

## Reflection for Lent 2020

This period of Lent in 2020 is perhaps one that is very different, and also unsettling in ways we have never previously encountered. The recent drastic restrictions, not only in our national life but also for each of us personally, is something we may well struggle to accept. It is perhaps the uncertainty of the virus we face that adds to our concern and confusion. This then can affect the way we live our lives, in our relationships, employment, health and faith. It seems the very basis of the life we live is being undermined; we do not know how it will all be resolved, and have concern about how we will continue the life we previously enjoyed.

There is a need for each of us as Christians to have as our foundation the knowledge that we have a God who offers us reassurance in all the uncertainty, the worries and the fear that life can give. By the time you read this short reflection I will have conducted the funeral of a long standing member of our community at St Martin's, Doreen Livesey. Doreen's favourite bible reading and favourite hymn was Psalm 23, the Lord's My Shepherd.

Written thousands of years ago its message never dates or fades with the years that have past. Written as a reflection looking back on a time of trouble the psalm reminds us where our confidence and trust is to be found. In all the pains and trouble of the world we are reminded of the Good Shepherd, a name for God where, in the days these words were composed, rulers were seen as shepherds, with a care for their people, their sheep. The psalm is a picture of life's journey, through the light of the good times and shadow of the difficult times; whether we feel we are in the light of the happiness, or the shadow of sadness we walk under the protection of the Good Shepherd, who for us is Jesus the Son of God, who lived our human life, gave himself to death and who through his resurrection has given us the hope of eternal life.

Maybe as we each travel this time of Lent leading into the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus our Lord, we will find an opportunity to rediscover God's presence however dark or impenetrable we see the way forward in the midst of the virus pandemic. We hear in the first chapter of the Gospel of John that Jesus is the light of the world and that "the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has never put it out".

A resource I use in particular at this time of Lent is called *Sacred Space* a small book that reflects on bible readings to encourage a personal reconnection with that presence of God we so easily overlook. It helps the reader to understand that God leads us into his presence where we can find the quiet and peace of reflection.

However you use are using Lent, I trust that your understanding and experience of the presence of God will encourage and support you as together we face the effects of the virus infection our world. I will finish with this reflection from the book *Sacred Space*, entitled ‘The Presence of God’.

“Bless all who worship you Almighty God, from the rising of the sun to its setting: from your goodness enrich us, by your love inspire us, by your Spirit guide us, by your power protect us, and in your mercy receive us now and always.”

*Revd Richard Firth*