



The Anglican Church of St Thomas, Kefalas

Reaching our Community through the Gospel message

Welcome today and throughout **April 2020**

Thank you for sharing in worship with us.

Early this year a young man carrying a large rucksack appeared at our Sunday morning service. His name was James Lorimer, and we learnt that he was on a pilgrimage from England to the Holy Land. I asked him if he would consider sending me a record of his journey. Here is the first instalment:

Last summer I left my home to make a pilgrimage to Canterbury and Rome, and then decided to continue to the Holy Land. So far I have walked 3775 miles (just over 6000km). Depending on my route I have about another 1000-1200km left to go and, God willing, I hope to arrive in Jerusalem in time for Easter. I normally walk about 30-35km each day, but sometimes 40 or 50 depending on accommodation. Occasionally I have met other pilgrims but for the most part I have walked alone. While walking I pray, sing hymns, take photos, maybe listen to BBC radio downloads, or just enjoy watching the wildlife and countryside.

The main question people normally ask me is why I want to do this. Essentially it is because I love walking and my faith has always been important to me. It is a time to be with God, listen to what he is saying and notice him at work in the world around me. I think perhaps it is about giving my whole life and everything I am good at to God, in an extravagant gesture that doesn't necessarily have to make sense, like the woman pouring perfume over Jesus' feet. When I worry that I don't understand the purpose of it, I am reminded of all the Biblical examples of people being asked to do something unusual and just trust God. Indeed, when I came to St Thomas' we sang the hymn "Will you come and follow me if I but call your name, will you go where you don't know and never be the same?" I realised it isn't about having the answers, but about listening to God's call and following his guidance, trusting that he knows what he is doing, even if I don't see the way.

The final push out of the door though, was when everything suddenly seemed to go wrong a year ago, and my mental health ended up in a very poor state. Yet I knew with certainty that God was with me through all this. Looking back now I think God had been preparing me for this for a while. I had spent the previous summer reading Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, so perhaps a pilgrimage was the obvious solution in my mind at a time when I really needed to be close to God. I remember also reading about the route to Rome but thinking that I would never have the time to do it. But the archaeology company I worked for had said they were happy for me to go, and if they had a space again in the future they would be happy for me to reapply. So now my only time limit was to cross the Alps before the snows arrived in September. In my parent's church we heard the story of God calling Abram to leave his home and trust God, and the story of Jesus telling the paralytic to "pick up your mat and walk". The vicar gave me a strong nudge that it was time to get going so at the end of June I packed my bag and set off.

I left Leicestershire, skirted around Coventry, followed the river Thames path from Oxford to Reading, and then headed straight south again to Winchester. I found campsites when possible and otherwise quietly camped

rough. When I reached Winchester the Bible reading was about Jesus sending out his disciples without a pack. I have quite a big rucksack. In fact, I nearly caused a bomb scare by leaving it next to the font for an hour after the service while I explored the cathedral. But I didn't think God was telling me to literally walk without my bag, but rather that I would have to trust him completely on this walk. I don't know if I am very good at that, but I am learning, and he has never ever let me down. I joined the North Downs national trail, through the low hills running parallel to the route of the medieval Pilgrims Way (now largely under the modern main roads). St. Swithun's shrine in Winchester was once the main pilgrimage destination in England, but after Thomas Becket's martyrdom pilgrims started travelling in the opposite direction to Canterbury instead.

Arriving in Canterbury I heard the story of Mary sitting at Jesus' feet and how Jesus tells Martha that we are all welcome to do the same, because only one thing is needed. I realised this was what the calling was about - to spend time listening to Jesus, to sit at his feet and rest, and to simply enjoy spending time with God. The relevance of the messages and hymns at each cathedral I had visited so far was quite amazing, and looking back now, it also occurs to me that God was preparing me for the long journey. I had three weeks in Anglican churches and cathedrals for God to show me much of what I would need, in order to have the strength and courage to trust his promises and guidance for the next several thousand miles away from home.

From Canterbury there is a route that leads all the way to Rome called the Via Francigena (*fran-chee-gen-a*, with a soft g, the "French Way"). The way closely follows the eighty stage itinerary detailed by Archbishop Sigeric in AD 990 when he was on his way home from meeting the Pope to receive his archbishop's vestments. I met a pilgrim called Andy and we walked together for a few weeks. We stayed in a monastery with strict rules of silence at meal times, we were hosted by French families in farmhouses and once even in a real French chateau. In northern France the route crosses vast stretches of seemingly never-ending agricultural fields. The landscape is still marked heavily by the conflicts that were fought there - pillboxes, war graves and even shrapnel and grenades lying by the path that farmers still dig up from time to time. I passed the childhood home of Benoît-Joseph Labre, a Catholic saint who left home one day and spent most of the rest of his life as a pilgrim. There are statues of him in most of the churches in that area, easily recognisable because of all the holes in his socks. I passed the great cathedral cities of Laon and Reims, then moved into the low vine-clad hills of the Champagne region. As I came towards Switzerland the hills grew taller and I found myself in alpine meadows full of the sound of jingling cow bells. Once over the border I walked through the UNESCO vineyards bordering Lake Lemman, then gradually climbed up through the Swiss Alps to reach Col Grand Saint Bernard at 2500 metres above sea level. The hospice at this historic pass has provided shelter for travelers for hundreds of years and never closes its doors, even in winter. I crossed into Italy on 1st September; two weeks later the first snows fell in the pass.

The route descended the beautiful Aosta valley to reach the flat canal landscape by the river Po, full of birdlife but also mosquitoes. I spent several weeks wandering here, detouring to Turin and Milan to visit some old Italian friends. Many more people walk the Italian section, as pilgrims or for recreation, so I could regularly meet other people in the evenings. It was easy to find accommodation in churches and monasteries now too, and to join in the regular rhythm of prayer. I crossed the Appenines at the Cisa Pass then stayed in a series of beautiful walled hill towns through Tuscany. As I approached Rome I passed more and more archaeology. There are so many tombs cut into the hillside that the locals use them as storerooms and garages. For several miles I walked on a well preserved section of Roman road. Later I followed an Etruscan *via cava*, a sunken roadway cut deep into the bedrock. Near Siena I joined three young Italians on a two mile detour through a dry underground canal, which luckily did come out at the other end.

Finally I arrived in Rome at the end of October. I spent some days exploring the city and following the traditional seven churches pilgrimage around the papal basilicas. There are many relics of Jesus' passion to see, and though I do not know the authenticity of them all, it reminded me of the greater truth, that our faith is based on real events, grounded in historical truth. Near St John's cathedral are the steps Jesus is thought to have been led up when tried by Pilate. Pilgrims can climb them, pausing to meditate on Christ's passion at each step, but you have to go up on your knees.*

Since arriving in France I had heard the idea that it was possible to continue to Jerusalem, but I was trying to wait for God's guidance. As I approached Rome I prayed about this again and felt called to continue. I turned to the Bible readings for the day and they spoke about how all peoples would go to worship God in Jerusalem. So I set off again, following the ancient Via Appia out of Rome towards the south. I visited St Benedict's abbey at Montecassino, the cave church of the Archangel Michael at Monte Sant'Angelo, then arrived at Santa Maria di Leuca on the southernmost tip of Italy for Advent Sunday. I was tired and lonely, it was getting cold and I wanted to go home. I prayed again, asking where I should go next, and then turned to the daily readings. It was the exact same verses I had read about Jerusalem when arriving in Rome.

Medieval pilgrims could take a ship leaving for the Holy Land from one of the ports of southern Italy, but this is not the case today. So I turned back to Brindisi to find a ferry to Albania. I had now left the established pilgrim network and would have to make my own route. I thought I could reach the Anglican Church in Athens if I walked very fast but I kept getting delayed and then a sheepdog bit me in the calf while crossing the hills in Albania. I was limping, I didn't know where I was going and it felt like the pilgrimage had gone off track. I climbed over the mountains to see the UNESCO heritage town of Gjirokastër and the archaeology in that area. In the surrounding hills I found many beautiful churches and ruined monasteries full of frescoes. I found time to sit on the hillside, not needing to speak, just listening to God and resting in his presence. I arrived at the Greek border just in time for Christmas and decided to stop in Corfu and visit the Anglican Church. I thought I would understand the service if not the Greek, but God had brought me straight to the English-speaking community of Corfu. I was able to celebrate Christmas in English and got invited to several dinners and parties so I didn't spend Christmas alone.

I prayed and made a new plan. I would try and cross the Aegean via Crete and Rhodes, thus letting me walk as much as possible and sail less. It would also let me follow the route taken by medieval pilgrims and I could visit the sites of the Biblical epistles. First I came to ancient Corinth. In the agora is the "bema" where it is thought the crowd dragged Paul in Acts 18. Outside the modern village church nearby is a memorial with the words of Paul's great sermon on love. I continued south through the Peloponnese and took a ferry from Gythio to Kissamos. On Crete of course I also had the opportunity to attend another wonderful Anglican church, and I followed the coast to Chania in time to arrive at Kefalas on a Sunday morning so that I could join you for worship. I wanted to visit Gortynas, the site of a major Roman town in the south of Crete. St Titus was left there by Paul, became the first bishop and was the recipient of another of the epistles. I took a route through the hills past Spili and Mires, avoiding the snow-covered higher ranges on either side, then after visiting the ruins I looped north again to Herakleion and followed the coast past Agios Nikolaos to Sitia. From here I sailed to Karpathos then Rhodes and finally to Marmaris on the coast of Turkey. I have just made it to Ephesus, another major site of early Christianity, and now I am heading east to Collosae near Denizli.

I do try to keep a record of my pilgrimage and share some photos for my friends and family at home. If you are interested you can see it at www.instagram.com/jimmy_pilgrimmy

* I was confused by this –what was Jesus doing in Rome?? I queried this with James, and here is what he wrote:

The relics. I was trying to very briefly summarise what I saw in Rome after walking so far to get there. I can't remember all of the things I saw but certainly the tombs of St Peter, St Paul, and I think St Matthew and some of the other apostles.

In the church of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme there are many relics of Christ - thorns from the crown of thorns, nails from the crucifixion, pieces of the cross, and the notice Pilate wrote proclaiming Jesus as "King of the Jews". I heard a guide explaining that of all the relics this one is the most likely to be genuine because the style of the writing can be checked as well as chemical analysis of the wood it is written on. Incidentally the church's name is because the foundations are built on earth brought back from Jerusalem, so it is said in this way to be "in Jerusalem".

In Santa Maria Maggiore is Jesus' manger from Bethlehem. I remember wondering how could they possibly know which of all the mangers was the right one. They surely didn't carry it with them on the flight to Egypt! And who would remember which one it was decades later. But then again, it was certainly a special night,

maybe they did keep it safe. Or maybe God divinely revealed its location. After all, nothing is impossible for God.

So I move between thinking as an archaeologist and wanting to check the evidence, and simply having faith in a God who can do more than we could possibly imagine. Because ultimately the relics draw us to Christ. The manger reminds us of the deeper truth that God is with us. There was a sign at Santa Croce - "the relics are precious signs of a true event, whose reverence can help the meditation on the pains; they call our mind, and re-propose the salvific value of the Cross."

As for the stairs, one of the early emperors or popes had the whole staircase shifted from Jerusalem and rebuilt in Rome! It's actually really difficult to climb while kneeling because there are protective wooden boards across each step, so you end up half crawling up it!

NEWS, REPORTS, FORTHCOMING EVENTS & INFORMATION

CHURCH WEBSITE

The Church Website has a link to Revd Bruce's Sermons & Important Messages:

www.theanglicanchurchincrete.co.uk

This website is updated on a daily basis as developments unfold.

Please check the website on a regular basis.

Mary & David Hurley

REGULAR CHURCH GIVING

The Church of St. Thomas continues to be grateful for your financial support and would ask that your regular giving is continued during this difficult time. Although Services have been suspended by the Greek Government, we are still responsible for the expenses of the Church including the Chaplain's salary & social security, rent & accommodation expenses, which are mostly payable in Euros.

Thank you for the Payments paid into the Chaplaincy Euro Account, Cash Donations, and payments into our account in the Diocese Office in London with the option of Gift Aid. As the GBP/EURO exchange rate is very low at the moment, if you are currently in Crete we would appreciate donations in Euros rather than GBP.

CASH DONATIONS ARE ALWAYS ACCEPTED AND RECEIPTS WILL BE PROVIDED

Please do contact me if you would like to discuss payment options and cash arrangements.

Mary Hurley, Chaplaincy Treasurer.

DOCTORS' SCREENING SESSION FOR TYPE 2 DIABETES.

€145 was raised for Church funds.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS:

The **Annual General Meeting** scheduled for Sunday, March 29th after the service, will not now take place. You will be updated when there is new information available.

The next **Church Council Meeting** will be announced when a new date can be set.

EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 12TH.

The 3 course Easter Lamb lunch is cancelled.

CHURCH CHARITIES to be supported in 2020:

1. Touching the Tonga. 2. Anámnisi. 3. ELEPAP.

Diana Silk.

**VINTAGE ROSE Second Hand Shop,
79 Sifaka Street. Chania. A/C 395
(A map with the location of the shop is on the Church notice board).
NB. The shop will be closed for the time being.**

Please continue to take unwanted clean, **seasonal** clothing in good condition, shoes, accessories especially jewellery, books, DVDs, CDs, furniture and household items, tools, flower pots, pet accessories etc to the shop to raise funds for the Church.

Gill.

Reminder: Please collect all your plastic bottle tops and bring them to the Tabernacle for recycling to fund wheelchairs for the disabled.

Also please remember the Social Supermarket: There is a large red plastic bowl in the Tabernacle for your donations of non-perishable goods.

CHURCH SERVICES IN APRIL 2020

Church closed.

BIBLE READINGS FOR APRIL 2020

Church closed.

CHURCH SERVICES INFORMATION FOR MARCH 2020

Feb 25	MORNING PRAYER	2	-
Feb 26	ASH WEDNESDAY HOLY COMMUNION	9	€ 37.00
Mar 01	HOLY COMMUNION	16	€ 77.00
Mar 03	MORNING PRAYER		-
Mar08	HOLY COMMUNION	11	€ 72.00
Mar 15	HOLY COMMUNION	11	€ 30.00
Mar 16	FUNERAL NORMAN ERIC HAINES	25	€350.00 FEE
Mar 22	NO SERVICE		

TOTAL FOR MARCH € 566.00

DONATIONS €300.00

FUNDRAISING €405.00

CHURCH FINANCE INFORMATION FOR MARCH 2020

EURO INCOME € 1271.00
TRANSFER FROM STERLING ACCOUNT € 0.00

EURO EXPENSES € 1542.87

FIGURES AS AT 25/03/2020 (25 FEBRUARY- 25 MARCH)

STERLING INCOME	BANKERS ORDERS	£ 520.00
	GIFT AID	£ 0.00
	DONATIONS	£ 250.00
	WEDDING FEE	£ 350.00

£ 1120.00

STERLING EXPENSES: £ 500.00

TOUCHING THE TONGA

FIGURES AS AT 19/03/2020 (27 JANUARY -19 MARCH)

Thank you to everyone for your financial support particularly for the cash and bank donations since St. Thomas' were obliged to suspend services.

PRAYERNET

Are you experiencing a rough patch in your life? We all have times when we are having problems, either healthwise, mentally or emotionally. Or do you know of someone who is in a difficult place at present? The Prayernet consists of people who pray for others in need, either for a week or two, or sometimes longer. If you would like the support of extra prayers, or would like to join the Prayernet to pray for others in need, please contact me. All this work is done by email and is confidential to the members of the Prayernet. The Prayernet is a vibrant, worldwide community of people who enjoy being able to support people through prayer. Do contact me for help or further information:

suewhitehouse1808@gmail.com or on +3028253 00657

Sue.

MAY NEWSLETTER

Please would you send any notices or articles for the **MAY 2020** Newsletter to:
Diana Silk at tonydi@otenet.gr by **APRIL 24th**

The Newsletter may be downloaded from the
Church website: theanglicanchurchincrete.co.uk
Church email: creteanglicans@yahoo.co.uk

THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF ST. THOMAS, KEFALAS LEADERSHIP TEAM

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Fundraising Coordinator: Val Holmes

Publicity: David & Mary Hurley

Safeguarding Officer: Jo Cheslyn-Hall