



Church at Home For Abridge

29th March 2020

*Jesus said: I am the resurrection and the life
John 11:25*



Dear friends

Welcome to the second week of church-at-home in Abridge. This Sunday is only two weeks before Easter and is called Passion Sunday. From today we begin to focus our hearts and minds on the events of Holy Week and Easter, which lie at the heart of our Christian Faith .

It's going to be strange this year celebrating such a great festival apart from each other, but let's remember that throughout Christian history this has often been the way it was for our sisters and brothers. The very first churches met in homes often in isolation and fear; and even today Christians in some countries are not able or allowed to meet together because of war, hardship or persecution. Nevertheless today we *can* be linked by sharing a service like this at the same time and through the Holy Spirit, who is with us all.

Might we suggest that if you're on your own for this act of worship, you might like to arrange to contact a friend and share this time over the phone line?

1. We hope you still have your personal church-at-home space as suggested last week: maybe a cross or other Christian symbol, a candle and a Bible on the table. Today's Bible story is from **John chapter 11:1-45**. But before you start, take a moment to remember that the Lord Jesus is with you and with all of us in our various homes by his Spirit.

2. Today's story is about Lazarus who fell sick and of Mary and Martha, his sisters, who sent for Jesus. Strangely Jesus didn't rush to be there because he knew that what would happen to Lazarus was going to help them and us get ready for the miracle of Easter. It teaches us that that death is not the end.

3. Read the story slowly.

I wonder which part of the story most catches your attention?

I wonder which part puzzles you?

I wonder which is the most important part of this story?

I wonder which part was especially for you this morning?

I wonder how this story might connect to what is happening in our world today?

I wonder how God can use this story to teach us more about his power and his love?

4. To help you explore the story further, there are some all-age resources and activities, including a video, that you might like to use, if you have access to the Internet. There is also a poem written by Sheila Bell from AEFC. You can find these resources on the websites of the two churches and here are the links:

www.lambournechurch.com

www.abridgeevangelicalchurch.org

5. For your prayers:

Pray for medical staff on the front line in this pandemic.

Pray also for shopkeepers, shelf-stackers and delivery drivers and those who volunteer in the Foodbanks.

Remember the scientists who are working hard to find a cure along with all those who are hospitalised and needing specialist treatment.

Name your friends around the world and in this country who like us are shut in at this time and particularly lift up to God those with mental health problems, who are finding this experience particularly distressing. Finally pray for your own family, and also name before God each member of the church family to which you belong. Here is another prayer you might like to use:

Faithful God

Who chose in Christ

To share our sorrows

And experience a pain,

Help us to be a people of faith not fear

Of compassion not carelessness

In these testing times. Amen

End with our family prayer, The Lord's Prayer.

6. You might like to try and sing the famous hymn 'What a friend we have in Jesus' which links well with today's Bible story.

7. End your time of church-at-home by saying out loud the words of The Grace, reaching out your hands to include in your imagination all those you know and love, who live here in the village.

* By now you will know that there has been a great outpouring of generosity from people in the village, offering help to get food or support to those who cannot get out. Here is the contact number should you need to call on them: 07745 342102.

* And don't forget that there are Church services available on whatever is your radio station of choice. And for those with access to the Internet a number of local churches have made live stream services available whenever you want to tune in.

* Finally, you might like to continue the habit of placing a candle safely in your window at 7pm tonight in solidarity with Christians everywhere and very importantly as a sign that we are praying for this country at this time.

* Don't hesitate to contact the church leaders whose numbers at the bottom of the letter, if you would like to have a friendly chat or want to pass on some news for us all.

Martha said to Jesus: Yes, Lord, I believe you are the Christ, the son of God
John 11:27



Left is a photo of Keith and Ruth White's church-at-home table from last week. Maybe you can take a photo of your new place of worship that we can share?

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