

HOLY TRINITY CUCKFIELD

Joyfully serving Jesus



Weekly devotions, prayers and news
Fourth Sunday of Easter
30 April 2023

The book of Acts gives us a glimpse of what the early church was like following the dramatic events of Pentecost. We are told that the early Christians devoted themselves to the apostles teaching, to fellowship with one another, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. This was a community of people united in purpose and identity, a community that existed not for its own sake, but to care for its most vulnerable members and reach out to others in need. They understood that following Jesus involved commitment and a totally new way of thinking and living. As a result the early church was so vibrant, loving and joyful that those who observed it saw something really attractive and appealing and the community grew day by day, both spiritually and numerically.

We may be tempted to look at this idealistic portrait and feel a sense of despair at how the church sometimes looks, or how it is often perceived to be today. Or we could see it as a vision of what the Holy Spirit can do, has done and will do again, and a challenge to us all to be open to his transforming power so we become the church that Christ would have us to be.

Jane & Brian

Church website: www.holytrinitycuckfield.org

Fourth Sunday of Easter (30 April 2023)

8.00 Holy Communion *(in church)*

Readers: Margaret Thistlethwaite & Ralph Colbran

9.45 Parish Eucharist *(in church & online)*

Readers: David Reed & Susan Mayou; Intercessor: Janes Sanders

Hymns: 207, 568, 221, 724, 712, 624

Services during the week:

Wednesday: 10.30 Holy Communion (C. Worship) *(in church & online)*

Readings: Acts 12: 24-13: 5; John 12: 44-end

Thursday: 9.00 Holy Communion (Iona/Celtic) *(in church)*

Readings: Acts 13: 13-25; John 13: 16-20

Friday: 11.00 Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer) *Readings: Fourth Sunday of Easter (in church)*

Next Sunday: Fifth Sunday of Easter (7 May 2023)

8.00 Holy Communion *(in church)*

9.45 Parish Eucharist *(in church & online)*

11.15 Family Praise

6.00 Choral Evensong for the Coronation *(in church & online)*

For services live on Zoom: Click the blue link on the front page of the church website

The Collect Fourth Sunday of Easter

.Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life: raise us, who trust in him, from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, that we may see those things which are above, where he reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

The Post Communion Prayer:

Merciful Father, you gave your Son Jesus Christ to be the good shepherd, and in his love for us to lay down his life and rise again: keep us always under his protection, and give us grace to follow in his steps; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Acts 2: 42-end

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

I Peter 2: 19-end

For it is to your credit if, being aware of God, you endure pain while suffering unjustly. If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, where is the credit in that? But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps.

'He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.'

When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

John 10: 1-10

'Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.' Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

So again Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

A thought: 4th Sunday of Easter 30th April 2023

Jesus promises that with the Lord as our shepherd, we will "come in and go out and find pasture." Outside the fold, sheep are under threat from predators. The shepherd's rod and staff are not only comfort, but protection. But the biggest risk comes from the sheep themselves – they are apt to wander off, each to its own way.

Jesus, however, seems especially concerned about dangers inside the sheepfold. Even in our place of shelter and rest, thieves may come in to steal and kill and destroy. Some slip over the walls and whisper to us that our Easter hope is misguided, that we truly are following blindly, that death, after all, will have the final word. Some thieves call to us from outside, telling us that our shelter is a prison and that we'd do better to leave behind our false sense of security.

Then, sometimes, our own wandering hearts tempt us in the same way, giving us false hope that there's an easier path to 'transcendence', without all the work and uncertainty of transformation by the grace of God.

In the eyes of the world, we may seem foolish to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. A thousand competing voices call to us that we should look for escape instead of sacrifice, should seek an easier bliss than the peace of God. But Jesus doesn't call us to become something different; he calls us to grow into who we truly are. The Good Shepherd doesn't round up the sheep with a whistle, or dogs. The Good Shepherd calls the sheep by name.

In the end, our only wisdom is to know our shepherd's voice. Our one skill as sheep is to listen – to listen from the deep place in which we recognize who we truly are, and whose we truly are. Because the Good Shepherd is the only one who calls us by our own names, our true names.

A prayer for this time of Vacancy:

Send us your Holy Spirit at this time of change and uncertainty, to fill us with vision, energy and faithfulness in prayer that we may be true to our calling to bring new life to our community; and guide with your heavenly wisdom those who are to choose a new priest for this Benefice, so that the one whom we receive may be a wise and gentle shepherd of your people, ready to serve us with joy, to build us up in faith, and to lead us by example, in loving obedience to your Son our Saviour, Jesus Christ.
Amen

Please remember those for whom we pray:

Immediate need: Paul Simpson, Martin Packham, Becky Parker, Eileen Caple, Karen Leese, Jim Knight, Peter Graydon,

Long Term Need: Young Georgia, Joshua and Reggie, Wendy, Ann Went, Julie Sadler, Wendy Hibling, Yvonne Godsmark, Carla Spear, Pam Sagar, Eileen Knight, Maureen Griffiths, Liz Graydon,, Eileen Macdougall, George Snashall, Tina Owens

Those in Care Homes: Mary Watts, Ruth Baker,, Rosemary Pardey, Janet Card,

Please remember the recently departed and their families: Val Thompson, Jeremy Cutler, Jonathan Rowe

In our Book of Remembrance this week we remember: 1st Isabel Durham, William Llewellyn,
2nd John Wilcox, Gerald Leaney, Derek Wood, Robert Buckle,, Douglas Simpson, 3rd Eileen Hall, 4th Iris Simmons,
Irene Garley, John Williams, Viola Muddle, 5th Peter Irving, 6th Angela Turner, Richard Beddington