

# Witney Congregational Church

## R CROSS A D S

*Witney Congregational Church is a crossroads where we:*

*meet God in worship*

*meet one another in friendship*

*meet our community and world with the love of Jesus*



# WHAT'S ON GUIDE

Witney Congregational Church offer a whole range of activities through which we seek to Worship, Work and Witness to the Lord Jesus Christ in this community today.

Further information can be obtained from the Church Administrator, Minister, Church Secretary or the leaders of the particular activities who are listed at the back of this magazine.

## WORSHIP

Daily Worship	9.30 am	Mon-Fri	Short time of Prayer and Reading
Saturday Praise	11.00 am	1 <sup>st</sup> Saturday of the month	
Sunday Services	10.30 am		
	6.00 pm	1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month	

Communion is held twice during the month at the first Sunday evening and third Sunday morning services

## PRAYER

The Church is open each morning for Prayer

## STUDY & FELLOWSHIP

Thursday	2.30pm	Homes (2 <sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month)
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## YOUTH ACTIVITIES

Sunday	10.30 am	Crèche, Noah's Ark & The K.I.C.K. on Sundays
Monday	10.00 am	Noah's Ark – Infant Group for babies and pre-school children
Friday	6.00pm	www. – Twice a month
	7.00 pm	Y4J – Twice a month

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

Tuesday	Monthly	Deacon's Meeting
	Bi-Monthly	Church Meeting
Thursday	10.00 am	Rest & Chat (Coffee/Tea available)
Saturday	10.30 am	Coffee Morning

## SUNDAY LINK

Weekly bulletin for all Christians providing stimulating thought along with news and notices concerning our Church

## WITNEY ECUMENICAL YOUTH TRUST (BASE 33)

4 Welch Way (Entrance – High Street) ☎ 01993 774402  
01993 864853 (Office)

## St ANDREW'S BOOKSHOP

☎ 01993 709429  
Opening Hours: Monday – Saturday 09.00 am – 5.00 pm

## CHURCH WEBSITE

For further information, please visit our website:

[www.witneycongregational.org.uk](http://www.witneycongregational.org.uk)



If you are reading this on the day it was published, Easter Sunday, or indeed after this date, we are at the greatest of all Christian feasts in commemoration of the resurrection of Christ. So let us not forget the magnitude of Christ's sacrifice made for us all on the cross.



The month of May will also enable us to live out the love of Christ in service to the world by means of Christian Aid Week which runs from 10<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup>. You are encouraged to support this in whatever way your personal circumstances may permit.

Also in May, we still have much to look forward to in the way of two public holidays during the month – the 4<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup>

Turning now to those who have contributed to this edition; alongside the standard pages, Marjorie Lee asks – Do you know what I have done to you?; Coming up towards the General Election, there is an article on What do we want from our parliament?; At this Easter time there is an article entitled: Why Easter will never go away; Susan Wass gives us a recipe for happiness; and poems have been submitted by Val Obriain and Maureen Miles, to name but a few.

Many thanks for those who have contributed for this edition, but would encourage anyone to consider submitting article(s) for the next edition by either:  
E-mail:

terrypowlesland@uwclub.net

jacquipowlesland@uwclub.net

or, just plainly written on paper, which can be typed up.

The next **summer** edition, covering June, July & August, is due on Sunday **31<sup>st</sup> May**

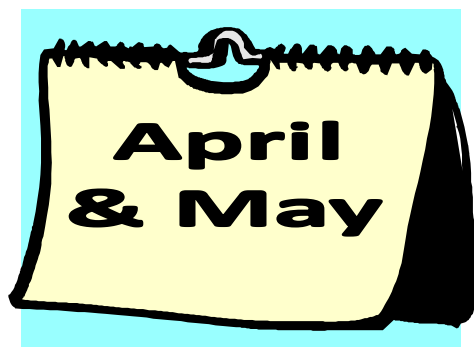
Your Editor



This will be a busy week for our band of collectors, so if anyone has time to help deliver and/or collect envelopes alongside a regular collector please see Susan Wass TODAY!!

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### Daily Prayer Time:

Mon-Fri 9.30 am

### Services

10.30 am weekly & 6.00pm on first Sunday of the month and will normally be led by Rev Jason Boyd unless advised below

### April

5 <sup>th</sup>	6.20	Dawn Service at Congregational Church garden	
	8.00	Communion	
	8.45	Breakfast	
	10.30	All-Age Worship	Communion
12 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Judi Holloway	
19 <sup>th</sup>	am	Karen Brusch	Communion
26 <sup>th</sup>	am	Morning Worship	

### May

2 <sup>nd</sup>		Saturday praise	11.00am
3 <sup>rd</sup>	am	Morning Worship	
	pm	Evening Worship	
10 <sup>th</sup>	am	Morning Worship	
17 <sup>th</sup>	am	Morning Worship	Communion
24 <sup>th</sup>	am	Morning Worship	
31 <sup>st</sup>	am	Morning Worship	
	pm	Madley Park Residential Home	

### June

6 <sup>th</sup>		Messy Church	
7 <sup>th</sup>	am	Café Church	
	pm	Evening Worship	

The following events are given for your particular attention:

### April

9 <sup>th</sup>	Fellowship Group	2.30pm	9 Pensclose
11 <sup>th</sup>	Prayer Chain meeting	9.15am	
17 <sup>th</sup>	Y4J	7.00pm	
24 <sup>th</sup>	www.	6.00pm	

### May

1 <sup>st</sup>	Y4J	7.00pm	
5 <sup>th</sup>	Lite Bite piece of the Word	12.15 for 12.30	
	Deacon's meeting	7.30pm	
7 <sup>th</sup>	Lyfe Group Bible Study	7.30pm	
9 <sup>th</sup>	Prayer Chain meeting	9.15am	
	CF National Assembly at Peterborough		
11 <sup>th</sup>	CTiW Council meeting & AGM	7.30pm	
14 <sup>th</sup>	Fellowship Group	2.30pm	7 Riverside Gardens
	Lyfe Group Bible Study	7.30pm	
15 <sup>th</sup>	Y4J	7.00pm	
17 <sup>th</sup>	Church Meeting – After Sunday morning worship		
21 <sup>st</sup>	Lyfe Group Bible Study	7.30pm	
22 <sup>nd</sup>	www.	6.00pm	

## June

2 <sup>nd</sup>	Lite Bite piece of the Word	12.15 for 12.30
	Deacon's meeting	7.30pm
4 <sup>th</sup>	Lyfe Group Bible Study	7.30pm

## ROTAS

### WELCOMING TEAM

<b>Apr</b>	05	Viviane Boyd & Cecily Lau
	12	Pip & Beryl Cartwright
	19	Robert McBride & Lesley Barter
	26	Nanna Blackman & Theo Howells
<b>May</b>	03	Susan Wass & Joan Currie
	10	Pat Smith & Claire Woodward
	17	Mel Knapton & Irene St Clair
	24	Viviane Boyd & Cecily Lau
	31	Pip & Beryl Cartwright
<b>June</b>	07	Robert McBride & Lesley Barter



### COMMUNION

<b>Apr</b>	05 am	Lesley Barter & Beryl Cartwright
		Susan Wass & Norline Martin
		Preparation Beryl Cartwright
	19 am	Judi Holloway & Chris Esapa
<b>May</b>		Jacqui Powlesland & Susan Wass
		Preparation Rita Hayes
	03 pm	Lesley Barter
		Preparation Lesley Barter
	17 am	Beryl Cartwright & Norline Martin
		Jacqui Powlesland & Chris Esapa
<b>June</b>		Preparation Mel Knapton
	07 pm	Jacqui Powlesland
		Preparation Jacqui Powlesland



### FLOWERS

<b>Apr</b>	05	Easter
	12	Judi Holloway
	19	Val Obriain
	26	Beryl Cartwright
<b>May</b>	03	Rita Hayes
	10	Joan Currie
	17	Jacqui Powlesland
	24	Sonya Boyd
	31	Judi Holloway
<b>June</b>	07	Val Obriain



### COFFEE

<b>Apr</b>	05	Mel Knapton & Clare Woodward
	12	Viviane Boyd & Hilary Pratley
	19	Sue Birdseye & Irene St Clair
	26	Susan Wass & Judith Bungey
<b>May</b>	03	Mel Knapton & Clare Woodward
	10	Viviane Boyd & Hilary Pratley
	17	Sue Birdseye & Irene St Clair





	24	Susan Wass & Judith Bungey
	31	Mel Knapton & Clare Woodward
<b>June</b>	07	Café Church

#### REST & CHAT

<b>Apr</b>	09	Pat Smith
	16	Jean Stanley, Marina Bowerman & Irene St Clair
	23	Robert McBride
	30	Beryl Cartwright & Stephen Hopwood
<b>May</b>	07	Joan Currie & Iris Lindsay
	14	Pat Smith
	21	Jean Stanley, Marina Bowerman & Irene St Clair
	28	Robert McBride
<b>June</b>	04	Beryl Cartwright & Stephen Hopwood



Every effort has been made on the rota list to meet individual circumstances. However, please change with someone else if the dates are not convenient for you

<b>Apr</b>	26	Sonya Boyd
		Simon Bruschi
		Joyce Kearsey
		Seren St Clair
	28	Jo Matthews



<b>May</b>	16	Jean Stanley
	21	Terry Powlesland
	24	Pip Cartwright
	25	Bill Elliot
	30	Robert McBride
		Pat Smith


The following poem, author unknown, has been extracted from Human Writes magazine, and has been submitted by Val Obriain, and is entitled:

#### To each his own

I cannot change the way I am  
 I never really try  
 God made me different and unique  
 I never ask Him why  
 If I appear peculiar  
 There's nothing I can do  
 You must accept me as I am  
 As I've accepted you

God made a casting of each life  
 Then threw the mould away  
 Each child is different than the rest  
 Unlike as night from day  
 So often we will criticise  
 The things that others do  
 But, do you know they do not think  
 The same as me and you

So, God in all His wisdom  
 Who knows us all by name  
 He didn't want us to be bored  
 That's why we're not the same



The Combined Choirs of  
**LOWER WINDRUSH CHORAL SOCIETY**  
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**PARRY** I Was Glad

**Saturday 23 May 2015 at 6.00 pm**  
**St Mary's Church, Witney**  
 Conductor: Terry McNamara  
 Organist: Frances Rumsey

Tickets £10.00 each available on the door or  
 from Rapture, Woolgate, Witney and  
 St Andrew's Bookshop, High Street, Witney

Enquiries: 01993 773283

[www.lowerwindrush.co.uk](http://www.lowerwindrush.co.uk)  
 Registered Charity No: 1152661

## Pastor's Paper

“Christ is risen! Hallelujah! He is risen indeed.” We will speak these ancient words of acclamation to each other on the day this letter is put into your hands.

## Lent's austerity

...the pomp of Palm Sunday

...the bittersweet sorrow of the

Last Supper,

...the anguish of the Garden of

Gethsemane,

...and the desolate darkness

of Good Friday has given

way to the good news that

Jesus is alive!

The love of God is made plain to us in him. The arms of Jesus stretch out and wrap us up in hope. The breath of the Spirit fills our lungs with the life of God. What joy! What peace! What grace! Who could keep such a message top secret? It has to get out. People need to hear. Our one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit invites us into a dance of creating and recreating. Through tear blurred vision we see that shadow of the gardener and hear our name being spoken. We know that Jesus is no longer in the tomb. He is risen! Truly he is the Lord of the Dance!

Springfield School held Easter worship in our church. It was fantastic to be supported by a good number of the congregation. I asked what Easter was all about. One young woman declared it was about the Easter Bunny and chocolate eggs! A young man raised his hand and said, "It's about the dead man." And then with a little more time to think he declared, "Jesus!"

Then at Tower Hill School I asked the same question. Again there was much about rabbits and chocolate eggs. One young person spoke out, "Easter is about Jesus' birth and rebirth." What an amazing expression! I love it! Easter begins with Christmas. It is about Jesus

being born into this world and from the grave being reborn to new life in resurrection. It is a privilege to be able to engage in conversations of faith with children and young people.

Of course Easter continues on.

Every Sunday is Easter Sunday. Every Sunday is resurrection morning. We are invited to join in the celebration of Jesus' life and to speak with confidence of the renewal that he brings to the world. The risen Jesus calls us to proclaim a message of 180 degree turnaround and the forgiveness of sins. In communities hell bent on labelling people with dehumanising tags: 'foreigners' 'immigrants' 'benefits cheats' and 'scroungers'. In this hostile climate towards the 'Other' we are called to live in peace. Followers of Jesus are called to put flesh on the bones of forgiveness and reconciliation. Yet how do we live out the Gospel?

We demonstrate the good news of the forgiveness of sins through our personal relationships. Today (5 April) marks 18 years of marriage. These are the words we chose for our vows:  
I will love you in good times and bad.  
I will love you when it is easy and when it is not.

I will love you when love brings us close,  
and when love pushes us apart.

I will love you when my love is obvious  
and when it is hidden by my faults. Please  
go on trusting me.

In marriage I've learned a lot about being forgiven and being able to forgive, to love and be loved.

Looking at the words of the vows it strikes me that this is a good way to live in relationship to everyone around us. Of course the reality is that loving others is not as easy as we would like it to be: relationships do break down. There are times when we find love unravelling and we are unable to gather up the threads. It

is an agony beyond words. The risen Christ comes to us with wounded hands and touches fractured relationships. He mends the broken heart though the scars remain. Though the pain dulls with the passing of time it never goes away. The risen Jesus offers us the grace to forgive those who have betrayed us. The risen Jesus offers us the grace to forgive ourselves.

We not only demonstrate the good news of the forgiveness of sins through our personal relationships, we live it in our wider network of relationships in society. We are newly into the campaign for the General Election. It seems as if electioneering has been going on forever! How will we live out the hope of the resurrection, of forgiveness and healing as we participate in politics? I urge you to engage in the debate and to reflect on the issues. Pray. Do not allow cynicism to keep you from the ballot box. Voting is a hard won privilege and it is crucial to use it.

Getting involved in the political process does not mean you and I have to belong to a political party. It is enough for us to take an avid interest in current issues and to advocate for those issues that particularly impinge on justice and the flourishing of every human being in our society. Go to the ballot box thinking of others. Often people vote for the political brand that is going to benefit them directly. What if we put our cross next to the candidate that we know will represent the interests of a fairer society for ALL?

In this Easter Season as we prepare for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, I pray that you will remain diligent in prayer, steeped in the scriptures, and constantly in worship.

Shalom  
Jason

The following article has been submitted by Marjorie Lee, and is entitled:

### **Do you know what I have done to you?**

The following new hymn, words and music by Rev Dr George Mulrain, was used in the Women's World Day of Prayer service, and it is good to share this at Eastertime

From the supper table Jesus rose  
Gently he removed his outer clothes  
Round his waist a towel tied  
Took a basin and applied  
Water to each one of his disciple's feet

*Do you know what I have done to you?  
Do you know what I have done to you?  
As your teacher and your Lord  
I your weary feet have washed  
Do to others just as I have done to you*

Simon Peter, with protesting word:  
'Not my feet – wash my whole body, Lord'  
Jesus helped them to admit  
That unclean and dirt-soiled feet  
Not cared for will corrupt the entire self

*Do you know what I have done to you?  
Do you know what I have done to you?  
As your teacher and your Lord  
I your weary feet have washed  
Do to others just as I have done to you*

Jesus came to serve, not to be served  
Follow him means to obey his word  
So as long as we shall live  
Humble service we must give  
And encourage others to do just the same

*Do you know what I have done to you?  
Do you know what I have done to you?  
As your teacher and your Lord  
I your weary feet have washed  
Do to others just as I have done to you*





## PRAYER LETTER No 169



### The Symbol of the Cross

The symbol of the Cross, is this just an historical reminder of Jesus' crucifixion or is it something more?

We have crosses in our Churches, in our homes, as pieces of jewellery, as aids to prayer. There are four crosses in our own Sanctuary at Church. The small wooden cross on the Communion Table reminds us of the words of the Last Supper when we take communion. There is a carved see through cross on the small table lectern holding the Bible (the Word of God) which is always open. The Pulpit Fall (material drape) on the Pulpit has a beautiful cross embroidered on it with rays of light spreading out from the top of the Cross. Finally there is the wonderful Cross Window central on the front wall bringing light flooding into the Sanctuary reminding us that Jesus is 'The Light of The World'.

At the Lent QUIET DAY held in our Church, the Rev Joy Hance displayed on a table many different crosses made from different materials. I spent quite a time standing in front of this table looking at the crosses asking myself what does the cross mean for me?

Three crosses took my attention. The first one was an intricate network of square crosses which looked to me to represent the four corners of the world, Christ crucified for all.

The second cross that stood out for me and really 'spoke' to me was a very simple rough cross, the vertical being quite uneven at the top and bottom tied to the misshapen horizontal with a piece of raffia, so ordinary. This to me represented the ordinariness of the practise of crucifixion in Roman Times. Jesus was crucified among the condemned, the political radicalists, the criminals, the ones not listened to.

The third cross that stood out for me was the 'empty cross'. This cross was carved out from a round log of wood so you could see through the cross.. The circle of the cross representing the world and the 'emptiness' of the cross shape representing the emptiness and foolishness of the world BUT also the sign that although Jesus suffered for us He is not there, He is risen and among us.

The rest of the crosses on the table although different in size and texture made from different materials, wooden, brass, shells and looked pleasing to the eye did not impact on me as the ones described above.

The emblem of the cross today seems to be sanitized, smooth, pristine and beautiful but in reality for Jesus it was brutal, humiliating, foolish, undignified. Not a quick an efficient death but a cruel agonising one watched by booing sarcastic opponents and stunned silent disciples and followers.

How do we accept God's plan in the crucifixion of Jesus? Jesus was sacrificed as the 'Lamb of God' for 'our sins'. He died so that we could be forgiven. Do you forgive others ? However the incredulity was in the Resurrection of Jesus that we might have life in Him. The Foolishness of the cross and acceptance of the Resurrection is our gateway to Heaven.

What does the Cross mean to you?

Jesus told His disciples 'to take up the cross and follow me'



To follow Jesus is to follow his example and His commandment to us, 'to love one another and love your neighbour as yourself. It is love in action using our eyes to see who needs love compassion and care; using our ears to listen to others; using our tongue, thinking before speaking, using words with love and kindness and our touch using our hands to show God's love by encouragement and compassion.



Use the words of the hymn 'When I survey the wondrous cross' for reflection and prayer

May God Bless you all,  
Beryl

*Please note that for up-to-date prayer requests contact Beryl Cartwright (703717)*

1. When I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.
2. Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,  
Save in the death of Christ my God!  
All the vain things that charm me  
most,  
I sacrifice them to His blood.
3. See from His head, His hands, His feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?
4. Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

The following article has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

## **Why Easter will never go away**

How do you make sense of the Resurrection? Dead men don't rise, so why believe that this particular dead man did rise?

At the end of St Luke's Gospel we read that: "they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement" (Luke 24.4). This is highly significant. The Gospels do not show us a group of disciples who were in a receptive frame of mind. After the crucifixion, they were in hiding, frightened and scattered. Then suddenly, they came out of hiding and were totally different; excited, joyful. By Pentecost they were confident, with one firm message: "You crucified Jesus, but God raised him up!"

How did they know this? Because of experience. Some of them had visited the tomb of Jesus: it was empty. Others claimed to have seen and touched the risen Lord. Were they hallucinating? People can hallucinate in groups – when taking drugs, for example. But of course each one will see a different hallucination. But the disciples all saw the same thing. Or rather, the same person. Jesus.

Were they lying? Jesus had died a humiliating death as a criminal. Perhaps they wanted to rescue His good name. So did they pretend they had seen Him?

This theory has a big problem. Their preaching led them into trouble with the authorities. They were beaten and imprisoned and some of them killed. People will die for ideas and causes which they believe in passionately. But not for things they have made up. We might suffer for our convictions, we will not suffer for our inventions.

What about the 'swoon' theory? That Jesus didn't die on the cross, despite terrible wounds. He recovered in the tomb,

and escaped. The disciples nursed Him back to health. But Roman soldiers knew when a man was dead; and there was the guard on the tomb. Also, the events which followed simply don't fit.

If the disciples had been hiding Jesus, they would have kept very low-key, and out of the way, so that the authorities did not come after him again.

Besides, to preach that God had raised Jesus from the dead – which is exactly what they did preach – would have been a lie. Beatings and threat of death would soon have loosened their tongues. Inventions crumble under pressure; convictions hold fast.

Another reason for believing in the Resurrection is this: Jesus' continuing impact. Thousands and soon millions of people in every generation since have shared an inescapable sense of being 'accompanied' through life. Though unseen, they identify this presence as the Risen Lord.

Sometimes this experience of meeting Jesus is gentle and fitful. Sometimes it is dramatic and life-changing. This reminds us that the resurrection of Jesus is not just an interesting historical puzzle. It is a vital present day reality. It brings wonderful comfort, assuring us of the central Christian truths: death is dead; Jesus is alive; God is love.

This central notion was captured, most movingly, by the great Albert Schweitzer: "He came to those men who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same word: 'Follow thou me', and sets us to the tasks which He has to fulfil for our time. He commands. And to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal himself in the toils, the conflicts, the suffering which they shall pass through in His fellowship, and, as ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience who He is."

Have a joyful – and a challenging Easter

The following articles have been extracted from Parish Pump

## **Samaritan's Purse launches campaign to tackle Uganda's Water Poverty Cycle**

Samaritan's Purse has launched a campaign to help 20,000 people in Karamoja, northern Uganda, break free from the crippling effects of water poverty.

Globally, one in ten people lacks access to clean water (*WHO/UNICEF - JMP Report, 2014*), but in Karamoja the situation is far worse, with six in ten people lacking access to clean water.

Families in Karamoja are affected in many ways: sickness by contaminated water prevents children attending school; their parents stay home to look after them, so they cannot earn a living; lack of money means that families cannot afford food or healthcare. When daughters have to walk several miles each day to/from the nearest water source, they get no education, and are at risk of sexual abuse.

To help these communities break out of this vicious cycle Samaritan's Purse is planning to rehabilitate 45 broken wells and drill five new boreholes in Karamoja, and provide comprehensive sanitation and hygiene education.

Samaritan's Purse has launched a campaign – *Still, Sparkling or Dirty* - to eliminate water poverty for more than 20,000 people living in 50 communities in Karamoja. A well or borehole will provide clean water for approximately 400 people right where they live. On average it will cost £6,000 to install and/or repair the 50 wells in Karamoja. Every donation raised through this campaign will be matched, pound for pound, by the UK government.

<http://turnonthetap.org.uk/give-now/>

## **UK public votes the Real Easter Egg into the top three Fairtrade products**

The Real Easter Egg has come third in a national poll to find the UK's favourite Fairtrade product. Launched in 2010 with the support of hundreds of churches and schools, it beat leading brands such as Maltesers, Cadbury Dairy Milk and Nestle Kit Kat to win the coveted title of third most popular UK Fairtrade product. The Real Easter Egg shared the podium with Divine Sea Salt and Caramel Chocolate bar (1<sup>st</sup> place) and Zatoun Olive Oil (2<sup>nd</sup> place).

The Meaningful Chocolate Company (MCC) was launched in 2010 and produced the first Real Easter Egg that year. Out of the 80 million Easter eggs sold in this part of the world, it is the only Fairtrade charity egg explaining the story of Easter. MCC will sell their millionth egg in 2015. By the end of the year the company expects to have given away more than £160,000 to charitable causes.

Dr John Sentamu, the Archbishop of York, said: 'I am delighted that the significance of The Real Easter Egg has been recognised in this way. Easter celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and the good news of forgiveness and new life in Him. The Real Easter Egg tells this story.'



## **EASTER – the most joyful day of the year**

Easter is the most joyful day of the year for Christians. Christ has died for our sins. We are forgiven. Christ has risen! We are redeemed! We can look forward to an eternity in his joy! Hallelujah!

The Good News of Jesus Christ is a message so simple that you can explain it to someone in a few minutes. It is so profound that for the rest of their lives they will be still be 'growing' in their Christian walk with God.

Why does the date move around so much? Because the date of Passover moves around, and according to the biblical account, Easter is tied to the Passover. Passover celebrates the Israelites' exodus from Egypt and it lasts for seven days, from the middle of the Hebrew month of Nisan, which equates to late March or early April.

Sir Isaac Newton was one of the first to use the Hebrew lunar calendar to come up with firm dates for Good Friday: Friday 7 April 30 AD or Friday 3 April, 33 AD, with Easter Day falling two days later. Modern scholars continue to think these the most likely.

Most people will tell you that Easter falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Spring Equinox, which is broadly true. But the precise calculations are complicated and involve something called an 'ecclesiastical full moon', which is not the same as the moon in the sky. The earliest possible date for Easter in the West is 22 March, which last fell in 1818 and won't fall again until 2285. The latest is 25 April, which last happened in 1943 and is next due in 2038.

Why the name, 'Easter'? In almost every European language, the festival's name comes from 'Pesach', the Hebrew word for Passover. The Germanic word 'Easter', however, seems to come

from Eostre, a Saxon fertility goddess mentioned by the Venerable Bede. He thought that the Saxons worshipped her in 'Eostur month', but may have confused her with the classical dawn goddesses like Eos and Aurora, whose names mean 'shining in the east'. So Easter might have meant simply 'beginning month' – a good time for starting up again after a long winter.

Finally, why Easter eggs? On one hand, they are an ancient symbol of birth in most European cultures. On the other hand, hens start laying regularly again each Spring. Since eggs were forbidden during Lent, it's easy to see how decorating and eating them became a practical way to celebrate Easter.

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The following article, author unknown, has been submitted by Susan Wass, and is entitled:

### **All times & Seasons**

This place we call our world is a special place to be;  
But it can be even better with the likes of you and me.  
We've got a duty to perform to protect this fragile earth,  
Building citizenship through projects;  
Each one can bring new birth  
Of friendship through commitment,  
To culture, peace and health,  
Education, food and environment  
Are worth more than any of our wealth.  
Around this globe of ours are simple things we share  
The joy of food and water and the gift of light and air.  
So let us together on this our special day,  
To pledge our own commitment for a better world we pray

The following article, written by Gemma Curran, has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

## **Amid the winds and the waves of life**

*Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake... 'Lord, if it's you,' Peter replied, 'tell me to come to you on the water.' 'Come,' he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came towards Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, 'Lord, save me!' Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. 'You of little faith,' he said, 'why did you doubt?' Matthew 14:25-31*

If you could have any superpower, what would it be? Unfortunately, this story isn't evidence that Jesus is in the habit of handing out superpowers. So, what can we learn from this account? Like most of our modern superhero stories, this incident is less about the superpower on display and more about what the characters learn about themselves and others.

Most significantly of all, the first thing Peter sees is Jesus doing what God alone can do. In Scripture, power over the wind and waves is always attributed to God. Jesus' feat of walking on water is more than just a clever trick. It's further evidence of his authority – an authority which enables Peter himself to walk on water. Even more remarkably, we can trust that the power of Christ residing in us through his Spirit will enable us to walk through life's storms without fear.

The second thing Peter learns is that he can't do it himself. He began to walk towards Jesus, "but when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, 'Lord, save me!'" Peter was

aware of the wind and the waves in his peripheral vision when he climbed out of the boat. But when he stopped focusing on Jesus and allowed his vision to be filled with the storm, he began to sink.

Few of us will ever find ourselves in a boat surrounded by a storm, but we regularly weather metaphorical storms. The storms around us might be powered by financial difficulty, impossible deadlines at work, family strife, unstable health, relationship breakdown. But when we find ourselves in a storm, what do we do? Do we allow the wind and waves to fill our vision and overwhelm us, or do we keep focusing on Jesus? Do we trust that, if we begin to sink, he will reach out and catch us?

The one we look to is the Lord, who not only directs the winds and waves but also death and life, the only one who can save us – and carry us through the storms of today.

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The following poem, author unknown, has been submitted by Maureen Miles, and is entitled:

## **Who?**

Who could paint the sky so blue  
And add some sun-touched clouds to view?  
Who could dust the monarch's wing  
And teach the nightingale to sing?  
Who could spread the golden grain  
Across the vast and open plain?  
Who could hold the atom's power  
And perfume each and every flower?  
Who could plot man's upward climb  
To reach the stars and thoughts sublime?  
Who could guide his long ascent  
To the celestial firmament?



The following article, written by the Ven John Barton, has been extracted from Parish Pump, and considers Easter amid the evil all around us, and is entitled:

## **The Ultimate Offer to the Human Race**

This Easter the media will rightly remind us of the carnage in Syria, Northern Iraq, Ukraine and Afghanistan. For as we celebrate this great Festival, commemorating Christ's victory over evil, we are confronted with death, barbarity and terror in the world. Unless we choose to live in fantasyland, we have to relate the two.

First, Jesus Christ did not escape death. Nor did He promise His followers a trouble-free world. Actually, they themselves can expect an above average share of suffering.

Secondly, we believe that Christ's death was no accident, no mistake. It was typical of the evil deeds that human beings do to each other. Innocent suffering did not begin in Jerusalem and will not end there. But the crucifixion was a calculated risk: God's costly and unexpected intervention in human affairs. The Christian claim that God's Son was put to death is deeply offensive to religious groups who cannot believe that the remote and all-powerful God to whom human beings should submit, has Himself submitted to our brutality. Yet it is in this way that God enlists in His creation without violating it.

Thirdly, Christ's way of sacrifice, forgiveness and reconciliation is God's ultimate offer to the human race. We are going to learn it, if necessary the hard way, however long it takes. But the world is populated by former enemies: ask the French or the Spanish or the Americans about the British, if you doubt that.

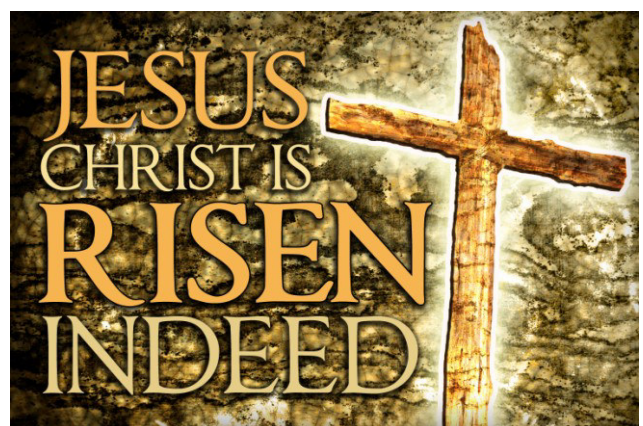
The first reaction of the people who witnessed the resurrection of Jesus Christ was fear. Incredulity, too, but fear. And no wonder: they were seeing the King of Kings.

In the last book of the Bible, the Risen Christ is described like this: "I saw one like the Son of Man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash across His chest. His head and His hair were white as white wool, white as snow; His eyes were like a flame of fire, His feet were like burnished bronze refined in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters..... When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as though dead."

That is the proper first response of reverence and respect to a vision of God. Only then can we hear the words spoken by this terrifying figure:

"Do not be afraid: I am the first and the last, and the living one. I was dead, and see I am alive forever and ever; and I have the keys of death and the world of the dead."

God's rule over the world – the world at its worst and the world at its best – was reasserted at the first Easter. This is no domestic, ecclesiastical event. It is God's glorious yet solemn challenge to His rebellious creation: the grip of evil and death is terminally weakened. Christ is Risen! He is Risen indeed!



The following article, written by Antony Billington, head of theology at the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, has been extracted from Parish Pump, and with the General Election coming in May, this Christian perspective on politics might be of interest, and is entitled:

## **What do we want from our Parliament?**

A few months ago, in late January, we marked the 750th anniversary of the first English Parliament, held by Simon de Montfort in the Palace of Westminster. In another few weeks, in May, we will be facing a General Election. So it seems appropriate to recognise the long, albeit somewhat chequered, history of democracy we have enjoyed in this country

At the very least, elections provide an opportunity for us to reflect on priorities and concerns, for ourselves and for the society in which we live: health, education, transport, housing, welfare, tax, crime, environment, immigration. Not for the first time will we notice how many of these play to our fears as well as our hopes.

In all of this, we recognise that politics is an inevitable feature of life for the 'whole-life' disciple. We recognise, too, that Scripture allows us to be neither overly cynical nor overly confident about the potential of politics to make a difference.

As Romans 13:1-7 reminds us, we acknowledge that 'the authorities... have been established by God for... our good' – words written in the context of an imperial power holding sway. In the UK, where we have a voice in deciding who the 'authorities' should be, where it's possible to encourage the values by which society operates, we accept the responsibility that comes with the

privilege, and vote wisely.

More specifically, a perspective nourished by Scripture helps to reframe how and why we vote. We vote not simply for what will benefit *ourselves*, but for what will benefit *others*, for that which serves the wider community. Scripture places high premium on right treatment of the vulnerable and marginalised. What do manifestos say about the poor, the elderly, the disabled, the asylum seeker? Since the gospel reframes *aspirations*, we vote less for what might bring material gain than for what might bring moral gain.

What will be the effect of policies on marriage, family life, poverty? Given the centrality of *relationship* at the heart of the gospel, we vote for what will build and nurture relationships – personally, nationally, internationally. On issues related to religion, not least the freedom to practise our faith in the public square, we vote for that which is more likely to promote the way of the gospel.

Who we vote for and why, arguably says as much about us as it does about candidates and parties. Who will you vote for? *What* will you vote for?

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The following poem, written by Kenneth McKinzie, has been extracted from Human Writes magazine, and has been submitted by Val Obriain, and is entitled:

## **Knowing**

Life's full of twists and unpredictable turns  
From calm to disaster, we're fraught with concerns  
One day can be dreadful, the next day stupendous  
One day can be splendid, the next day horrendous

Some things we cannot control, some  
things are elusive  
It's hard to bring change when things  
seem conclusive  
Through doubt and dismay we seek the  
mundane  
A small slice of peace in a deluge of pain

Life does not follow a strict set of rules  
Prepare for the struggle by having the  
tools  
Hope and forgiveness, persistence and  
cheer  
Compassion and reason will help dethrone  
fear

To deal with the heartache we need not  
be brilliant  
But one thing is certain, we must be  
resilient  
It's hard to imagine a world without onus  
But knowing we're loved is life's greatest  
bonus

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The follow article has been written and  
submitted by Joan Currie, and is entitled:

### **Word Cafe**

At the recent Word Cafe, at one table we  
discussed the morning reading which was  
the story of Jesus on the road to Emmaus,  
and how he appeared to the disciples as a  
stranger. As they finally recognised him he  
disappeared from their sight

We spoke of how angels can come  
to us in the guise of a stranger, give help  
and leave before we can thank them  
adequately. How do we repay that good  
deed?

As a child I remember my father saying  
these words:

*Have you had a kindness shown – pass it  
on  
'twas not given for you alone – pass it on  
Let it travel down the years  
Let it wipe another's tears  
'til in heaven the deed appears – pass it on*

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The following article, author unknown,  
has been submitted by Susan Wass, and is  
entitled:

### **A Recipe for Happiness**

Four cups of love is all you need  
Two cups of loyalty, plus a good deed,  
Three cups of forgiveness is an absolute  
must  
One cup of friendship with plenty of trust,  
Two spoons of tenderness heaped to the  
brim,  
Four quarts of faith with another thrown  
in,  
One barrel of laughter, to help on the  
way,  
To keep us happy all through the day

#### **Method:**

Take love and loyalty, mix thoroughly with  
faith,  
Blend it with tenderness, just to be safe;  
Kindness, understanding you also must  
add,  
Friendship and hope which cannot be bad,  
Sprinkle with laughter right up to the top.  
Bake it in sunshine, no need to stop.  
Serve this up daily with helpings galore,  
Don't be afraid to come back for some  
more

# Afraid, alone, in pain

Be the answer to Loko's prayer this Christian Aid Week.



Loko's choice in life is simple: 'If I can't collect firewood, my children will die.'

Four times a week, in a remote corner of Ethiopia, Loko makes a back-breaking eight-hour trip to gather wood. It's a task she dreads, but she steels herself to do it because if she doesn't her children will starve.

She prays to God as she walks. 'I ask him to change my life and lead us out of this,' she says.

Just £5 could give Loko a loan to start her own business buying and selling tea and coffee, freeing her from her desperate task and allowing her to spend more time caring for her family.

This Christian Aid Week, you can help transform the lives of women like Loko.

From 10-16 May, churches the length and breadth of Britain and Ireland will come together to pray, campaign and raise money to improve the lives of people like Loko.

Every year, 100,000 volunteers demonstrate God's love for the poor by taking part in house-to-house collections for Christian Aid. This fantastic witness is a chance to take the mission of the church into your community.

Find out how you can play your part at [caweek.org](http://caweek.org)



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