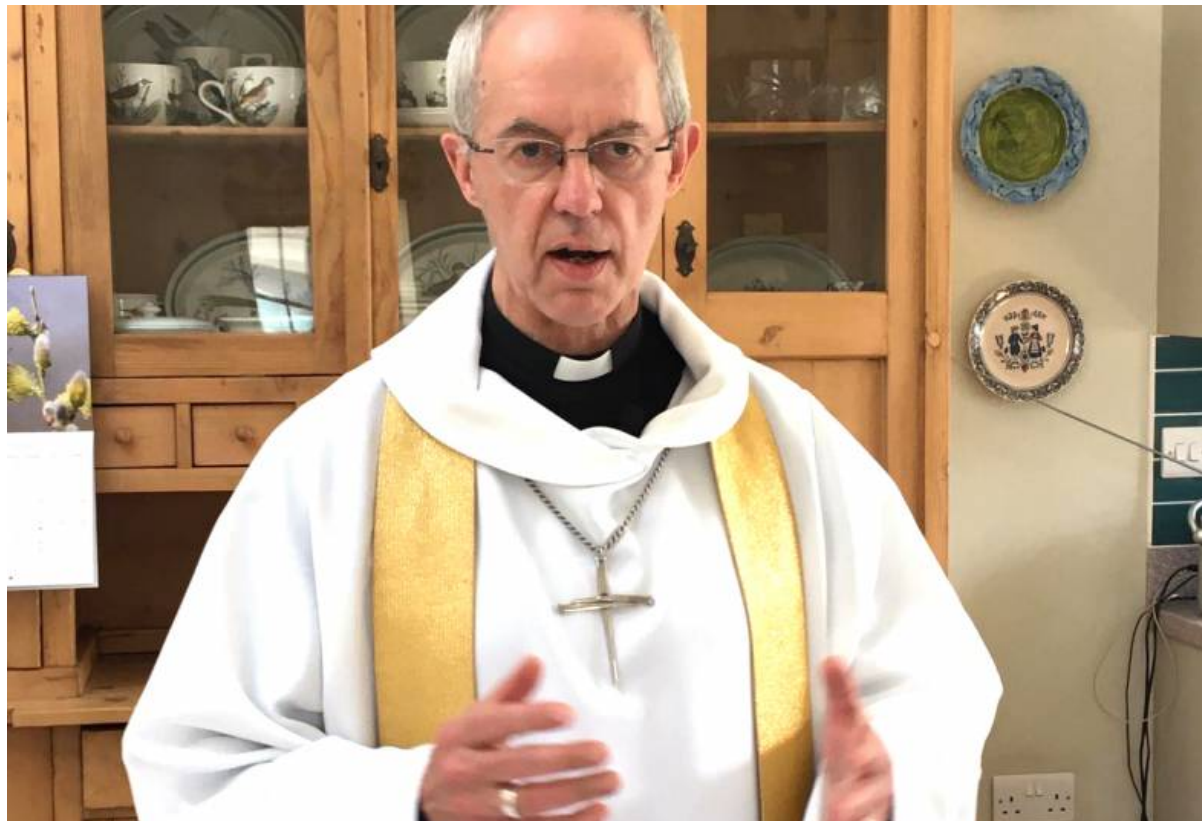


At this time of resurrection, our towns are closed but our hearts are open, Archbishop Justin Welby writes in the Mail on Sunday.



At this time of great difficulty for so many, we naturally turn to our leaders in Westminster and their advisers who are making difficult decisions, in uncertain circumstances and under a huge amount of pressure.

The fact the Prime Minister required intensive care can only deepen our compassion for all those seriously ill and those who are caring for them, and for those who still need to lead our country.

As they rise to the challenge, we offer our prayers and support, regardless of party politics, for the good of our nation.

Across the country, there are more stories of great leadership: Businesses such as Timpson, which has guaranteed its workers' pay; executives who have donated their salaries to charities providing coronavirus relief.

Everywhere, people are reaching out to one another in a way almost unknown in decades. More than that, they're doing so while social distancing.

I am overwhelmed and overjoyed at the humanity and kindness.

Ultimately, though, great leadership is about assuming responsibility and accepting sacrifice for the benefit of others. Who among us has not done that?

Whether you're a parent educating your children, an essential worker maintaining food supplies and keeping streets clean and secure, or someone staying at home, we're all in roles of responsibility for others, often others we don't know.

Today, my Easter Sermon won't be delivered from a pulpit in Canterbury Cathedral - it was recorded on an iPad in my kitchen with my wife Caroline.

The closure of churches is extremely painful but the church is the people of God - not just a building.

We are not only the Church of England; we are the church FOR England. Good leadership is about courage, as our NHS and frontline workers demonstrate.

It is about selfless, hidden care and consideration for others. Leadership is not about power in the conventional sense. It's about service to others.

Jesus was not a person with 'power' in the normal sense, yet he was the ultimate leader. He was a carpenter's son born in a stable, never leading an army, never holding high office. His life was spent with those who didn't matter to the powerful.

His last act before his arrest was to eat with his friends and wash their feet. This revealed the true nature of God because Jesus Christ is God.

He is the crucified God, and because he was obedient to his calling, his death brings us God's forgiveness, and his resurrection brings us new life, eternal life.

Jesus calls us all to be partners with him in the story of God at work in His world, a story so much bigger than we can ever imagine, and tells us we have a vital role to play in it, because God knows us and has called us each by name.

The impact of his life, death and resurrection has been to summon billions to his service, and to set the values by which we live.

We applaud the NHS because it is fundamentally right. We thank those who show heroism because it causes our hearts to leap with joy.

In the midst of the suffering, this renewal of service, this recognition of goodness, speaks to us of hope. Hope is not in vain because Christ conquered death, and thus no enemy is invincible - not Covid-19, not economic suffering.

We can overcome any threat if we give our all as Christ commands when he said: 'I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

That is what people are doing in the NHS and support services, and all over the country. It is the work of God: it takes each of us to lead in it - believers or not - and in these dark and agonising days for so many, it shines an inextinguishable light of hope.

This day of resurrection, of God's action to show the way, our towns may be closed and our immediate circle of people smaller, but our hearts are more open and our spirit is bigger than ever.

We may be apart, but we never walk alone.

Source URL: <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/speaking-writing/articles/archbishop-canterbury-writes-easter-message-mail-sunday>

