

CMR: April message – Easter

Dear Friends,

Our April message starts with Easter Greetings. Christ is Risen. Hallelujah.

We are given the wonderful news that God has conquered life and death through Jesus – through his Crucifixion, death and rising again on Easter Sunday. God has fulfilled his promises and covenants made in the Old Testament and we have inherited a new status as God's beloved children, his sons and daughters – blessed and sustained by his love. Easter is our annual celebration of this wonderful status that we enjoy with God.

Spring and Easter are times when we experience the joy and wonder of new life. All through the winter bulbs and plants have been preparing to grow to populate and beautify our gardens and fields. There is new life in our hedgerows and in our fields. Thankfully nature has not been subjected to the same lock-down we have been. With lower infections and higher vaccinations, there are signs that life is starting to ease for us. Places of worship have been allowed to reopen with reduced numbers. Unfortunately, in our situation at Ruthwell Church we are not able to meet all the conditions which would allow us to reopen safely as yet. The Kirk Session has decided to consider reopening when we hear the new restrictions likely to be in place after May 17 – hoping that they will be less onerous.

There are pictures on the Ruthwell Cross relating to Easter. The first of these is of Jesus on the Cross – a crucifix. While unusual to our post-Reformation minds, this was a regular way for pre-Reformation people to portray Jesus at Easter. They were reminding themselves of the great cost of God's love for us – which was Jesus' death. They were reminding themselves that, although they were centuries removed from Jesus' death and were believers – what they did in their lives was still a contributing factor to human behaviour that had led to Jesus' death. They wanted to remind themselves of the horror, shame and pain of Jesus' death – and the part they played in it.

At the Reformation, the new Church wanted to do away with all images that spoke of idolatry. Many were destroyed immediately after the Reformation. The Ruthwell Cross was eventually taken down as well – but in a protected way until it could be restored.

The positive idea behind the removal of images and crucifixes was the fact that the Easter message tells us that the Cross of Good Friday is now empty. Christ is Risen. He is no longer nailed to the Cross or buried in the Tomb. He has joined his Father in Glory and is now available to all of us in our individual situations – surrounding us with God's love and strength and equipping us to lead full and fulfilled lives.

However, the pre-Reformation Church didn't just have Christ on the Cross to look at. There is another picture on the Ruthwell Cross of Christ Glorified – Jesus in all his risen majesty.

So, in our three pictures, the two on the Ruthwell Cross and our own one of the empty Cross, we have reminders of God's great love – working over many centuries – in many people's lives – until it came to its great climax at Easter. We are truly blessed to know of this and to be able to use it in our lives together.

As a Church, Kirk Session and Congregation, we are still maintaining contacts within the parish. The elders are there to help in their districts and our Locum, Rev Gerald Moule is continuing his pastoral work by telephone. If you wish to contact him, his number is 01683 220667 and his email is: [groule@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:groule@hotmail.co.uk).

The website has contact details for Fiona Sloan and myself if you cannot contact anyone else. Even as we look forward to coming out of the restrictions, we have to be sure that we keep and cultivate the connections we have made with and for each other during Covid-19. They are good in themselves and will enhance our Church and Community in years to come.

Stay safe,

God bless,

Bill Holland  
(Interim Moderator)