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***“The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.” Psalm 24:1***

Dear Friends,

Over the last couple of weeks I’ve really enjoyed catching up with you all after being away on placement since Christmas. It’s only been two months that I’ve been away but so much has changed. The changing of the seasons means lighter evenings, buds appearing on the trees and daffodils and hyacinths in the gardens. Soon we will be planning summer barbeques and fayres.

And one of the things that has now changed is that St James’s have now twinned their toilet! I suspect many of you are wondering what it means as it does sound rather bizarre. Toilet twinning is a part of Tearfund, a Christian charity supporting people living in poverty in some of the world’s poorest countries. The toilet twinning scheme funds water, sanitation and hygiene schemes in communities in some of these countries and each twin celebrates a family getting a new toilet. When that family understands the improvement in their health as a result of better sanitation, they tell others and more people build toilets. In this way the charity is helping local people to help local people and to reduce the number of water-borne infections experienced in local communities. The St James’s toilet has been twinned with a latrine in Nepal and you can see the details on the back of the toilet door next time you visit.

So why did they twin their toilet? Well they are currently working towards getting our Bronze Eco-Church award, an award for churches which are trying to become more environmentally-friendly and live out our responsibility to care for God’s creation. This is done through a survey which looks at the areas of worship and teaching, buildings, land, community and global engagement and lifestyle. Toilet twinning comes under the area of community and global engagement.

But if we’re really going to live out the words of Psalm 24 and do our little bit to improve the global environmental situation, we need to all take a look at our lifestyles. We can do that in a number of ways. The easiest is to reduce how much we buy, reuse what we can and recycle those things that have come to the end of their usefulness. Then we can reduce our car and energy use wherever we can. I suspect, given the recent increases in petrol, gas and electricity costs over the last couple of years, that many of you are already doing these things. It certainly makes financial sense to make these changes, as well as making a difference to our planet’s futures.

The Easter story we’ve just celebrated results in Christ redeeming the whole world, not just us. Jesus was there when the world was created and participated in it. We’re not promised a completely new world but this world made new, so we have to look after it and ensure we do whatever we can to build His Kingdom here. It’s also a basic matter of justice which supports those who are most affected by climate change – those very countries which are supported by Toilet Twinning, some of the poorest in the world.

Change isn’t easy. We all know that, but if we don’t make the changes to our lifestyles it may be too late when our children and grandchildren have the power to make these changes for themselves. And if you want to find out more about the Eco church scheme you can take a look at https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/

Love and prayers

**Diane**

Revd Diane Komorowski (Curate)

**Sunday 7th April – 2nd Sunday of Easter**

Risen Christ, for whom no door is locked, no entrance barred: open the doors of our hearts, that we may seek the good of others and walk the joyful road of sacrifice and peace, to the praise of God the Father.

**Amen**

**Gospel Reading: John 20.19-end**

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.’

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, ‘We have seen the Lord.’ But he said to them, ‘Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.’ A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.’ Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.’

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

**New Testament: Acts 4.32-35**

Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

**Final Prayer**

Lord God our Father, through our Saviour Jesus Christ you have assured your children of eternal life and in baptism have made us one with him: deliver us from the death of sin and raise us to new life in your love,

in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen**

**Hymn:**

Jesus stand among us

At the meeting of our lives;

Be our sweet agreement

At the meeting of our eyes.

O Jesus, we love You, so we gather here;

Join our hearts in unity and take away our fear.

So to You we're gathering

Out of each and every land;

Christ the love between us

At the joining of our hands.

O Jesus, we love You, so we gather here;

Join our hearts in unity and take away our fear.

Jesus, stand among us

At the breaking of the bread;

Join us as one body

As we worship You, our Head.

O Jesus, we love You, so we gather here;

Join our hearts in unity and take away our fear.

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**The Blessing**

The God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep,

make you perfect in every good work to do his will;

and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit rest upon you and remain with you now and always. **Amen**

**Sunday 14th April – 3rd Sunday of Easter**

Risen Christ, you filled your disciples with boldness and fresh hope: strengthen us to proclaim your risen life and fill us with your peace, to the glory of God the Father. **Amen**

**Gospel Reading:** **Luke 24.36b-48**

While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, ‘Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.’ And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, ‘Have you anything here to eat?’ They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence. Then he said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you-that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.’ 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.

**New Testament: Acts 3.12-19**

When Peter saw it, he addressed the people, ‘You Israelites, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk? The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. And by faith in his name, his name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know; and the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you. ‘And now, friends, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer. Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out,

**Final Prayer**

Living God, your Son made himself known to his disciples in the breaking of bread: open the eyes of our faith, that we may see him in all his redeeming work; who is alive and reigns, now and for ever. **Amen**

**Hymn:**

O for a thousand tongues to sing  
my dear Redeemer's praise,  
the glories of my God and King,  
the triumphs of his grace!  
  
Jesus! the name that charms our fears,  
that bids our sorrows cease;  
'tis music in the sinner's ears,  
'tis life and health and peace.  
  
He breaks the power of cancelled sin,  
he sets the prisoner free:  
his blood can make the foulest clean;  
his blood availed for me.

He speaks; and, listening to his voice,  
new life the dead receive,  
the mournful broken hearts rejoice,  
the humble poor believe.  
  
Hear him, ye deaf; his praise, ye dumb,  
your loosened tongues employ;  
ye blind, behold your Saviour come;  
and leap, ye lame, for joy!

My gracious Master and my God,  
assist me to proclaim  
and spread through all the earth abroad  
the honours of thy name. Public Domain.

**The Blessing**

God, who through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ has given us the victory, give you joy and peace in your faith; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit rest upon you and remain with you now and always. **Amen.**

**Sunday 21st April – 4th Sunday of Easter**

Risen Christ, faithful shepherd of your Father’s sheep: teach us to hear your voice and to follow your command, that all your people may be gathered into one flock, to the glory of God the Father. **Amen**

## **Gospel Reading: John 10.11-18**

‘I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away-and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.’

**New Testament: Acts 4.5-12**

The next day their rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. When they had made the prisoners stand in their midst, they inquired, ‘By what power or by what name did you do this?’ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, ‘Rulers of the people and elders, if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. This Jesus is “the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone.” There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.’

**Final Prayer**

Merciful Father, you gave your Son Jesus Christ to be the good shepherd, and in his love for us to lay down his life and rise again: keep us always under his protection, and give us grace to follow in his steps;

through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

**Hymn:**

All hail the pow'r of Jesus' name!  
let angels prostrate fall;  
bring forth the royal diadem,  
***Chorus:*** and crown him, crown him, crown him,  
crown him, and crown him Lord of all.  
  
Crown him, all martyrs of your God,  
who from his altar call;  
praise him whose way of pain you trod,  
***Chorus***  
O prophets faithful to his word,  
in matters get and small,  
who made his voice of justice heard,  
***Chorus***  
  
All sinners, now redeemed by grace,  
who heard your Savior's call,  
now robed in light before his face,  
***Chorus***  
  
Let every tribe and every race  
who heard the freedom call,  
in liberation, see Christ's face  
***Chorus***  
  
Let every people, every tongue  
to him their heart enthralling:  
lift high the universal song  
***Chorus***

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**The Blessing**

God the Father, by whose glory Christ was raised from the dead, strengthen you to walk with him in his risen life; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit rest upon you and remain with you now and always. **Amen.**

**Sunday 28th April – 5th Sunday after Easter**

Risen Christ, your wounds declare your love for the world and the wonder of your risen life: give us compassion and courage to risk ourselves for those we serve, to the glory of God the Father. **Amen**

**Gospel Reading: John 15.1-8**

‘I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

**New Testament: Acts 8.26-end**

Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, ‘Get up and go towards the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.’ (This is a wilderness road.) So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. Then the Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go over to this chariot and join it.’ So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ He replied, ‘How can I, unless someone guides me?’ And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this: ‘Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.’

The eunuch asked Philip, ‘About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?’ Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, ‘Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?’ He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

**Final Prayer**

Eternal God, whose Son Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life: grant us to walk in his way, to rejoice in his truth, and to share his risen life; who is alive and reigns, now and for ever. **Amen**

**Hymn:**

Come down, O Love divine,  
seek thou this soul of mine,  
and visit it with thine own ardour glowing;  
O Comforter, draw near,  
within my heart appear,  
and kindle it, thy holy flame bestowing.  
  
O let it freely burn,  
till earthly passions turn  
to dust and ashes in its heat consuming;  
and let thy glorious light  
shine ever on my sight,  
and clothe me round, the while my path illuming.  
  
Let holy charity  
mine outward vesture be,  
and lowliness become mine inner clothing:  
true lowliness of heart,  
which takes the humbler part,  
and o'er its own shortcomings weeps with loathing.  
  
And so the yearning strong,  
with which the soul will long,  
shall far outpass the pow'r of human telling;  
nor can we guess its grace,  
till we become the place  
wherein the Holy Spirit makes his dwelling.

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**The Blessing**

May Christ, who out of defeat brings new hope and a new future, fill you with his new life; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit rest upon you and remain with you now and always. **Amen.**