

EASTER MESSAGE 2021

FROM RT REV. DR JILL DUFF, BISHOP OF LANCASTER

The [video version of this message](#) was filmed at Wrea Green Remembrance Wood in Lancashire.

Bishop Jill explains in her message how the wood, created by local property developer Andy Bradshaw, came into being last year and how she was invited to bless the wood by local vicar Rev. Philip Chew.

The video version of the message contains an excerpt from an edition of Granada Reports, featuring Bishop Jill; filmed on location in Wrea Green on the recent National Day of Reflection.

Nearly 2000 years ago, in a small wood of trees outside Jerusalem, Jesus spent the night agonizing in prayer before he faced trial and crucifixion.

Luke's gospel tells us 'When Jesus got up from prayer, he came to the disciples – his closest friends, Peter, James and John – and found them sleeping because of grief' (Luke 22.45)

Because of grief. Grief is so exhausting.

Here in Wrea Green, property developer Andy Bradshaw, had a brush with death last year, when he contracted Covid last February on a skiing holiday in Austria.

In response, he gave 65 acres of his land to become the Wrea Green Remembrance Wood, so people could plant trees to remember those they have loved and lost.

Local vicar Philip Chew invited me to come to bless the wood last August. I turned up in surprise to find 200 people at the open air service; with 400 watching live on Facebook. The grief was palpable.

On the National Day of Reflection last week, Granada Reports made a feature of the story.

Grief is so exhausting. And there have been many other griefs this last year. Livelihoods, schooling, relationships...

It has been an exhausting year. And there are still trials and challenges ahead.

And yet there is a beautiful thread through Scripture and the lives of our saints.

It seems those dark times of trial and crucifixion are mysteriously linked to the reality of the resurrection.

In lockdown, I have discovered the writings of the English mystics: men and women of the Word and Spirit whose extraordinary exuberance and joy was balanced by lament and tears.

Peter was there in that wood with Jesus – the garden of Gethsemane – on the night before Jesus died.

Some years later, he went on to write this: “Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.

But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed” (1 Peter 4.12-13).

So, on this second Easter of a global pandemic, in the midst of suffering and pain, may heaven draw near. May you catch a glimpse of that beautiful image of heaven where there are trees with leaves for the healing of the nations.

May you know Jesus for yourself, living and breathing, back from the dead, touching your wounds, sharing your sufferings as you share in his.

And may you glimpse Jesus in his glory telling you that one day ‘it’s going to be OK’. Amen
