

Dear Friends,

As we move from February into March, the sun rises higher and longer each day, and the nights shorten. We know this happens every year, but every year the first signs of spring come as a relief after the long dark of the winter months. With the lengthening days we often find our spirits lift, our energy is at least partly restored, and we may dare to look to the future once again.

This year more than most, we stand in need of encouragement and relief from the strains and struggles of the past year. Even while vaccines are administered and it looks like numbers of cases are falling once again, the pandemic continues to place constraints on our lives, and we know we must continue in patience and in hope until we emerge from its long shadow.

We know that Easter is coming, and with it the celebration of new life in Christ, who died and was raised to set us free to live life to the full, set free from fear by the perfect love of God that overcomes even death itself.

Yet while we look forward to Easter Day, the most important celebration in the Christian year, we also know that before we come to that day, it is good practice to join with other church traditions in using the season of Lent to prepare the way – to prepare ourselves, in prayer, reflection, and self-examination, to assess where we stand as people of God.

The forty days of Lent mirror the forty years Israel spent in the wilderness before coming to the Promised Land, and also the forty days Jesus spent in the desert before setting out on his public ministry to proclaim the Good News. For both, this was a time of preparation, a time when they were put to the test, when they had to ask and answer questions about who they were, and where they were going, and what they were to do next.

As we look to Easter, and beyond, to the new life we long for after Covid, perhaps we too should pause during these coming weeks, and think about who we are, and where we are going, and what it is that God desires and requires of us.

with every blessing and prayer for this Lenten season

Alan