



St Paul's Church



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Dear all

I have been reflecting this week on the difference between the celebration of Easter in this country versus the way we do it in orthodox countries like Cyprus where my family are from. Of course there is the obvious difference that we celebrate on different days; we are currently still in Lent in Cyprus; we have to wait until 5th May for Easter Sunday because the religious calendar used is the Julian one whereas in the west, we use the Gregorian calendar. I must admit that as a child, I was delighted that I had two chances to chomp on Easter eggs every year when all my English friends only had one!

However, the biggest difference for me is around religious literacy. I'm sad to say that we don't do as well as Cyprus in this regard, at least not once we step outside of our church circles. For example, when I have been telling my clients about Archbishop Justin's visit to Maidstone deanery in Holy Week, most people have said to me, "What's Holy Week?". By contrast, you couldn't be in Cyprus though in the week leading up to Easter without knowing that something *very special* was about to happen. There is a general air of festivity, and the smell of baking is everywhere as people prepare to break the strict vegan fast of Lent. Eggs are hard boiled and dyed bright colours in preparation for games on Sunday, and everywhere is a hive of activity.

The vast majority of people go to church too...many times during the week in fact! Late in the evening on Holy Saturday, bonfires are lit and church bells are rung, calling everyone to come and celebrate the resurrection of Christ. Each person has a candle and just before midnight, the lights in the church are extinguished as the choir sings the story of the three women who came to the tomb only to find it empty. The priest emerges with his own lit candle and the flame is passed from one person to another. The liturgy continues outside for another 30 minutes before resuming inside for HOURS!!! To be honest, most people slip away early eat the traditional meal of soup with family and friends, quite understandably.

The real feasting begins around lunchtime on Sunday and can last until Tuesday evening! The Cypriots certainly know how to party! Back here in Maidstone, I'm guessing that most of us have had a slightly less exuberant Easter (except perhaps Allert and Rosemary whose son was getting married), but whatever you did and whoever you did it with, I hope you had a great time celebrating the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. *Christos anesti!*

Rev Anthea

FORTHCOMING SERVICES

SUNDAY 7th APRIL – Easter 2

10.30 am Café Worship – Gwyn

SUNDAY 14th APRIL – Easter 3

10.30 am All-Age Holy Communion – Rev Anthea

SUNDAY 21st APRIL – Easter 4

9.15 am for 9.30 am - Bubble Church

10.30 am Experimental Worship – Gwyn

SUNDAY 28th April – Easter 5

10.30 am - Holy Communion – Rev Anthea

EVENTS

FRIDAY 5th APRIL

9.30 am - Baby & Toddler Group

THURSDAY 11th APRIL

2.30 pm – Mothers' Union: Music & Poetry

THURSDAY 18th APRIL

2.30 pm – Fellowship: Life as a PC – PC Julie

FRIDAY 26th APRIL

7 pm – Church Crafts

NOTICES

Revision of Church Electoral Roll

Notice is hereby given that the Church Electoral Roll of the Parish of St Paul's Maidstone will be revised by the Parochial Church Council, beginning on Sunday 14th April 2024 and ending on Sunday 28th April 2024.

FOOD BANK

The next delivery will be next week Friday 12 April.

PRAYER RESOURCE

week beginning Sunday, 7th April 2024

'Prayer transforms our vision of the world, and makes us see it... in the light of God.' (Thomas Merton)

This week we give thanks for:

- God's unfailing love, and may we trust that he knows what is best for each one of us.
- The hope of Spring and the gradual lengthening of daylight.

Please pray for:

- The families of the seven people working for food aid charity World Central Kitchen who were killed in an Israeli strike in Gaza.
- Churches around the world and ask God to help Christians be peacemakers in their communities.
- All who are facing challenges living out their faith: we ask that God gives them strength, wisdom and endurance, and that their lives will be a testimony to everyone around them.
- Forgiveness and reconciliation so that the conflicts born of generations of hatred can be transformed into peace; and for peaceful solutions to all violent situations around the world.
- All who are suffering alone, that they may be accompanied.
- Our Church family: all who are struggling; and for Edith, Pat, Alice, Jill, Trevor, Maureen, Sandra, Brenda and Elizabeth; and for Ruth, Meaghan and Linda.
- Reflection on how God has blessed us: give thanks for His love and goodness, and pray that, through us, others will seek His presence and open their hearts to Him.

You may like to use this prayer during the week:

Lord, bless me and protect me; smile on me and be gracious to me. Lord, show me your favour and give me your peace. Amen.