



Parish of St Peter & St Paul, Abington
- the Church in the Park -
**Welcome to our March Newsletter
2024**

Rector's Pastoral Letter

Easter Message

I wonder if you have a favourite story. A story that never get old no matter how many times you hear it. When I was a child, there were a few books that I could just keep reading day after day. And every time I read them, scenes came alive so vividly that I felt I was in the story.

One of my favourite childhood stories was the story of the elves and the shoemaker. You may have heard of it. Every time I read the story, I could see the shoemakers' shop, sense the smell of leathers and of freshly made shoes. I could see the shock on the face of the shoemaker and his wife. I could hear the giggles of the elves. Now I read it to my boys. And I can see them seeing and feeling the same way just as I did.

Some stories never get old. And then there are stories that never stop surprising you. Every time you hear them, you discover something new. For me, the story in John's gospel where Mary encounters the risen Christ is one of them.

It was early in the morning. The world was still in darkness as the shadow of the silent Saturday was still lingering. Everything and everyone in Jerusalem were asleep. Except Mary Magdalene who made her way to the garden tomb.

Picture her arriving at the tomb of the one whom had changed her entire life. Jesus had met Mary at a time when her life was in complete disrepair. She lacked joy, she lacked peace, she lacked freedom, she lacked fullness until Jesus came. And then everything changed.

She had followed him ever since. She had had been there by his side during the trials. She had been there while they whipped him to the point where he could not even be recognised. She had been there to witness his crucifixion. And now she is there in the darkness, wandering into the garden so that she can come and pay respects to him at the tomb.

As she approaches closer to the tomb, she sees the gargantuan stone that had been used to seal up the tomb has been rolled way. And in her mind in the moment, that could mean only one thing.

Robbers have come and they have stolen the body of her lord. She races away so she can tell the disciples. Two of them immediately run along with her back to the tomb. Those two go in and corroborate that indeed Jesus' body is not there. Then the two rushes away, leaving Mary alone. Typical men's response, I would say. They want to fix the situation immediately.

Long after they have gone, Mary still remains. She is weeping a river of tears. As the sun starts to rise, she looks inside the tomb and she realises that there are two angels that have come. They ask her. 'Why are you weeping?'

She doesn't even flinch by the sight of the angels. Grief has numbed her senses. The absence of Jesus whom she loved dearly left her soul hollow, her mind empty. After all those miracles and transformed live, is it where this ends? Back to where she was once again? Alone, empty, powerless, hopeless?

'I have come looking for Jesus and I cannot find him. Where is his body?' she replies, her voice shaking with sorrow and worry.

She is still weeping. She has seen two angels just now but even their presence can't take the place of Jesus, the one whom she loved. For any of us who have experienced losing someone whom we loved deeply, we can say the same thing. It doesn't matter how much success we achieved, no matter how much money we make, no matter how famous we are, even angels cannot take the place of the one whom we love, who has changed our lives.

Before the angels reply, something garners her attention. Whether it's the rustle in the foliage behind or whether it's the breeze of early morning, she senses something behind her. She turns around and she looks at someone standing there whom she supposes to be the gardener.

She doesn't know that it's Jesus. Whether it's because her vision is blurred with tears; or whether it is because Jesus is standing in front of the sun that is

just rising; Whatever the reason, she doesn't know that it's him. And again this person poses the same question: 'Woman, why are you crying?'

And she pours her heart out in so many words. But what she is saying is one thing. 'Just give me Jesus.'

And then he says her name. He says, 'Mary'.

She's only known one person to speak her name with that kind of love and kindness. And in that moment, the gospel becomes not just powerful. It becomes personal. When she hears her name, her eyes are open, she recognises that this isn't the gardener. This is Jesus Christ.

Friends, it was when Jesus called her name, that her eyes were open to recognise Jesus. The world looked the same, the Romans were still there. The cross was still there. The grave was still there. But the moment he called her name, everything changed.

And he is doing the same even now. I can tell you because I am witness to it; that Jesus Christ is still calling people's names. One by one, he calls our names. And when he does, the gospel becomes not just powerful but personal.

Like Mary, he comes to us when we feel we are left alone. Times when we cannot see God because we are struggling whether that being our grief or depression, or anxiety, or addiction, or debts, or relationship breakdown or cancer. Like Mary, we cry out 'Where is Jesus? I cannot find him!'

Hear the good news from Mary. He comes to you and calls your names even when you can't see him. In all stories of Easter, never a single occasion there is where people see the risen Jesus first and calls him. It's always Jesus who comes to them first and call their names. Only then their eyes open and they recognise the risen Christ.

Now Mary races away, becoming the very first witness of the resurrection. She is the Apostle of the Apostles, telling everyone of what her eyes have seen: Jesus has been raised from the dead.

She's our eyewitness. And you know how it is when you have an eyewitness. Think about it when you're watching the news and the reporter is giving you information. It's one thing to hear the information. But once that reporter takes the microphone and puts it in front of a person who was there; a person who saw it for themselves, all of sudden, the story becomes alive.

Mary is our eyewitness. She saw him with her own eyes. She heard his voice with her own ears. She communicates to us that Jesus raised from the grave and he is still alive today. But it's not just her. There have been and still are billions and billions of eyewitnesses who met risen Christ, who tells us the same message.

I know one of them. Her name is Hilary.

Hilary lived all her life as a follower of Jesus. A couple of weeks ago, after Sunday service, someone told me that Hilary's health was deteriorating. So I looked at my diary and thought I would see her on the coming Friday. It was a very busy week.

Halfway through the week, it was Wednesday morning. I was sitting at a meeting. And I noticed a voice kept on whispering in my heart, 'Jun, you need to see Hilary. You need to see Hilary'. The voice was so gentle and yet so clear. I looked at my diary and thought if I can finish this meeting a bit early then I can quickly see her on my way. And so I did. While I was on my way to see Hilary, the voice said to me again. 'Jun, you need to be prepared. You need to be prepared.' So I stopped by the church, got the communion and the kits for the last rites.

When I arrived, Hilary was surrounded by Hugh and her family. We prayed together for her. We laid our hands on her. We anointed her with holy oil. And we commend her to God. And by the time we finished, we could see she was very peaceful. Her breathing was calm and her eyes were closed.

And just when I was saying good bye to her, suddenly her eyes opened and she looked up. I was surprised and thought she was trying to look at me to say good bye. But then I saw a big, beautiful smile on her face. A moment ago, she was struggling to breathe and now she was smiling with her eyes open!

When I close my eyes, I can still see her smile and those eyes. But I couldn't make out what made her eyes open let alone the smile. Later that day, I received a message from Hugh, her husband. He said, 'Two minutes after you left, Hilary died peacefully'. Only then I understood. She wasn't trying to look at me. She opened her eyes because she heard. She heard the voice that called her name. The same voice that whispered in my heart. The same voice that called Mary in the garden on that first Easter Sunday morning. I am absolutely convinced that's why she smiled. Because she saw the same person that Mary saw on that Easter morning.

Friends, there are many great stories in the world. But only the stories that are true can change lives. The reason why we not only can believe but trust the Easter story is not because it's a great story but because it's real and it has changed billions and billions of lives over 2000 years. And it is still happening now just as it happened to Hilary, Hugh, their family and me. Jesus is risen and he is alive today. He is calling our name just he did on that first Easter Sunday morning. And because he lives and calls our names today, we can face tomorrow, come what may.

May we hear his voice and may the joy and hope of Easter fill our hearts today and the days to come.

With love in Christ

Jun

This month's preachers

31st March, Easter Sunday: Revd. Jun Kim

7th April, 2nd Sunday of Easter: Prester Coleman

14th April, 3rd Sunday of Easter: Liz Kelly

21st April, 4th Sunday of Easter: Bishop Andrew

28th April, 5th Sunday of Easter: Revd. Tracy Pegram

Readers and Intercessors for this month

7th April, 2nd Sunday of Easter: Readers: Fiona Crook & Mark Beesley

Intercessor: Liz Kelly

14th April, 3rd Sunday of Easter: Readers: Rhiannon George & Pester Coleman

Intercessor: Donald Loe

21st April, 4th Sunday of Easter: Readers: Sue Harrison & Matthew George

Intercessor: Jenny Parkin

28th April, 5th Sunday of Easter: Readers: TBC

Intercessor: TBC

Celebrating 800th year since the first Rector of Abington



Our 800th Anniversary logo designed by Katie

Please join us as we celebrate our 800th Anniversary. There are many events, projects and services that you can be involved and take part.

- Sermon Series Part 1

: Looking back with Gratitude, Looking forward with Hope
Hearing from old and new friends about their memories, hopes and prayers for Abington (12 May – 30 June)

- Visioning Exercise: Under the Oak

: All Wednesdays, 7.30 pm: 12 June, 26 June, 3 July, 17 July, 24 July, 31 July, led by Bishop Andrew.

Please pencil in those dates. All are invited to take part so we may discern our future together!

- **Family Fun Afternoons in the Churchyard Part 1**

: Saturday 25 May, 2 pm with Bouncy Castles
Free for all and open for all.

- Celebrating Musical Talents Part 1

Sunday 2 June, 3 pm

- **Celebration Service of Thanksgiving**

: Sun 30 June at 10 am.

Bishop Andrew Followed by full immersion baptisms in the churchyard and Celebration Lunch

- 800th Anniversary themed Fete

: Sat 6 July. **All invited to come dressed up in historical dress!**

- Parish BBQ: Saturday 3 August, 4 pm

- **Family Fun Afternoons in the Churchyard Part 2**

: Saturday 26 August, 2 pm with Lucia's tiny farm and Bouncy Castles
Free for all, open for all.

- Songs of 800 years

: Sunday 1 September, 3 pm

- **Celebration Service of Renewal of Dedication**

: Sunday 8 September, 10 am, All-Age Eucharist

Bishop Debbie Sellin, the Bishop of Peterborough will preside and preach for us. We will unveil the Icon to mark the 800th anniversary which will be commissioned and installed on the wall next to the font. There will be also confirmation and blessing of ribbons in the churchyard.

- Celebrating Musical Talents Part 2

Sunday 22 September, 3 pm

- Special Talk with Afternoon tea Part 1 (Parish Rooms)

Christians in the Middle East by Open Doors: Sat 28 Sep, 3 pm

- Sermon Series 2 : Healing and Wholeness (Oct-Nov)

: How God heals individuals and communities through his Church. How can we be an agent of God's healing as the church in the park?

- Special Talks with Afternoon tea Part 2(Parish Rooms)

Christians in the Middle East by Open Doors: Sat 28 Sep, 3pm

Christians in Ethiopia by Bishop Andrew: Sat 12 Oct, 3 pm

Christians in Korea by Jun: Sat 16 Nov, 3 pm

• **Celebration Concert (Church)**

Sunday, 1 December, 3 pm

Butterflies for 800th Anniversary

**Celebrating 800 Years:
Butterfly Art Display**

We are creating a community art display to celebrate the uniqueness and vibrancy of our church and our community.

Our vision is to cover the front of the balcony with beautiful butterflies, but we need your help to do this. We are inviting everyone to decorate a butterfly to be displayed in church during our anniversary year.

How should you decorate your butterfly? It is entirely up to you! We want this to be a reflection of you and your personality, there are no rules!

Paper butterflies, in various sizes, will be available at the back of the church. Once completed, please return to the box in the Welcomers' Corner.

St Peter & St Paul
ABINGTON

What better way to celebrate our 800 year anniversary, than by celebrating the diversity and vibrancy of our church and community with a display of beautiful butterflies, each one as unique as we are.

It's really appropriate that we are launching our project on Easter Sunday, the day we remember Jesus' marvellous resurrection and naturally think of rebirth, as butterflies are one of very few creatures that can completely transform into something completely different.

As we look at the intricate and beautiful designs of each butterfly we are reminded of the marvel of God's creation. The incredible transformation from caterpillar to butterfly is like our own spiritual journey. We leave our old selves

behind as we are transformed through our faith In Christ, growing spiritually just as a butterfly leaves its cocoon and takes flight into the world.

Our vision is to cover the front of the balcony with a fabulous display of butterflies. That's where we need you!

We want everyone (and we do mean everyone) to take part in this project by creating a butterfly. There are some examples on the pillar at the back of the church to give you some ideas, but you can create and decorate your butterfly however you want. As a guide we suggest anything up to A5 size,(or about half an A4 piece of paper).

There are some paper butterflies in the box at the back of the church in different sizes and different colours for you to decorate. Please take one, or feel free to create your own. Please also take one for friends and family to take part too. Our linked primary schools are going to be creating butterflies as are little fishes, our messy vintage group, junior church and hopefully more groups as our project continues. Ultimately we hope to have a truly fabulous display representing our whole community.

Once completed, please place butterflies in the box in the Welcomers' corner. Then over the next few months we will start to build up the display on the front of the balcony. Hopefully by the time of our patronal festival at the end of June we will have over 800 butterflies. And if we manage to completely cover the balcony then you may start to see butterflies appearing in other places in the church...

One final point, we are hoping to have hundreds and hundreds of butterflies so please understand that we cannot return butterflies.

For further information or any questions, please speak to either Susie or Melissa. Thank you.

Celebrating Baptism

It was a joy to share the moment of Loui's baptism this Easter Sunday. Many congratulations Loui! May God bless you and always guide you with his marvelous light!

If you would like to enquire about baptism, please do speak with Revd. Jun.

News from Abington Park View Care Home

Liz, accompanied by Jan, Jackie and Pat, led a Songs of Praise service on 6th March. We listened to the story of the Lost Sheep from St Luke's gospel. This was illustrated by a collection of small sheep models that Liz had collected on holidays in a variety of places, and we found the 'lost sheep' hiding in the arm of Shirley's chair! We also told the story of how Jesus was tempted by the devil when he spent forty days in the wilderness. Fourteen residents and family members, and friends enjoyed singing some favourite hymns, including 'Amazing Grace.'



Then on 20th March, Tracy celebrated the Eucharist for Lent. Liz and Jackie were there to help. In all, eighteen people received communion.



Our next visits are on 3rd April for a Songs of Praise celebration of Easter and 17th April for our next Messy Vintage service.

Abington Pastoral Team

The Pastoral Team continues to support parishioners through regular telephone calls, prayer, and pastoral visits. Home Communion is available too. If you, or anyone you know, would like someone from the pastoral team to get in touch, please contact Liz Kelly, Lay Pastoral Minister and Anna Chaplain. Her contact details are lizmk@outlook.com and telephone 01604 636947 or 07745 604591. We offer a listening ear, someone to pray with, bereavement support, or a friendly visit. Thank you all for your prayers for the Pastoral Team, and for the staff and residents of Abington Park View and St Christopher's Care Homes.

Lent Lunches

Thank you so much to all those who contributed to and supported Lent lunches. We enjoyed time together to share some lovely selection of soups as well as prayers and fellowship.



Sharing the Easter Story, Rev.Tracy (Curate)

I consider it an essential part of my role to tell people about Jesus, and to share the Easter story. This is a busy time of year so I was thankful to be given a 'morning off' and let the children of Bridgewater Primary School step in and tell the Easter story to the many parents, who gathered to see Year 5's Easter Assembly.

The children acted and sang the Easter story with talent and passion, and I found myself feeling quite emotional! The children had been preparing for over four weeks, learning lines, songs and actions, and the experience had been an enjoyable one, judging from the smiles on the children's faces. Parents were listening, engaging, and like me, were moved by the story – a story which changed the world, and is continuing to change the world today.

We visit Bridgewater Primary School on a regular basis, taking assemblies or giving short talks in classes. I particularly enjoy inviting the children to ask questions – a risk, but one that brings great reward! We also enjoy visiting Abington Vale Primary School, and I recently had the privilege of sharing the Easter story with the children there. Revd. Jun has also been busy visiting Weston Favell Primary School, taking assemblies on a number of themes.

We can worry that our society today cares little for religion; that we are becoming a nation without faith, but my experience within our primary schools shows me how treasured Christian heritage is. We might not see these children in church, we might never get to meet their parents, but thanks to the work happening in primary schools, the Christian message is being told, being shared. Seeds are being planted. Perhaps this Easter, we might pray for school children, and their families, that the Easter story will be heard, remembered, and find good soil in which to grow.

Readers and Intercessors

The new rota for readers and intercessors will run from the 28th of April. If anyone would like to be added to the list of people who read the lessons and/or lead the intercessions please let Alison Barnes know, alison.barnes41@ntlworld.com or speak to her. Everyone currently on the list will be rolled forward. Thank you.

The Northampton Philharmonic Choir

The Northampton Philharmonic Choir's next concert will take place on Saturday 22nd June. More information will be available nearer the date.

<https://www.northamptonphilharmonicchoir.co.uk/>

[Draft Minutes from the last PCC Meeting](#)

Please click the title above to access the link.

Zoom Compline

This is a weekly service at 7.00pm on Tuesdays. In case you don't know, Compline is a quiet, reflective service at the end of the day and includes an open prayer time, so we are able to continue to support one another. The joining details are: Meeting I.D. 815 8020 8528. Passcode 409450 Please talk to Liz Kelly if you want to know more about this and to receive a weekly invitation by email, which enables one-click joining. Her contact details are: lizmk@outlook.com or telephone on 07745 604591.
