

April 2025

Bishop Malcolm writes...

The message of Holy Week and Easter is that God's love for us in Jesus is Good News - the best news anyone could ever get. How are we doing at making this obvious to everyone, as it has become obvious to us?

One way we do it is simply to be present in each and every local community across Derbyshire. The way we are with our neighbours, the way we are as a church, and the way we are with each other, are all supposed to express the love of God in Christ – and very often they do! Where there is a community full of life and love and hospitality, people will experience 'good news' simply by walking through the door and being made welcome. Others will simply see the church tower, and be prompted to pray.

But how else do we share the wonders of the life in Christ we have been blessed with?

Another way is by making sure our churches are always places where people who are coming with questions about life and faith can find help in their search. Local churches either do it alone or they can team up to ensure there's always something going on locally geared towards helping people make a start with Jesus. This can be one of the many courses available, or simply a fun evening in church or café or pub where any question is taken seriously, and where new disciples and others can explore the scriptures honestly, making the connections with everyday life.

I do enjoy my ministry a lot – but the best thing I get to do as a bishop is to do confirmations. Hearing the stories of people's search for God – and sometimes of how God has surprised them without their previously having been interested – this is an extraordinary privilege. It encourages the whole church when they tell their story. I thank God for the many churches where an annual confirmation course has once again become routine -something we lost perhaps during Covid, but now have the opportunity to revive.

More and more we are hearing of newcomers, especially young people, just turning up at church wanting to see what goes on and to find out more. They don't necessarily want to be smothered – but they are glad when there is clear information about what is going on and how they can engage if they want to.



It is worth thinking of also that most searching and enquiring today happens online. My guess is that some of those who are just randomly turning up at church have begun their search out there. There are a range of great online resources out there to help people become disciples of Jesus – for younger people #thewayuk on Instagram or Youtube or Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/twuktv/> is a great place to start.

Or there is the Christian Enquiry Agency - <https://www.christianity.org.uk/site-map>

And there is helpful material on the Church of England website too:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/faith-life/what-we-believe>

This April we keep company with Jesus on his road to Good Friday and to Easter while the guns of war still sound, and in a world where human failure and sin are all too evident. So many lives are broken and hurting. There are many and various factors at play: with ever deepening poverty and rising inequality, with the global rise in political extremism, and with today's preference for social media silo talk rather than open, honest conversation. Meanwhile the climate emergency only gets more urgent. It would be easy to give in, and give up hope. We must not.

And yet, even in these perilous times, Sunday by Sunday, many are finding real hope in Jesus, the crucified and risen one. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection are still **good news** to those who encounter him alive and present today. In Him there is a new creation – a whole new world.

Let's find ways old and new to pass this on.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Malcolm Macnaughton". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

The Rt Revd Malcolm Macnaughton
Bishop of Repton