



Sunday 24th April 2022

Second Sunday of Easter

Points for Prayer. We hold in prayer the ongoing conflict in Ukraine praying for peace. We particularly pray for those families who are facing separation due to the conflict.

April and May Editions of The Beacon Magazine are available in the churches now.



LLF Creative Prayer Event at Exeter Cathedral, 28 April: Drop-In Prayer Stations from 10am to 2pm, 12pm Service led by Bishop Jackie. You are invited to a time of prayer and reflection for the Living in Love and Faith discernment process as it goes forward. This event is being organised by the Diocese of Exeter Living in Love and Faith project group, led by the Bishop of Crediton, the Rt Rev'd Jackie Searle. It will include a time of gathered prayer when we will be praying for Bishop Robert and our General Synod representatives who will be involved in national discussions about the future direction for the Church of England in matters of relationships, sexuality, gender and marriage. If you have done the LLF course and would like to share your thoughts by completing the LLF survey, you have until 30 April to do so.

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/LLFcourse>

Over 200 Offers of Homes for Ukraine Thank you to everyone who has filled in the online expression of interest form offering accommodation to refugees from Ukraine. Around 220 people have filled it out so far. The Diocese of Exeter is working with the charity Citizens UK <https://www.citizensuk.org/> to act as a key sponsor in Devon to co-ordinate providing homes for Ukrainian refugees and help ensure ongoing community support. Citizens UK is linked to the Government's Homes for Ukraine scheme. Work is now underway with aid agencies in Poland to identify Ukrainians who would like to travel to the UK. The Diocese of Exeter will then be working to match up refugees with householders in Devon.

Exeter Diocese has set up a donations page to pay for the transport costs for Ukrainian refugees to travel to Devon. You can find out more and donate by clicking the link below or search for Exeter Diocese Ukraine Appeal at givealittle.co.uk

<https://givealittle.co/campaigns/2d2a1971-a8af-4500-a701-57eff0308c24>

Readings	This week	Next week
Readings for this Sunday:		
1st Reading	Acts 5:27-32	Acts 9:1-6
Psalm	118:14-End	30
2nd Reading	Revelation 1:4-8	Revelation 5:11-End
Gospel	John 20:19-End	John 21:1-19
Readings for the week ahead:		
Mon 25 th	Mark 13:5-13	Thurs 28 th John 3:31-End
Tue 26 th	John 15:18-21	Fri 29 th John 6:1-15
Wed 27 th	John 3:16-21	Sat 30 th John 6:16-21

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Today's Sunday Services

9.30 am	Holy Communion	- St Mary the Virgin, Denbury
11.00 am	Holy Communion	- Ss Peter and Paul, Broadhempston
11.00 am	Churches Together – Family Service	- St Andrew's, Ipplepen
6.00 pm	Scouts' St George's Day Parade	- Ipplepen

Morning Prayer

This week morning prayer will be said at the following times:

Tuesday	9.15 am	- St Andrew's Ipplepen
Wednesday	9.15 am	- Online Via Zoom (for the zoom password email rev.andrewdown@gmail.com)
Thursday	9.15 am	- St Mary the Virgin, Denbury
Friday	9.15 am	- Ss Peter and Paul, Broadhempston (A time of silent prayer and meditation)

Reflection

All our churches are open for private prayer and reflection throughout the week from approximately 9am to 5pm each day.

Mid-Week

Rev'd Andrew Down - Day off on Mondays.

Monday	3pm-5pm	T-Pot	- Church Cottage, Denbury
	7.30 pm	Bellringing Practice	- Ss Peter and Paul, Broadhempston
Tuesday	10.15am	Holy Communion	- St Andrew's Ipplepen
Wednesday	2.00 pm	Funeral Service & Burial of Royston George Hopkins	- St Andrew's, Ipplepen
	7.30 pm	Bellringing Practice	- St Andrew's, Ipplepen
Thursday	10.15 am	Holy Communion	- St Mary the Virgin, Denbury
	4.30 pm	Sta*x Youth Choir Practice	- St Andrew's, Ipplepen
Friday	2.00 pm	Funeral Service & Burial of Gwen Hayman	- St Andrew's, Ipplepen
	5.30 pm	Kids Disco (5.30pm - 7pm) followed by a Concert in the Church (7pm-11pm)	- Ss Peter and Paul, Broadhempston

Next Sunday 1st May 2022 – Third Sunday of Easter

9.30 am	Holy Communion	- St John the Baptist, Woodland
9.30 am	Celtic Morning Prayer	- St Mary the Virgin, Denbury
11.00 am	Holy Communion	- St Andrew's, Ipplepen
2.00 pm	Wedding Meeting	- St Andrew's, Ipplepen

In Memory: Michael Dow, Edith Mortimore, Penelope Kittow, David Day, Rita Day, Royston Hopkins and Gwen Hayman.



Reflection by Steve Sheldon

John 20:19-End
Sunday 24th April 2022

So here we are once again in that lonely room with the disciples huddled in fear and confusion. Here we are once again with Thomas.

Thomas who was the first Christian to vocalise in public his doubts about Jesus, to speak aloud the difficulty he was having with faith in the resurrection. Not doubts in Jesus, whom he knew and loved, but he's dead; Thomas had doubts in the resurrection. Having doubts, but none the less willing to struggle with those doubts, and wish that he could be a better believer. Thomas didn't run away, he kept faith with his friends.

Doubt is an important subject that can touch all of our lives. Few of us feel able to openly express our doubts like Thomas, we don't wear 'Doubter' tattooed on our foreheads. No matter how secure we are with our faith today, inevitably there will come a time when some tragedy in our life or in the world can shatter our faith like glass and doubts swallow us whole. The subject of doubting is always with us in the Church.

Some say that faith, belief, is a gift, gracefully given, and that we just have to accept it. And we sit around, and sit around, and wait for 'it' to happen, that magic moment of undiluted pure easy faith; that tingly glow of absolute certainty.

When 'it' doesn't come, that tingle, we sit around some more; and we get frustrated and we get impatient. We especially get impatient when we see others around us for whom 'faith' has been ever so easy and struggle-free.

Thomas wanted a miracle and so do we. And then we feel guilty or we feel broken and imperfect, we feel like failed believers, and our doubts swell up into enormous room-filling monsters.

Where's my miracle? Where's my proof? Bob Dylan once wrote, *'Many try to stop me, shake me up in my mind, saying "Prove to me that he is Lord, show me a sign." What kind of sign they need, when it all comes from within, when what's lost has been found, what's to come has already been.'*

So what kind of sign *do* we need? Thomas got his sign; he got to physically touch the resurrected Christ. But before that touch came the simplicity of Jesus saying, 'Peace be with you.'

Sometimes we get the answers to all of our arguments and rationality only after we have let them go. We allow Jesus to enter our lives just as he entered that lonely room with the doors shut.

Faith is *sometimes* more than just wanting to believe, striving and struggling to believe. It is letting go and letting the reality of God enter into that space in our hearts that was made just for him. Yeah, but how do we do that? Well, it's not like Thomas, just sitting around waiting.

If faith is a gift, it's still a gift that has to be unwrapped. You can't sit around with your Christmas present all wrapped up in paper and bows and ribbons and make use of it. You have to do something yourself if the Peace that Jesus bestows is going to find its way into your heart.

The Christian life is not passively waiting around for something to be done to you, but an **active response**, a response of love which we make to the living God whom we can encounter in the Church, in the Bible, in the Eucharist, in Creation, within ourselves and in other people. We can have life-transforming encounters with Jesus and the living God through our engagement with ordinary sinners like ourselves, encounters that can give us hope that God has us in his keeping. That's why Jesus lingered after his resurrection, to plant that assurance firmly in the hearts and minds of those who were going to have to continue with his teachings, so that those teachings can still reach us today 2000 years later.

These encounters which we can have with the World serve to assure us that Jesus **is** the way, the truth, the life, making us confident, certain, comfortable, and at peace with the Christian gospel. The more we seek out Jesus in the World, to see his presence wherever we may be, the closer we become and the more eager we are to respond with even greater love and devotion.

These encounters with Jesus in the World, in the Church, in Creation must be pursued. Thomas was lucky in that Jesus was still physically around at his great moment of doubt.

We have to open up a bit more and allow the presence of Jesus in the World to come to us through our Christian lifestyle. That's the unwrapping of the gift. It's a bit like training children too young to understand the importance of certain safety lessons, like looking both ways and holding Mummy's hand before crossing the road. They learn to do things through habit and discipline.

Sometimes we just have to take our doubts out onto the road, carry them with us and be disciplined enough to carry on as though we believed. God didn't reject Thomas for his doubt; God honoured it with the gift of Jesus' presence. Thomas wasn't punished or scorned by Jesus, he was transformed.

God's loving grace means that he will, over time, honour our doubt with the faith that we might be pretending to have, and maybe give us an extra dollop for good measure. Think of a young child wanting to run about and do her own thing out in the streets, but trusts Mummy just enough to hold her hand and wait until it is safe. In the end she will grow to understand the need for safety on the street, and it will gradually be a normal part of her life.

Faith can be acquired in the same way, through trusting, going out on the street under proper guidance, going along with it until the time comes when it is a perfectly normal part of life, full of confidence and certainty. No magic 'boom' moment, just a gradual unwrapping of that gift.

Thomas wanted his own personal Jesus; he wanted his own special miracle, experienced first hand, not like anybody else's. Jesus says to us: Happy are you who have never seen or touched me, but have unwrapped the gift and found Faith within.

Thank you Jesus for your patience with us; thank you for that steadfast enduring love that sustains us and carries us through times of doubt and darkness. Thank you for showing us the Father. Amen.