



Today it is exactly one year since we went into lockdown.

Back then, no one knew what twists and turns this past year would take, nor even that it would be a full year and that we would still be separated from our friends and families.

And here we are, in Passiontide with all its sorrow and lament, confusion and pain. And we bring to it this year our own sorrows, our own grief, perhaps even our own anger and disappointment. We come to Holy Week carrying our own very burdensome cross.

It is ok to feel the frustration, the tightness of breath that a year of captivity can enforce on us. It is ok to feel the heaviness of grief for lost time, lost friends, lost memories with those we love.

It is ok to come to Holy Week and to lay these burdens at the foot of the cross, alongside the burdens of millions of others also bringing their losses. It is ok to acknowledge our fears and anxieties both for ourselves and those we care about.

In Matthew 11:28 Jesus said:

Come to me all who are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

And so now we take a little time to pray, knowing that we are coming together with others in our church family here at St Mary's and beyond:

Reflect

Loving God,

You hold all our times in your hands, our past, our present, our future. Be close to us now as we remember all the difficulties and disappointments of the past year. Be especially close to all of us who are thinking of someone we loved and knew, but see no longer, whether family, friend, colleague or neighbour. Help us to trust that they are at peace with you, and comfort us with your presence.

Connect

Loving God,

You place us in families and communities, and we give you thanks for all those around us who serve us and help us in so many ways. Give wisdom to community leaders, to our schools, hospitals, care homes and other agencies who make a difference to our lives. Help each of us to have the courage to reach out with thanks and kindness to those around us and to speak words of faith as we share the good news of your love

Hope

Loving God,

As we journey towards Easter, help us to live as people of hope, knowing that beyond the pain of the cross lies the joy of resurrection. Inspire us in our worship, through our churches and in our homes, that we may bring glory to you and joy to others. Be with those who are struggling in mind, body or spirit, and give courage to those who are facing uncertainty and change ahead. Help each of us to keep our eyes fixed on you, that we may reflect your light to all whom we meet.

Amen

What else can we do?

There will be a minute's silence at 12noon and everyone is invited to place a candle in their window at 8pm to remember all those who have died during the pandemic.

The Church of England Life Events Department has prepared this specially written prayer:

*Dear God,
Be with us as we think about all that has changed this year,
And help us to trust that you are always with us.
Be close to us as we remember those who have died,
And help us to trust they are at peace with you.
Show us how to reach out to others with kindness and care ,
So that hope shines out in every heart and home,
Amen*

You may also like to look at these resources:

The Bishop of London's Faith and Mental Health Online Lecture 2021

This online webinar at 7pm on 23rd March must be pre-booked using the link below:

<https://gohealth.org.uk/shop/booking/the-bishop-of-londons-faith-and-mental-health-lecture/>

Bishop Graham's Online Reflection

<https://youtu.be/0GzzR-VkK9c>