

## **A message from Leisa...**

How are you doing, as we continue in lock down?

I know some people are simply getting on with life and finding ways of occupying themselves or still catching up with jobs in the house and garden. My house and garden has not yet had a lock down makeover!

Some of us are exploring new interests or serving your communities, in ways that they have never imagined. Some of us are feeling cooped up, fed up and annoyed that the restrictions apply to us and our loved ones. Others would relish just 5 mins to themselves, away from the joys and challenges of home schooling or caring for loved ones at home. Some have become masters of online technology. Others still are reconnecting with their love of radio, music and the arts. Some have lost loved ones and have had to say a farewell from far away. Many of us are missing human connection and long for an honest face to face conversation, a reassuring pat on the back, a long drawn out cuddle – or a simple smile and thumbs up!

Freedom, fear and abundant life are some of the words that I have been reflecting upon this week. During a week when we should have been making our final preparations for VE Day. When much celebrating for the 75th year of remembrance of Victory in Europe Day, was planned, across the nation to mark the formal acceptance of Nazi Germany's unconditional surrender of its armed forces. Much of this has had to be put on hold in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic – although celebrations will still take place, with the Queen addressing the nation, as well as a public singalong of Vera Lynn's 'We'll Meet Again' being planned. I know, across the West Wight that we will find our own way, of singing and celebrating that victory together, in our homes and streets - in creative social distancing style!

The recurring theme in today's bible readings, on this 4th Sunday of Easter – brings the language of freedom, fear and abundant life, sharply into focus and of how we, as Christians, live in the light of the resurrection of Jesus. How do we face our fears and hold on to the hope of the freedom and full life that Jesus invites us to take up, even when our circumstances and the plight of the whole world continues to challenge us and our world leaders, to the core? What sort of model of Christian life do we seek to build, during and beyond Covid 19, as people of God in our communities, as well as in our personal lives? What does it mean for us to follow Jesus today, praying for ourselves and for others – in these extraordinary times?

These questions are not just for us as individuals but as citizens of our global community. The whole of God's creation is experiencing the effects of Covid 19, with differing needs, fears, hopes and opportunities to change. The sheepfold of which Jesus speaks, in John can also be seen as a metaphor for the Church, which might raise the question: what kind of a door do we now make, now that the doors to our homes and churches, remain firmly closed?

Might we do things another way, to respond to the questions of fear, freedom and abundant life, in our world today? How can we continue to mind the gap, for the most vulnerable and protect those who offer their lives, every day for others?

As we continue to journey through our experience of lockdown, there is perhaps no better time to consider how we might hear and share the resurrection message in a fresh way. There is every opportunity to listen for the voice of the Shepherd and how he wants us to respond, in both prayer and action - with sacrificial and generous hearts to those around us. It is a timely reminder to us all that we cannot completely experience abundant life, until we share the fruit of it with others.

As we continue our journey through this pandemic towards Pentecost, there is perhaps no better time to consider how we might hear the resurrection message in a fresh way, listen for the voice of Jesus, the Shepherd and guardian of your souls.

This week, Rev Sandra Lloyd encourages us to invite Jesus, more fully, into our hearts and our homes in her reflection – Ordinary places in extraordinary times.

With every blessing to you as always.

## **Leisa**

Lord God You are our Saviour and king,  
our Master and friend our Shepherd and guide.

Wherever we go,

You are with us.

Wherever we stray,

You seek us out.

Whenever we call,

You hear us.

You are our promise and our hope  
our place of rest and peace  
our security and our sureness.

Whoever we are,

You accept us.

Whatever we do,

You love us.

Whenever we fall,

You lift us up.

Amen