26 April 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

How are you? I hope you are not feeling too isolated and lonely or frustrated and fed up. Please do phone us if you are “at the end of your tether” and need someone to talk to or need some help.

As I write, we still don’t know for how much longer this lockdown will last or how it will be eased. Our politicians certainly need our prayers as they try to make decisions that are right for the health of the nation (and the capacity of the NHS) as well as trying to get the economy working again. These sorts of decisions feel like “You’ll be damned if you do and you’ll be damned if you don’t.” I know of at least two members of our congregations who are working in intensive Care or on wards with patients with Covid-19. Please pray for them and their families. People who cannot be with loved ones who are dying desperately need our prayers as well.

Life is always uncertain: we try our best to keep certainty alive but the reality is that we can only live one day at a time and none of us knows what tomorrow will bring. Today’s Gospel reading for the eucharist re-told the story of two disciples on their way to Emmaus on the first Easter Day. (Luke 24: 13-35.) Those disciples were bereaved and sad but were also perplexed because of what some of the women had told them about seeing Jesus alive. Unrecognisable to those two disciples, Jesus came alongside them as they walked. They poured out to Jesus all that had happened and shared their perplexity with him. It wasn’t until they shared supper with him that they recognised it was Jesus as he broke the bread. The psalmist wrote (in Ps 139), “Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there your hand shall hold me fast.” Jesus’s death and resurrection didn’t separate him from those disciples. Jesus- Emmanuel- God with us – is ***always*** with us. We are not separated from Jesus at this current time. How are you meeting Jesus/God during the lockdown? How is your prayer life? Personally, I find I have more time to pray. But I am not juggling trying to work and home-school children. Even in those situations, it might be “prayer on the run” or snatched prayer in those minute spaces in your day. Grab those gaps and remember Jesus is with you.

75 years ago, life was uncertain. World War 2 was still raging; many, many people had been killed; many millions were homeless and there were between 7-11 million displaced people/refugees in Europe. On 8 May 2020, we would have been celebrating the 75th anniversary of VE Day. Many of us (like me) weren’t alive 75 years ago, but I know that some of you were and that you may have vivid memories of what you did on VE Day 1945. We would love to hear about your memories and put them on the Parish website and in the Parish News. Please would you send them to us? (to parishnews@solihullparish.org.uk and to the Parish office office1@solihullparish.org.uk or hand- written/typed to me at 45 Park Avenue, Solihull, B91 3EJ.)

Lastly, as many of you know Linda Hicks and I are living in uncertain times. Both of us have been diagnosed with breast cancer. Linda will have surgery on 5 May. I have yet to hear when my surgery date will be. Thank you so much to those of you who have been praying for us, who have sent us cards and flowers and prayers. We are extremely grateful. As I have said to colleagues, I will continue to work until I have to go into hospital, so please don’t hesitate to contact me if you need assistance or help or if you need to tell me something. I have not disappeared anywhere!

May God continue to bless you all and may you feel Jesus close to you.

With love and prayers,

Jane Kenchington