Service Belfairs Easter Sunday 12th April 2020

Dear friends,

This Sunday 12th April I would have been with you to joyously worship and witness to the resurrection of Jesus I would begin with

**Alleluia! Christ is risen!** (and you would respond) **He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

We would sing such hymns as Hymn STF 295 Alleluia, Alleluia give thanks to the risen Lord, STF 313 Thine be the glory, STF 276 )Lift high the cross and ‘On Fire’. All proclaiming Jesus is Lord. It is vitally important to keep believing in Christ at this time.

We would have read Matthew 28:1-10 and heard the angel say to the women ‘Do not be afraid’. Later Jesus repeats the phrase, ‘Do not be afraid.’ He adds ‘Peace be with you’.

In our everyday lives of ‘self-isolating’ and ‘social distancing’ it is hard not to be afraid. Please do not feel you are alone, please pick up a phone and telephone someone, or email or if you can what’s app or zoom. Those of you who are able contact friends regularly so they know you will ring. For throughout this time my experience has been that the vast number of people want to help. In my road, two neighbours I do not know got together and put a note through everyone’s door with a telephone number and email if anyone was in need. This time has enabled me to have longer conversations from the window or garden with immediate neighbours.

As I passed North Street Primary School in Pall Mall in Leigh one person or maybe a couple had created a material rainbow on the railings with the letters NHS next to it – a wonderfully creative sight that made me smile. It also remaindered me of Noah and his Ark who was also self-isolating, but I am not sure he was social distancing! Noah did not know how long he would remain on the Ark but eventually the Dove returned, and all was well. It was not the same but life continued. My hope is that you will ‘not be afraid’ and ‘Peace’ will be with you as you keep faith in our Risen Lord through scripture, song and prayer.

I leave you with some prayers from Barbara Gleeson, our Methodist President and from the Church of England (CofE.io/Churchonline)

**A prayer for the world**

God of love and hope, you made the world and care for all creation, but the world feels strange right now. The news is full of stories about Coronavirus. Some people are worried that they might get ill. Others are anxious for their family and friends. Be with them and help them find peace.

We pray for the doctors and nurses and scientists, and all who are working to discover the right medicines to help those who are ill. Thank you that even in these anxious times, you are with us. Help us to put our trust in you and keep safe.

**A personal prayer**

O God help me to trust in you, help me to know that you are with me, help me to believe that nothing can separate me from your love through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

**A prayer for the Christian Community**

We are not a people of fear: we are a people of courage

We are not people who protect our own safety: we are people who protect our neighbour’s safety.

We are not a people of greed: we are a people of generosity.

We are a people of God, giving and loving, wherever we are, whatever it costs, for as long as it takes wherever you call us. (Barbara Gleseon)

Stay safe, keep praying and know that God is always with you

Jane Fulford