

Letter for April Newsletter from Revd Sheila Swarbrick

Dear friends,

A few weeks ago, as Christians we began Lent, aware that there was this unseen virus travelling the world but probably having no idea that it would change our lives quite so much. The Church Mission Society had produced a Lent resource called 'Lament for Lent', encouraging us to use psalms to lament over the injustices of the world, with no idea how much we would need to lament this Lent. Each week they have a prayer with the first sentence using a quote from an African Archbishop. Here is one of those prayers -

'God of love.

There are things that can be seen only with eyes that have cried.

Give us, we pray, courage this Lent to give ourselves to lamentation

and to know again that your steadfast love never ceases (*Lamentations 3:22*).

Deepen our love for you, and for your world.

So bring your healing now. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.'

Now as we move into April with no public worship or gatherings, yet as Christians we remember the events of Holy Week – a time of great uncertainty and suffering – we may find we can connect more with the experiences of God's people through the ages and today in many other parts of the world. Recently I have been reading Psalms 42-44 and I want to share with you two of the prayers that are given as meditations following these psalms in the *preliminary Daily Prayer from Common Worship*

Psalm 42 Creator God, whose life-giving Spirit wells up with streams of living water,
sustain those whose spirits are heavy and whose wells have run dry,
through Jesus Christ, the rock of our salvation.

Psalm 44 In the darkness of unknowing,
when your love seems absent and your favour far away,
draw near to us, O God, through Jesus Christ,
the forsaken one, the risen one, our redeemer and our Lord.

Our celebration of Easter will necessarily be different this year, but it can be no less joyful as we know that the risen Lord appeared to the disciples behind locked doors. As we remain in our homes we can continue to say 'Christ is in the midst of us! He is, and ever shall be!' (*Russian Orthodox acclamation*)

With love and prayers for you all

Sheila R Swarbrick