

# Christ Church Freemantle

## Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> May; Fourth Sunday of Easter

How are you doing in this strange time? Well, I hope, despite the difficulties. And how can the Church go on being the Church when we can't gather for worship and especially Holy Communion, and this state of affairs might go on for some time still. We might well be feeling very deprived of all that holds us together, and nourishes us, so can today's readings help us as we see what it was like for the first Christians.

In the passage from Acts we see the very early Church community in the first flush of enthusiasm, energy and unity, almost without effort. A sense of mutual support, no opposition, and approval all around. Obviously, this side of heaven, such an ideal state cannot last, and it doesn't. Then we read a part of Peter's first letter to the Church which came later when many Christians were suffering for their faith. They had been scattered from Jerusalem all the way round the Mediterranean, and a fair number of years had gone by since that first euphoric Church existed.

So where is the abundant life that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, promised his followers in the passage from St John's Gospel set for today? Indeed where is it for us right now when our life is so heavily restricted? It's intriguing to ask what a man or woman of the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century heard in this offer of abundant life. It seems that in a society where the old certainties were slipping away,



they heard an offer for meaning and community; something worth living for – indeed something worth giving your whole life to. It was like a resurrection of themselves, enabling them to burst into a new life they had never dreamed of and couldn't have imagined before. And then Peter holds up the portrait of a suffering Christ who endures, and so gives the grace that makes endurance possible.

It seems to me that we can take something from both Church communities to encourage us on our way. We live in a society which is changing, there will be a new shape to 'normal' once the lock-down is over. We are an Easter people still singing 'Alleluia!', who know the power of the Good Shepherd's love for us in our own lives. And we have the grace of endurance shown to us by the suffering Christ so that we may be given the staying power to endure this distressing time.

So take heart and carry on singing 'Alleluia!' loudly and often!

*Eileen Wetherell*