

Hello Everyone!

### **Challenging times**

I think we will all agree that it was the strangest Easter in our lifetime. Even those who lived in the darkest years of the Second World War will probably agree with that. In a sense, as we look out of our window on a sunny, spring day, it all seems unreal – and yet it is all true. I particularly liked the Queen's words in her Easter Day broadcast:

This year, Easter will be different for many of us, but by keeping apart we keep others safe. But Easter isn't cancelled; indeed, we need Easter as much as ever. The discovery of the risen Christ on the first Easter Day gave his followers new hope and fresh purpose, and we can all take heart from this. We know that Coronavirus will not overcome us. As dark as death can be – particularly for those suffering with grief – light and life are greater. May the living flame of the Easter hope be a steady guide as we face the future.

A colleague of mine sent an Easter reflection to me. The scripture passage was the two disciples who walked with Jesus on the Emmaus Road (Luke 24:13-35) and my friend's reflection likened the journey to putting together the pieces of jigsaw puzzle. Unlike many of our members, I don't like jigsaw puzzles much but I do know that there is a well-trying method of doing them – get the corners, the sides and the whole perimeter complete and then start on the various bits in the middle. Some parts (green for grass and blue for sky if it is that kind of picture) are easier to look for, while others remain pretty difficult, even if there is a picture on top of the box. Little by little, the picture starts to come and in the right places the pieces start to make sense.

The resurrection narratives in the Gospels show that the disciples struggled to come to terms with the resurrection. They, like us, discovered that there are things about life and faith which take a while to make sense. Just as you need to persevere when making a jigsaw, so we need to persevere in our journey of following Jesus, even when, indeed especially when, the pieces don't fall neatly into place. The two disciples journeying home from Jerusalem had so many thoughts to contend with. We hear a little about those as their conversation with Jesus unfolds. It's difficult to know why they were kept from recognising Jesus – perhaps because they would have been scared to death! Instead, the fact that they had made the journey with the risen Lord gradually dawned on them and was sealed as Jesus said grace before the simple supper in their home.

When making a jigsaw, there can be times when discovering a few important pieces help you to make a significant breakthrough. The resurrection of Jesus is a significant breakthrough. Believing that Jesus is alive doesn't bring all the pieces into the picture just yet; there are other pieces (questions in our lives) that still need to be found. Making sense of the Coronavirus and finding it a place in the big picture is something we might not be able to do for a while – perhaps not even in our lifetime – but that does not mean when things seem confusing that everything is ultimately meaningless.

There have been plenty of things in my life and in my ministry, especially standing alongside others in their suffering and losses, which I have not understood. That is why it is important to me to say that the Christian faith isn't about knowing the answers to everything, it is believing some things are true despite not knowing the answers to everything. There's a simple song in *Mission Praise* by Keith Matten and I find the words very helpful.

I believe in Jesus / I believe he is the Son of God  
I believe he died and rose again / I believe he paid for us all

The second verse is very similar but it simply affirms:

I believe in you Lord / I believe you are the Son of God,  
I believe you died and rose again / I believe you paid for us all.

### **Lockdown**

Once again, the coronavirus pandemic means that all activities at the church are suspended for the foreseeable future. It is important that you know that you are not alone – Jenny continues to work from her own home (see the temporary number which is answered as usual during office hours) and we can still be contacted in the same way. We are sending regular information to our church community. If you are getting this by regular post and you have an email address and would like to receive things by email instead, please contact Jenny on the office number.

### **We continue to pray together**

Everyone is invited to share in a few minutes of prayer at 7.00 am and/or 7.00 pm each day. If you would like to put a candle (take care with naked flames) or a light in your window as you pray that is also a witness to others. God hears our prayers so we must trust him to respond to us in his love and grace. Irene and I are grateful for the encouragement that we have received from members and friends as we have been in touch with you.

God bless

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'John'.

**John Haley**  
**Minister**