

### Walking with Jesus

#### Dear friends

Since Easter, we have been following the events following the resurrection as we have looked at "40 Days with Jesus."

Each week we have seen how ordinary people's lives have been changed as a result of meeting Jesus. What usually begins with uncertainty and/or despair invariably concludes with renewed faith, a wider vision and an individual's commitment to be part of something special.

Like me, you may have your own favourite stories of these encounters between the resurrected Jesus and His disciples. Hearing these words again has, for me, brought new perspective to two of these meetings - reflecting something of the journey we have all been on through this past year, dominated as it has been by Covid19.

On the very afternoon of that first Easter Day, two of Jesus' disciples (whom I believe to be husband and wife) were returning to their home a few miles outside Jerusalem. Their hopes dashed, their dreams seemingly broken on a Roman cross, they were downcast to the extent that their perspective on faith could only see what had been lost rather than what might have been gained.

It was not until they shared hospitality with a fellow traveller (albeit a stranger at first sight), that they realised that God's plan was working out as He intended. So taken were they with their news that, instead of continuing their journey, they returned the long, dusty miles to Jerusalem to break the Good News of the resurrection to their friends. They simply could not contain their joy and excitement.

Covid19 has drawn us all into its grip. Our lives have been affected as never before and, uniquely in recorded history, churches have closed their doors.

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It has been easy to allow our heads to drop and for our faith perspective to be limited to reflecting on past/present events rather than looking for the next steps to take.



Our reading of Luke 24 brings a new perspective to what may seem to be dead end streets.

Christ is present, has been with us and will show us where we need to look to in the future. We can do no better than to look to Him and, like our two friends on the road make it our goal to take any and every opportunity to witness to the transforming power of the resurrection.

First of all, though, we have to meet Him and to see Him for who He is; are we sure that we are looking in the right place or, does our fear, despair or concern about the future hide Him from our view?

Look again to this story; find Him in whatever you're doing today, then taking time to give thanks for what you have and going on to tell someone how good God is!

On another occasion Jesus appears to all His disciples, who were hiding in a locked room afraid that they might be arrested. What strikes me here is not so much the fact that Jesus was there (His presence) but His greeting on meeting them: "Peace be with you."

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## OUR MOTTO TEXT FOR 2021

### Isaiah 58:11

The Lord will guide you always;  
he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched  
land and will strengthen your frame.  
You will be like a well-watered garden,  
like a spring whose waters never fail.



#### Walking with Jesus (continued)

Simple words. Everyday words. A greeting they would have exchanged many times before - it was the traditional form of words whenever two Jews met.

But, this particular greeting was far from the everyday - it was unique. The risen Christ was in the room with them (there were the scars to prove who He was) and, in the face of everything they had seen in the previous 72 hours, He was saying to them that everything was going to be ok.

*Peace be with you: may God bring you His healing and His wholeness, His hope and His joy.*

Words we welcome right now but more than that - a reality we crave at a time when we are surrounded by so much uncertainty.

The dark despair the disciples faced was over, a new way of living was here - after waiting for power from on high, they would be the means by which the Kingdom of God would be spread as Good News throughout the world to all nations

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Jesus stands with and among us in His risen power. As far as we can see today, lockdown restrictions are easing and we will be able resume our "normal" lives. I honestly believe, though, that there is much more to the next few months than the same old, same old, business as usual.

We serve a risen Saviour who is in the world today. We therefore have a unique (and possibly a once in a lifetime) opportunity to make a significant statement about the gospel both through GHBC and our own personal witness to our faith.

We cannot do this on our own: we must welcome, rely and walk in the footsteps of God's plan as revealed by His Spirit.

We must not do it on our own - we will only build God's Kingdom when we work together, using our complementary gifts and talents to reach the whole of our community.

We should not do it on our own: we are God's church, bought at a price, declaring together the works, nature and love of Him who makes it all possible.

Let's restart our work and re-energise our faith but let's pray for God's increase in 2021 and beyond.

In Christ's name and service

*Steve*



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