

Easter is coming!

Minister's Pastoral Letter March 2022

3 R's Reconnection, Renewal and Resurrection

Hello Friends of Bricknell Avenue, Clowes Memorial and Trinity,

Grace and peace to you from our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ!

It is now approaching 6 months since I began my role as Deacon in the circuit and I am so grateful and blessed for the ministry we have already done and shared together. It has been a joy to begin getting to know people. As some wonderful activities are re-establishing and people are beginning to gather again, my hope is that we will continue to find ways to connect, to build relationships and rebuild community, taking care of one another and sharing the fullness of the Gospel with our church and local communities.

We have by now, all had visits from someone from The Way Forward team. For some this will be an exciting time of looking forward for new things to come, for others it will bring feelings of uncertainty and may leave us with unanswered questions. Maybe at this time, there are no clear answers, but let us be encouraged to pray, to have conversations, discussions and to listen well with grace to one another. According to Bonhoeffer, there are many times when "listening can be a greater service than speaking." Good listening then prepares us to speak well. I invite you to consider this as a time for reconnecting, for renewal and of resurrection.

'Easter is coming!' I don't know about you, but for me, those 3 words speak volumes to me this year. The last two years have felt very different, Easter in isolation, Easter a time of separation and disconnection, Easter away from family, friends and church, Easter in mourning, Easter in a mask! But what wonderful lessons we have learned about the value of connecting with one another in different ways. Zoom, letters, cards, flowers, phone calls, goody bags, food parcels, over the wall meet ups, pavement picnics, and I am sure you can name many more. Updates of the pandemic have been over-shadowed by news of war, but we remain mindful that for some, it is still a difficult time and isolation and fear. Thank you to all who have taken and continue to give extra time to notice and to care.

I am hopeful that this year can again be a time of reconnection, renewal, and resurrection. Those three words for me speak of Hope. Hope of reconnecting with friends, family, and church community. I see hope of newness and refreshment.

We must not deny that throughout this season of Lent, we have experienced and witnessed great suffering and conflict in the world, the crucifixion of Jesus illustrates that graphically. But it does not have the final word! In Christ's anguish when he was under trial, in his betrayal, suffering and dying; in Christ's deadness and waiting; in Christ's rising and empowering, God is with us and for us all.

Whatever your struggles, may God be with you, encouraging you in your endeavours, inspiring your gratitude for people and things of goodness, bringing you hope and peace even in the deepest times of distress; for these are the things of God, and God's love endures. We think about the broken body of Christ on the cross and from that comes the hope that when things are desolate, if we can but open our eyes, the seeds of hope may be visible.

So, as we wait, as we look forward, we must also have hope of transformation, reconnecting, renewal and resurrection for the Church of God. As hard as it may be to hear, when we think about our churches, are we willing to endure that some things need to die so that we might experience a miraculous transformation? Has the church emerged from the grave of the pandemic physically and spiritually transformed? Will landscapes be carved out to make room for new life-giving ministries?

As we look forward, I offer some questions for reflection. In what way will Bricknell, Clowes and Trinity embody the resurrection of Jesus Christ and come out of this pandemic and time of reflection noticeably or dramatically different or will everything stay the same?

May the hope and joy of resurrection continue to guide us all.

Easter is coming! Let's look forward with joyful hearts.

Thanks be to God. Love and Peace.

Deacon Ali

P.S I am very grateful for the invitations I have had to share some of who Ali is and what it means to be a deacon. Please ask if you would find that helpful in your group or church.