



**Dear friends and parishioners,**

Sometimes what we believe can be written down – sometimes it can't. One of the things which moves me most deeply about the Easter story is that none of those whom the risen Jesus meets are given a piece of paper and asked to 'sign here'; Jesus doesn't start long and complicated questioning to ensure people are 'believing properly' – generally he calls those first disciples by their name and begins a conversation with them.

He called them, as he calls us, not into a discussion of doctrine but into a lifelong relationship with him. And what are relationships about? Relationships are messy and contradictory – the same people whom we love dearly have the power to irritate us intensely; when we start to love someone we open ourselves up to the possibility of pain by making ourselves vulnerable – this is what happened to God. Through loving us enough to walk amongst us as his Son he opened himself to the pain of rejection and death.

Life has messy and blurred edges; and so faith, too, has messy and blurred edges. Things are not very often straightforward. If the risen Jesus we meet at Easter tells us anything, he tells us that building a relationship happens through:

- meeting the other person where they are;
- listening and taking them seriously;
- assuming that we can learn from the other person;
- being open to them, and risking hurt.

God calls us into a new relationship of love with him today. It may be a struggle. It may not answer all our questions, but it will ultimately change our lives, if we let it.

With my love and prayers, this Eastertide and always,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicola" with a stylized flourish underneath.

**Nicola**