

## ST MATTHEW

### “IN TOUCH”

#### EASTER 3

Isolation is proving a challenge to many people. It's not that we don't like being on our own, but not being able to have the freedom to explore options. Speak to a neighbour, meet with family or other special friend, wonder the shops or visit the library are the types of activities that are special to us and we grieve their loss. Humans are relational and our 'soul' thrives on those special connections.

Living on our lonesome can sometimes play with our mind, we begin to wonder how long we might have to endure the 'lockdown' and some news media reports suggesting for 70 and overs it might be well into next year is emotionally a challenging thought.

On the other side of the story are the reports of family finally finding time to be together and once again simple games can be more fun than the television. But several months of monopoly can be monotonous and our love of personal space is surely tested.

The worst of these extraordinary 'lockdown' times is the concern for some people's mental health. Let's hope being too close together does not result on failed marriages.

Nelson Mandela made the famous quote, 'I learnt that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it' Lock down is only one narrative of life. The primary one is Resurrection.

Through past centuries Easter was so often applied just to the end of life. "Praise the Lord". But it also has far more pertinent messages as we look closely at some of the detail. Resurrection speaks powerful of community. Hence when we celebrate the resurrection feast of bread and wine we are required to always have two people present. It is a love feast for a community, God, neighbour and self.

Community is the arena in which we truly flourish as humans. Yet it is not a smooth ride. It is more like a football field where people clash in the rough and tumble of their living. The Easter day gathering in the upper room speaks clearly of a relational message.

Jesus appears in the midst of this broken community. Out of fear they are in a self-imposed 'lockdown'. We read the doors are locked for fear of the Jews. Individually they carry their own scars of betrayal, denial, doubt. Jesus first word is 'Peace'. Fancy the spokesperson of God declaring the divine message of loving reconciliation with the Almighty. Paul captured the essence of resurrection in later writing, by declaring, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. This is the peace that passes all understanding, that we refer to at the conclusion of our Holy Communion service.

Beyond all understanding takes us to the core of existence where the notion of Spirit is perceived in the fulness of Holiness. Jesus illustrated this in a powerful and dramatic way. His greeting of Peace. 'Peace be with you', was followed by the gesture, 'and he breathed on them and said receive the Holy Spirit'. 'Resurrection is reconciliation with the very Spirit of the divine. Reconciliation with the concept of Being in its Becoming to use a famous saying of Inter-Faith Theologian Raimon Panikkar.

Far from waiting till we die, we have a mission to share in the 'becoming.' The gift of reconciliation comes with a mission for living. To live in this gift of peace he instructs, 'Whose soever sins you forgive they are forgiven. Reconciliation and Peace are the mission of resurrection. We are to learn to live with the very purpose of rebuilding relationships by fulfilling the new commandment Jesus gave us, love one another as He has loved us.

Being lockdown is only one part of our story in these days. Resurrection is the other primary story.

Yes, Alleluia he is risen, He is risen indeed. Alleluia, Alleluia. Amen

## OUR NEW VICAR, THE REVD. COLLEEN CLAYTON

Following Fr Rays few months in the parish early 2019, Jane and I came to St. Matthew's on the 25<sup>th</sup> April, the few days after Easter to act as your locum. As a neighbour at various times of our life we had been familiar with the parish, particularly through my mother Helen. We immediately felt welcomed and have delighted in the fond relationships we have developed. There is something about gathering in a church for the intimacy of worship that creates a subtle bond between one another. The spirit never stops consolidating a deep unity for those actively engaging in the building up of the body. While this is the gift of worship, the chance to fondly interact with people in a more face to face engagement enables a flourishing of relationships to the point of friendship. The spirit encourages this and how we all found we naturally wanted to gather for a coffee and chat after church even through January. Christian friendship is a unique blessing of life as we trustingly share our stories with one another. Jane and I have been so blessed amongst you. We thank you.

Week by week the parish has been moving toward a new ministry of 'faith' in this fine parish of 150 years in Cheltenham. Firstly, with the Incumbency committee and then gradually with the wardens, stories of excitement have been seeping through to us of Colleen and our excitement has been growing. I watched her final service at St. Johns Camberwell 'online' last Sunday and as their priest Fr John Baldock shared an emotional farewell I empathised with their sense of loss hearing of how fondly they had enjoyed her time with them. But my feeling for them was certainly coloured by the knowledge that her mind would now be turning to us. We can rightly be excited for she will be a wonderful spiritual leader for us.

It is the strangest of times for anyone to have to enter a new community, but next Tuesday Colleen and her husband, the Bishop and a few of our representatives will gather to formalise her calling as our 'Priest in Charge.' In the weeks and month's ahead Colleen and Stephen, Hannah and in spirit Matthew will be living in the renovated vicarage to settle into our midst. There will be some interesting and innovative ways she will explore to get to know us in our time of physical isolation. In just a few words I say on behalf of all of us 'welcome'. We are excited.

WE CAN HELP MAKE COLLEEN WELCOME AND BELOW IS ONE SUGGESTION.

For perhaps several months Colleen will commence her new ministry as our vicar in the quietness of isolation.

I would suggest the reopening of the church might be a special day of celebration and personal welcoming of Colleen.

**So, I am inviting parishioners to send a greeting card or letter to Vicar Colleen.**

**Include a paragraph or so, introducing yourself and perhaps your special people (yes and animals) and something of your life. Most importantly include a picture.**

Don't forget your contact details.

Telephone, Email, residential address

Try to set up 'Zoom' on your computer or iphone

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Post to:  
The Revd. Colleen Clayton  
St. Matthew's Anglican Church, 161 Park Road, Cheltenham, 3192