



Image of the day

Easter outreach in Killinchy and Kilmoody

Easter outreach in Killinchy and Kilmoody

Members of Killinchy and Kilmoody Select Vestry were busy preparing Easter packs as part of the parish's attempt to stay in contact with parishioners throughout lockdown.

Each parishioner will receive an Easter card, a Home Communion kit, a Palm Cross, 'Seven Days' - a collection of poems for Holy Week, a bag of Cadbury's Mini-eggs and a copy of the Parish Accounts.

Rev Dr Stanley Gamble, the Rector of the parish commented, "Holy Week and Easter are going to be very different this year as we continue to live with the Covid-19 pandemic. There are signs of hope with a successful rollout of the vaccine and a drop in the 'R' number. It is paramount that we continue to stay safe throughout this precarious time, but it is also important that we remain upbeat and optimistic. These Easter goodie bags are a small way of letting parishioners know that although they remain in isolation due to government restrictions, they are still part of the community of faith - the Church."

The parish is also rising to the challenge of answering Bishop David McClay's call to write to members of the local community. 4,000 postcards are being distributed throughout the villages of Killinchy, Lisbane and Ballygowan with a message of hope and new life in Christ Jesus and the offer of pastoral assistance and personal ministry if need be.

Moderator's Easter Message: The Ultimate Hope

In his Easter Message, the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Right Rev Dr David Bruce, recounts a conversation with a sceptical friend about what Easter means. His friend questioned if the resurrection of Jesus, that first Easter, actually happen at all, or was it a kind of metaphor?

Dr Bruce writes that “The record shows that Jesus did the apparently impossible”. He explains that the New Testament makes a shattering claim that Jesus was physically raised from the dead, a miracle witnessed and accounted for by not only his disciples, but hundreds of other people. While Good Friday marked the moment of Jesus’ supposed ‘failure’ as a would-be Messiah, Easter Sunday changed everything, as “Jesus, now alive, became a beacon of hope for sinful people everywhere,” he said.

Dr Bruce goes onto say, “This is our second Easter in the grip of the pandemic. The vaccines give us some hope that soon it might end. Our ultimate hope is not through an injection in our arms, but through the extraordinary act of love through which Jesus said, “Father, forgive them...”

The full text of the Moderator's 2021 Easter Message

My old friend Michael, whom I have known since school days, sat back in his chair wearing a quizzical and slightly troubled expression. He and I had been talking on Zoom about Easter, and what it means. He chose his words



carefully, as if knowing what he would say next might change our relationship.

“So, are you saying you believe Jesus Christ physically came back to life?” he said. “Are you saying that this Bible story of the resurrection is not a metaphor, because if you are, this is the single biggest issue I have about the Christian faith. It’s beyond my experience as a medical doctor, and beyond my understanding as a rational scientifically educated person.”

I recalled being in a tutorial group at theological college in Aberdeen, when this very subject was being discussed. The tutor asked us if we believed Jesus had truly come back from the dead. We each nodded our agreement, confirming what the creeds of the church had clearly stated for centuries.

She immediately turned to me and asked, “So David, would it make any difference to your faith if an archaeologist were able to prove that the bones he’d dug up from an ancient tomb outside Jerusalem were the bones of Jesus, thus disproving his physical resurrection?” I knew the answer I would give was important – indeed that it might define the future course of my life. “Yes, it would make a difference” I said. “Such a discovery would mean I was no longer a Christian.”

My answer was a kind of ‘on the fly’ reaction to what I had read in 1 Corinthians 15:17-20, which says, ‘And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins...If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead...’

The New Testament makes a shattering claim. Michael told me that, speaking as a doctor, dead people do not come back to life - and yet the New Testament says that Jesus did, physically, and with hundreds of witnesses. The record shows that Jesus did the apparently impossible. How are we to interpret this?

Good Friday marks the moment of Jesus’ supposed ‘failure’ as a would-be Messiah. Dead and buried – Friday marked the end of his mission, and the end of any hope for a broken and sinful world. Small wonder his followers fled.

But Easter Sunday changed everything. On Sunday, Jesus cheated death, so that Friday’s apparent failure was now properly seen as a triumph. Jesus, now alive, became a

beacon of hope for sinful people everywhere – death was no longer the inevitable sentence they had to bear. His fleeing followers, having seen him risen with their own eyes, stopped running and instead set out to change the world – not deluded at all, but enthralled by a future with Jesus as their Lord.

This is our second Easter in the grip of the pandemic. The vaccines give us some hope that soon it might end. Our ultimate hope is not through an injection in our arms, but through the extraordinary act of love through which Jesus said, “Father, forgive them...”

My conversation with Michael continues. There is more to life than what we can know using our five senses – there is hope that, with Jesus, heaven awaits us!

Anti-racism charter given green light by Southwark Diocese

The Diocese of Southwark has unanimously approved an 'anti-racism charter' which promises to work to tackle racism through theological understanding and improving diversity in its churches.

The vote of the Southwark Diocesan Synod to approve the charter came at the end of a discussion on it led by The Venerable Dr Rosemarie Mallett, Archdeacon of Croydon and Diocesan Lead on Anti-Racism.

Reacting to the vote, Archdeacon Rosemarie Mallett said "We now want the Charter to take forward our programme for future action. This action must be taken at all levels,



Archdeacon Rosemarie Mallett

working in partnership with our parishes, our schools, our young people, our Cathedral, our Area and Diocesan Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns Committees, to ensure that racism in any form is rooted out and diversity is truly our strength. This document should be our legacy to the next generation whom we want to attend and to lead in our churches and in the Diocese."

The Bishop of Southwark, The Rt Revd Christopher Chessun, welcomed the vote and added: "Our rich ethnic diversity in this Diocese is God's gift and blessing which we celebrate. I am greatly encouraged that the Diocesan Synod voted unanimously to endorse the Anti-Racism Charter which we are committed to implementing fully. There is no place for racist attitudes and behaviours in this Diocese. The Charter will guide us as we journey forwards in faith, hope and love for the people of South London and East Surrey."

The key principles of Southwark Anti-Racism Charter are:

1. An explicit theological understanding that God's kingdom is multi-ethnic, and that it is through our baptismal covenant

that we recognise and respect the dignity of every human being and our unity in Christ.

2. An intentional focus in our theological studies, liturgy, teaching, prayer, word and work to take strategic and practical actions to combat racism and inequality.

3. A clear strategy for increasing and sustaining diversity in our governance structures at Diocesan and parish level so as to ensure representation and participation of people from diverse ethnic backgrounds at all levels of our organisation.

The Diocese of Southwark serves 2.8 million people in the 16 Local Authorities of South London and East Surrey through 356 places of worship.

A Bible-based approach to help people who have experienced trauma

The Bible Society has launched a new programme to help churches, faith groups and chaplains support their communities in working through trauma.

“Navigating Trauma” is rooted in mental health best practice and uses contextual Bible reading to help people explore what Scripture has to say about suffering, and God's relationship with those who have experienced trauma.

It spans five core sessions with a further eight optional sessions that take place within small groups led by trained volunteers.

Bible Society Chief Executive Professor Paul Williams said it was a "significant" time to be launching the initiative.

"We're only now beginning to understand the full impact of the coronavirus pandemic on our society," he said.

"Hundreds of thousands of people have suffered the loss of loved ones. Many more have seen livelihoods devastated by the economic fallout, and more still have suffered the mental anguish of anxiety, stress and loneliness as a result of the various effects of the pandemic on their relationships and social fabric.

"But these impacts have come on top of those already occurring and indeed deepening in our society. We live in a world of historically unprecedented wealth, power and connectivity. It's also a world of extraordinary pain, suffering and relational brokenness.

"As Western societies like Britain turned away from the Christian faith that nurtured them and the Scripture that structured our public institutions and private lives, we attempted to replace faith and Scripture at the centre with reason, science and technological progress. We put our faith in those things.

"As good as they are, they have nonetheless failed us in spectacular ways - two World Wars, the Holocaust, the threat of nuclear destruction, repeated financial crises, rising and deepening inequality, a global climate crisis and the alienating nature of modern communications technology."

The result is a "profound disillusionment" in today's society, with people increasingly wondering where they can turn to

for help or resorting to coping strategies "that may make things worse".

"This is the context of modern Britain. A context, yes, of wealth and success on the outside but a context of deep pain, exclusion and suffering if you look more closely; a context of a growing search for something, someone that can help, for a different way," he said.

Prof Williams went on to say that although the Bible "does not offer a quick fix for these wounds", it has a lot to say about the reality of suffering.

"At the centre of the biblical witness to suffering is the practice of lament, a deep cry of the heart expressing the pain that's been experienced in its rawest form," he said.

"There are many today who are in pain and crying out for help. Even though it may be inarticulate, there is an acknowledgement of their need of God.

"Navigating Trauma is an initiative that allows the Church of Jesus Christ to come near to those experiencing brokenness in their lives, to listen to them and journey alongside them as they express their heart to God.

"It seems to me that this is exactly where the Church needs to be in this missional moment because it's where God is."

Ama Obeng is a wellbeing group participant who has experienced the positive impact of the Navigating Trauma programme firsthand.

March 31,2021

After losing her younger brother to a knife attack in Tottenham, she said the group gave her a "safe" place to process her grief.

"It helped a lot because I guess I didn't understand how to grieve. I didn't understand my feelings. I didn't understand that I was allowed to grieve," she said.

"At times when I would cry, I felt as if I was failing God because I'm supposed to be up and strong and going on, but the programme made me see there's nothing wrong with me and that grieving is a form of healing."

Bible Society President, Coptic Orthodox Archbishop Angaelos said the social isolation of the pandemic had been traumatic for many people, and that there was a "need for someone to reach out".

Books, Broadcasts, resources and webinars

Oratorio Easter 2021: Messiah

[[] https://operabrava.com/an_easter_blessing.html?fbclid=IwAR2GVt_cFn4dpMiCQq9Wt7c00Lw1fhxQOxRDp61_PKHntoxxK-JM7EUISdc]

Sanctuary

New Irish Arts

5 short broadcasts to help you enjoy some protected sacred space during Holy Week.

[[] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Le7Judwmv7w>]

Feature on pilgrimages

The Guardian

March 31,2021

[<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2021/mar/28/secular-pilgrims-why-ancient-trails-still-pack-a-spiritual-punch>]



John's Gospel read by Sir David Suchet CBE

Sir David Suchet CBE will read the whole of John's Gospel from the renowned Jerusalem Chamber at Westminster Abbey on Easter Sunday. You can watch it on their YouTube channel at 4pm.

[<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNySjNq1BUNEu7azGutrDEw>]

Book - The Madness of Grief: A Memoir of Loss and Love by Revd Richard Coles

Whether it is pastoral care for the bereaved, discussions about the afterlife, or being called out to perform the last rites, death is part of the Reverend Richard Coles's life and work. But when his partner the Reverend David Coles died, shortly before Christmas in 2019, much about death took

March 31,2021

Coles by surprise. For one thing, David's death at the early age of forty-three was unexpected.

Kindle 9.99 Hard cover 13.19 from -

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Madness-Grief-Memoir-Love-Loss/dp/1474619622>

Holy Week and Easter Explainer article

<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/easter-date-2021-sunday-when-change-why-christian-b1823535.html>

Media review

Gardaí set checkpoints near church as priest says Mass in breach of Covid rules

The Irish Times

'Challenged faith'. During his homily, Fr Hughes told them to turn off the news and focus on the events of Holy Week.

“Our faith in God ...

[[] <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/garda%C3%AD-set-checkpoints-near-church-as-priest-says-mass-in-breach-of-covid-rules-1.4522152>]

Caution at last paying dividends

Belfast Telegraph Viewpoint

Church of Ireland, Methodist and Presbyterian churches will resume in-person services from Good Friday, April 2. All the Churches displayed great ...

[[] <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/viewpoint/caution-at-last-paying-dividends-40244313.html>]

Celebrating five years of Eco Church

Independent Catholic News

Nicholas Holtam, Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Salisbury and Church of England lead on the environment, warmly thanked all involved in Eco ...

[[] <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/41866>]

Cardinal Vincent Nichols: Palm Sunday homily

Independent Catholic News

Cardinal Vincent Nichols gave this homily today, Palm Sunday 2021, at Westminster Cathedral...Today we start our journey of Holy Week. I hope you will...

[[] <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/41862>]

Dean of Clogher elected to national role within Church

Impartial Reporter

The Cathedral Chapter of the National Cathedral of the Church of Ireland (St. Patrick's, Dublin) is composed of four dignitaries (Dean William Morton, ...

[[] <https://www.impartialreporter.com/news/19178012.dean-clogher-elected-national-role-within-church/>]

Opinion - Zoom cannot sustain the mystery of faith - Giles Fraser

It's almost exactly a year since I peered through the window of the church door and made my apologies to those who had come out for the evening service. It was one of the worst moments in my many years of ministry as a priest.

“Go home, we are closed.” I didn't say it quite like that. But that was how they understood it – and they were right to do

so. I felt I had abandoned them. Many churches are still shut, doors bolted to those seeking communion.

Lots of people will tell you that there are many ways of being a church. And that's true, as far as it goes. The Church is being the Church when it gathers food for those who are struggling, when it offers support over the phone. Yes, and also when it goes online.

During this last year, my church – doors defiantly open since the summer, broadcasting simultaneously on Zoom – has actually grown in numbers.

We used to get two or three gathered together for mid-week service, now we get 30. As well as those attending physically in the building – the Home Service, I call them – we have regular weekly congregants from Ghana, Mauritius, Australia, as well as from all over the UK – the World Service.

For a small church like mine, it gives this extraordinary sense of being a part of something much larger than our little corner of south London. From now on, I suspect there will always be a camera in front of the altar. We are all televangelists now.

But despite Zoom's many advantages, no technology can outweigh the fact that Christianity is inescapably physical. It is not just "a message" that can be communicated through social media. It is also about bodily participation, the receiving of bread and wine.

And while the carefully nuanced and endlessly debated metaphysics of how bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Jesus is a question I have long left to the theological anoraks, I have no doubt that receiving the Eucharist is a physical activity requiring physical participation. The statements “this is my body” and “this is my blood” make Christianity about matter, physically ingested. You can no more do this over Zoom than you can go to the dentist over Zoom.

This is why lockdown has been such a threat to the lifeblood – literally - of the Christian faith. And why the bolted door was such a betrayal of the need of so many of my parishioners for the “real presence” of Christ in the Eucharist.

This Thursday evening, Maundy Thursday, churches traditionally hold “watch services” where we sit up into the small hours to stay with a terrified man who did not want to be alone on the night before he was to die. This year it will be hard not to think of all those who have died without the physical presence of their loved ones beside them.

Saying goodbye over Zoom, unable to reach out to hold someone’s hand, must be among the most appalling things that some families will ever experience. And Last Rites are really not for Skype.

There is, quite simply, no substitute for being there. And at no point during the Church’s year is this more obvious than during Holy Week, when the suffering of Christ on the Cross is not just a metaphor for some generalised sense of spiritual pain, but the real torture of a real body. Watching on

March 31,2021

Zoom threatens to turn the whole thing into some sort of spectacle, a distant pornography of suffering, something to observe from a distance rather than be a part of.

Zoom may be a godsend to those who are housebound, but young children generally hate it, unable to focus for long. And to those who have been on endless business calls all week, its just another hour of alienating technology. The Church should be restoring souls, not sucking them away like some digital dementor.

Which is also why the Church must not trade in its bricks for clicks. Online church may be a lot cheaper than maintaining thousands of beautiful medieval barns, and require much less staffing. But – however convenient it might look – the Church can never be eviscerated into some online ether because Christianity is nothing without the bodily presence of Christ.

As our friends in Rome put it: Ave verum corpus.

Courtesy The Daily Telegraph 29.03.2021

Pointers for prayer

O God, by the passion of your blessed Son you made an instrument of shameful death to be for us the means of life: Grant us so to glory in the cross of Christ, that we may gladly suffer shame and loss for the sake of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.



Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honour of your Name. Amen

O God, you manifest in your servants the signs of your presence: Send forth upon us the Spirit of love, that in companionship with one another your abounding grace may increase among us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord God,
The message of the cross is difficult to take.
How can death give way to life? How can weakness be strength?
Yet your word says that Jesus, being God,
Took on human flesh
And suffered the worst kind of death.
How can this be?
This message is indeed difficult to take.
But your foolishness is wiser than our wisdom.
Your weakness is greater than our strength.

March 31,2021

Help us to know that none of us can boast before you.
It is only in Christ Jesus that we can boast.
In his name, we ask you to help our unbelief.
That we may love you, and walk in the way Jesus taught us.
In his name,
Amen.

Speaking to the Soul

But as he came closer to Jerusalem and saw the city ahead, he began to weep. “How I wish today that you of all people would understand the way to peace. But now it is too late, and peace is hidden from your eyes.”

Luke 19:41-42 NLT

I will never forget my first visit to Jerusalem. A disabled friend of mine asked me if I would take him to Israel as his carer. He needed me to push his wheel chair, drive the hire car and lift him from place to place. We stayed in a hotel on the Mount of Olives and arrived there in the dark. Driving through the chaotic traffic in Jerusalem for the first time was a hair-raising experience! The next morning I pulled open the curtains and was completely overwhelmed by the sight of the golden walls of the old city of Jerusalem set against a deep blue sky. It was one of the most amazing moments of my life and it was so easy to imagine the time when Jesus looked over the city and wept. Indeed not far away from the hotel there is a beautiful modern church in the shape of a tear drop which enables modern pilgrims to reflect on that poignant moment in Jesus' life.

Jesus longed for peace. That lay at the heart of his mission. He came to bring peace between humankind and God. Of

March 31,2021

all places, Jerusalem, the holy city, should have been full of God's peace but it was, then as now, a focus of division and tension. Jesus wept. You only weep when you feel something with great intensity. He desperately longed that people would enter into his peace. And as Jesus looks at our world today I believe that he still weeps, and still reaches out to us with the offer of peace. In this Holy Week of all weeks let us offer to Jesus our pains and struggles and receive his gift of peace.

QUESTION

How would Jesus' peace change your community?

PRAYER

Loving God, thank you for sending Jesus to be our peace. Help me to welcome his gift of peace today. Amen.

