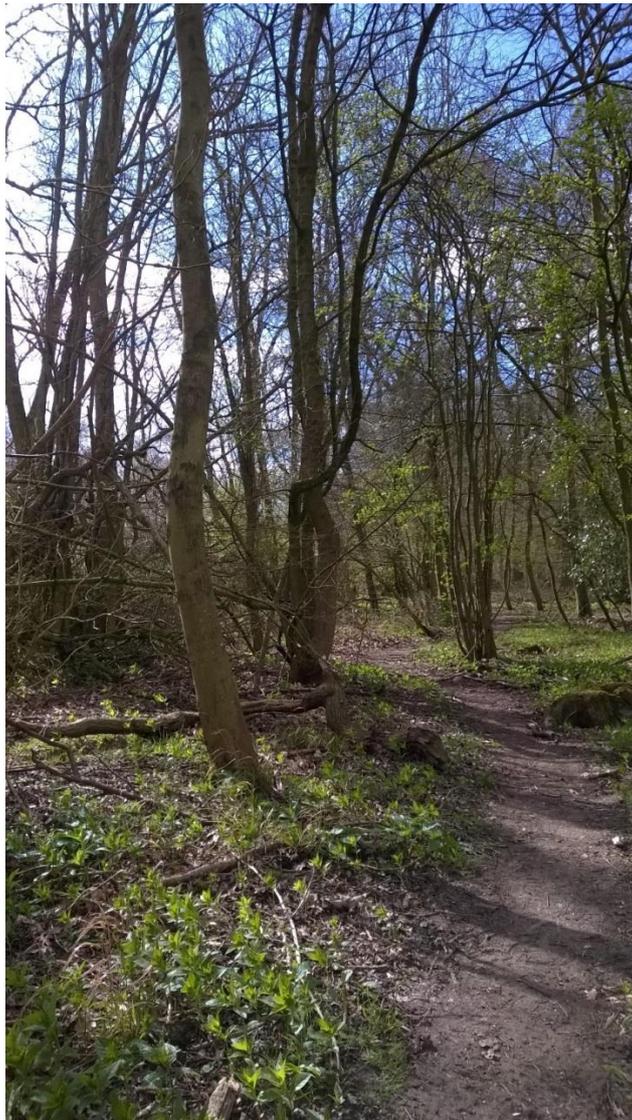


Keep on walking

Today is Palm Sunday. The Church recalls Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. It is the first stage of Christ's journey to the cross. Today we remember his walk from the Mount of Olives down into the city of Jerusalem. It was accompanied by excited crowds, enthusiastically waving palm branches and cheering him on. A few days later, the same people would be jeering and demanding his death. The crowds kept turning up but each time they bombarded him with different outpourings of emotion: excitement, delight, betrayal, rejection, anguish, hope and joy. But Jesus kept on walking. One foot in front of the other, he simply kept going.

During these last few weeks, many of us have experienced changing emotions. I don't think I'm alone in feeling despair one moment and hope the next; rapidly followed by fear, sorrow, peace, and so it goes on! But we must keep going. I find strength in both the image of Jesus calmly walking amidst the turmoil and the gift of daily exercise that continues to be offered to us.

Within a few steps of my house, I'm on a woodland path (photographed below). There is something very inviting about a path between the trees. It's as if it draws us in to a peaceful place within. You might like to take a few moments to use the picture below to imagine yourself on this path.

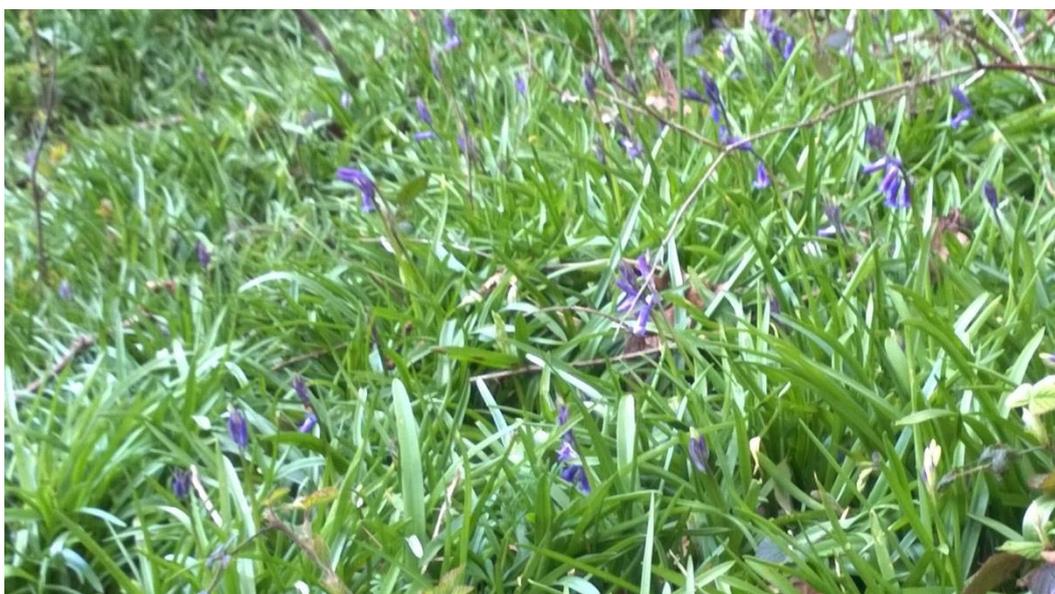


Initiatives such as Forest School and Forest Church have raised our awareness of woodlands as places of nurture and wellbeing. Woodland seems to offer a microcosm of the world at present. On my walk I notice forlorn dead tree trunks (death), fallen branches wrenched from trees during the last storm (brokenness), dropped litter (wasteful damage), buds beginning to open to reveal fresh green leaves (signs of hope), the woodland floor turning greener by the day (an ever-changing scene) and a hidden clump of primroses (delight in the unexpected).



But at the end of the woodland path, there is something even more striking. The bluebells are on the cusp of delighting us with their beauty. The flowers are not fully open yet, but I'm hopeful that by next Sunday, Easter Sunday, they will be resplendent in their stunning blue beauty.

And so let's keep walking. Jesus, with his feet fixed firmly on God's path, kept walking through every emotion and painful loss. Whilst we can't be together in churches this Holy Week, I sense that God might be using the natural world to nurture us through this. So if you are looking for new ways to prepare for the joy of Easter Sunday this year, keep an eye on the bluebells. If you haven't got any on your daily exercise route, I promise an update on my patch in next Sunday's reflection!



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