**Word for this week**

“When this is all over...” is a phrase being used quite frequently at the moment.

They are words that indicate a looking forward, and a confidence that troubled times will, with the passage of time, be overcome. They are words being used by families and friends as they look to the future and promise each other actual, rather than virtual, get-togethers and hugs, and as they look forward to getting together for a meal, or just being able to meet up and go to the pub. Thoughts like these are a great comfort and help to give us strength and purpose and keep us looking forward.

Her Majesty The Queen, in her address to the nation spoke of the future and the time when we will look back on this crisis and reflect on what it will say about us as a nation. Her Majesty encouraged us to be “united and resolute” and made clear that the way we respond will “define our present and our future”.

The notion of present and future is very much part of the 23rd Psalm, recognising that paying attention to both is important for our wellbeing. The psalm reminds us first that God is with us in the present, whether the pre- sent time is quiet and peaceful or dark and challenging, God is with us. He is with us this week as we journey through the uncertainty of this present valley.

This Holy Week is like no other we have known. How will we journey through these next days leading up to Easter? How will this define our present?

This is an unprecedented Holy Week, but we do not walk it alone. Our Lord, The Shepherd, is present with us, and is calling us to be present with Him.

These next days provide us with a unique opportunity to allow our faith to grow stronger as we join together in walking closely with Jesus. Some links to the services and resources that may help us in this can be found above.

We have the opportunity to draw close, to reflect again on the events of Maundy Thursday and the Last Supper, and to stay close through the desolation and darkness of Good Friday, to hear and see, and in our minds’ eyes to be there, present with Him, on the way to the cross and beyond.

As we do so we will open our hearts to begin to appreciate just a fragment more of the enormity of His immeasurable love and his stop-at-nothing desire and determination to bring us to the future He has and wants for us.

Taking this opportunity to be present with Jesus will strengthen our awareness and certainty of His presence with us as we journey on, growing our faith, and defining our future.

The last few verses of Psalm 23, have both a present and a lifelong focus. They speak of a table spread, a cup overflowing, a host providing lavishly for his guest, a glimpse of a feast that the Lord prepares. As our journey with Jesus brings us to the glorious climax of Easter Day, may we be unit- ed in celebrating together the wonder of the Easter Feast.

Knowing He is Risen, may we be united and resolute in living out the Easter message of sure and certain hope, as we share our lives with our com- munity, and may this be what defines both our present and our future.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all as we approach this Easter together.

With love and prayers,
Trish
*Revd. Trish Mander, Associate Minister, Wychert Vale Benefice*