members per group to share prayer together and offer encouragement and support to each other.

If you would like to be a part of a group, please email me and we will set up some more groups.

Remember the words of 1 Thessalonians 5:11 *“Therefore **encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.**”*

Pastoral Support

We are continuing to try to ensure that congregation members receive a phone call every few days from one of our church leadership teams. Should you wish for specific spiritual support then please do be in touch with either me (my details are below) or John Le Page on 257436.

Just to remind you, The Church of England has produced a booklet containing 13 daily reflections for those who are socially isolating at home which you may find helpful. These can be accessed at:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/10961•Mental Health Reflections WEB.pdf>

and they can also be found in the Worship at Home resources section on the website.

Ignatian Spiritual Reflection for Holy Week

Here are some thoughts for this coming week. I hope you find some of them useful.

Spend a little time each day listening to music that helps you slow down. It doesn't matter what kind of music—hymns, jazz, folksong, symphony pieces, songs with meaningful words, or pieces that are instrumental only—as long as the listening helps you breathe more slowly and go to a place deeper in your spirit.

Choose one of the Passion narratives—from any of the four Gospels—and read it aloud to yourself over the course of the week. Don't try to learn anything new or have a profound experience; simply read the story, asking God to help this story live in you better this year than it ever has before.

While you're sitting—maybe at the end of the day, trying to unwind in front of the television or in a favourite chair—try drawing aspects of Holy Week. Use whatever paper and pen(cil) is available and express something about symbols that are meaningful to you: cross, lily, bread, chalice, table, garden, hands, faces, a road...

Although Holy Week and Easter will be very different this year, take some time this week to go on a spiritual pilgrimage with Jesus.

And, remember at all times, 'God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.' (Psalm 46.1, NIV)"

God bless

Gill

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Rector of St. Sampson

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