Early April

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St John’s United Reformed Church
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NEWSLETTER FROM ST JOHN'S URC

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Minister’s Letter

Easter thoughts

I am well aware that the topic of the death and resurrection of Jesus which we celebrate especially around Easter is the one of those topics that shows the real and ever increasing gap between Christians and the rest of society.

For Christians, the crucifixion and resurrection are the pivotal events that define what and who we are. For the rest of society, whether secular, atheist, or adherent to another religion, the ‘Easter event’ (the death and resurrection) at best leaves them indifferent or bemused, at worse totally baffled or hostile.

Easter is the one event that truly separates Christianity from other philosophies and religions.

If Jesus was just a wise teacher (and he was) there are plenty of other good teachers and philosophers to listen to, discuss or follow. Some of them are better teachers and some worse, and we could happily spend our time comparing the pithy saying of the better ones. We could compare the wisdom of The Buddha, Mohammad and Jesus and we would be better people for it.

If Jesus was just a good man (and he was) there are plenty of biographies of inspiring lives available that we could read and films that we could watch. From humble people to the greats of history and faith, discovering what qualities these men and women possessed can be inspirational and motivational.

If Jesus was just a radical, challenging the status quo (and he was) we could look at him as well as other radicals and even revolutionaries and discover many of the areas of human society that contain oppression and disintegration. We could analyse and try to transform society into a more just and caring civilisation.

These are all good and they are facets of Jesus as revealed in the bible. But it is Easter that puts Jesus in a category of his own.

It’s not that Jesus died, or even the method of his death, that is unusual. All people die, and there have been ten of thousands of crucifixions and other inhumane methods of executions. What separates Jesus’ death from every one of the wise teachers, good people and radicals is that his death was transformed by his resurrection a few days later. The resurrection shows that Jesus was exceptional in the true sense of the word; that he was both human and God.

We have a profound choice as we remember and celebrate this Easter. Are we remembering just a good man, wise teacher and uncomfortable gadfly? Or is it a more profound event?

Do we remember the Man who is God, and the God who lived and died for us, and is with us still?

David
Church Secretary’s Notes

What extraordinary times! People compare them to war time but really it’s completely different. At least then people could meet together for companionship, encouragement, sharing resources and raising each others spirits. People went to cinemas, worked in large groups in factories or of course were in the forces (all be it being shouted at all the time!) Not that I was there of course! But now we have to keep away from each other. True there’s email and WhatsApp but they are far from a good hand-shake or cuddle!

I miss my chats/criticisms of ITFC with Sylvia, my discussions on films with Maggie & Doug, my talks with Roger about farm life and sharing stories of when he knew my Dad as a farm labourer….I could go on.

By now I expect you’ve been contacted by an Elder to see how you are getting on. Please feel free to contact them if you have any problems or just need to talk. If you can’t get through you can always ring me.

Let’s keep in touch and we can all come through this stronger and I’ll soon be saying ‘Welcome to our service which is being led by…….’

Adrian

TREASURER’S REPORT

You are thanked for the following:

Offerings in February totalling £1,798.33 Communion Fund donations for the R N L I of £70.40.

During this difficult time, we would be glad if you could stockpile your regular giving - envelopes / offerings and to let us have them as and when convenient to you.

Should anyone wish to consider making their regular donations by standing order, or bank transfer, please ask us and we will advise.

Please ensure that any cheques are made out to St Johns United Reformed Church - (in full) as required by our Bankers.

As you will all appreciate, with all our rental bookings ceased for an indefinite time, particularly the Pre-School, this will be having a major effect on our income.

Mary Aldous and Richard Wallace

Sunday (5th April) is Palm Sunday

For the family together at home or to share over private video/phone call

A Gathering prayer to say together

Jesus, our King, we offer you the praise of our hands, (wave hands)

we offer you the praise of our voices, (shout ‘Hosanna!’)

we offer you the praise of our feet, (stamp feet)

we offer you the praise of our minds and our hearts. (place hands on hearts)

Hosanna to the Son of David!

Amen
A Trip to the Seaside
You guess where!
Answers last page
Some news from Brian and Angie S

Brian and Angie are currently in the UK. They came across from Tanzania last month and are in Norfolk, caring for Angie's parents. They are unsure when and how they will be able to return to Tanzania. The virus is beginning to affect Tanzania also. Training institutions are closed and hospital services, such as Brian's eye care work, are likely to be very limited. They send their love and best wishes.

Juliette broke her wrist 2 weeks ago and is finding life difficult. She is unable to get upstairs. Michael G and Dennis G have lost their sister and sister-in-law in recent weeks. Michael G has had a cataract operation and is making good progress.

Advance

Whilst we are in these unusual circumstances Advance has a role to support communication between members and friends.

As the online editor I recognise difficulties we face. Not everybody associated with St John’s can access the internet which in turn means they cannot let us know what their stories are, nor can they read what others’ stories there are in Advance. Additionally, does any of us know what we should or need to share?

I will always act with editorial independence and have the Elders’ support and permission to do so.

I need to ask you to help make Advance useful by finding ways to overcome the issues.

- You need to provide the content, your own and others you are in touch with, and those who cannot access the internet.

- You need to think of ways you can share the content - safely - with those who cannot access the internet

Please note that given sufficient time I can be creative with what you do find to tell others by using your pictures, finding pictures to suit - or making drawings.

Some things may be more suitable for the website which as you know is a source of streaming of David’s Weekly Services, so sounds, pictures, video, cartoons are possibilities.

Thought for the day

We will often find compensation if we think more of what life has given us and less about what life has taken away.

(William Barclay)