

*“Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances,
for this is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.”*

1Thessalonians 5:16-18

Wednesday 1st April 2020

A special message from Ian to every member of Eastleigh Parish Church

Dear All Members of Eastleigh Parish Church,

It probably goes without saying that we are all living through some exceptional times. The restrictions that the UK govt have put in place to help curb the spread of COVID-19 have affected all of our lives, and not least of all the normal rhythm and patterns of our Church Family life.

I wanted to send this note today to ensure that you have heard all that Eastleigh Parish is doing to respond not only to these special circumstances, but to work towards the continued life and health of our church family.

1. Practical Help

Last week, our PCC published an Action Plan. You can read this on our website, or if you’re receiving a paper copy of this letter through the post, it will be enclosed with this letter.

Please do make use of the help that the PCC have put in place; and please do offer to help where you can.

Thank you to everyone who has given so generously to our Parish Hardship fund at this time. Every gift given is going to make a tremendous difference to those for whom the COVID-19 restrictions have hit the hardest. Details of how to seek financial help and to give towards the fund are in the Action Plan.

2. Ongoing Worship & Church Events

Although our buildings are temporarily closed, the life of the church is far from dormant! We’re continuing to meet together online, and over the telephone too. All details are on the website and technical assistance is available for those of us that might need a helping hand to use the internet. (See the Action Plan for details.) Dot Chadwick is now leading a team of church members who are doing all they can to ensure that every member of Eastleigh Parish is kept in contact with. (Again, see the Action Plan for details.)

Last week, more than a thousand local people connected with us during our first ever online “Quarantine Quiz”. It was incredible to see such a positive response from the local community to this offer of light-



hearted fun at this time. Earlier today, we hosted an informal coffee morning which was enjoyed by all who attended. We even played charades whilst looking with just a bit of envy at the cakes that other people were eating at home! Later today, at 7pm, we'll be running our first ever "Quarantine Countdown" via the website. (You'll be able to access a recording of this after the event if you miss it today.)

Here's a list of some of the worship events you can access online:

Worship & Discipleship Events

- Morning Prayer; 9am every Tuesday & Thursday
- Night Prayer (Compline); 7:30pm Mondays in Lent
- Midweek Communion; 9:15am every Wednesday
- Lent Group; 11am Thursday
- Palm Sunday worship & vision morning; 10am Sunday 5th April
- All our Discipleship Groups will continue to meet online (speak to Sue@eastleighparish.com to join a DG)

As new events get added, they will be posted on our website. Even if you don't have access to the internet, Dot's team of volunteers will do all they can to keep you in the loop. (Please get in touch with Dot and the team if you want to.)

Keeping Connected

If you'd like to explore the possibility of accessing the internet, please speak to the technical help team (details in the Action Plan); or could a neighbour or relative help you connect with us online? It is much easier than you think once it has been set up for you.

If you're not a regular member of a Discipleship Group, now is a great time to join one. Send an email to sue@eastleighparish.com or give me a call to find out more.

As I hope you can see, we're really keen to keep the whole church family connected with one-another at this time. That said, we're even more keen to encourage everyone to keep connected with God Himself at this time!

3. 2020 Vision & Palm Sunday

Details for Palm Sunday Vision Morning

You may remember that we were due to be spending several hours together this weekend at St Francis' for our special Palm Sunday celebration and whole-church Vision Day. Although we can't meet together in person, we're going to go ahead with a shorter whole-church event this Sunday. Here are the details for Palm Sunday, 5th April:

- At 10am, we will all join together (online) for a whole-church Palm Sunday celebration.
- At 10:30am, there'll be a short talk to explain a framework for the discussion groups that come next.
- At 10:45ish, we'll break into discussion groups. (The details of how we will do this will be explained on Sunday).
- At 11:20ish we'll all return from our discussion groups and will spend 30+ minutes listening to feedback from the discussions.
- At roughly 12noon, we'll have a short service of Holy Communion to end our time together.

As will all our online events, you can access all the above at www.EastleighParish.com.



If you can't access the internet but would like to take part in the Vision Day, please phone me. I'd like to hear your input.

Important Information Before Palm Sunday Vision Morning

I've copied a written version of the talk that I gave last Sunday to the foot of this letter. I'd really appreciate it if you could find the time to read it before Palm Sunday; especially if you weren't able to worship with us on Sunday morning. It's entitled "[Being Disciples: Following Jesus Wherever He Takes Us.](#)"

4. Holy Week & Easter

At the time of writing, the PCC and I haven't made any firm plans for Easter Sunday. There's a good reason for this! It is possible that Bishop Tim is going to invite us all to join in with a special online Easter Sunday service, and we may yet choose to take part in this. When we know more, we'll be sure to tell you.

These are the events/plans that we do have in place for Holy Week & Easter. They are a bit different to previous years, but hopefully provide a helpful 'diet' for Holy Week as we worship and pray from home.

Day	Time	Event
Mon 6 th	9:15am	Morning Prayer for Holy Week
Mon 6 th	7:30pm	Night Prayer (Compline)
Tues 7 th	9:15am	Morning Prayer for Holy Week
Weds 8 th	9:15am	Midweek Communion for Holy Week
Thurs 9 th	9:15am	Morning Prayer for Holy Week
Thurs 9 th	7:00pm	Passover Meal (full details in Outlook)
Fri 10 th	10:00am	Good Friday Service (led by Ian, with CTiE; & a special children's video posted online, prepared by Andy & Jo Berry)
Sun 12 th	6:30am	Sonrise Service (led by Ian, with CTiE)
Sun 12 th	tbc	Easter Communion Services – all tbc

5. Every Blessing!

I do hope that you have found this letter helpful. Please do keep in touch, and please do make use of (and contribute to!) the Action Plan that is on the website or included with this letter.

With every blessing,

Ian
Vicar, Eastleigh Parish Church



Message to EPC on Sunday 29th March 2020

Bible Reading: John 11:38-45 (NIRV)

³⁸ Once more Jesus felt very sad. He came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone in front of the entrance. ³⁹ "Take away the stone," he said.

"But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad smell. Lazarus has been in the tomb for four days."

⁴⁰ Then Jesus said, "Didn't I tell you that if you believe, you will see God's glory?"

⁴¹ So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up. He said, "Father, I thank you for hearing me. ⁴² I know that you always hear me. But I said this for the benefit of the people standing here. I said it so they will believe that you sent me."

⁴³ Then Jesus called in a loud voice. He said, "Lazarus, come out!" ⁴⁴ The dead man came out. His hands and feet were wrapped with strips of linen. A cloth was around his face.

Jesus said to them, "Take off the clothes he was buried in and let him go."

⁴⁵ Many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary saw what Jesus did. So they believed in him.

Being Disciples: Following Jesus Wherever He Takes Us

To be a disciple means to follow Jesus wherever he would lead us.

In his first public miracle, Jesus led his disciples to a wedding at Cana in Galilee and filled people's glasses and jugs with wine.

- Their own resources had run dry, and he not only answered the need that they had at that banquet, but the wine he provided was the best that anyone had tasted.

In the 3 years that followed, he led his disciples:

- on to hill sides where he sat down and taught the crowds the wisest and most profound truths anyone has ever heard;
- into the temple in Jerusalem where he confronted the religious authorities and showed that he was the perfect fulfilment of the OT law;
- to the very fringes of society;
 - to eat with & minister to the marginalised and the outcast;
 - like those that collaborated with the invading Roman army - traitors to the Jewish people
 - like lepers and those caught in adultery.

Jesus also led the disciples:

- deep into the Word of God so that they could see the beauty and the richness of every jot and tittle of the whole Bible, and also;
- so that they stood face-to-face with both the profoundest mysteries of the whole universe **and** the most secret and vulnerable places in their own hearts



Jesus led his disciples. And they followed him, wherever he chose to go.

And then, in this story of Lazarus, Jesus led his disciples to the ultimate challenge - the single biggest problem – that any of us will ever have to face:

- he led them to the grave
 - to a place of death
 - where there was no hope
 - no reason to believe
 - no chance of a positive outcome or encouraging story
- **but the disciples followed him anyway**
 - and in doing so they were there to witness the most amazing display of Jesus' power and authority.

--

Discipleship is a really big topic;

- but at its heart, it's all about following Jesus and going to the places that he would choose to lead us.

--

Earlier this week, the PCC sent out an email with a detailed plan of how we'd like to try and support one-another at this time of great need.

- Practical support to each other is really important
 - and is something that Jesus modelled
 - (like when he fed the 5000 or told the disciples how to go about preparing the meal for his Last Supper)

But what I'd like to begin to share with you this morning is how we – myself and the PCC – would like to encourage you in your discipleship in the days ahead

- And to start with, I'd like to share a picture that I think we're likely to return to again and again in the months ahead
- It might not be the perfect way to describe how we can be disciples and follow Jesus, but as Adrian, I and others talk about being disciples in these challenging days, it's a picture that we're going to use to illustrate some really important aspects of discipleship – and as a framework for our discussions about vision.

The picture I'd like to share is this: ***The Spitfire Aircraft.***

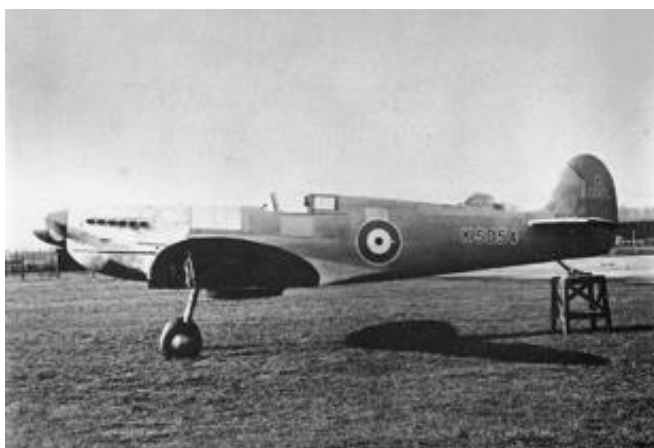




We'd like to use the picture of The Spitfire aircraft as a framework; as a way of describing our journey together as we begin to perceive the vision that God has for EPC.

There are many aspects to the Spitfire, and they include these:

- It was launched from Eastleigh
- It was sent on a mission to bring freedom & liberation the world over
- It was built for battle, but it was also a thing of beauty



- The 1st flight of the 1st ever Spitfire was on 5th March 1936 from Eastleigh Airfield
- This photo shows that plane on that day



- The Spitfire was constantly modified and updated throughout its lifetime
- Amongst other developments, it doubled its top speed as modifications were made



- Not every development was a roaring success
- But even the setbacks became part of the ongoing success (through lessons learned)
- The reason for pushing forwards was that the mission was so vital



- Over time, many different designs & variations were developed
- It was not a case of 'one size fits all'
- They rarely flew alone, preferring to operate as squadrons
- *(the top plane of the 3 is actually a Hurricane - oops)*



- The Spitfire was the combination of many different parts
- All the parts were custom made and skilfully engineered and designed
- For the plane to fly, there were almost countless roles: pilots / design / repair / supply / navigation / radar / oversight / strategy / leadership / training / even food & refreshments



We'd like to use the picture of The Spitfire aircraft as a framework; as a way of describing our journey together as we begin to perceive the vision that God has for EPC.

- Exactly what this vision is, is yet to be discerned by the whole church, but what we are confident of thus far is that it would take on these characteristics:

Like the Spitfire, that EPC would be –

- Connected with Eastleigh
- Built and formed to this serve this community *and* the wider world
- Made for a mission that seeks to bring liberation to others
- Not necessarily built exactly the same or flying the same route all the time, but on the same team, on the same overarching mission
- Prepared to go wherever the Commander-in-Chief may lead us

--

Summary

To be a disciple means to follow Jesus wherever he would lead us. Not just to where he performs miracles or offers amazing teaching, but even to the place of death too (e.g. Lazarus' tomb).

In the weeks ahead, we're going to be using the Spitfire picture as a framework for describing our shared discipleship; a picture of how we can follow Jesus wherever he may lead us.

It's likely that we'll keep on referring to the Spitfire picture for a while to come – particularly as we begin to put together all that God has been saying to the whole church throughout Lent in response to our special prayer this Lent:

Dear Heavenly Father, what is your vision for Eastleigh Parish Church?

Please give us ears to hear, hearts to care, and the willingness to respond to all that you show us.

In Jesus name, Amen.

