



**BISHOP'S
HATFIELD**

REFOCUSED

**News from St Etheldreda's and St Luke's
Churches in Hatfield**

April 2021

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**THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND**

Letter to the Parish from Fr Darren

So where was Thomas anyway that first Easter evening? In my childhood Sunday school classes, Thomas was a "bad guy." When the other ten disciples told him that Jesus was alive after his crucifixion, Thomas refused to believe it. He separated himself from the others and demanded to see Christ for himself. In short, we learned that he was a dull, doubting follower of Christ whom we should not imitate. The moral of the story was clear, don't be like Thomas! Believe! Do not doubt!

But I confess to a sneaking attraction to the rogues of scripture—Jacob the con artist, Jeremiah the complaining prophet, Peter the impulsive disciple. Perhaps because I have often been critical of Christian communities where no one voices doubt or struggle, I am reluctant to dismiss Thomas.

At Theological College, we did not talk much about our fears or failures because we thought others would judge us as unspiritual. And in churches that display



only facades of niceness, I have discovered all sorts of anxieties and resentments festering underneath. I have watched people struggling alone with deep questions because they were afraid of how others might react to their doubts. Doubts and uncertainty frighten us. That's why we reject Thomas who dares to bring doubt into our lives of faith.

When we take a close look, we realise that Thomas is a practical, concrete sort of chap. Earlier in John's Gospel, Thomas insists that the disciples accompany Jesus when he goes to Bethany, a place he had to leave under threat of being stoned. Thomas supports Jesus' apparently suicidal plan with, "Let us also go that we may die with him." Even better, amid Jesus' long farewell discourse, Thomas speaks up, cutting through Jesus' mystical, poetic and downright baffling language. Jesus assures his followers, "In my Father's house there are many dwelling places; where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going". To which Thomas replies, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Thomas is plain-spoken and forthright. He wants to understand what is going on and be able to face the situation at hand.

So where is Thomas that first Easter evening when the other disciples are hiding in the upper room? Is he faithless, separating himself from the community? Remember, Mary Magdalene has told the group that she has seen Jesus. Maybe Thomas cannot imagine hiding when someone has just reported seeing Jesus alive. Perhaps he is trying to find out the truth. Or maybe he is the only disciple with enough sense to recognise that this hiding thing could take a long time, and that he had better go out and get milk and bread for the group. When the disciples tell Thomas they have seen Jesus, he answers, "Unless I see the mark of the nails -- in fact, until I touch those marks and put my hand in the wound in his side, I'm not going to believe," responding out of his practical, concrete nature.

What if this is some mistake, a delusion born of desperate hope, an apparition? Mary's experience of meeting Jesus in the garden cannot keep the disciples from hiding themselves in a room. Thomas is no more of a doubter than the other disciples, than most of us. But he must find out.

Continues on page 3...

Parish of Bishop's Hatfield St Etheldreda with St Luke

St Etheldreda's Church Service

SUNDAY: 9.30^{am} Holy Communion

WEDNESDAY: 10^{am} Holy Communion

THURSDAY: 7^{pm} Holy Communion/Compline
(Thursday evening services will be led on Zoom)

St Luke's Church Service

SUNDAY: 11.30^{am} Holy Communion with Hymns

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t: 01707 256638 e: frdarren@yahoo.co.uk

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In his Easter evening appearance, Jesus shows his hands and sides to the gathered disciples. Thomas is asking for the same assurance that the others have had. But he goes a step beyond, demanding to touch Jesus' wounds. He insists upon verifying that this is the crucified Jesus and not an illusion or a ghost. Thomas wants proof, and he wants Jesus.

When Jesus again appears to his disciples in the closed room, Thomas is there and, far from rebuking Thomas, Jesus offers to meet his conditions. "Put your fingers in my hands, touch my side." The Gospel story gives no report of Thomas following through with these gruesome actions, and I do not believe he felt any need to do so. But the personal encounter makes Jesus' resurrection real to this follower.

In fact, Thomas's answer, "My Lord and my God!" is the high point of John's Gospel. No one else has offered such devotion or named Jesus as God. Thomas holds out for an experience of Jesus on his own terms until he finds his terms made foolish by the reality of seeing Jesus. Only then does he make his statement of faith.

Thomas has to make this personal connection with Jesus for himself. Mary cannot experience the resurrected Jesus for the disciples, and the disciples cannot experience Jesus for Thomas.

It is faith, not doubt, that holds out for one's own experience of Jesus. Sometimes the demand to see is not doubt.

Sometimes it is even love.



Fr Darren Collins

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Bishops Hatfield

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Good Friday and Good News: by Fr Carl Garner

“Good Friday” is the English name for the day on which Jesus was put to death on a cross. It brings us up short. Good? It is saying that a day that looked like a defeat is a day of victory. Not the seeming triumph of wickedness and the power of evil, but the triumph of Jesus, and of good. While enduring human malice and culpable callousness and stupidity, Jesus remained whole and humane, praying even for the soldiers who hammered nails into him. Experiencing suffering and humiliation and death, he overcame evil with good. “Jesus Christ died for us, leaving us an example” (1 Peter 2:21). But, beyond the cross and burial, God’s vindication of him was shown by the transformation of his resurrection, and by his appearing, and by his being taken into the heights of glory: and then also by the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. All this confirming what he had said about himself.

It is more than example therefore: more than the moral compass provided by his teaching, more than the inspiration of his life. It is also the truth of who he was: the anointed of God, the “fulness of the Godhead dwelling bodily” with us (Colossians 2:9). God was in Christ coming alongside us, and experiencing the depths of physical and spiritual suffering for us, and death itself. Through what happened that Good Friday, God made possible the presence of Jesus with us now, in this life, bringing inner healing and peace, and strength and spiritual life, and the known and experienced forgiveness of sin and removal of guilt, and the infilling of the Holy Spirit too. All this through a committed faith in him: Jesus the Christ. This is a religion to live by, and live in, and live for. Truly Good News from God for this life.

And not only for this life. Jesus taught too of life to come: a teaching proven as true by his rising and ascending. Through his presence and his Spirit, he also makes available to us a felt assurance of that life to come. In addition, his word spoken to the penitent thief on the cross speaks of the immediacy of that life to those who die with faith: “Today you will be with me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43). The garden of God—a place of growth and refreshment

and joy and peace. Moreover, in his saying “In my father’s house are many rooms” (John 14:2) space is left for the cleansing and forgiveness and preparation even of those whose faith is dim, and penitence incomplete.

But what of those who have sought for good, but have no obvious faith in God, and have not really heard the news of Jesus in this life? It was a question the early Church had to respond to. They answered firstly by asserting the justice and fairness of God who wants all to be saved (Romans 2:10-16, 1 Timothy 2:4), and secondly by stressing the importance of an article of the faith enshrined in the Apostles Creed: our Lord’s “descent into hell”: his proclamation to the departed upon his death. A proclamation which brought perfection and new joy to the Saints of old. But more than that, to quote St Peter in a reading traditionally set for holy Saturday:

“In the spirit Jesus went and preached to the spirits in prison - even to those who had not obeyed God when he waited patiently in the days when Noah was building the ark... this is why the Gospel was preached also to the dead, so that in their spiritual existence they might live with the life of God.” (1 Peter 3:18f)

What this means was emphasised by many early teachers of the Church, such as St Clement of Alexandria, writing about 200 AD:

“It is the direct teaching of Scripture that our Lord preached to the dead: not only to Jews and Saints, but to the heathen as well, which was only fair, since they had no chance of knowing”

“The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of Man.” Jesus says of himself in John 5:25. That voice continues to resound to all who can hear. It is to Jesus that God has given the keys to life and to the world to come. And in whom we look forward also to the great climax of the general resurrection and renewal of all things, the “yet more glorious day”. Truly Good News from God for the life to come as well.

What's on at Hatfield House

RESTAURANT: OPEN FROM 3RD APRIL

WEST GARDEN PARK: OPEN FROM 3RD APRIL

HATFIELD HOUSE: OPEN FROM 3RD JUNE

OPENING WEEKEND – PARK, WOODLAND WALKS & GARDENS

3 APRIL @ 10:30 AM -

26 SEPTEMBER @ 5PM

TUDOR LEGACIES- MEET HENRY VIII, HIS WIVES & CHILDREN

5 APRIL @ 11AM - 4PM

BEEKEEPING EXPERIENCE

25 APRIL @ 9:30 AM - 3PM

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Editorial



Editor of Refocused

Mary Rathbone, Lay Reader

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Dear readers welcome to our Easter issue of Refocused, which once again will be distributed throughout our parish.

We are now both back in church, as well as still delivering our services on line. Full details of our Easter services can be found on our website and Facebook page. They include:

28th March: Palm Sunday
29th March: Monday Holy Week
30th March: Tuesday Holy Week
31st March: Wednesday Holy Week
1st April: Maundy Thursday
2nd April: Good Friday
3rd April: Holy Saturday
4th April: Easter Day

We are looking forward to this Easter and hope to see those of you who feel comfortable in church join us during Holy Week,

but the option remains to attend online services for those who prefer to stay at home.

Fr Darren's Easter letter to the parish reflects upon how it is healthy and brave to question our faith and that faith is a unique experience for each person.

On Page 4, Fr Carl unpacks the biblical significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

You can read on page 7 how children at Countess Anne School have been growing Pumpkins (my goodness how school has changed since I went). The school is planning to hold a pumpkin festival in October 2021, find out more on page 7.

May we all be blessed with the hope Easter offers in Jesus.

A pilgrimage to Taize:

Written by the Rev'd Fiona Souter, Chaplain at the University of Hertfordshire

A couple of years ago, I made my first pilgrimage to Taize in France. Taize is based around an order of monks and welcomes young people from all over Europe. It's a sort of spiritual holiday camp (and the food is, well...interesting but not in a good way). I was there as a leader with a group of under thirties from my diocese and I didn't really know what to expect. It was to be a trip of many new experiences, some of them great but not all of them positive.

I'm not good with crowds, so sitting down in a chapel that can host at least 3000, in the heat, three times a day was a challenge. Staying silent for up to 10 minutes at a time was initially an even greater challenge for me – 10 whole minutes! I came to love it. But these weren't the only steep learning curves of the trip.

After evening prayers the brothers would offer a 'listening' service. People would wait behind in the chapel and have the chance to speak one to one. As a priest, I was offered the opportunity to do this on our last evening there.

It was really exciting! Why? It was a privilege to don the same robe as the brothers as a female priest.

I was quickly on the back foot as I realised that, despite speaking fluent French and German, albeit slightly rusty, I had never studied the spiritual language needed.

I looked around to see a male colleague from Finland with a couple of people waiting. I had a queue. There was novelty in a female priest dressed up as a brother, it would seem.

I listened. I prayed with people. I blessed crosses people had brought. And then came a stand out moment – one I will never forget. A young German woman took up the single seat opposite me and without much precursor said: I'm gay...does that mean God doesn't love me?

I was floored. I felt tears coming to my eyes. What could it possibly feel like to think you were outside God's love? What could it possibly feel like to come all the way to a rural bit of France, to a religious holiday camp, not knowing if God's love was there for you or not.

There is, in my mind a short answer: of course God loves you! The Bible is very clear on this. We are all made in God's image and God loves God's creation. End of, as far as I am concerned.

If only it were that simple. The problem is that religion, especially organised religion, can work its way round to being exclusive, not inclusive. It can become a place of insiders rather than a gathering of all. It can become a human built bastion of cherry picked ideas and norms, where, for comfort and safety, diversity and difference become rejected. You're either in or you're out.

But who gets to decide that?

As a Christian, I only have to look to the Gospels on the life of Jesus to see how engaged he was with the marginalised in his society. Who are those who feel marginalised today? Homosexuals? Trans people? Non-binary people? Who would Jesus hang out with today? I want to bet that Jesus would have sought their inclusion.

The problem here is one of religion versus faith. Religion is the human outworking of connection to the divine. It's a chequered history of patriarchal influence. We need to look beyond bricks and mortar and the human thumbprints on them if we are truly to understand who God is in our lives and what God (no pronoun by the way) expects of us.

I would hope never to encounter someone again who feels outside God's love but I know this won't be true. There are barriers to be broken down, institutionalised norms to be challenged, laws to be changed.

But that doesn't mean we can't aim for a more inclusive future for all faiths. If I aspire to be Christ-like, which is what it means to be Christian (the clue is in the name), then I am to reassure everyone of God's love. Everyone. Here's a closing thought – and I'm with St Catherine of Siena on this one:

Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire.

I hope you can be who God meant you to be.

RHS Five Star Gardening Award for: Countess Anne School

Growing pumpkins in the school allotment last year gave Countess Anne Gardening Club a delicious ingredient for home-made soup. We took part in the RHS Soup Share and our 'souper' gardeners not only tasted healthy soup, we shared our largest pumpkin with Sparks Community Cafe in Hatfield and the children brought in food donations for Hatfield Food Bank. The event was rewarded with a Five Star Award from the Royal Horticultural Society. Gardening club, made up of YEAR 4 children received a plaque and £200 of gardening vouchers, brilliant!

Gardening Club has continued online in 2021. Keen young gardeners from Y3 and 4 have been growing sweet peas, cress, basil and even carrot tops at home whilst designing bee-friendly gardens and learning about wonderful worms. Sharing their own pictures and work on line meant we could all keep in touch. We are hoping to celebrate after Easter with a cake or even a cake for the birds!

Mrs Cummings—Countess Anne Gardening Club - scummings@countessanne.herts.sch.uk

PUMPKIN FESTIVAL OCTOBER 2021

So do you enjoy gardening or trying something new? How about joining us in growing a pumpkin? Countess Anne wants to hold another Soup Share in the Autumn and also host a:

PUMPKIN FESTIVAL

Pumpkin seeds are sown mid April. I have grown pumpkin plants at home in amongst my flower beds. They do wander along and the bees love their giant yellow flowers.

Watering is the key to success and putting them on a board while they ripen, so they don't rot, also helps. I do have some spare seeds to start sowing in April and possibly plants towards the middle of May. If you are interested in taking part please message me and lets get growing! It will be fun! Start your pumpkin patch now by adding coffee grounds, veg peelings etc to enrich the soil. Hope to hear from you soon.



A brief history of Hatfield *a poem written by Hazel Bell*

The Saxons sailed along the river Lee
And settled here in Heathfield as they called it.

King Edgar gave the Manor to the monks
at Ely – so St Etheldreda (Audrey)
Became the patron saint of Hatfield church.

The Normans deemed it Hetfelle when they came,
(Symons among them, founding Symonshyde).
The Domesday Book shows herds of pigs and sheep,
Four water mills, and the great forest land.

The Wood provided timber and good clay
So houses wooden-framed were first constructed
As well as building bricks and tiles. Besides,
Bernard the Potter modelled pottery ware.
They cleared the forest to make way for farms.

In Fore Street were the first cottages built.
Six oaks were felled for shingles to shore up
the Old Palace, reroofed with local tiles
When Cardinal Morton rendered it his Palace
with bricks built from the clay of the Great Wood.

The Manor became Crown property again,
And the eighth Henry leased it to his farrier,
Annibali Zenzano by name,
and sent his baby daughter to be reared here.

The Cecils came from Theobalds, which King James
Preferred, and gave them Hatfield in exchange.
The first Lord Salisbury built Hatfield House,
from local brick, in the old palace garden.

John Evelyn came, admired the vines and garden,
And so did Samuel Pepys, who dined at the inn,
And in the church was mightily impressed
Both by the sermon, and fine company.

The Great North Road provided many inns
Where horses could be changed and ale drunk,
But highwaymen waylaid the travellers
And gave a dangerous name to our fine roads,
So novelists portrayed the dangers here.
A Turnpike Trust was formed, collecting tolls.

When fire destroyed a wing of Hatfield House,
Charles Dickens came to write it up for press.
He left again, but well recalled Hatfield,
And wrote how Bill Sykes, after murdering Nancy,
Fled here, and sought refuge in the Eight Bells.

Victoria came and partied; railway lines
Were laid, and Salisbury had London Road
Diverted so it ran beside his park.
Newtown developed – Hatfield's California.
Edward the Seventh came here with his Queen.
The Tingeys opened shops of several kinds.

When war broke out, the prototype of tanks
Was tested out in peaceful Hatfield Park.
In Cuffley the first Zeppelin was shot down.

The Barnet bypass helped reduce the traffic.
de Havillands arrived, producing planes.

War came again, bombs fell across the town,
The House became a military hospital,
And Agent Zig Zag fooled the German spies.
A rail crash caused injury and grief.

Dame Barbara broke all records for her work
of writing novels by dictating them,
And settled Romanies in Barbaraville.

We were declared a New Town, to expand,
Development in the Corporation's hands.
Old Hatfield lost much of its early work.

The College opened for the Technical,
The swimming pool had a fantastic roof.
But Wrestler's Bridge collapsed upon the track
Where luckily no trains were passing through.

Lord David wrote about his noble clan,
And Welwyn-Hatfield District came about
By merging Hatfield with two nearest towns.

Mill Green Museum opened, to display
Our Hatfield history, and with a working Mill.
Woolco gave way to Gateways, then to Asda.
The Galleria, major Centre, sat
Upon a tunnel carved in the A1.

The Aircraft left us after sixty years.
The Forum Theatre lasted twenty years.
Another railway crash appalled us all

A University rose from the College
Filling the town with students, though ungowned.
A Business Park filled what had been the airfield,
And major films were shot on local sites.
But Hatfield Town Centre still awaits
Its promised makeover. Soon may it come!

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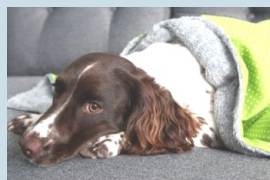
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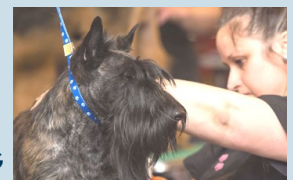
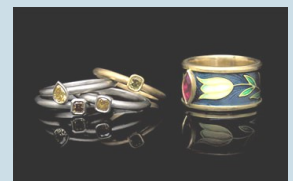
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Views expressed in this magazine are those of contributors and are not necessarily endorsed by the Ministers, Churchwardens, Parochial Church Council or Editorial Team of the Parish of St Etheldreda with St Luke.

Please contact—maryrathbone@icloud.com if you have any editorial contributions.

LifeLine

Community Alarm Service

“ Helping people live independently so they can stay in their own home for longer; happy, safe and in control



The Lifeline service is open to everyone - of all ages - that would like to feel safe, protected & independent in their own home

Get in touch

Contact the control centre on **01707 357 696** and request a **LifeLine application form**.

For more information, visit our website: www.welhat.gov.uk/housing/lifeline

LifeLine is a service provided by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.

- 24/7 365 day emergency response service
- Average 12 minute response time
- Regular monitoring visits
- Locally based control centre
- Free installation & competitive weekly charge
- Immediate action
- Holiday packages available

hyh

Herts Young Homeless

Knitting is the new yoga (apparently)



St Mary's Church in North Mymms has been knitting blankets for the homeless for 5 years.

The blankets are for young people who are coming out of council care and setting up their first homes.

We are going to join St Mary's efforts and start knitting the squares that make up the blankets.

Is this something you would like to help with?

The soothing effect of knitting can be quite relaxing too—so it's a great win-win winter activity

Contact: maryrathbone@icloud.com



The Herts Young Homeless charity at Gracemead House, in Hatfield Town Centre, helps young people in Herts aged 18-24 who are coming out of care, to establish their first homes.

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