

## St Mary's, Barton-upon-Humber: Readings, prayers and notices for the week April 26-May 3

### Collects

Almighty Father,  
who in your great mercy  
gladdened the disciples with the sight of the risen Lord:  
give us such knowledge of his presence with us,  
that we may be strengthened and sustained by his risen life  
and serve you continually in righteousness and truth;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord

or

Risen Christ,  
you filled your disciples with boldness and fresh hope:  
strengthen us to proclaim your risen life and fill us with your peace,  
to the glory of God the Father.

### Readings:

Acts 2.14a, 36–41; Psalm 116.1–3, 10–17; 1 Peter 1.17–23; Luke 24.13–35

### Meditation

Well, this is another situation which couldn't occur at this time – two people walking down a road and being joined by a stranger. In these days of restrictions and isolation, we all feel rather uneasy and decidedly odd. Imagine how the couple on the road felt, with all the rumours and the “lockdown” of the disciples.

After the encounter with Jesu, the couple said to each other, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?’

This is heartburn at its best – its spiritual high; it's the equivalent of suddenly coming upon a stunning view, or experiencing a colourful sunset, a snow-covered mountain or a massive edifice for the first time. All these may be able to be recaptured on another occasion, but with never the same awe and wonder as on the first. Just as on the Emmaus Road, God is at work.

It had been a long day, beginning before sunrise with Mary at the tomb – and even now it had not ended. The hot afternoon slid into evening, and the journey of about seven and a half miles, with Jesus expounding the Scriptures all the time, would take a while. People don't walk fast when they are talking. Jesus was preparing the ground for his appearance to a group of his disciples

later that evening in Jerusalem. After implanting the truth of the resurrection in the minds of these two travellers, they retraced their steps to Jerusalem fully convinced and capable of convincing the others. And then, after Jesus had clinched the matter, appearing through a locked door, the first Easter Day would at last be over.

It didn't really matter how long it lasted: Jesus didn't need sleep any more. He was the same in some ways, but very different in others, and for the next 40 days or so, his disciples would have to come to terms with this.

Centuries before Christ, God had told the prophet Ezekiel: “I will remove the heart of stone from the people of Israel's flesh and give them a heart of flesh, [a heart that could respond to the Lord's warming] so that they may follow my statutes and keep my ordinances and obey them.” On Easter Day, Jesus had to warm the disciples' hearts, which had turned stony with grief. At times, we are called to do the same. It reminds us of John the Baptist's words at the Jordan, just before the start of Jesus's public ministry. John told the assembled crowd; “I baptise you with water... But Jesus will baptise you with the Holy Spirit *and with fire*.” John wasn't talking about baptism as we know it. Jesus very probably didn't baptise anyone: we read in John, chapter 4: “Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard, ‘Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John’— although it was not Jesus himself but his disciples who baptized.” Jesus rather called men and women to his way, his work, his witness and mission. This wasn't for the faint-hearted, but for those who could stand the heat – and the journey.

To follow Jesus, we must be red-hot, or even white-hot; too many people are lukewarm in their faith, or even haven't yet got past running just the cold tap. Easter, with its high excitement and powerful message, is a good time to get spiritual heartburn, so that we may all say, like those two on the road to Emmaus, that **our** hearts are burning within us while he is talking to us. Perhaps also we can kindle in others something of that fire.

Alan

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## For your prayers

**Church:** Chaplains in the NHS. Those on a journey towards faith and belief. The Episcopal Church in Jerusalem & The Middle East.

**World:** Health workers, all those involved in keeping essential services running. Our own political leaders. Those charged with peace-keeping and peace-making. The governments & peoples of China, Syria and the Middle East, North Africa. All seeking to resolve the issues surrounding protection of the environment, of infection control and of migrancy. Our Muslim brothers and sisters keeping Ramadan under difficult circumstances.

**Our Community:** Emergency services. Those who serve in the armed forces.

**Those in need:** Those whose lives or livelihoods are endangered by Coronavirus. Those who fear the prospect of isolation. All who live in areas of conflict or tension; the homeless, the poor, the sick, the enslaved, the hungry and the abused. Victims of terrorism.

**Those for whom our prayers are asked:** Melissa Milbourn, Julie Newton, Penny Archer, Vicky Page-Chestney, Kate Eaton, Mike Page-Chestney, Brenda Skinner, Henry Farrow, Stephen Wilkinson, Sally, Abby, Jan, Nell.

**Departed:** Kath Lambert, Henry Fell, Dorothy Pearson, Kathleen Windle, Rosalind Ellerby. Those who have died as a result of COVID-19 infection, especially those who work in the caring and medical communities.

**Next Sunday – the Fourth Sunday of Easter** ('Good Shepherd Sunday')

Acts 2.42-47; Psalm 23; 1 Peter 2.19–25; John 10.1-10

## Updates

**Kath Lambert:** Kath's funeral is this Thursday at Woodlands – a great pity we can't give her the send-off she's earned. As we give thanks for her life, we pray for her (and George) and for Julie and the family. May she rest in peace and rise in glory.

**Dorothy Pearson** long time councillor and former Mayor of Barton also died this week. We give thanks for what she gave this community too and remember those who mourn her.

**With support from Barton Town Council and others,** the Ropewalk is providing meals to the elderly of Barton. Meals will be provided on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday and delivered to the door/outhouse/shed - wherever they can put it to avoid contact.

To book a meal ring the day before on 01652 660380. The service is free although donations will be accepted.

**Ramadan:** No, we're not suggesting you observe this Muslim Holy Season, but spare a thought and a prayer for faithful Muslims for whom these four weeks are like Lent, Christmas and Easter all rolled into one, and in which many of the features we'd recognise in our calendar – fasting, almsgiving, special worship, and celebration with family and friends – will be greatly affected (as were major festivals for Jews and Sikhs these last few weeks).

**Foodbank** is still operating, but unable to take donations in the usual manner. We are accepting cash donations to help run things slightly differently during the present situation.

**Those in need.** Please help us keep our intercessions up to date and leave requests for prayer – either by email to david.rowett@lincoln.anglican.org, or the phone, or even a note through my door, and encourage others likewise.

## Coronavirus Provisions

No-one has a clue how soon any place of worship will in any sense be open, so the provisions on the BBC and Barton FM as previously listed continue. If you know anyone who'd like a copy of the weekly bulletin, let David know.

Our websites and FB pages contain details of how to join others online for prayer, worship, study, and community life. The Diocesan Website in particular carries material of all sorts, and our own website carries a number of resources also.

See: [www.lincoln.anglican.org](http://www.lincoln.anglican.org)

[www.stmarysbarton.org.uk](http://www.stmarysbarton.org.uk)

[www.facebook.com/StMarysChurchBarton](https://www.facebook.com/StMarysChurchBarton)

## Meanwhile:

Some interesting Saints and assorted Holy Ones this week, with a (just about) 50/50 male-female split: the poet **Christina Rossetti** on Monday, the martyr **Peter Chanel** on Tuesday, who was the first martyr in the South Seas (within a year of his death the island on which he was murdered embraced Christianity) and **Catherine of Siena** on Wednesday, a Dominican sister and one of the Doctors of the Church on account of her passionate commitment to the salvation of all people, evidenced in the (dictated) letters she left behind. **Pip'n'Jim**, on Friday May 1<sup>st</sup>; who sound like they should be on a Saturday evening TV show, are of course apostles, and on Thursday it's the Indian **Pandita Mary Ramabai**, daughter of a Hindu Sanskrit scholar who converted to Christianity (driving the Anglican nuns who supported her to distraction by her refusal to renounce all the insights of Hinduism) and who became a biblical translator and advocate of women's emancipation.

Most significant of all is **Athanasius of Alexandria** (May 2<sup>nd</sup>). We first hear of him as a deacon in 325 AD at the great Council of Nicea (as in 'Nicene Creed') and as the controversies about how Christ relates to God boiled over for the next half-century, Athanasius was always somewhere in the middle of the scrum advocating what we would now see as the 'orthodox' Christian belief in the Trinity.

It wasn't a foregone conclusion that it'd work out that way. Church politics were every bit as tortuous then as now, probably more so because the Emperor wanted to make sure that Christianity, the glue to hold the Empire together, wouldn't actually create division. Part of the problem was language; the East spoke Greek, the West Latin, and neither always understood the nuances of the other's tongue. There were populist theological extremists around. There was naked ambition. There was even genuine searching for the truth about God and how Christ fitted into the picture. Biblical texts were ambiguous and new words had to be invented – which, of course, 'weren't scriptural,' causing yet more dissent.

As oft-exiled Bishop of Alexandria he had various narrow escapes, on one occasion being chased down the Nile by a faster boat. Turning his craft around, as his pursuers sped past crying, 'Have you seen Athanasius?' he's said to have replied 'You're quite near to him now.'

Emperor Constantius (d.361) desperately wanted rid of him, but by the time of his death in 373 Trinitarian Christianity was becoming firmly established throughout the Empire, with 'our' Nicene Creed (slightly longer than the 325 original) being produced in 381