



ST CHRISTOPHER'S 'CATCH UP CHURCH' NEWSLETTER

Sunday 4th April 2021 – Easter Sunday



NEWS UPDATE

No newsletter Sunday 11th April

After a busy period, we will take a break from the newsletter next week. There will also be no Tuesday evening zoom on 6th April.

Junior Church

Junior Church will restart on Sunday 18th April. If you plan on bringing your child it would be helpful if you could message Louise Walton or Dawn Edwards in advance, as this will help those leading the group to gauge the numbers. youngpeople@stchristopherslea.org

BIBLE READING – Mark 16:1-8

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

And all that had been commanded them they told briefly to those around Peter. And afterward Jesus himself sent out through them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE – written by Peter

Do we recognise ourselves?



These days I hardly recognise myself when I look in the mirror, because I am in such dire need a haircut. I was meant to get my hair cut in December, but the appointment coincided with the week when our family had to isolate, so I think the last time I had it cut was in October. My hair now reminds me of when I was sixteen and I had long curtains, which was ideal for chewing on during school lessons.

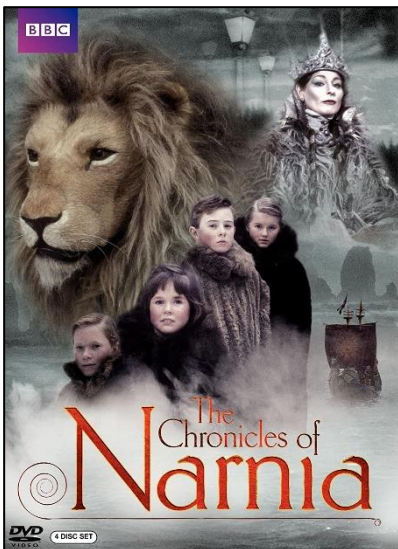
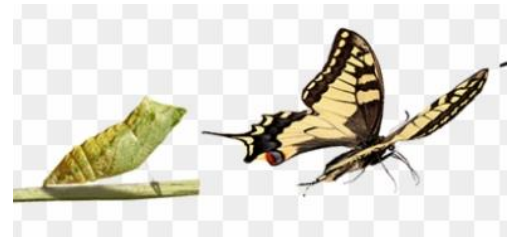
This got me thinking. Not only may we look a little different on the outside from what we did a year ago before this pandemic, we may have changed in other ways too. I am not talking about our physical appearance, I am talking about who we are as individuals; our character, and our behaviours. This

pandemic has changed people, because it has forced upon us such dramatic changes to the way we live. For some the pandemic may have changed them for the better, and in other cases not.

Images of Transformation



The Easter message is about change and transformation. It's about new life being borne out of the old; like a seed in the ground springing forth into a flower, like a caterpillar entering its cocoon and morphing into a butterfly, and like a chick emerging out of its egg. These are indeed lovely images, conveying the idea that through faith in the risen Jesus we can be born afresh into newness of life, we can be changed and renewed. We have to rely on images to understand it, because it can never be fully described in words.



One writer who has captured spiritual themes through fictional stories is C.S. Lewis, who is best known for his book '*The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*.' When I was growing up we read the whole series of Narnia books, which includes *Prince Caspian*, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, *The Silver Chair*, *the Horse and His Boy*, and a couple more. There was also a great 'Chronicles of Narnia' TV series in the late 1980s. I didn't realise at the time that these stories conveyed deep spiritual truths, but looking back now I can see that they do.

I have been reminded this week of something that features in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. Lucy and Edmund go to stay with their cousin Eustace, and they are drawn into the land of Narnia through a painting of a ship at sea. They journey with Prince Caspian across the ocean, landing first on the lone islands, then after suffering storm damage they come to shore on a little island to make repairs to the ship. Eustace doesn't want to help out with the work on the ship, so he takes a walk onto the island, and when there is a sudden downpour he hides in a dragon's cave to escape the rain. The cave is full of the dragon's treasure, and Eustace greedily fills his pockets with gold and jewels, and he puts on a large golden bracelet; but as he falls asleep in the cave, he is transformed into a dragon.

As a sad and mournful dragon, Eustace becomes aware of how bad his previous behaviour has been. With regret and remorse he attempts to shed his dragon skin, but without success. It is only with the help of Aslan the Lion – who represents Jesus in all of the stories – that he is able to become human again, though the process is painful. After helping Eustace remove his dragon



scales, Aslan tells Eustace to bathe in a pool, and when he emerges from the water he is Eustace the boy again. Eustace comes up out of the pool a brand-new person, and as a result of his experiences he becomes a much nicer character than he was before.



Have we grown a few dragon scales?

At least when I look at my reflection in the mirror I still see a human face looking back at me, despite how bad my hair looks. Or do I? There is a part of me that feels like I've spent the last year inside a cave, and maybe without realising it I've turned into something else. What about you? Have you morphed into some other kind of creature? The pandemic has brought with it some positives, but as we begin to emerge from perpetual lockdown we maybe need to ask ourselves this question - would the person you were a year ago be happy with the person you are now? Or have you grown a few dragon scales after twelve months inside your cave?

The image of Eustace rising up out of the pool (no longer a dragon) has an obvious parallel with the Easter message, with Eustace attempting to peel off his dragon scales providing us with a picture of repentance. He had been lazy, self-centred, and greedy; and yet he could not shed all of his dragon skin by himself, he needed Aslan's help. So too it is only by faith in Christ crucified that we can be completely free from our sins; and because Jesus rose again on Easter day, we too can be made new.

As we now look with optimism to a future with less pandemic restrictions, we might want to stop and ask ourselves whether we have unwittingly grown any dragon scales inside our lockdown cave. We may have been shaped by a spirit of fear and self-preservation, which in light of the resurrection has no real place in the Christian life, because death has been defeated. There is ultimately nothing to be afraid of. When I search my own heart, I also wonder whether I am less affected when I hear about people getting ill and dying than I was a year ago, because the pandemic has had a sort of numbing effect. Have we, as a result of the pandemic, trained ourselves to feel indifferent towards the suffering of others?

Whatever the 'dragon scales' are for you, this Easter offers us a chance to get back to who we know we are meant to be. We can ask Jesus to help us get back into our true selves, and we can rise again with Christ into newness of life. We might even find that, like Eustace, we become a better version of ourselves than we were previously.



When I finally do get my haircut, and the unsightly mop on my head is at last tidied up, this is what I shall think about. I shall think about any negative characteristics I've developed through this pandemic being cut away (Jenni Collinson will get to play the part of Jesus!). Because who among us would like to remain as a dragon? We want to be fully human, don't we? Thanks to Jesus dying on the cross and rising again for us – we can be. That is good news indeed.



Prayers – Written by Jim Berry

Lord God, we praise you on this Easter day, the day of resurrection.

We celebrate that Jesus Christ has been raised to life again.

We come to you on this Easter Day, to rejoice that Jesus Christ is alive.

We celebrate that the tomb of Jesus is empty and that your love is filling our hearts.

We celebrate that Jesus is Lord and nothing can stop him making all things new.

Lord, we are filled with great joy because of Jesus.

He is now the source of hope, comfort, forgiveness, and peace for everyone.

May the joy of Easter Day give us courage to face whatever comes in the days and years ahead.

In the name of the risen Jesus; **we ask our prayers.**

Lord of creation and God of grace, we thank you for the yearly miracle of the spring,
as the earth awakes from its winter sleep and is arrayed again in the glory of resurrection life.

We thank you for flowers and trees and for everything that makes your world so special.

May a similar miracle of grace take place in our lives this Easter.

Send into our hearts the Spirit of the living Christ, to raise us to newness of life and to cloth us with the
beauty of his holiness, for your honour and glory.

In the name of the risen Jesus; **we ask our prayers.**

We pray for the mission of the Church here at St. Christopher's and Emmanuel,
for our Vicar Peter, as he leads both our parishes.

We pray also for Mike Clayton, as he prepares to come and minister amongst us.

We pray for our congregations and for the communities among which we serve.

Lord Jesus Christ, you showed us how to relate to one another,
when you washed the feet of those who were your friends and partners in mission.

Teach us now that true discipleship depends not on feelings but on following, not on ecstasy but obedience,
and may we discover the joy that comes from serving and listening to one another.

We offer ourselves to work in partnership with you; Father Son and Holy Spirit,
in our homes and in the mission of your Church.

Enlarge our vision of the world and give us the stamina to make it a reality to your glory!

In the name of the risen Jesus; **we ask our prayers.**

Father, whatever we must face this week and whoever we must face it with,
may we be assured of your presence and power.

May the risen Christ touch our hearts and change our lives.

Merciful Father; **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**