

April 2017

The Rector writes:

Don't just do something, sit there!



The story is told of a student at Oxford who was confronted with a history paper question which asked, 'Was Queen Mary a good queen? (Be brief)'. The student simply answered 'Yes'. The examiner returned the script with a note which read, 'A good brief answer, but a better and even briefer one would have been "No"'.

We live in a world that is overwhelmed with words – 24/7 news media, and the development of social media mean that we are bombarded by words from the moment we get up, until we go to bed. Sadly many of the words are so often repeated that we reach a stage that they become almost meaningless – exactly the opposite purpose for which they were intended.

Bishop John Pritchard, long one of my favourite modern Christian writers, provides the title for my letter this month – as in his latest book he identifies a 'need for stillness' in modern life. This is something that the secular world is beginning to address too, the subject of 'mindfulness' seems to be filling the shelves of bookshops at present.

Mindfulness is defined as, 'a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations, used as a therapeutic technique'. It has its origins in the religious practice of meditation, particularly in Buddhist and Christian faiths.

When Mother Theresa of Calcutta was interviewed by a journalist on one occasion she admitted that she spent several hours each day in prayer. When asked how she found the words to pray for hours, she replied, 'I don't speak much to God, I just listen'. 'So what does God say to you', asked the journalist. 'Not much, I guess he just listens too', was the reply from that saintly lady.

In the last three weeks a small group of St Martin's members have been meeting to pray for revival. The pattern of our prayers has been to pray quietly and contemplatively, beginning with ourselves and moving outwards to pray for our church, community, nation, world or anywhere else the Holy Spirit might lead us. Though folk are able to share any thoughts or insights they might have, we use few words mostly being silent in our praying as we listen to God, and he to us. Several participants have remarked how quickly 45 minutes passes, how refreshing the process feels, and how beautiful and precious the stillness is in the midst of our busy lives.

Bishop Pritchard reminds us that the words 'silent' and 'listen' are made up of the same six letters. Silence is not about shutting out noise, but rather a quiet patient listening – undeterred by distractions and anxieties – but rising above them as our hearts and minds seek and occasionally find a real and deep engagement with God. As the psalmist reminds us, 'Be still, and know that I am God. I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth' (Psalm 46 v10).

Why not come and join us on Thursday evenings at 7.00pm? If you can't get out to church, why not find a quiet space at home for a similar exercise?

Yours in Christ,.

Reverend John, your Rector.

HOLY WEEK AND EASTER

The events of Holy Week and Easter are the most significant moments in the life of Jesus and centre on the two major tenets of our Christian faith – his death and resurrection. That is why the church focuses so much on worship in this Holy Season, and this year we hope to provide a varied programme of prayer, meditation and worship for the whole church family.

Passion Sunday

In the evening, we will have a shortened Evensong followed by extracts from Stainer's 'Crucifixion' sung by the choir.

Palm Sunday

We shall gather at the **Rectory at 9.30am for the Liturgy of the Palms**, before heading in procession through the village to **St Martin's for a Palm Sunday family service at 10.00am.**

Holy Week

The story of our Lord's journey to the Cross is well known, powerful and painful – sometimes we pass over it too quickly. This year we shall be using material from Stephen Cottrell (Bishop of Chelmsford) – 'The things he carried' – a series of meditations that we shall use throughout the week and in our Good Friday devotions.

This year we plan a quiet start to Holy Week with a series of imaginative reflections on 'The services of **Holy Communion each evening at 7.30pm.**

Maundy Thursday

Many of you enjoyed the **Agape** last year, and we hope to repeat the experience this year in the **Brass Crosby Room at**

7.30pm. We will share a lamb casserole supper and join in a simple table Eucharist as we commemorate the Last Supper. This will be followed by the stripping of the church, and the keeping of a short vigil of prayer in church, reflecting on Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Good Friday

Worship on this most holy day begins with **Litany and Ante-Communion at 8.00am.**

In the morning you are invited to join with the folk from churches all over Orpington for a **Walk of Witness and Worship in Orpington Town Centre.** This will set off from Orpington Methodist church on Sevenoaks Road after a short act of worship at 10.30am. Our devotions at St Martin's will see us keep an hour's **'Watch by the Cross' from 2.00 – 3.00pm in the afternoon.**

Holy Saturday

Come and help decorate the church for Easter in the morning, and join us for the **Easter Vigil Service at 8.00pm.**

Easter Day

Services of **Holy Communion at 8.00am (BCP) and 10.00 Family Eucharist (with Easter Egg Hunt) and 11.00 a BCP Eucharist** as we celebrate the joy of the Resurrection. There will also be **Evensong at 6.30pm.**

Above all remember that Christ died and rose for you,
to him be glory for ever! Amen.