

ISSUE 22



Summer 2018

THE MESSENGER

The magazine for
The United Reformed Church of Eastcote and Northwood Hills



'The Font and House at Mottisfont



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Easter Sunday Reflection: Who is for Resurrection?

When Jesus appears to Mary she does not recognise him. In her grief she holds powerful assumptions about what the future will hold and she continues to grasp onto an image of her beloved friend which no longer matches the reality of her new situation.

This is the first regular Sunday service here at Northwood Hills and on this Easter Sunday we are beginning our journey to discover more about what is at the heart of our church in this altered setting and then to work out how we can best make resurrection real to the community around us. Like Mary, we find ourselves in a different situation. And like Mary we have a whole new future ahead of us.

Some of us might be feeling a bit disorientated, fragile even, and so, it is good to remember that Mary's Easter morning encounter turned out very differently to how she expected. Today is a day when we are gifted great hope. The story we are here to rejoice and celebrate is one of total surprise and a complete reversal of expectation.

Mary and two of the other disciples go very early to the tomb only to discover Jesus' body is missing. They are confused and deep in grief. No doubt they are also carrying feelings of bewilderment that the body of Jesus has been removed from their care. Like all pivotal moments of our lives, they are experiencing a powerful mix of emotions. But that was about to change and their lives turned upside down. Where they had expected to find death they suddenly discover evidence of new life. Where they had expected to discover the broken body in the tomb they encounter transformation, even though they couldn't recognize it right away.

Mary's encounter with Jesus on Easter Sunday is her moment of new calling. Jesus calls her to a resurrected life and then sends her to witness to the disciples, so that together they might go out and change lives. Mary, a woman and the least expected, is the first witness to the resurrection. And she finds herself being ushered out by Jesus to begin a new road on their pilgrimage together. The rest of Mary's life is altered by this moment of encounter. So how appropriate that this is also the day of our own new beginning.

On a day when the church is called to proclaim the greatest life-giving message ever, we come to allow our future to be directed and driven by this wonderful affirming, encouraging, faith filled message of new life and new possibility. Often the paths pointing to us new directions arrive in our lives unbidden. Something happens which we did not expect and we are forced to shift our perspective in order to open our eyes to new possibilities. Sometimes it is an unwelcome event like death or illness. Other times we are given the opportunity to seek out a new adventure in our lives. Either way, these journeys leave us between different spaces... places of comfort and discomfort; risk and security; knowing and unknowing.

As we begin our new adventure this morning we are beginning to let go of what we thought we knew and of our desire to control what is to come. This is a new landscape for us all. For each of us this is a new future with the chance to make this place a Christian presence for many years to come. It is an exciting but awesome responsibility.

We have much to talk about and much to plan but this is a moment to pause, draw breath and gain strength from the story that guides and shapes us. And then having allowed resurrection to seep into our life together we will journey even further into this new opportunity.

We are at a new place in more ways than one. And in some significant way we have been changed by this experience. The physical journey we have made from Eastcote to Northwood Hills is very short but the potential that mileage has given us is huge and life changing. And that is why I see us not so much as an established church but an emerging church which is full of the excitement of new possibilities.

Jesus tells Mary, "*Do not hold onto me.*" Jesus is asking her to take all that has happened in the past and to allow that to be informed by this new revelation. She then has to go forward not with clenched fists but open palms which enable her to take hold of the opportunities God is offering. Now we must do the same.

We have a very bright future ahead of us. We have done change and it doesn't frighten us anymore! We are in a place emotionally where we are ready and willing to receive the gifts being offered. We are ready to build a new future and to accept, *welcome even*, that our lives including the life of our church might take us to places that we do not expect or indeed, to places we might not have necessarily chosen for ourselves.

Today is also our 5th anniversary. Five years in which our sense of community has deepened and our friendships have strengthened. This is a time of celebration as we seek out the future God is now calling us to.

Resurrection is about being prepared to say yes to the things that arrive unbidden into life. The call of Easter is an invitation to step forth across the threshold; to release all we thought we knew, in order to find the space to say yes to what might be. We have done that!

So, on this very special day we don't need to hold too tightly to what we think the outcome should or will be. Instead we can let ourselves be surprised by what the future might hold for us. We can now let go of our own expectations and allow God to turn us inside out. For we have discovered that it is in the places of profound unknowing that we let ourselves enter into the Mystery that is God.

continued:

This is our moment. Our moment when we welcome the start of a process that is leading us on a journey of discovery together. And together we will find the courage to embrace adventure and to trustfully enter the joy of the journey. We know we do not travel this way alone. We know that right beside us we have the man who became vulnerable for our sake. The man, Jesus, who will share the road map with us and who will rejoice with us each time we take a step that gives a greater assurance that his story will continue to be told in this place.

Jesus we have a story that changes lives and reverses expectations. On Easter Sunday we see Jesus' friends make their own tentative steps in taking on the responsibility of becoming Jesus' hands and his feet, in the world. And today we take ours too.

When Jesus tells Mary not to physically hold on to him, he is inaugurating a new relationship that cannot be anchored in the past, nor can it remain between just two people. It is a relationship that is shared within community. Jesus tells Mary not to weep for what has gone, nor to try to hold onto the past, but to release her grip on all that holds her back and begin the work he needs her to do. And Mary loves Jesus enough to trust him. Her past has gone. Her present is something quite new. And as a result of Mary's encounter in a garden, a small Christian community is born and she joins with others to work out the implications of Christ's resurrection for them. And just like those first disciples we have also been commissioned to find ways to tell and to show the world about the uniqueness of Christ.

As a community of his people we are here to reflect his morality, acceptance, fairness, openness, hospitality and most of all compassion as we reach out to others. We now look forward as we begin to name and live out our dreams for the future. We are a community who have shown that we are prepared to be changed by our encounter with one another and we will continue to nurture, value and inspire each other. And as we enjoy this sense of accomplishment we will look out for the joy of fresh inspiration and the excitement of new discoveries.

With Christ beside us, the story of this new future is ours to write and we are responsible for the words that will be written. And today we have pledged to do that with grace, tolerance and love. But most importantly of all we will do it together. And we will do it in the name of the God who is within and around us; in the name of the God who loves and holds us and who has shaped us and made us who we are and in the name of the God, who with our co-operation will shape us into *all* that we have the potential to become.

© Liz Shaw 1st April 2018



Steve Lethbridge has been our organist for 25 years and on Sunday 18th March we held a special service to celebrate this during which a presentation was made to Steve to show our appreciation of all he has done for us. An extract from Liz's address summed this up so well:

"Steve is such an ever-present and important part of every church service, and yet it is so easy to take his gifts for granted. He makes an enormous contribution in enabling us to worship God.

Steve has been here 25 years and he and I have shared worship for nearly 13 of those years, so it would be fair to say we have spent a good deal of time working together and it would not be an overstatement to say I have been richly blessed.

It is customary to say nice things on these occasions, but what I am saying this morning is so easy because it is the absolute truth. Steve is an absolute gem to work with, and his love of music and pride in his art is a joy to behold. Each week he graciously walks in carrying a bagful of heavy hymn books to meet my requirements for the service. He has a minister whose only knowledge about music is what words fit the service and who has no idea if these words will actually match the tune. I know I can depend on Steve to put me back on the right track and that security is a great gift for a tone-deaf minister like myself. Steve has helped me out of the holes I have dug for myself on many occasions and wherever I go beyond these walls, I feel a sense of pride in the music he continually produces.

Steve is utterly dedicated and rarely takes time off. When he does it is often due to other music commitments. I think it is obvious that Steve loves music with a passion and through Sunday Worship and the concerts he has provided us with, we have been the lucky recipients of that.

The thing with Steve is that he feels his music deeply and that authenticity and passion conveys itself to us. You can ask Steve to play anything knowing it is in safe hands.

I feel very privileged that I am able to speak on behalf of us all and thank Steve for all that he brought us over the past 25 years. It seems quite fitting that we are doing so as we prepare to start a new stage on our journey together."

From everyone in the church "Thank you" Steve.

CHARITY COFFEE MORNINGS

Saturdays 10.30am - Noon

- 2nd June (NH) **Bury Lake Young Mariners**
(Based at the Aquadrome, offers courses for adults and children)
- 16th June (E) **London Churches Refugee Fund**
- 7th July (NH) **Orchyd**
(Provides annual holidays for local children with disabilities)
- 21st July (E) **Action for Children**
(Helping disadvantaged children)
- 4th August (NH) **Arthritis Care**
- 18th August (E) **Sense**
(Support for people who are deaf/blind or have sensory impairments)



Charity Coffee Mornings during January, February, March and April raised £1200 for 7 different charities. Thanks to all who supported them and to the helpers each time. If you have a particular charity for which you would like to raise money in the future we would be delighted to hear from you.

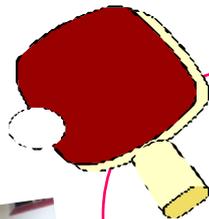


TABLE TENNIS

In the Kingsland Hall 7.30pm - 9pm

All ages and abilities welcome.

Even if you have never held a bat, but would like to have a go, we will introduce you to the game. It is fun and friendly and a good way to have some exercise.

MONDAYS

**4th June,
2nd and 16th July,
6th and 20th Aug,
3rd Sept**



ACTIVITIES

5

WHAT'S ON ?



BOOK CIRCLE

At 'The Gate', Northwood
7.30pm

27th June
The Outrun by Amy Liptrot

1st August
Crisis by Frank Gardner

COME AND SING GROUP

A small friendly group who sing at special services (Christmas, Easter & other occasions). They also sing for the Templeton Centre 2 or 3 times a year and give other concerts.

Join us at Northwood Hills on Fridays from 8pm to 9pm:

27th April – 29th June
not Friday 1st June



COFFEE AND CHAT

Drop into Northwood Hills
Anytime between
10.30am and Noon

Wednesdays
27th June
25th July
22nd August



SUNDAY MORNING SERVICES

10.30am at Northwood Hills

3rd June	Revd Liz Shaw	Communion Service
10th June	Revd Liz Shaw	
17th June	Revd Liz Shaw	
24th June	Revd Liz Shaw	
1st July	Revd Liz Shaw	Communion Service
8th July	Revd Alyn Owens	
15th July	Peter Knowles	
22nd July	Revd Ken Marsh	
29th July	Revd Liz Shaw	<u>followed by Church Meeting</u>
5th August	Revd Liz Shaw	Communion Service
12th August	Revd Liz Shaw	
19th August	Revd Liz Shaw	
26th August	Revd Liz Shaw	
2nd September	Revd Liz Shaw	

SANDWICH SERVICES

12 noon at Northwood Hills

Short Service followed by a light lunch

Thursdays:

7th June, 5th July, 2nd August, 6th September



CHURCH NEWS

*Many
Congratulations*

To Eileen and Joyce who both celebrated 90th birthdays in March.

We were saddened to hear that Mary Jones had died. Due to ill health, she had been unable to attend church for some time. Our sympathy goes to Gordon and his family.

On Mothers' Day the service was led by Janet Clark and was the last Parade Service for our Uniformed Organisations. It was good to see so many of their parents and friends joining us on this special occasion. Some of the young people read poems or prayers dedicated to their mothers and helped to distribute daffodils to all ladies in the Congregation.

A Heartfelt Farewell

Our Church is not closing, but we are unable to support two buildings, so we are closing the Eastcote site and moving all our worship and activities to the Northwood Hills site.

Palm Sunday, 25th March, was sadly the last Act of Worship and Communion at Eastcote after 80 outstanding years of worship, witness and service.

We were expecting some visitors, but they just poured in; one of the largest congregations we have seen for years, some coming from as far afield as Cambridge and North Wales - they felt they had to be with us conscious that there would be no more worship within these hallowed walls. Others wanted to attend but were unable to travel or were involved in special services at their own Churches scattered throughout the country; Ministers with connections to our Church also wanted to come but had preaching or other commitments - all were with us in spirit. St. Andrew's meant so much to them and held a place in their hearts. This was ample evidence of the great far flung loving family of St. Andrew's throughout the world. This Palm Sunday service was one of celebration and thanksgiving for the years of worship at Eastcote. Palm Crosses were handed out as we entered, various people took part and the service included a meaningful Communion. The last hymn, sung to the tune Cwm Rhondda, had raised the roof on so many previous occasions. A fitting but sorrowful farewell.

At times the atmosphere was charged with feeling, some people emotionally upset. Afterwards, some initially were too overcome to speak or greet each other. When they recovered, they recalled the great times, the jam packed church, the inspirational leadership, uplifting services, electric atmosphere, the encouragement of youth, the Sunday School of 700, youth clubs, uniformed organisations, the shows, the outgoing mission and national initiatives plus the 11 who went on to enter the Ministry. No wonder it was among the leading churches in the denomination. True to tradition, we continued to reminisce for over an hour as we enjoyed tea, coffee, hot cross buns and biscuits.

When those visionary founding members in 1938 took their first tentative steps, little could they have imagined what a dynamic powerhouse they were creating.

Finally, thank God for St. Andrew's, its integrity, its high ideals and everything it stood for and all that flowed forth from our great Church.

Gavin Gillespie

Post Script:

That was such a special service on Sunday. Though, in sadness, it was good to be back at St. Andrew's - it was like coming home to all the familiar places and faces - though some dear ones missing. Thank you for the warm welcome. With a feeling of bereavement we went away but were so glad we attended the final act of faith in that dear place.

(Extract from a letter received from Judy Walker and her brother Philip Hawkins)



Easter Sunday and New Beginnings

After an emotional farewell to St. Andrew's last Sunday, Easter Day was our new beginning. The first time for our regular Sunday Worship at Northwood Hills. The church looked very familiar with so much of the St. Andrew's furniture having been moved there during the past few days. Thank you to all those people who worked so hard to make it feel so much 'like home'.

It was so good to see the church so full with over 50 members (some travelling from Oxfordshire to be with us), families, friends and visitors. There were some rousing hymns, sung lustily and contributions from the 'Come and Sing' group. Easter Sunday seemed such an appropriate day for our new beginnings. In her address, Liz reminded us that Jesus didn't want Mary or His Disciples to look back to the past or cling on to Him, but to move on to the future, which is what we must do. Before the Celebration of Communion, we Affirmed our Faith looking toward the future.

After the service, we enjoyed coffee, cake, biscuits and Easter eggs, but most of all, chatting and catching up with friends old and new.

Celia Williams

Mottisfont

The brochure says 'Step across the crystal clear river and enter a little piece of paradise' and how true that is.

The ancient spring shown on the front page gives Mottisfont its name. It is the 'font' around which the local community held their 'moots' or meetings more than a thousand years ago. Such a regular supply of fresh water made it an ideal place to build a medieval priory. At the Dissolution of the monasteries this 12th century Augustinian priory came into the hands of Lord Sandys, Chancellor to Henry VIII and it was converted into a house which has been changed by various owners over the intervening years.

On the first hot day of the year, the magnificent trees in the grounds were bursting into life and the spring flowers and blossom made a wonderful display. Later, a spectacular collection of roses will provide colour and scent in the walled garden.

The font is a very deep pool (hence the need for railings round it) and the stream leading from it eventually flows into the River Test famed for its salmon and trout. Sitting by the font in the warm sunshine was so peaceful, with the sound of the water and birdsong and the scent from the spring flowers all around.

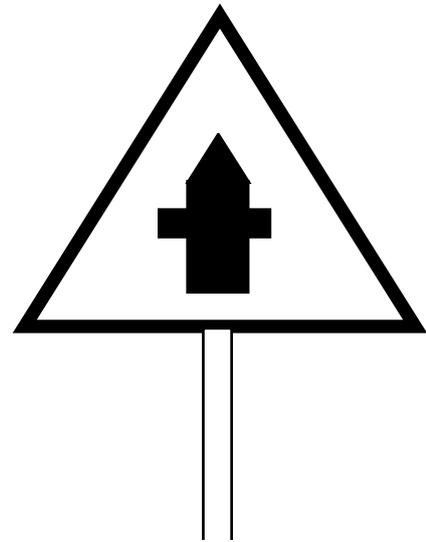
Celia Williams



And Finally.....

How to waste wisely my days

To awaken each morning with a smile brightening my face; to greet the day with reverence for the opportunities it contains; to approach my work with a clean mind; to hold before me, even in doing little things, the ultimate purpose toward which I am working; to meet people with laughter on my lips and love in my heart; to be gentle, kind and courteous through all the hours; to approach the night with weariness that ever woos sleep and the joy that comes from work well done - this is how I desire to waste wisely my days.



If you wander off the road to the right or left, you will hear His voice behind you saying, 'This is the road, follow it.'

**Next Issue -
Harvest 2018
Articles, news etc.
to
Celia Williams or Gavin Gillespie
By
29th July 2018**

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