



The Church of England
in Essex and East London

Diocese of Chelmsford

Easter 2024

A message from The Rt Revd Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani, Bishop of Chelmsford

Once again, the message of Easter hope and resurrection life breaks into a world that is full of sorrow, conflict and pain. How can we possibly make sense of this central event - the one that everything else in the Christian faith hangs on - when all the evidence seems to point away from it? When much of the time it feels like death and hatred and evil have the final say, rather than life and love and hope? Both on a global scale, but perhaps personally too, for there is so much suffering and loss.

Well, if you rely on your *emotions*, on how you *feel* at any particular moment and in response to any specific event that might make you happy or sad - if you rely on your *feelings*, then faith is indeed a fickle thing. For sometimes God can feel close and other times far away. But the truth at the heart of the Gospel is that God, through Christ, is ever present, whatever is going on and whether or not we experience that closeness or not. I have these words of Karl Jung hanging in the hallway of our home, and I look at them every time I come in or go out: "Bidden or not bidden, God is present." God was present on Good Friday, just as much as on Easter Day. The important thing is not to confuse *our* experiences and emotions - whether we feel the nearness of God or not – with the reality of Easter resurrection.

There's no denying that embracing this requires a leap of faith. No logic or experiment will prove the existence of God or convince you of the Easter story. But faith knows more. In the words of the French mathematician and philosopher Blaise Pascal, *The heart has reasons, of which reason knows nothing*. On Easter morning, Christ rose from the dead and broke the power of death and hatred through the strength of his love and sacrifice. As Christians we try to embody that in the way we live our lives, in the service of others, speaking out against injustice, seeking to respond in love wherever there is hate.

This is the Easter story, and it is ours to tell. It is challenging, mysterious and life changing. It offers light and hope in the midst of darkness, and I commend it to you wholeheartedly. For, Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, Alleluia.

I wish you a joyful and blessed Easter.

+ Guli

Note to parish magazine or website editors:

- If you have any questions, please get in touch with the Diocesan Communications Team at communicationsdept@chelmsford.anglican.org