

## This month's Mission Focus – Christian Solidarity Worldwide

CSW is a Christian Human Rights Organisation specialising in freedom of religion or belief around the world.

1. Please pray for the people who have been sent to re-education camps in China because of their religious beliefs. Over one million people, mostly Uyghur Muslims, have been sent to re-education camps which are over-crowded for reasons such as having the messaging app WhatsApp on their phone or praying in public.

Disappearances can happen at any time and for any reason. Once in the re-education camp they have no access to lawyers. Often their families are not told where they are being held or when they will be released. In response, many Uyghur Muslims have stopped showing any outward sign of their faith and broken off contact with overseas relatives, heightening their already intense feelings of fear and isolation.

2. Please pray for China's new, tighter controls on religion to be lifted and for children to be able to go to church. Please pray for God to guide the congregations of shut down churches to safer places and be able to worship in peace.

In 2018 new regulations tightened state control over Chinese churches. Churches registered with the government and unofficial house churches have experienced harassment which has led to church closures and demolitions. Church religious items have been taken away and children have been banned from going to church.

### Ian Miller Writes...

I am enormously grateful to you all for having me as a placement student from Oak Hill Theological College since late August 2018. It has been a joy and a blessing getting to know so many of you and I will miss you greatly now that my placement has come to an end. Over my time I have been struck by St Mary's role in Chesham – whether in caring for people (pastoral visits, Chiltern Food Bank etc.), being engaged in civic life (100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of WWI remembrance day service), being involved in schools (Josh and John) or ministering to people at various points in life. I will be praying that your proclamation of Jesus in the heart of Chesham will bear great fruit. During my time at St Mary's we moved to Maidenhead in preparation for my curacy which commences at the end of June. For the sake of my girls' education it made sense to move sooner rather than later. God has been very good to us and the family are all settling in well. I will be ordained on 29<sup>th</sup> June at Christchurch Cathedral, Oxford and will then be joining Val at another St Mary's – one run by Will Stileman (also formerly of Chesham).

St Mary's

with St John's Bellingdon



## Family News - April 2019

### A Mile in their Shoes....

is coming real soon! This Holy Week Exhibition will be an eye-opening event of real quality, originality. Through 25 pairs of shoes from around the world we get to see individual stories of love, struggle, faith and hope, through the lens of people's feet, where they walk and the road that Jesus walked for us through Holy Week. Trust us, it will be great. Bring people. Lots of people. To the Exhibition when it's open, or to any of the services. The daily services will be working through John chapter 12.

Here's the programme:

#### Sunday 14th April

5 pm Songs of Praise followed by an opening reception

#### Monday 15th April

12 noon to 4 pm - Exhibition open

4.30 pm - All Age Worship (half an hour, just right for families)

#### Tuesday 16th April

12 noon to 9 pm - Exhibition open

9.30 pm - Compline

#### Wednesday 17th April

8.45 am - Holy Communion

12 noon to 6 pm - Exhibition open

#### Thursday 18th April

12 noon to 7 pm - Exhibition open

7.30 pm - Informal Holy Communion

#### St. Mary's Annual District Church Meeting

#### Wednesday 24th April, 8.00 pm Church Rooms

At this meeting we elect new wardens, PCC and DCC members, look back over the last year at St. Mary's, hear an update about our Accounts, and there's the chance to ask questions about any aspect of our church life. We will be saying a special "thank you" to our Treasurer, Michael Hardman, and Church Warden, Hilary Richardson, as they step down from their duties. Please come.

## Family Update



### Easter Experience on Good Friday, 19th April.

We are looking forward to welcoming lots of children for a morning of fun to celebrate Easter.

There are a few more spaces available but pre-registration is necessary. Please sign up via the parish website - [www.greatchesham.org.uk](http://www.greatchesham.org.uk)

When: 19th April, 9.45 - 12.30pm (parents join the fun at 12pm)

What: Crafts, Music, Games & the Easter story

Who: Children in school years Reception to Year 6

Where: St.Mary's Church Rooms

Please contact Hannah Martin ([children@cheshamchurch.co.uk](mailto:children@cheshamchurch.co.uk), 784574) for more information.

## Why I love Easter

“Therefore we were buried with him through baptism into death, in order that **just as Christ was raised from the dead** through the glory of the Father, thus also **we ourselves might walk in new life.**” Romans 6:4

Beautiful and broken. The stubborn fact of our existence. Our bodies don't keep. Work is frustrating as often as fulfilling. Relationships can be heavenly and hellish. Even the greatest joys we experience are tinged with sadness.

Jesus enters into ALL of it. But even in his weak, decaying existence from Bethlehem to Jerusalem, He gives us whispers of another world. His connection with the creation as a sinless, blessed human is the stuff of our dreams. When he speaks to the wind, it listens. When he wants food for people, the creation delivers it up at his request. When he's stuck on the wrong side of a lake, he just walks to where he wants to go. When confronted with decades long human dysfunction, He calmly tells it to get lost: and it's gone. Cells restructured. Minds made whole. Souls at peace; given joy where there was only darkness.

All pointing to the defeat of the shadow that hangs over us. The spectre of meaninglessness cast over everything by death. The removal of the curse that has dogged the very ground we walk on.

When Easter finally comes after that long Saturday, all our assumptions about our existence can be torn up and thrown away. There's no more shrugging at suffering. The life that Jesus reveals in his physical, immortal body is unlike anything the universe has ever known before. A life made perfect BY death; rather than the half-life we know, always on the verge of being swallowed up by death. Almost anything wonderful that we can imagine can happen now. And one day it will. Because His tomb is empty.

The life we rejoice in at Easter is our life. New. Immortal. Full of possibility. Giving suffering a purpose. Giving hope to anyone who knows they need it. Totally real!

I love Easter because I love the new life of Jesus. When despair lurks, Jesus declares a different future. If Christ has been raised from the dead - AND HE HAS - my wildest hopes and longings are only the warm-up act for all the new creation will bring. And the chocolate's nice too.

Rev. Josh Bailey

### THE STORY OF ST MARY'S CHANCEL ARCH MURAL

The mural which we know so well, illustrating Holy Week, is approaching 50 years old. I have been researching the story of how Chesham came to get the mural, the artists (yes, there were two really), the Trust which paid for it etc. A leaflet relating this most interesting story is now available – please collect a copy from the desk at the back of the church.

**RICHARD OGDEN**, for **THE FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S**