

AMERSHAM FREE CHURCH

(A Baptist Union and United Reformed Church)

Woodside Road, AMERSHAM, Bucks, HP6 6AJ

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The Revd Erna Stevenson

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Maundy Thursday, 9th April 2020

Dear Friends,

As we step into another week of the enforced physical isolation from each other, we continue to give thanks for the new ways in which we can still feel connected. This is particularly true in my case since I have to observe the lockdown at some distance from most of you.

Being in Holy Week we remember that today is Maundy Thursday when, under ordinary circumstances, we would share an evening Communion Service with our friends at St. John's Methodist Church. This year we can only send our prayerful greetings to them knowing that in the middle of the international health crisis they too are learning with us a deeper way of understanding our Lord's journey towards trial and suffering and giving himself for others.

Thanks to the dedicated work of Ian, Michael and Matthew and everybody else involved, we continue to benefit from the audio services broadcast Sunday by Sunday on the internet. Many of you commented on how you enjoyed the format of the service, which combines new and fresh material with old, familiar clips from our past years of worship. This chimes well with Jesus' words in Matthew's Gospel, when he makes it a hallmark of discipleship to be 'like a householder, who brings out of his treasure things both new and old'. We can be deeply thankful here at AFC to have such rich treasures to draw upon.

It is with great sadness that we have received the news of the death of Sara Autton's mother, Helen on Monday. Her voice is still fresh in our minds as she was doing one of the readings in the Mothering Sunday broadcast. Last week she had a bad fall and after a few days in hospital she passed away. On the same day we heard that Darrell Hamley, one of our elderly church members has also passed away at The Leys in Chesham. He has not been well for a long time, ever since he lost his beloved wife Jo. He 'slipped away' quietly in the afternoon just a few minutes after having spoken to one of the nurses. The sad news continued on Tuesday when we were told that Maureen Holdaway's brother had died in Preston Hospital, where he was cared for since the end of March. Our hearts go out to the three families and we ask God to surround them with love and comfort as they prepare for the funerals.

At yesterday's Zoom Team meeting appreciation was expressed to Liz Waumsley for all that she is doing keeping in touch with Junior Church, sending them a letter each week with an activity sheet. To Peter Waumsley for all his continuing good work around the church, including the big task of polishing the Sanctuary floor. To Laura, who is doing a

great job of sending out the Minister's letter and dealing with booking issues so efficiently. To Peter Wilkinson for distributing CD-s of the Sunday services to some 11 people in the congregation who have no computers.

And I am sure I am speaking for the rest of us when I say a big Thank you to Ian, Janet and Bob, who are tirelessly working through the 'virtual' meetings so that our AFC community could remain connected and our work as God's people in this place may continue to flourish even in these tough times.

Finally, I would like to remind you all of the Good Friday and Easter Sunday services on the church's website. If you would like to donate to Christian Aid according to AFC tradition, will you please send it directly to Christian Aid this year. On Easter morning a little Communion service will be available afterwards for those who might like to take communion in their own homes. And please, remember Ian's invitation that, if you would like to send an Easter message of greeting of three lines or so, to the church community, send it to him, so that he can compile a communication on the website entitled: Passing the Peace on Easter Sunday.

Ian joins me in wishing you every Blessing for Easter as we celebrate our Lord's Resurrection in a different, but no less heart-felt way.

The Reverend Erna Stevenson