

Dear Friends

This Sunday: 25th April 2021, Easter 4

The Lord is Risen, Alleluiah!
He is Risen Indeed, Alleluiah!

This fourth Resurrection Sunday all our churches will be open for worship, and an on-line Zoom service will be available from St Mary's Allithwaite locally as well as the myriad offerings elsewhere.

You can access the Allithwaite service on Zoom by going to:

<https://zoom.us/j/96271535233?pwd=UmlQV3BPd3kxci9rWFpxMWQ1VS9yUT09>

I'm again very grateful to John Lanham, Churchwarden at Allithwaite, for again making this possible.

In case you'd like to see the core of worship I'll be leading, I'm attaching a bare-bones version, without hymns.

Excuse me writing personally for a few lines but I feel the need to **explain clearly what my situation is**, because there is much false talk of retirement around. Fake news, as someone once said.

I'd love to retire: so many fells not climbed; lakes not sailed; books not read etc. However, I'm not retiring yet: I can't afford to! I can't stay in my present post as Transitional Rector of CPTM because it was an 'Interim' appointment for three years which cannot be extended.

Bishop James asked last October if I'd be willing to stay on if the plan for the parishes of the CPTM was agreed by the Commissioners, and there was a gap pending its introduction. I said I would. However, there isn't an agreed plan with the Commissioners. I also indicated I'd be willing to stay in one of the new posts if there would be a group of colleagues with whom I felt able to build a mission community. This will need ministers who work in an instinctively and demonstrably collegial way, and a diocese which backs this up: it's simply too stressful and frustrating and unlikely otherwise.

My formal appointment ends on July 19th, but I have to take annual leave due before this point, so **my last Sunday in action among you will be June 27th.**

It would be lovely to be able to get all the congregations together to pray and say farewell, but I fear with Covid, even though most restrictions *could* be lifted by 21st June, this may not be sensible or desirable for many. It's probably best we say farewell to each other on my final visits to lead worship in each church through June?

Many have kindly asked what I'm going to do next? I'm about to engage in a programme to help come to terms with the levels of stress, maybe mild depression (I think they call it 'high functioning...') that I find myself fallen into. I just need to decompress as I approach the end of this appointment. I'm acutely conscious that I'm leaving you all in it, and it feels awful to do so, but the circumstances are outside my control. I know plans are afoot, though don't know what they are, and the diocese is concerned to bring resolution. Revd John Dixon, Rural Dean based in Hawkshead, will be looking after things for the time being.

After that, I don't know: we're in the hands of the Lord. Humanly, Valerie and I would prefer not to move for the three years until my actual retirement, but that limits possibilities severely. We're trusting God will reveal what's next: maybe it's sailing and fell walking, or back on the boats? We are a resurrection people, with a God who brings the dead back to life! Jesus said: "There are other sheep which belong to me that are not in this sheep pen. I must bring them, too..." (Jn 10.16)

We're approaching the celebration of the first Pentecost, 50 days after Jesus' resurrection when the Holy Spirit comes down on the small group of disciples hiding away for fear of what the authorities might do. They were fearful, frustrated, wondering if Jesus' promises were true. Suddenly... but that's for a few week's time!

Heavenly Father

Your son, our Lord Jesus the anointed and risen one declared:

"I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it."

We pray that you will pour out your Holy Spirit

And bring this declaration to bear today
on this peninsula.

We pray for true confession of wrong,
for deep repentance,

For restoration,

for the renewal of your promise,
for growth in the number of disciples,
your followers,

in the power of Your Spirit

In the Name of the risen Jesus Christ
who defeated death. Amen.

God bless us as we trust Christ to transform us, our churches and our communities

Jim