



CHURCH OF THE HOLY CROSS : www.holycrossedinburgh.org

Congregational e-news for EASTER SUNDAY 12 April

From the Rector, the Revd Dr Stephen Holmes

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I. KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH EACH OTHER



Dear friends at Holy Cross,

Happy Easter! Christ has risen! What a strange Easter this is, when we won't meet together. I have been preparing videos in advance and so have been out of sync with the daily themes throughout Holy Week. It was particularly odd to be shouting alleluias in the Church on Holy Saturday but I'm glad to say that the different ways of being in touch has been well received. All those of you missing Holy Cross can see it being prayed in and join in with our worship. There are still those lovely daffodils giving colour to our church grounds.

We miss visiting our family with Bess and I am sure you are missing seeing family and friends; online communication is good but it is not quite the same. At the same time we can thank God for the human skill that produces Skype, Facetime and Zoom! As a former monk I have no problem with praying on my own, I really like it, but the experience of just celebrating the Eucharist on my own and with my family has shown me how important it is for us all to meet as a Christian community because Jesus has made us a sacramental people – waving an artisan bread roll and a thimble of sherry in front of our computer screen during a live-stream communion service is just not good enough!

It was good to be in contact with Rev Dan of the Church of Scotland Parish Church and share our online worship in Holy Week, and I also sent our greetings to our friends in the Syrian Orthodox congregation at Holy Cross. I received this reply from Deacon Elias Varughese: "Father Stephen, thank you so much for keeping us in your prayers. We all are going through the difficult time of our generation. As you said, we too are missing our Holy week services. We can unite in our personal and family prayers during this pandemic. Many families in our community are frontline workers for NHS. My wife is working in a Covid ward and some of her co-workers are off sick with the infection already. May God act upon this pandemic and shower his miracle healing on his precious creation. We extend our prayers and thoughts to the Holy Cross Church community. Thanks in Christ, Deacon Elias". We will continue to hold them in our prayers.

A new online edition of our magazine is coming out soon and it has been suggested that we might enjoy reading about what we have been up to during this time of lockdown. It might be funny stories, inspiring stories or sad stories – short ones are best, perhaps just a paragraph. Send them to me and to Margaret, I might be able to use some here. As we are not meeting it will be good to hear each other's experiences.



Like most clergy I take Easter Week as annual leave but this year we won't be going far! I won't be answering emails or the telephone, except in an emergency, and it will be nice to catch up with jobs round the house, do some non-churchy reading and spend more time with Izzy and Bess. We priests would normally have renewed our ordination vows at the cathedral with Bishop John during Holy Week but couldn't, so he sent us all an encouraging letter, sharing some examples of good practice in our churches during the lockdown and encouraging us to take our normal time off.

I would not have imagined that my first weeks at Holy Cross would have been like this, but there have been some good things. One of the best has been getting to know you in different ways via email and phone. I don't know how long this will last during Eastertide and beyond but I know now that we will hold together as a community and, God willing, come out of it all stronger (and warmer if we can get the heating fixed!) I end, as before, with Jesus' words which still seem relevant in this crisis: 'LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AND DO NOT BE AFRAID'.

With love in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stephen". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the "Pastoral Team" section.

Pastoral Team

If anyone needs help while self-isolating or shielding, please contact one of our pastoral team:

- Alan Kirkpatrick (07891 237940 or muttley.l@blueyonder.co.uk)
- Helen Smith (07917 695491 or Helgillard@yahoo.com)
- Angela Gardner (07703 443291 or angela.gardner@ajenterprises.co.uk)

Helping your Church

Holy Cross, like most churches, is losing income during the crisis and will need to spend a lot soon to obtain a new heating system. If you would like to make a donation via online banking or set up a standing order the Church's bank details are: Royal Bank of Scotland Sort code 83-18-47; Account number 00170278; Account name: Church of the Holy Cross). Many thanks to those who have done this and Gordon has asked me to let you know that if you don't do online banking, you can donate by cheque or via the Virgin Money Giving Button on our website: [HERE](#)

2. KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH GOD

First of all thanks to all who watched our videos and prayed in union with me at the various liturgies of Holy Week. I have moved our Holy Cross videos to a new YouTube channel called “Holy Cross Church Edinburgh” – you may wish to follow that. This is all very new!

We are now at Easter, but Easter is not just what we do on Easter Sunday. That is like getting the prize without running the race. You may say, rightly, that Jesus has run the race for us, he was alone on the cross and we don’t need to try and do it all ourselves. But Paul has that strange phrase, “I am completing what is lacking in Christ’s sufferings” (Colossians 1:24). The meaning is clear – Jesus’ death and resurrection save the whole cosmos but to be part of this great healing, to get its benefits, we ourselves have to enter into the Mystery of Christ’s suffering. Paul goes further and says this ‘completing what is lacking’ is “for the sake of his body, the Church”. Our sharing Christ’s suffering is not just for me, it is for us as a community.

Baptism and the Eucharist are both a sharing in this Mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection. Any idea that the Cross is something in the past and Christianity is all about being nice to each other is profoundly inadequate. In a Church dedicated to the Holy Cross I am sure none of us shares this error! Coronavirus tells us that none of us are immune from suffering, though it does seem to be, as always, the poor who are suffering most.

What this means is that there is great benefit for us all in walking with Jesus on the Way of his Cross, in attending all the powerful services of the Sacred Triduum, the great Three Days at the end of Holy Week: Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil. Not being able to do this together now is a great loss. They are still being celebrated in our Church, sadly behind locked doors, so that they will reappear, fresh and new, next year.

We go through all this with Jesus so that we can share the joy of his resurrection. I often wonder about the purpose of Christianity, what it adds to human life and what the great number of people in our society who are untouched by it miss out on. I think the answer is here: the cross and resurrection of Jesus are the only response to the mystery of existence. They are the only thing that can begin to make sense of what we encounter in the world. And at their heart they are a mystery of love.

Easter is therefore good news. Having got there through Holy Week we can sit down with a good meal (though sadly not with family and friends this year), eat some chocolate and raise a glass to the God who has called us out of darkness into his wonderful light.

3. PRAYER & READINGS FOR EASTER WEEK

These are offered so we can stay together in our prayers even if we can’t meet together. The collects and readings are those that are used in Church at the Eucharist & Daily Prayer. Easter week is treated as one day of Resurrection, ‘this is the day that the Lord has made’, so this is the only theme this week. In addition to the readings from Exodus used at Morning Prayer, I have added the daily Eucharist readings which follow the Early Church in Acts in the days after the resurrection and bring together the different resurrection narratives from the Gospels. These are too good to miss!

Choose which ones you want to use and don’t feel any obligation to do everything! If we do use even some of them we know we are part of a big community, all meditating on the same bits of the Bible each day and all praying in the same way. This can be a consolation when we are isolated.

All the readings for the whole year can be downloaded by clicking on this link:

<https://www.osp.org.uk/worship/calendar-lectionary/>

THE EASTER VIGIL - the night of 11-12 April

The readings of the Easter Vigil take us through the whole of salvation history from creation to redemption, each with an accompanying song – the song for the Gospel is simply Alleluia. They might make a good thing to read on Holy Saturday. The liturgical books say one can use three or more of the Old Testament readings but one should always read the Passover story from Exodus.

- *Collect:* O God, who made this most holy night to shine with the glory of the Lord's resurrection: stir up in your Church that Spirit of adoption given to us in baptism; that, being renewed both in body and mind, we may worship you in sincerity and truth; through Christ, our Lord, Amen.
- *Readings for the Vigil:* 1) Genesis 1.1–2.4a with Psalm 136.1-9,23-26 ; 2) Genesis 7.1-5,11-18; 8.6-18; 9.8-13 with Psalm 46 ; 3) Genesis 22.1-18 with Psalm 16 ; 4) Exodus 14.10-31; 15.20-21 with the Song of Moses (Exodus 15.1b-13,17-18) ; 5) Isaiah 55.1-11 with the Song of Isaiah (Isaiah 12.2-6) ; 6) Baruch 3.9-15,32–4.4 with Psalm 19 ; 7) Ezekiel 36.24-28 with Psalms 42 & 43 ; 8) Ezekiel 37.1-14 with Psalm 143 ; 9) Zephaniah 3.14-20 with Psalm 98 ; 10) Romans 6.3-11 ; 11) Psalm 114 ; 12) Matthew 28.1-10.

EASTER DAY – 12 April

- *Collect:* Lord of all life and power, through the mighty resurrection of your Son you overcame the old order of sin and death and opened to us the gate of Everlasting Life: grant that we, being dead to sin and alive to you in Jesus Christ, may reign with him in glory; through Christ our Lord, Amen.
- *Readings at the Eucharist:* Acts 10.34-43 ; Colossians 3.1-4 ; Matthew 28.1-10
- *Prayer intentions:* our Church community (Beth McGregor; Isobel W-I); Rev Dan and Davidson's Mains Parish Church; for all consumed with worry. *Edinburgh Diocese Prayer Cycle:* Bishop John; Old St Paul's, Edinburgh, Fr John McLuckie

Monday in Easter Week - 13 April

- *Daily Readings:* Exodus 12.14-20 ; Acts 2.14,22-33 ; Matthew 28.8-15
- *Prayer intentions:* our Church Community (Helen A; Graham H), families with children at home from school. *Edinburgh Diocese Prayer Cycle:* The Priory Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, South Queensferry, Revd Terry Harkin & Revd Iain MacRobert.

Tuesday in Easter Week – 14 April

- *Daily Readings:* Ex 12.21-39 ; Acts 2.14,36-41 ; John 20.11-18
- *Prayer intentions:* our Church Community (Andy; Eric T), those worried about their jobs, businesses & financial situation. *Edinburgh Diocese Prayer Cycle:* St Baldred's, North Berwick & St Adrian's, Gullane, Revd Simon Metzner.

Wednesday in Easter Week – 15 April

- *Daily Readings:* Exodus 12.40-51 ; Acts 3.1-10 ; Luke 24.13-35
- *Prayer intentions:* our Church Community (Heather A; Mike H), those working from home, St Margaret's RC Church. *Edinburgh Diocese Prayer Cycle:* St Anne's, Dunbar, Revd Diana Hall & their partnership with the Methodist Church.

Thursday in Easter Week - 16 April

- *Daily Readings:* Exodus 13.1-16 ; Acts 3.11-26 ; Luke 24.36b-48
- *Prayer intentions:* our Church Community (Lucy; Peter S), the NHS, medical staff, emergency services and all key workers. *Edinburgh Diocese Prayer Cycle:* St Peter's, Musselburgh, Revd Andy Reid ; Loreto School.

Friday in Easter Week - 17 April

- *The Good Friday Liturgy:* Exodus 13.17-14.4 ; Acts 4.1-12 ; John 21.1-14
- *Prayer intentions:* our Church Community and those who live around us (Margaret M; Andrew), especially those self-isolating;. *Edinburgh Diocese Prayer Cycle:* Bishop John and our link Dioceses around the world: Diocese of Dunedin, New Zealand ; Diocese of Cape Coast, Ghana ; Diocese of Espoo, Finland within the Porvoo Communion.

Saturday in Easter Week - 18 April

- *Daily Prayer Readings:* Exodus 14.5-22 ; Acts 4.13-21 ; Mark 16.9-15
- *Prayer intentions:* our Church community (Molly; our families), those suffering from Covid-19 and their families around the world. *Edinburgh Diocese Prayer Cycle:* Revd Simon Cake and the A7 Centre of Mission: St Peter's, Galashiels; St Cuthbert's, Hawick; & St John's, Selkirk.

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER (Low Sunday) – 19 April

- *Collect:* Almighty Father, you have given your only Son to die for our sins and to rise again for our justification: grant us so to put away the leaven of malice and wickedness that we may always serve you in pureness of living and truth; through Christ our Lord, Amen.
- *Readings at the Eucharist:* Acts 2.14a,22-32 ; I Peter 1.3-9 ; John 20.19-31
- *Prayer intentions:* our Church community (Beth McG; Isobel W-I); Deacon Elias and the Syrian Orthodox congregation at Holy Cross; for all consumed with worry. *Edinburgh Diocese Prayer Cycle:* Bishop John; St Andrew's, Kelso, Revd Bob King & Revd Grace Redpath

4. HYMN OF THE WEEK : Ye sons and daughters of the King (NEH 125)

There are many glorious Easter hymns, for example 'Jesus Christ is risen today' and 'Thine be the glory', but I have chosen this one, designed to be sung on the Evening of Easter Day, as it concentrates on Jesus' appearances on Easter Day. It particularly focusses on doubting Thomas who was nevertheless led to proclaim the most profound faith in the risen Jesus, "my Lord and my God". It also follows John's gospel in bringing us into this story as those who have not seen

but believe. Written by the fifteenth-century Franciscan Jean Tisserand and translated into English by the great nineteenth-century Anglican priest and scholar John Mason Neale, it is sung to a haunting French melody. The modern Irish singer Sinéad O'Connor did a cover of parts of it in Latin: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJHgeBpjGio>

As some of us may not know this, Izzy and I had a go at singing it in the Rectory with Bess giving moral support. You can see this here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NfozPnd6tnk&t=5s>

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!
Ye sons and daughters of the King,
whom heavenly hosts in glory sing,
today the grave bath lost its sting. Alleluia!

On that first morning of the week,
before the day began to break,
the Marys went their Lord to seek. Alleluia!

An Angel bade their sorrow flee,
for thus he spake unto the three:
'Your Lord is gone to Galilee.' Alleluia!

That night the Apostles met in fear,
amidst them came their Lord most dear,
and said: 'Peace be unto you here!' Alleluia!

When Thomas afterwards had heard
that Jesus had fulfilled his word,
he doubted if it were the Lord. Alleluia!

'Thomas, behold my side,' saith he,
'my hands, my feet, my body see;
'and doubt not, but believe in me.' Alleluia!

No longer Thomas then denied;
he saw the feet, the hands, the side;
'Thou art my Lord and God,' he cried. Alleluia!

Blessèd are they that have not seen,
and yet whose faith bath constant been,
in life eternal they shall reign. Alleluia!

5. AFTERWORD :

When the Gospels talk about the Crucifixion they broadly tell the same story, it was public and brutal. When they get to the Resurrection of Jesus there is a scattering of different stories, it is if each disciple meets the risen Christ in their own way. So it is with us, and we can draw richness from other, different experiences. It is as if the Holy Gospels legitimate this diversity.

We have two poems, firstly a personal, intensely human, imagining of Jesus by the twentieth-century Oxford poet Elizabeth Jennings – she lived with long-term mental health problems and was known as ‘the bag lady of the sonnets’, famously collecting her OBE at the Palace in a scruffy duffel coat and woolly hat. The other poem is from the Court of King James IV and shows Christ as a knightly Victor in the battle against Satan, it is more ‘Lord of the Rings’ than ‘thoughts in an Oxford garden’. It is by William Dunbar, one of the greatest of Scots poets, and it is worth persevering with the courtly Scots language (I have given some help).

Easter breaks through our comfortable lives. It is not a question of ‘do I like one or the other?’, but ‘what can I learn from each one?’ We can only grow in faith if we are willing to learn from things old and new, things congenial and uncongenial.

Christ Surprised by Elizabeth Jennings (1926-2001)

Back I came so deftly, felt my body
Healed but light, washed by the sun of morning
And every sense was woken up to newness.
I looked, surprised to see my shadow marking
The earth which slightly hurt my feet – new-grounded

No one must touch me, no one yet must finger
The hands which had been wounded or the body.
Light-headed was I, yes, intoxicated
By air, by light, my godhead brimming over,
My manhood daunted. I was lost a little.

She came so fast along the garden to me.
O Father I was fearful, I was being
Born once again but in a new aloneness.
The sun was heavy and the hours were pressing.
I must grow used to my own Resurrection.

On the resurrection by William Dunbar (1459-1520s)

Done is a battle on the dragon black,
Our champion Christ confoundit has his force;
The yetis of hell are broken with a crack,

gates

