

Link Up!

**“Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”
John 20:29**

What's coming up in May

You should already know that on the first Sunday of our Pastoral Vacancy (1st May) we will be holding the first of our monthly Prayer Services, this will be held in the Hall around tables with tea/coffee served as you come in. The morning will include Singing, Bible Reading and thoughts and times of prayer in small groups. This will be concluded with our time of Communion. Do come and be prepared to participate.

On Sunday 8th May we have Rev Martin Poole as our visiting speaker. Martin is an old friend of Longfleet, and we look forward to renewing contact with him.

On Sunday 15th May, Alistair Doxat-Purser from Faithworks Wessex will be visiting us to share news about Faithworks' projects and bring us God's word. Carri will be leading the service that morning.

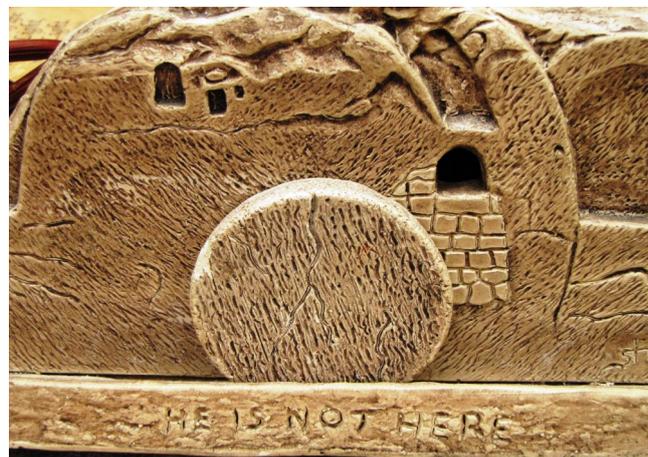
Stephen Chaloner, our treasurer will be leading and preaching on Sunday 22nd May.

Then to conclude the month, on Sunday 29th May, Rev Colin Norris the Regional Team Leader for SCBA our Baptist Association, will be visiting us to lead worship and preach.

Evidence, evidence, evidence...!

I work for a small health insurance provider in Poole although what I do there can be a bit of a mystery at times. Truth be told, I don't always know myself! It seems to be a little bit of everything from handling complaints to writing policy booklets to overseeing data protection and other compliance rules. It's a real mixed bag and certainly keeps me on my toes!

Anyone who has worked in 'compliance' (of any industry – not just financial services) will know the key word is 'evidence'. Can you prove something happened? Where are the records? Nowadays, it is not enough for a firm to 'believe' it complies with the rules or to say *'Well, nothing bad has happened, therefore we must be compliant...'* but it must provide positive evidence to demonstrate compliance. Training records. Audit results. Internal procedures. Customer feedback. If it's not written down, it didn't happen. Evidence, evidence, evidence...



Things to pray for in May

Pray for the ongoing process of letting our manse through the Afghan Resettlement and Assistance Scheme. We are busy signing up with the letting agent and liaising with BCP Council and ICN who will be recommending the house for the scheme and helping the family who are allocated to us to complete all the necessary paperwork. In the meantime, John will be busy making sure that the house meets all the necessary safety requirements for the tenancy and giving it a bit of a tidy up.

Pray for the Deacons as we wait for SCBA to recommend someone to us to act as our moderator and as they keep the church functioning in the meantime.

Pray about what God might be wanting us to do as a church as we move forward into the future. Keep seeking his will for our church so that, when we do start to discuss the future in members' meetings, we hear His voice clearly.

In the immediate aftermath of Jesus' resurrection, there was naturally much rejoicing. Except in the heart of one man – Thomas (called Didymus) who refused to believe without physical evidence. He wanted not just to see but to feel the wounds for himself. And, of course, the Lord lovingly obliged him although Thomas was left with the everlasting nickname 'Doubting Thomas'. (*John 20 v 24-29.*)

Thomas tends to get a bad rap out of this story and the moniker 'Doubting Thomas' is used more as an insult than a commendation. But is he really so different from you and I? Trust often requires a healthy mix of evidence in what you can see and faith in what you can't, and Thomas' reaction is both natural and human. Rational thinking minds require more than just the claims of others. They need to see as well, particularly in a world of fake news and mistrust of grand narratives.

So, in today's world, what makes faith believable? In this respect, nothing has changed from 2,000 years ago – it's how the light and love of Christ shines through His followers into the world beyond church doors. It's how we treat each other and the people around us. It's how others see something in us worth believing. It's how our faith transforms and influences us for good. It's the outpouring of grace and love towards others who feel they have no hope and nothing to look forward to.

In short, we are called to be evidence of the resurrection of Christ and His presence in the world today.

The early church had its issues, yet it was the authenticity of those first disciples in their witness which caused the Romans to say, "*See how they [Christians] love one another*" (Tertullian – Apologeticus – AD 197). This should be our aim too. Yes, we will have our disagreements, but we should never forget our primary calling – to be Jesus in a world which badly needs to see more of Him every day. We need to be practical evidence of Him.

Blessings...
Stephen Chaloner