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Dear Friends

This comes to you as we approach perhaps the greatest day in the Church calendar – Easter Day, the Feast of the Resurrection – knowing that we shall be unable to celebrate it together. The Archbishop has spoken of the 'long Holy Saturday' - waiting in stillness, quiet but also anticipation, looking for the coming resurrection. We do not know how many more weeks or even months of restrictions and isolation are ahead of us. But even though we cannot celebrate in our usual way, the truth of Jesus' resurrection remains and is still something for us to celebrate in what ever way we can in our current situation. Enclosed you will find small tokens of this celebration and a pattern for worship on Easter Sunday, which I hope you will be able to join in with.

The importance of the resurrection cannot, I believe, be overstated, it is the heart of our faith. At Christmas we celebrated the Incarnation – the divine becomes human in the person of Jesus. And now at Easter we celebrate the Resurrection where, again in Jesus, the human becomes divine, resurrected, given a new kind of being, given life, as Bishop Tom Wright puts it, not by breath but by Spirit. It happened first to Jesus, who conquered Death for us, so that it can one day happen to us all – we too, like Jesus, will be resurrected in the new heaven and the new earth when Christ returns with glory.

Because God, in Christ, entered fully into our physical, material humanness and raised this same physical, material humanness, to life at the resurrection, so physical, material, sensual things play an important part in our faith – bread & wine, oil & water, art & music, light, movement and so on. And the way we live, the way we interact with other people,



with the world around us and all of God's creation, even the way we treat ourselves, 'em-bodies' our faith; how we live matters because our bodies matter – they will, in some way, be a part of our eternal being. Jesus carried the scars of his torture and crucifixion in his resurrected body, he ate and drank, and he walked along the road talking with his disciples – his resurrection body was in some ways a continuation of his body that died on the cross. Our bodies matter, they have eternal value. This is perhaps worth reminding ourselves of next time we look in the mirror! We are constantly being told that we shouldn't look like ourselves, but should change to look like someone else's idealised image, or should cover up perceived imperfections, all usually so that someone can try to sell us some over-priced chemicals that probably do a fair bit of damage to the planet. The Resurrection tells us that our body is great, that its value is not in how it looks, but in how we live in it, that its value is eternal – even the grey hairs, stretch marks, bits that don't work and all the wrinkles!

As we celebrate Jesus' resurrection and anticipate our own future resurrection, so perhaps we also look forward to some sort of resurrection for our society and communities once the current necessary restrictions can be lifted. One of the things I currently miss is saying Morning Prayer in St Bart's in sight of the Memorial Chapel window. The foreground of the stained-glass picture shows Christ crucified but with a golden 'iris' around him representing, I believe, the resurrection; the agony of his suffering and the glory of his resurrection go together. Behind this is a representation of Sydenham damaged by the bombs of the second world war. Out of the damage rose modern Sydenham, a kind of resurrection as the town was rebuilt and new life came into the area. Jesus is with us in suffering and destruction so that he can bring us, with him, to resurrection. Jesus' resurrection is also a promise that out of suffering, out of darkness, through all the challenges we may face, God can bring something glorious, that resurrection is possible for our lives, the life of our church and the life of our communities.

May this hope, this promise, be something we can hold on to in the days ahead and be for us a cause for celebration this Easter time.

Alleluia! Christ is risen indeed!

Rev'd Jim