

## **St Mary's Ticehurst and St Augustine's Flimwell**

**To: Congregation members and those on our circulation list**

### **VICAR'S LETTER/UPDATE as at Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2021**

I do hope that Eastertide is proving more joyous than you expected. (As for me, just don't mention football.) It is helped hugely by being back in church for congregational worship. Even the death of Prince Philip, while a shock, led to uplifting reflections of his remarkable life of service. He arrived as a stateless refugee, and yet it has been our nation's privilege to take him in and benefit from his many global contributions. The main purpose of this letter is to make sure - especially for those without internet access/email - that you are aware that of our still interim and restricted ...

**WORSHIP SCHEDULE** as agreed by our PCCs (in St Mary's unless stated otherwise):

<u>Sun 25 April, Easter 4</u>	8am Communion (1662 BCP) 9.30am <b>Flimwell</b> Communion (Contemporary) 6.30pm Evening Prayer (1662 BCP)
<u>Sun 2 May, Easter 5</u>	9.30am Communion (Contemporary) 11am <b>Online (only)</b> Morning Worship
<u>Sun 9 May, Easter 6</u> (and <i>Rogation Sunday</i> )	8am Communion (1662 BCP) 9.30am <b>Flimwell</b> Morning Worship (Contemporary) 11am Morning Worship for Rogation Sunday
<b>Thurs 13 May</b>	10am <b>Ascension Day</b> Communion (1662 BCP)
<u>Sun 16 May, Easter 7</u> (Sun after Ascension)	8am Communion (1662 BCP) 11am St Mary's Morning Worship (livestreamed <u>with</u> congregation)
<u>Sun 23 May, Pentecost</u>	9.30am <b>Flimwell</b> Communion (Contemporary) 11am Day of Pentecost Communion (Contemporary) 6.30pm Evening Prayer (1662 BCP)
<u>30 May, Trinity Sunday</u>	8am Communion (1662 BCP) 11am Trinity Sunday Communion (Contemporary)

**Congregational services** will be shortened, said, face-masked and 2m distanced for the foreseeable.

**\*Online Worship** – viewable on our Facebook Page, [www.facebook.com/stMarysTicehurst](http://www.facebook.com/stMarysTicehurst)

Service sheets **for online worship** will be emailed out, on our [website](http://www.ticehurstandflimwell.org) and that of [www.achurchnearyou.com](http://www.achurchnearyou.com). If you are not on the internet/email and want a particular service sheet copied for you, get in touch with me.

**ECO CHURCH UPDATE.** *St Mary's holds the Eco Church Silver Award and is Animal Friendly Church of the Year.* **WWF Earth Hour:** we advertised the turning off of non-essential electric lights for the Hour at 8.30pm on 27 March, aiming to promote this more in 2022! **Deanery Synod:** Penny gave her presentation on our Eco Church journey and stimulated interest from many parish churches in the Deanery. See more on our website.

**Church Annual Meetings & Electoral Rolls.** St Augustine Flimwell's annual meeting (APCM) is on Tues 18 May at 7.30pm in church, its electoral roll revision period now over. St Mary's APCM is on Tues 25 May at 7pm in church. Only electoral roll members may vote. Any changes to St Mary's roll must be made to Dorothy Richardson by 7 May. Please see [website](http://www.ticehurstandflimwell.org) for formal Revision notices for contact details and further info.

**Family Support Work (FSW).** Sheila Syngé can be contacted (01580 860164) about collecting food and household items for FSW, serving East Sussex. **FSW OPEN GARDEN,** Sun 30 May, 1.30 to 5.30pm at Warren House, Eridge Green, TN3 9JR. Adults £6. You must book, go to: [www.familysupportwork.org/warrenhouse](http://www.familysupportwork.org/warrenhouse)

**Diocesan Worship Online** - can be watched on [www.chichester.anglican.org/liveservices](http://www.chichester.anglican.org/liveservices) and those at the Cathedral at [www.chichestercathedral.org.uk/worship/live-service](http://www.chichestercathedral.org.uk/worship/live-service)

**For those not on the internet – DAILY HOPE** for C of E worship, music, prayers, reflections: 0800 804 8044.

**CHURCH FINANCES.** Your continued giving, contactless or otherwise, is very welcome/needed. BACS details: Nat West Bank 60-22-15: Ticehurst PCC 71164383 or Parochial Church Council of Flimwell 35098651.

God bless you all. *Ashley Evans*

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It could be said that that Gospel rdg is about knowledge, belief and unbelief. Many have and would say that religion is about belief, while science is about knowledge. But some apologists (defenders of the faith) now question that assumption, arguing that scientists merely believe in theories! It might depend on the scientist and the branch of science involved. Did you like me have a science teacher who would unerringly bounce his chalk off your head (or a blackboard rubber depending on his mood). One such teacher would apparently declare "You see! It still works!" (Gravity, that is.)

So, what knowledge can we discern in our rdg? Thomas' friends didn't rush up to him and share their *belief* in the resurrection. It was as if they had seen the chalk hit the floor - "We have seen the Lord!" It exists ... *Resurrection!* How does Thomas react? Well, to call him Doubting Thomas seems over-kindly. He seems adamant. We know that Thomas missed seeing the risen Jesus for himself on the first Easter Day. To use the vernacular, he'd have been 'gutted'. His fellow disciples told him who they had seen, but he refused to believe them. Faith was required, and was entirely lacking. Doubt implies a wavering belief, existing belief that's beset by questions. As for Thomas? He'd no belief to waver. His best friends told him that they'd seen the Lord: and he didn't believe them. He insisted he'd believe only if he saw for himself. Thomas wasn't a Doubter, he was an Unbeliever!

It's normally assumed that the pivotal event in today's Gospel is Jesus' appearance. But in fact something significant happens first. In that first Easter week Thomas was an unbeliever, so he didn't really belong there. The last unbeliever with whom they'd shared supper had betrayed Jesus. These were increasingly dangerous times for the disciples. The sensible thing might have been to cast Thomas out, or kill him for heresy (what a ridiculous unthinkable suggestion – followers of Christ would never do that...). But when the disciples were gathered the following Sunday, Thomas was still with them. Awkward that surely, to have with them a man who believed Jesus was still a stone-cold corpse hidden away somewhere? Did they trust him? Yes - they seemed to still love him.

It is easy to assume that the second appearance of the risen Jesus, in the Upper Room, was expected. We picture Peter saying, "Never mind, Thomas, you'll see him next week!" But they had no reason to assume it. Indeed they had the doors locked up tight. So Thomas wasn't in the Upper Room booked in to see Jesus. He was simply there because he was loved.

There's a strong possibility that Jesus' appearance was not a display meant to convince. That doesn't ring true, it seems too shallow, inconsistent with what else we know of Jesus. His resurrection appearances seem aimed more to confirm people's knowledge of God, born out of a transformation (a rising up) already being experienced, namely **love** (*agape*) between the disciples, between believer and unbeliever. The risen Jesus appearing in the Upper Room was God's love sort of 'incarnate' once more, even more mysterious than the first time in Bethlehem.

Has the Church become in general a sanctuary for those who believe, instead of a place for believers and unbelievers to meet? Jesus is risen, we proclaim, and if the Census predictions are borne out, many more, like Thomas, are disbelieving. As we approach the post-pandemic era we must find a way to meet with them, welcome them, go out to them. Not to debate evidence, proof, scientific parameters, textual criticism, the Gospel truth (although that can be done, in *Alpha*-like groups). But instead to show them *agape*, God's love for us seen in the resurrection, the hope that has unshackled us from the grip of evil and death. Let them see the Spirit at work in us and know the love, such that they'd come to believe, to share in our faith, not dependent on intellectual assent, but borne out of the risen Christ being experienced, known, in their hearts. A.E.