

## Weekly Newsletter (59)

by and for the Christ Church and Paghams URC families

18<sup>th</sup> April 2021

### Musings from the Manse

Dear Friends,

When I wrote last week's Newsletter and recorded the service for last Sunday we were all oblivious to the sad events of Friday 9<sup>th</sup> April. The death of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, was a high profile, attention grabbing, piece of news which will have us all, in future years, remembering where we were when we heard the announcement. The coverage on our TV screens and radio stations might have been a bit over the top for many, judging by the number of complaints to the BBC, but I found it fascinating to learn just a little of the man behind the woman who is our Queen. Throughout all of my life Prince Philip has been there in the background and - like all who mourn loved ones - his death may have been expected at some point, but it is still a shock when it happens.



Of course, Queen Elizabeth and her family will be subject to the same restrictions that we've all had to contend with over the past pandemic year; so, in many ways, this 'royal' funeral will be like no other. Even so, the same hope is there, the hope that is conveyed to all who are saying goodbye to someone they love.

In the words of Paul Woolley, (CEO of L.I.C.C.), writing today –

*'We all experience the valley of the shadow of death, and, in the context of the global pandemic, that valley has seemed deeper and, perhaps, nearer during the past year. I am certainly not alone in having experienced the anguish, pain, and abandonment of death during lockdown.*

*In view of all this, declaring 'I believe in the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting' is an act of defiance and subversion. In light of Jesus, his life, death, and resurrection, everything changes. Our final enemy is destroyed. We look forward to not only life-after-death ('sleeping in Christ', 'resting in peace'), but, more significantly, to life-after-life-after-death: rising in glory, the resurrection of the body, and a new creation.*

*The hope that God, through Jesus, will raise those who have fallen asleep should comfort us as we deal with the pain of death. But, it should also make a tangible difference to the way that we live on earth, right here, right now, in the spectacular-ordinary of our everyday lives: In our work to produce things that are good and of service, in our activism, in our personal relationships, and in our leisure time, we live in light of the new age begun in Jesus, risen and exalted. We live to bring the life of heaven to earth.*

*Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.'*

Those, who are able to watch the funeral of Prince Philip, will, perhaps, also be remembering the loss of their own loved ones - whether that loss has occurred during the Covid pandemic or further back in time. We are able to empathise with the Royal Family because we too have suffered our own losses – yet, I believe, we can be comforted by the words of a prayer I use when officiating at a funeral....

*'Almighty God, you have bound together all your people, in heaven and on earth, in one holy fellowship: let not our thoughts linger here but help us to truly believe that ..... has made a new beginning, with your mercy and your love surrounding [him/her]. Strengthened by this assurance, may we return to the duties which await us in the world, resolved to be more faithful to you and more helpful to one another, for the sake of those no longer with us upon earth.*

*Amen'.*

Yours in Christ, Helen <><

### Word for today - Luke 24: 36b-48

'Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.'"

Luke 24: 45-48

## Meditation of Joanna, a companion of the disciples

How did we not see it before? How could we have missed what was staring us in the face?

It's a puzzle to me, to us all, but that's the way it was.

When they arrested Jesus in the garden, dragged him before Pilate; when they nailed him to that cross and sealed him in a tomb; we'd believed that was it - the dream over, the adventure at an end. After all, we saw he was dead with our own eyes, watched him draw his last breath, so there could be no denying it, no clutching at straws.

We wanted to - heaven knows! But what was the point of pretending there was hope, when it was all too clear there was none?

So, we'd simply given in to sorrow - a paralysing, consuming grief - and we'd be wrestling with that now, had nothing changed. But change it did, wonderfully, gloriously – death defeated, the Lord risen!

He's been with us again today, laughing, smiling, eating in our presence, unmistakably alive – and, as he opened the Scriptures to us - just as he'd done earlier for our friends on the Emmaus Road - the truth suddenly became obvious, leaping out at us from the page.

It was as he'd said: The Messiah must suffer and rise from the dead on the third day – the empty tomb not the undoing of some awful catastrophe but part of God's plan - the fulfilment of his purpose of old.

We hadn't seen it before, and, no doubt, there's much we still don't see; but we know one thing now for sure: that he's constantly with us, leading us to a greater understanding of truth and richer experience of his love - each day a new beginning through his resurrection life.

## Prayer

Loving God,

we have begun to understand the miracle of Easter,  
but so much escapes us;  
we have grasped a little of your resurrection power,  
but have far more still to learn.

We read the Scriptures,  
but too often we do not see what's there before us.  
We declare our faith,  
but our commitment is limited.

Open our eyes,  
our minds  
and our hearts to the living Christ,  
so that we may know the truth more fully  
and celebrate each day the new life you have won for us through him.  
Amen.

*adapted from 'A most amazing Man' by Nick Fawcett*

## Gathered for Prayer....

Gathered for Prayer continues to meet at **9 am and 7pm** each Wednesday. All are welcome!  
Here's the link....

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5742722693?pwd=R3BEQ3pPVOZJNndRWVVKwWdvand6QT09>

Meeting ID: 574 272 2693 Passcode: xsX5UM

## Other news....

**HOPE Together, Evangelical Alliance and Churches Together in England** are presenting an online webinar called 'Edging into Hybrid Church', on the **22<sup>nd</sup> April 2 – 3:30 pm**. On the CTE website is says:

*'Is your church leadership wondering how to balance in-person worship and online church?.....The main aim of the event is to encourage and practically equip Church leaders. We will look at the opportunities provided by digital Church and share some lessons learned from a Church in the United States who has been doing this for more than ten years....This webinar will cater for those churches who haven't yet dipped a toe in the digital waters and those who are quite far down the road.'*

**If you are interested, you can book your place on the 'Churches Together in England' website!**

## 'Thy Kingdom Come' – 13<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2021

For those that are unaware of this movement - *'Thy Kingdom Come'* is a global prayer movement that invites Christians around the world to pray from Ascension to Pentecost for more people to come to know Jesus.

Since its start in May 2016, God has grown Thy Kingdom Come from a dream of possibility into a movement. Christians from 172 countries have taken part in praying *'Come Holy Spirit'*, so that friends and family, neighbours and colleagues might come to faith in Jesus Christ.

This praying together has been across our diversity and differences as every person, household and church are encouraged to pray in their own way. According to our annual survey findings, an astonishing percentage of people said they were praying for family and friends to come to faith in Jesus and a significant number of people join in for the first time; we recognise there is much more we can do together to help *'Thy Kingdom Come'* be fully in the lifeblood of the Church.'

It was agreed by Trustees and Elders that Christ Church would support this initiative and encourage all to take part. To this end a resource has been purchased and will be distributed by Pastoral Visitors over the coming days.

**The 'Novena'**, (the resource coming to you), is a booklet containing nine days of prayer that usually encourages us to pray with a particular intention. Praying for other people is known as a prayer of intercession. *'Our nine days of prayer open and close with reflections for Ascension Day and Pentecost Sunday to help you prepare and give thanks to God.'*

We have also been fortunate to secure some free resources - 50 Prayer Journals and 50 Digital Family Prayer Maps - which are available to anyone to have or to give to friends and family. If you'd like one, please contact your pastoral visitor.

## Re-opening Christ Church – 23rd May

Following discussions at both Trustee and Elders meetings, it has been agreed that Christ Church will be open for in-person worship on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May. This will be Pentecost Sunday and, perhaps, a fitting Sunday of celebration in which to gather once more.

Until we have indications to the contrary about restrictions on numbers of worshippers allowed, we will still operate a system of 'booking in' for a service, as happened last year – so you will need to contact Mary Quiney, (see below)\*, in order to reserve your place and avoid disappointment. Masks will still need to be worn and congregational singing avoided. As disappointing as this may be, we need to make sure that we keep everyone safe and cared for. It is hoped that services will be able to be recorded and copies made available for viewing or - if our technology allows - that services will be live-streamed.

We do appreciate that some may be apprehensive about returning to church, so please speak to your pastoral visitor if you have concerns or questions and we will do our best to allay any fears you may have.

Newsletters will continue for those unable to access the various modes of technology, so that you will have at least some resource to reflect upon each week.

It is hoped that after 21<sup>st</sup> June, when lockdown is supposed to end, things will be a little freer and we will be able to return to some sort of normality in our worship and in the building – so please bear with us and we all adjust to what the future may look like.

Thankyou – Helen <><

\*The easiest way to book a place at a service is to **click 'Reply' to an email** that is sent with a newsletter.

Otherwise, email: **[chichristchurch@gmail.com](mailto:chichristchurch@gmail.com)** or phone the Church Office phone **01243 531594** and leave a message on the answerphone. **Please supply the following information:**

*Date of service you wish to book*

*Your name and the names of anyone else in your household or bubble that you are also booking for*

*Any seating requirement – eg front, back or side*

### **I am now taking bookings for the services on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> May.**

Both are Family Worship and the minister will be the Rev'd Helen.

As services will be recorded or live streamed and, therefore, available on Youtube it will be assumed that – by booking - you give appropriate permission on behalf of yourself and any others in your 'bubble' including any minors you are responsible for -

If there are not enough places for all who wish to come, please be aware that decisions will be made based on how many services you have already attended during the pandemic and, thereafter, on the date and time of your booking.

Oxfam bookshop, East Street,  
is back to serve you.

Terry and his son Luke are ready  
to pick up books from you  
[terrytimblick@gmail.com](mailto:terrytimblick@gmail.com)

(537812)