

Reflection for Easter Sunday

As I sit here today I have fond memories of Easter Sunday at church as a child in the 1950s and 1960s. The church was packed out; everybody went as it was a time for the whole parish to celebrate. Every year my mum had to have a new hat for the occasion! (She always wore a hat to church). This Easter Sunday is so very different to any I have ever known. No church, no big family gathering, no big celebrations.

Many of us have had to explore new ways of keeping in touch with friends and family, with more emails and phone calls; What's App and Zoom meetings; 'e' greetings cards to name but a few. My sister had a Zoom birthday quiz, put on by the staff of her school, our photo club has continued with Zoom meetings enabling us to keep in touch with each other. But for some, modern technology is too much, for them we need to be aware that a phone call now and again is so important. It's very hard not being with loved ones at this time but perhaps we are actually keeping in touch more now than when we are all busy with our day to day lives in more normal times.

Worship has been very different. Many have shared services on the radio and television. This morning I shared in the Easter service at Sarah's vineyard church. Despite everyone worshipping from their own homes it was a real family service. There were messages and tasks for the children and young people to do, family worship and prayer. They also shared a video with clips showing many members of the congregation offering Easter greetings to everyone. It was a really lovely way of keeping in touch with their church family.

As we worshipped I was very much reminded of people from the early church, right through to today, who have had no choice but to worship in hiding, on their own, because of the fear of persecution. Without their determination and resilience we would not be the worldwide church that we are today. As I prayed, I thought of all the people throughout the world, all praying in their own homes, celebrating the miracle that is Easter. And I really felt the power of being part of such a big, worldwide family of Christians.

But it has also been an amazing opportunity to reflect on the true meaning of Easter. After the death of Jesus on Good Friday, his followers must have felt totally bereft, mourning their loss, but having to stay in hiding. Because of the timing of the Passover, they had been unable to lay Him to rest properly. It was heartbreaking for the disciples and the women in Jesus life.

According to the Gospel of Matthew, at the very first opportunity the next day, Mary Magdalene and Mary went to the tomb to lay Him to rest properly, only to find the stone rolled away. The Angel of the Lord gave them the Good News that Jesus had risen from the dead. He had told them that He would rise again, but until that moment they had not believed Him.

Thousands of years later, we have, during very different circumstances, followed the journey they walked during Holy Week. We have mourned with them on Good Friday and felt bereft on Easter Saturday. And now we can celebrate the Good News of our Risen Lord. In his death and resurrection we have the sure and certain hope of our own redemption.

Alleluia, He is Risen.