

## Dates for the Diary

2<sup>nd</sup> April 2021 – Good Friday

4<sup>th</sup> April 2021 – Easter Sunday

25<sup>th</sup> April 2021 – APCM after the afternoon service

17<sup>th</sup> May 2021 – Confirmation Service

## Confirmation Service

There is a confirmation service planned for Mon 17<sup>th</sup> May 7.30pm at St. Thomas Church, Box with Bishop Lee

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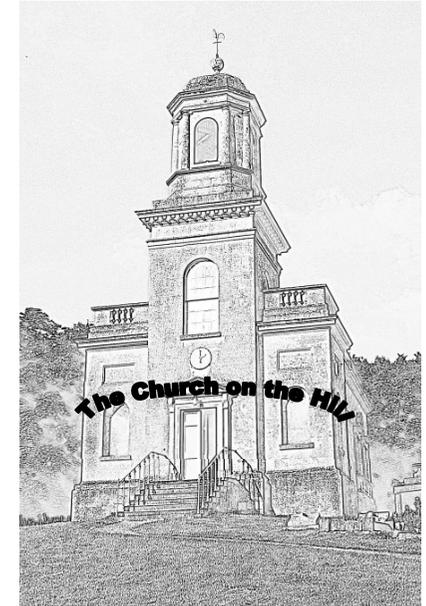
## Greenways Group of Churches

# St. Nicholas News April 2021

*The Rt Rev Maurice Wood (1916-2007)*

*Bishop Maurice Wood prayer seems appropriate for Hardenhuish:*

*“Make us like a city set on a hill whose light cannot be hidden; so that men and women and children may find Christ as the light of the world, and his church as the family of the redeemed, and eternal life as the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord”*



<b>Sunday</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> April</b>	<b>4 p.m.</b>	<b>Easter Day Service</b>
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>11<sup>th</sup> April</b>	<b>4 p.m.</b>	<b>Come &amp; Praise</b>
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>18<sup>th</sup> April</b>	<b>4 p.m.</b>	<b>Come &amp; Praise</b>
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>25<sup>th</sup> April</b>	<b>4 p.m.</b>	<b>Come &amp; Praise followed by St Nicholas APCM</b>

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## **Ministry Musings**

HE HAS RISEN .....

'Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb'. ( John 20 : 1)

The drama of Holy Week comes to its climax in the resurrection of Christ. Encountering the risen Christ on that first Easter Day brought a new truth of his presence into the lives of the disciples and the women who followed Jesus.

Mary Magdalene was a remarkable woman, but little is known of her life before she met Jesus. We know that she lived in darkness, constantly tormented by demons ( Luke 8: 2) and her life was insignificant until she met Jesus and was healed. She realised the authority of Jesus, she knew he was the Messiah and she followed him to the very end.

Familiarity would have developed over the three year span of his ministry. She listened to his teaching and marvelled at his compassion for the suffering and marginalised.

When Jesus was arrested the disciples scattered but she remained at the foot of the cross with Mary the mother of Jesus. She was the first person he appeared to after he rose from the dead and she was the one he sent to tell the disciples the amazing news, " He has risen"

We may know very little about this woman, but Jesus knew her. He knew exactly what he had delivered her from and for, the old was gone and dead, Jesus had given her new life.

Jesus often called people who were in need or despair. He saw the potential and what he could make of their lives,

Peter, the stubborn fisherman, became the 'rock' of the Church. Matthew, the taxman traitor, became a disciple and author of the first Gospel,

"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine" ( Isaiah 43:1)

So, it is with us, he calls us by name, we have new life in Jesus.

Resurrection hope and joy are ours, just as it was with Mary Magdalene and the disciples when they heard the news.

Resurrection hope and joy which comes from God's presence, abiding love and a hope for this life and beyond.

A prayer for Easter, A prayer for all

Lord, on this glorious Easter Day we celebrate your rising from the dead offering us peace, joy and hope. May we all realise the new life and hope we can have through knowing you and pass this Easter hope onto others. Amen.

Christ is risen.....He is risen indeed.....Hallelujah!

A Very Happy Easter to you all,

**Judith**

## An Easter message from the Bishop

*This sermon was given by Bishop Viv on Sunday 4 April 2021 at Bristol Cathedral.*

### **Let's start the Easter drama with the women.**

That Easter Day was never going to be easy— the journey to the tomb at sunrise, no doubt because that was the safest time to go for the women, at risk because of their allegiance to Jesus, and no doubt because of their gender. Their day got no better, ending with Mary of Magdalen, Mary the mother of James and Salome running from the empty tomb we are told, in terror and amazement, or, to regain the force of the Greek they fled, traumatised and ecstatic.

Those two emotions, both overwhelming and almost impossible to hold together in our imaginations.

The followers of Jesus, and I include the women amongst these disciples, had never found discipleship easy. They were described as fearful in stormy boat crossings, at the transfiguration and throughout the journey to Jerusalem. No doubt that was an entirely human response.

I wonder when you last felt terror with all its bodily symptoms; the twisting gut, the sweat, the dry throat, the lungs constrained. Fear isn't itself good or bad, but it is important because it tells us what we love. The quickest way to find out what or whom someone loves is to find out what they are afraid of. We fear because we don't want to lose what we love. We fear intensely when we love intensely or when we think that what or whom we love is in real danger. So a world without fear wouldn't be a good thing because it wouldn't just be a world without danger, it would be a world without love. St Thomas Aquinas described the object of fear as a future evil that is imminent, or great magnitude and threatening huge loss.

And how accurately that describes our experiences of the Covid pandemic with its threat to all which is familiar and all we rely on and everything which

gives our lives value and all we love. Boy, have we been afraid, and boy are we still.

So we can, perhaps, better than for many many years understand Mary of Magdala and Mary the mother of James and Salome, hyper alert as they made their way to the tomb, their worry focused on the stone – who would roll it away? That's the thing about fear. It make us worry about things that turn out to be utterly irrelevant. But still it saps our souls if we don't attend to what that fear means. And to their fear was added alarm at the young man sat inside the tomb, and on the right side and dressed in white. Sometimes, in fear, we remember every single detail with great clarity, though without understanding the whole. The Marys and Salome certainly didn't get it. Having been told (admittedly after months of being told by Jesus not to tell), having been told to tell the disciples and (specifically) Peter, they fled, terrified and amazed, but saying nothing.

We can, after months of pandemic, perhaps understand how hard it is to speak. We have run out of words, or can't find the words to talk of the fears and hurts which go so deep, of the hopes and longings which we don't dare to trust. There will be much listening to do in the months ahead, to enable people to find the right words, to begin little by little, to heal.

They were afraid, you see.

And so Mark's gospel ends. With terror, but also amazement. The message to tell the disciples and Peter apparently not relayed. And so the the lights go down on Act 1 of this Easter drama.

Offstage are the risen Christ, and now the women. An intriguing juxtaposition.

And so to Act 2.

And, as recorded in the first reading, Peter speaking of what he does now know. Astonishingly and amazingly we hear the Peter who denied Jesus affirming his faith in the Jesus who who lived, died and rose again and is now sending his followers to testify. By whoever and however the message has got out and Peter is no longer anxious or afraid because he has seen the Lord.

The context of Peter's testimony is crucial. Peter is in the house of Cornelius, a centurion and not just any centurion but a centurion from the Italian cohort. Peter a Galilean fisherman is facing his erstwhile oppressor, a sophisticated Roman and extraordinarily they are finding common ground in their ecstatic experience, the experience each has had of the spirit of God speaking directly to them. If you read the surrounding verses you will know that it wasn't just Peter who was amazed and astonished and ecstatic, literally beside himself. Nor was it just Cornelius. It was Stephen, and Paul, and Ananias the go between and the women out of sight.

So in Act 2 we see Peter is having a profound theological conversation with someone of a very different faith and world view who might have condemned him as provincial, unsophisticated, uneducated and deluded. But Peter is taking that risk. Peter is claiming authority to speak for Christ. And taking that risk. And, let's not underestimate the risk, for who knew what Cornelius was really up to? Peter is, potentially, risking his life. The fear which had imprisoned Peter, had imprisoned them all, the fear that Jesus, whom they loved, had gone, had evaporated. Because they had all seen the Lord who is now going ahead of them..

And the lights go down on Act 2 of this Easter Drama.

And the scene shifts to Bristol Cathedral, to Easter 2021, to this congregation, here and scattered.

Let's be honest. We are still afraid. We have been deeply affected by the pandemic and lockdown and will be tempted to cling to what has become familiar. As an example near to home, the apparent safety of self isolation, the calm of this cathedral church even if watched from a distance has had its own preciousness. Cathedrals will always be tempted to pull up the drawbridge, its communities behave like castle dwellers, failing to see that castles can become prisons.

Yet even during lockdown you opened your hearts and the cathedral to Greta Thunberg and out of that a new understanding of how the space around the cathedral might be increasingly greened. And just this week, fissures opened between the peoples of the city – Dean Mandy and Canon Martin were out on College Green with those who had gathered and listening to their concerns about the direction our nation seems to have been set, and the fading hope

that we might build back better and build together equitably, justly and peacefully.

I know that you will, in this new phase of the cathedral's life with new team members want to enable this cathedral to be increasingly porous to the life of the energised, creative, divided and sometimes, yes, scary city that we too, touched by Christ in the eucharist, confident in the Christ who is ahead of us may, with Peter and all the apostles, speak of that Christ and of the new life in him.

So the drama draws to a close.

The story of the women at the tomb, imprisoned by fear and unable to speak.

The story of Peter, released from failure and almost beside himself with words.

Stories of terror and amazement.

Which story is ours? Which story is yours? Will you flee Christ? Or will you follow Christ? How will the drama conclude for you?