

Pandemic Pastoral Letter #15 | 27th March 2021

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?'

Exodus Luke 24:30-32, NRSV

Dear «Forenames»,

When I wrote the first *Pandemic Pastoral Letter* we were close to Holy Week 2020. Never in a million years did I expect 12 months on to still be writing to you in what has for this moment become a monthly routine. If I've learnt anything over this pandemic, it is to expect the unexpected and don't plan too far ahead – because chance is, plans will have to change!

If expecting the unexpected is something we have become more used to as a result of the pandemic, perhaps it will make us more open and aware to just how unexpected and life-changing Jesus resurrection appearances were for those Jesus appeared to.

Take the duo on the Emmaus road for example (read the full story in Luke 24:13-35). The duo have been walking and talking to a stranger for ages, they invite him into their home to break bread together, and then, at the moment they have invited the stranger to break the bread, their eyes are opened, and they see this stranger for who he is – the one they have spent all this journey talking about. Jesus is there. Jesus is not dead. Jesus is alive. Unbelievable – but yet they believe.

It is curious that they don't recognise Jesus in the beginning. In movies that depict the time, Jesus is often clothed in large cloak with hood to suggest the stranger was seeking to conceal their identity. But I'm not convinced that's the case. When we look across all the post-resurrection gospel stories, one thing in common is that Jesus' physicality has changed. He can seemingly appear and disappear from people's sight, multiple people are recorded to not initially recognise him, and he can even appear to the disciples within a locked room! ***Unexpected or what?!?***

Seemingly, post-resurrection the body of Christ does not appear the same. Christ's embodiment among the people seems more flexible and unexpected, changed and somehow transcends the norms of physical form. Yet when people are ready to see, Christ is still recognised as friend and saviour, who eats at our table, holds out his scarred hands for us, and invites us to journey with him.

As we continue to consider what post-pandemic life will look like- in our churches, and our lives, I wonder if this truth of the post-resurrection story helps us. Many of you have said to me you don't believe things will ever be the same. Indeed, this is the message we are hearing across society. That in some ways can feel a bit scary and uncertain, not being sure what things will look like in the future can be a source of anxiety.

But as the post-resurrection stories remind us, no matter how different and uncertain things around us may appear, if we are ready to see, Christ remains certain and constant. Christ continues to appear to us with his scarred, yet open arms outstretched towards us, inviting us to continue journeying with him.

In peace & hope, Rev Dan

News & Updates

Worshipping Together Booklets & Prayer Guide

The Worshipping Together booklet for April is enclosed.

Holy Week: 'Voices of the Witnesses'

A reminder that Throughout Holy week we are holding a reflective time of worship each weekday evening at 7:30pm, lasting around 30minutes. Each Day we will reflect on a different voice among those who witnessed to Jesus' ministry and the events of Holy Week. Join via the Together Channel.

SONrise Encounters

We encourage you to meet the rising sun to celebrate the Risen Son using the leaflet and ideas to do so enclosed.

Easter @ Bognor Regis – open for prayer

All are invited to BRMC which will be open for prayer between 10am and 12noon on Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

Easter Cross @ Felpham

The Easter cross will be out in the car park on Good Friday and all are invited from Easter Saturday onwards to come at a time appropriate for you to add flowers to the cross which will stand for the many passers by to see, along with our Easter Window display.

Small Meet up's

You may be aware that from 29th March restrictions will permit meet ups outside for groups of up to 6 people. Many of us have missed social time together, so I encourage you if you feel confident, or want to gently build your confidence, to talk to others about informally meeting up - for a walk, on a park bench, in your garden or on your driveway.

You could also consider a mini time of fellowship to discuss faith and/or a bible passage. If you feel up for it, please take the opportunity to build one another up in love and we live as disciples together – while also keeping as safe as you can!

Zoom Coffee

Every **Wednesday at 10:30am** you can join our zoom and phone-in coffee morning, hosted by Lynne James, and accessed via the Together channel. Bring your favourite brew, biscuit, or cake of your choice and enjoy chance to share fellowship with each other. All welcome.

On 21st April this will include a quiz, including questions prepared by Roger Saunders. Bring your brains and have some fun!

COVID-19 - Update on Transition to resuming face to face worship

Thank you to all of you who responded to our quick survey over the last few weeks to indicate how you currently feel about resuming face to face worship. These responses have been really helpful and in general show a vast spectrum of feeling among all 3 congregations. From the responses, it was very hard to find a majority view, with all 3 congregations having fairly equally split indication in terms of feeling 'ready' to return, or wanting to wait longer.

Following this our TOTs have met and, with some further consultation with others, we can now confirm our intentions for transitioning to the resumption of face to face worship in our buildings, while also maintaining opportunities for worship at home, to ensure that despite how scattered things may feel, we all have opportunity to gather as God's people.

Continued Worship at home, by phone and online

While face to face worship is planned to resume in our buildings over the coming weeks, our **9am Together** services will continue to be available by phone or zoom with our Together Channel. Connection details, as always, included over the page.

We will also continue to stream a service from Felpham each week at **10:30am**, again available by phone and zoom, joining instructions over the page.

Bognor Regis: Trustees met on 24th March and unanimously agreed to resume face to face Worship on Sundays at 10:30am from 2nd May. Updated guidance will follow closer to the time.

Felpham: Our oversight team have put arrangements in place to resume face to face worship from 4th April. Updated guidance is enclosed. Please take particular note of the key updates to guidance in **purple**.

Westergate: Our oversight teams are putting arrangements in place to resume face to face worship from 18th April. Updated guidance is enclosed. Please take particular note of the key updates to guidance in **purple**.

Continuing Oversight and feedback

Our oversight teams will now work with others to put arrangements in place to review our risk assessments in light of recent updates to government guidance to ensure we meet in ways that remain as safe as they can be. All these arrangements will continue

to be under review based on the ongoing picture of the pandemic, both locally and nationally.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, now or in the weeks ahead, please contact a church leader or Rev Dan.

Worship in April

The below summarises the circuit plan for our section of the circuit for April, with opportunities for worship by phone, online and face to face.

April	4 th <i>Easter Day</i>	11 th	18 th	25 th
Together 9am <i>Zoom and Phone</i>	Dan Balsdon & team	Dan Balsdon & team	Dan Balsdon & team	Dan Balsdon & team
Morning Worship @ 10:30am Streamed by zoom and phone + Face to Face @ Felpham	Dan Balsdon	Lynne James	Malcolm Lindo	Dan Balsdon
Morning Worship @ 10:30am Westergate	---	---	Dan Balsdon	---

Together Channel Details

All services will be held on our shared Together Channel

access details for phone and/or zoom below:

Join Via Telephone

the cost of the call will be equivalent to your standard rate as per your telephone bill.

1. Call **one** of the Dial in by phone numbers from a mobile or landline.
It shouldn't matter which number you call, occasionally one doesn't work, if this happens for you, hang up and try a different number.

📞 **0203 481 5237** 📞 **0203 481 5240** 📞 **0203 051 2874**
📞 **0203 901 7895** 📞 **0131 460 1196**

2. When asked enter the meeting ID. For **Together** this is **878 7997 8475** and press **#**
3. (optional) You will be offered opportunity to add a participant ID, you can skip this step by pressing **#**
4. When asked enter the meeting password. For **Together** this is **473352**

Telephone Controls when in a call.

Get the attention of the host by pressing * 9

Mute/Unmute by pressing * 6

Join Via Zoom (on desktop, laptop, tablet or smartphone)

1. Visit <https://zoom.us/> and click 'Join a meeting' – or open the zoom app.
2. Enter the Meeting ID: **878 7997 8475** press enter/return
3. Enter the meeting Password: **473352** press enter/return