

Church of the Holy Cross

DAVIDSON'S MAINS

EDINBURGH

APRIL 2020



THE SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH



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FROM THE RECTOR

Love in the Time of Coronavirus

We didn't expect this when we moved back to Edinburgh and into the Holy Cross Rectory. A member of the congregation has just pointed out to me that I said I wouldn't change much at first but I have just abolished all services in our Church! The Covid-19 pandemic is a unique crisis. It has been pointed out that school exams in Scotland have never been cancelled before and I believe that all public worship was last suspended in Scotland in 1328 when the Pope placed the country under an Interdict because of Robert the Bruce. Our Episcopalian worship was last stopped in the aftermath of the Battle of Culloden when most of us were Jacobites and supported the rightful King, James VIII.

The lesson from our past is that we will survive, public worship will return, but in some ways things will never be the same again. The Greek word 'krisis' means 'judgement' as well as 'punishment'. The present crisis is revealing who we really are. We have all seen the empty shelves in the supermarkets. Some of us are buying 20 packs of toilet roll and fighting in the aisles over the last packet of mince (this really happened in London) while others are getting shopping for self-isolating neighbours and checking the elderly and sick are ok. Jesus said, 'A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit', and each of us has the potential to be either type of tree. What is judgement? I would suggest that it is less being told off by the head master and more looking into the mirror of God's Love and seeing who we really are behind the masks we construct.

The big question for us at Holy Cross is how we can remain together when we are apart; how we can maintain our love in a time of coronavirus (to misquote the title of a book by the Colombian novelist Gabriel García Márquez). The Vestry and I are working at this; there is regular guidance from the College of Bishops but it is very much a work in progress. We have not been in this situation before. In the rest of this letter I will outline some of what we are doing at the time I write (on 20th March). There is one thing of which we can be certain and that is that things will change – on Sunday 15th March we had a great discussion on how we would do coffee after the Eucharist the next Sunday, even buying gloves and disposable cups, but the Eucharist was cancelled!

What we are not doing, for good public health reasons, is gathering for worship. This is particularly serious as we are not doing what Jesus told us to do, take bread and wine, bless, break, pour and share it. You might be feeling a loss at not being able to receive the Eucharist and that is a good thing, Jesus

is with us in many ways but his presence in the bread and wine of the Eucharist is unique. I will continue to celebrate the Eucharist on my own, at the request of the Bishop, but, of course, I will not be alone. In the Scottish Liturgy we pray ‘with angels and archangels and the whole company of heaven’; the angels and saints are in the Church with me, and I will also be praying for you and our families and neighbours. My intention is to do that at our usual times, 10.30 on Sunday and Wednesday so you have the opportunity to stop at that time and join in spiritually. I will also be saying Evening Prayer in the church when I can and have started ringing the bell at the start of worship to let those around know that the door may be closed but we are still in business praying for them and for the world.

What I began to do at our last Eucharist together was to collect emails so I can send out a weekly newsletter so we can keep in touch. I am preparing the first at the moment with news, prayer intentions and Bible readings we can use at home. If you know anyone who would like to join our e-news list, ask them to send their email address to me at rector.hce@gmail.com (this information will be stored and used by Holy Cross solely for church purposes and you may ask for it to be deleted at any time).

What we do as a Church is not for ourselves alone but for our local community and for everyone. I know some of you have joined groups offering your services to those who are self-isolating, for example to get shopping. It is probably best to join the groups that already exist but some of us at Holy Cross want to make ourselves available to members of the congregation and others who need help:

- Alan Kirkpatrick (07891 237940 or muttley.1@blueyonder.co.uk)
- Helen Smith (07917 695491 or Helgillard@yahoo.com)
- Angela Gardner (07703 443291 or angela.gardner@ajenterprises.co.uk)
- and I (07584 091870 or rector.hce@gmail.com)

are ready to do this, and if anyone else under 70 would like to offer their services, let me know. We’ll post more on the weekly e-news and hope to link up with a similar group at Davidson’s Mains Parish Church.

What some churches are doing is live-streaming services so that others can virtually join the priest praying on his or her own, putting up videos of sermons or setting up groups and meetings on platforms such as Zoom and Skype. We are looking into these options but the Scottish Episcopal Church (SEC) has committed to broadcast a service every Sunday at 11 a.m. which you can see on the SEC website: www.scotland.anglican.org. Not everyone has access to the internet and a congregational email cannot reach all of us. Instruction from the Bishops discourages pastoral visiting during the crisis but

I am available by telephone so do give me a ring on one of the numbers given above.

Even in the short time I have been here I have seen how Holy Cross is a close-knit community where people look after each other and I am sure we will continue to do this in this strange new situation. May God bless you all and may we continue to grow as a Christian community even if we don't see each other. As I said at our last service, Jesus' teaching gives us a good principle to live by in this crisis: 'Love your neighbour and do not be afraid'.

With love in Christ,

Stephen

ONLINE MAGAZINES ONLY

With the latest government restrictions on being out and about, we have decided that at present the magazine will be published **online only**. Most of us can access the website, even if it is not our preferred way of doing things.

If you are in contact with anyone who may be waiting patiently for their paper copy, please let them know it is on the website. If 'online' for them means 'inaccessible' please pass on anything they need to know.

The magazine will continue – possibly somewhat smaller while there are no events to advertise or report on – but online only. Normal service will be resumed as soon as possible, but there is no knowing when that will be.

Margaret Deas, Editor

FLOWERS IN CHURCH

Thank you to those who signed up to do the flowers in April and beyond. Though your efforts are not needed at the moment, when worship gets back to normal the list will be there on the noticeboard with gaps to be filled, and the church can be beautified again.



FELLOWSHIP LUNCHES



With the cancellation of church services there will of course be no Fellowship Lunches. The Vestry knows how popular these lunches are, and will do all it can to re-establish them as soon as possible.

LENT BOOKS

I am learning new things about Holy Cross all the time. One Sunday at coffee (before we shut down) Sylvia Vass showed me the Holy Cross library in a cupboard in the hall. Most parish libraries are tired collections of Victorian piety with brightly coloured out-of-date books from the 1960s and '70s. Ours is much better than this and has some excellent, sound and readable Christian books including volumes by N.T. Wright and Rowan Williams. Sylvia mentioned the custom of taking a Lent book with which I am very familiar from my monastic days. In his Holy Rule, written around 540 AD, St Benedict says that 'in these days of Lent the monks should each receive a book from the library, to be read straight through in its entirety. These books are to be given out at the beginning of Lent'. This is thus a very ancient tradition and is a good Lenten discipline. The Abbot would sometimes choose books to give the monk the help he thought we needed. We who don't live in monasteries can choose what we read; I'm reading a theological commentary on the music of the modern Estonian composer Arvo Pärt, but having a Lent book is a good spiritual practice and particularly useful in using 'self-isolation' and 'social distancing' to get closer to God. Sylvia shares below some insights from a book borrowed from our library:

Stephen

Having read this during Lent, I should like to share some excerpts and impressions.

ON CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY by Rowan Williams

Between the cherubim: The Empty Tomb and the Empty Throne

Any discourse on the resurrection will not include anything that depends on the corpse of Jesus.

It will be claiming that what is vital is that which happens in the minds of believers when the victim of the Crucifixion is the one through whom God continues to speak and act.

The angels in the tomb in St John's Gospel are seated at the head and foot of the grave slab. Iconographically this recalls the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant linked by Cherubim. This focuses the possibility of Divine Presence invisibly enthroned.

Belief in the resurrection is one way of saying that the death of Jesus is not confined to the past. Scripture and theology affirm that the act of God in and

through the acts of Jesus continue after his death and are accessible through his human identity.

The resurrection narratives insist that Jesus is not owned or used by persons but the church seeks continually to discern the will of God in his conciliatory process and it is this attention which constitutes the heart of Christian belief. It is not meditation on the teaching of Jesus or a reflection on a hero or a visionary encounter with the glorified Lord, nor is it the common ground holding together communities as diverse as those addressed by John and Paul.

In his earthly life Jesus initiates a redrawing of the boundaries of God's people in such a way that a response to his invitation becomes decisive for the relation of persons to God. At the end of time, what is uncovered is the history of the world as a history of response to or a rejection of what Jesus offers. He remains there as the point of reference, God's standard of judgement. Jesus is active as Bestower of the Spirit that makes it possible for people to pray. We do not simply continue his practice, we seek a relationship with God which makes possible reconciliation as Gift.

Jesus is active in the corporate life of the church; the Lord's Supper dramatises this. The concrete food and drink of the meal is interpreted as the material presence of Jesus, the community as the body, the material thereness, of Jesus.

The Empty Tomb does not signify absence but presence. It announces Jesus' presence on the road ahead in a particular place of struggle such as Galilee. Jesus is present in the struggle for survival of the impoverished, hungry, tortured and killed. He is going ahead not going away. The central image of the Gospel narrative is an absence which confirms the reality of a creative liberty, an agency not sealed and closed but fully engaged with a material environment and a historical process.

In memory of my mother whose 100th birthday would have been 24th February 2020, I should like to recount a prayer which she taught me during the war years when I was a small child.

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John
Bless the bed which I lay on.
Four white angels round my bed,
One to watch, One to pray, One to chase the devil away,
One to carry my soul away if I die. Amen.

Sylvia Vass

SALLY'S BACK!

Dear friends, just a few weeks ago I arrived back in Edinburgh from my visit to India – and what a lot has happened here, both while I was away and since I came back. Things we could never have imagined. I'm so pleased that I was able to enjoy a couple of services where our new Rector was celebrating and also to have the chance to greet many of you and thank you for your prayers while I was away before things shut down. Now, like many of you, Colin and I are self-isolating. I thought though that you might like to hear about some of my adventures 5,000 miles away in 40 degrees of heat!

I stayed once again in the centre for elderly deaf women, about 1.5 miles away from the school I go to. The room is basic, but clean and with air conditioning. The ladies greet me as a friend each year and although I cannot use their sign language, my specialism is in non-verbal communication so we get by, by a combination of my adapted signs and of course, smiles.

When I went to the school, I found that the physiotherapist who leads the class which I am most involved in had just returned from maternity leave. This meant that the pre-school class had largely disappeared as parents had stopped bringing their children in. At first I was disheartened by this and wondered what I should do. To my surprise I found myself spending most of my time with one of the older groups. I had known some of the pupils for over 12 years, so I was able to slot in and support them. There was a lot of laughter as they taught me to write on a chalkboard and we spent time together. I felt so moved that they clearly remembered me and two boys I have known for such a long time actually started to say my name and to call to me for the first time ever.

One of the things that struck me most on this visit was the very positive atmosphere in the school, more than I have ever been aware of in the past. Children were laughing more than I remembered, they had smiles on their faces most of the time. Teachers were much more gentle with the children and things in general seemed to be more focused on the needs of the individual children rather than on following a class curriculum.

Staff were as welcoming as ever. As a teacher I don't know how I would feel about somebody who parachuted into the school for a month every year and then disappeared again. I was however made to feel extremely welcome and part of the team.

My health was very good. I ate breakfast in a local café – puri, which is a puffed deep fried type of bread (those of you who remember Rachel's cookery demonstration in the hall, many years ago now, will have eaten them then)

served with potato curry and a cup of coffee. Lunch was provided by the school and I ate what the children and staff ate – much to their horror as they didn't consider it good enough for me. I disagreed. My dinner was also usually eaten out in a restaurant, local food, most commonly chicken, with rice and a curry sauce.

The money I left last year had been put to good use. The classroom floor retiled, which means it is easier to clean and there are fewer ants and cockroaches around! An exercise bicycle was bought, very useful for children needing physiotherapy exercises when exercise outdoors in the heat is difficult. A large selection of puzzles and classroom teaching aids had been bought too.

I've brought lots of pictures and stories home and, when we are able to meet again, I hope I'll be able to share these with you. In the meantime, thank you for your love and your support. It means a huge amount to me and to the children in Tirunelveli.

Sally

TREASURER'S REPORT

These are uncertain times for all of us. From a financial point of view, we have money in our current account to continue to pay the Rector's stipend and essential costs for several months but we are committed to spending a significant amount on the Church central heating before the autumn.

I also anticipate that we will face significant loss of income, particularly hall rentals, over the next few months. As I write, the Reindeer Playgroup and the Parent and Toddler group who use the hall in the mornings have suspended and I expect the After School Club who use the hall in the afternoon to close from Friday 20th March. Similarly, the evening groups who use the hall will be suspending classes. Hall rental is a huge contribution to our finances and we face the loss of over £2,000 per month over the next few months.

We also face the loss of collections with the suspension of church services. I would ask anyone who currently pays in cash or by offertory envelopes, and feels able to continue to support Holy Cross financially, to consider making payments via online banking or by setting 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

There have been a couple of pieces of good financial news lately. First, the Vestry took £25,000 out of the Church investments to cover cash flow during the stonework project and decided to keep it in cash to help pay for the replacement of the Church heating system. If it had still been in our investments, it would have been worth several thousand pounds less following the falls in share prices. Second, I have successfully applied for exemption from water rates for the Church and hall (charities are exempt but you need to apply formally every year). As a result I received a refund of the payments we had previously made and received a cheque for £2,390 from Scottish Water which I took to the bank today.

Colin Mair, Treasurer

A PERSONAL REFLECTION ON THE EUCHARIST

‘The best definition of a man, his chief characteristic, that which makes him to be himself, is gratitude, thanksgiving.’ Metropolitan Kallistos

The church has always considered the Eucharist to be the central act of the church’s existence because Jesus himself said *‘do this’*. It is a command to be fulfilled, not a service like Matins or Evensong, invented in the first instance as a monastic observance and later transformed at the Reformation. In the East it is called the Liturgy and in the West it is called Mass, the Eucharist or Holy Communion. The Eucharist, as we prefer to call it, means thanksgiving and this is one of the main themes of the service. There are other important themes. It is not just the fulfilment of a command, it is also a guide to living our everyday lives but, as in every aspect of faith, it is easier said than done.

So when we reach ‘The Great Thanksgiving’ the familiar refrain starts:

Priest: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them to the Lord.

Priest: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to give him thanks and praise.

Then at the consecration of the bread and wine the priest continues: He took bread and *offered you thanks* and: He took the cup and *offered you thanks*.

One can say that it is Jesus’ act of thanksgiving over the bread and the wine and the priest’s re-enactment of this action that brings the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ into the present. It is significant that he chose bread as a symbol of the necessities of life and wine, a symbol of the pleasures of life, as the vehicle for bringing the reality of his presence to every generation.

The meaning of this for me is that just as he transforms everyday things such as bread and wine into the means for making himself present, so being thankful for the necessities and pleasures in our own life can also be life transforming. Circumstances in our lives that are happy, sad, difficult or impossible can be turned into something life-enhancing and positive in a spirit of thanksgiving for what cannot be changed. The life of Helen Keller springs to mind. She was blind, deaf and dumb, a circumstance one might consider impossible to change, but with the help of a friend, persistence and faith she learned to read and talk and her life was transformed into a positive gift to the world. She graduated from university and travelled the world giving lectures and inspiring people.

Another such (and there are countless others) was Maiti Gertanner, a Swiss citizen and veteran of the French Resistance who was cruelly tortured by a Gestapo doctor. His actions robbed her of a life as a promising pianist and she spent the rest of her life in pain. Eric Varden writes of her in *The Shattering of Loneliness*, ‘She cultivated the certainty that the threads of what she was living through were woven into a story, which, in time, would reveal its meaning, perhaps even a beauty of sorts.... The example of Christ sustained her. Even as he suffered she clung to the conviction that providence was operative in her pain.’ Thankfulness for what she did have, not regret for what might have been, transformed suffering into grace. Thankfulness helps to overcome envy, jealousy, the wish to be someone different or be in another place where the grass is greener.

William Sieghart wrote recently, in *The Poetry Pharmacy*, that ‘we are all in need of a doorway into thanks and a way of relating to the world without our egos’. For Christians the Eucharist is that very doorway as it is a weekly reminder that thankfulness is of the essence of Christian living.

Neville Long

PRAYING by Mary Oliver

It doesn't have to be
the blue iris, it could be
weeds in a vacant lot, or a few
small stones; just
pay attention, then patch
a few words together and don't try
to make them elaborate, this isn't
a contest but the doorway
into thanks, and a silence in which
another voice may speak.



HEARD THE ONE ABOUT THE CORNY VIRUS?

My sense of humour may not be as infectious as the coronavirus which is sweeping through these isles, but humour is often one anchor for maintaining a sense of balance in times of anxiety. Our nervous system can trigger the fight and flight reactions impulsively if we don't use our anchors to steady the ship. Mindful breathing is one anchor because one tends to slip into fast breathing when the nervous system is beginning to panic. The acronym S.T.O.P. can help us counteract that tendency and thus prevent brain networks from recycling alerts round and round in our heads:

S = soften cheeks, T = take deep breaths, O = observe benefits, P = have presence and be present.

Dialectical Behavioural Therapy focuses on shaping behaviours. It helps people learn to regulate emotions and use distress tolerance skills. Here are some such techniques.

HALF SMILE. You might not feel like having a full smile but there may be something in your day you can have a half smile about.

I.M.P.R.O.V.E. I = Imagery: visualise a peaceful calming place.

M = consider what Motivates you and gives you a sense of meaning.

P = Pray for help or just cultivate a sense of presence.

R = Relaxation: take deep breaths!

O = plan a One-step mindful strategy so you have time to do things and don't multi-task at the last minute.

V = take the occasional short two-minute Vacation to reduce pressure.

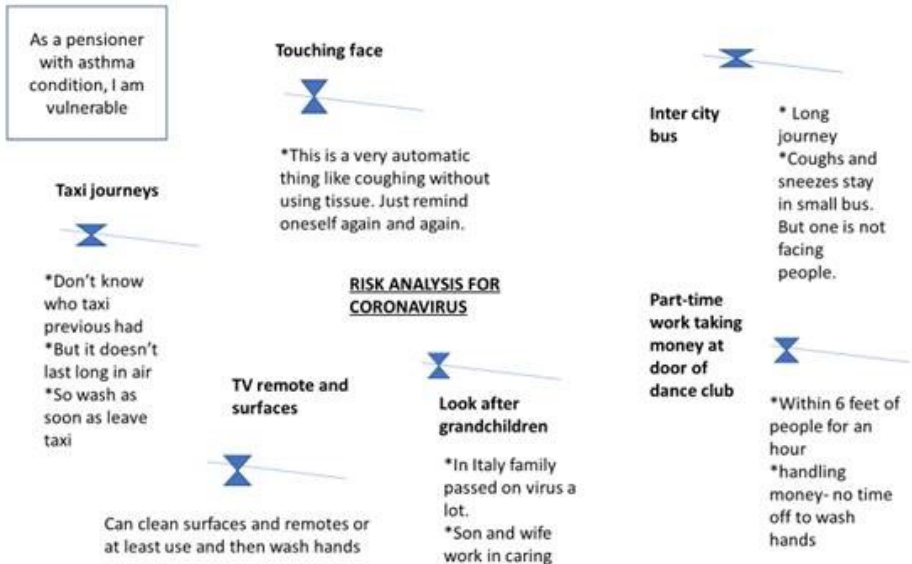
E = Encouragement: praise yourself.

NETWORK Identify how you and others can act as a support group for each other in event of one or others becoming ill. If families rely too much on the services of grandparents that may expose the most vulnerable to risks. Perhaps friends need to discuss how best they can help in predictable contingencies. For example, one couple may be in bed for two weeks but only with a kind of flu turn. Getting essential shopping of tins of food for them may be useful. Perhaps it may not be easy to rely on public transport if drivers become ill. Network contingency arrangements may get around this problem. Groups of people can plan for contingencies and be of mutual help to each other.

But we should nevertheless use techniques which help us with risk analysis. I used a CBT technique of trying to guess at level of risk for various issues. You quantify the level of risk on continuum lines or bar charts. Below is the

one I did for my risks.

Andrew Vass



ENCOURAGING WORDS

The coronavirus is not the first time we have faced a world-wide threat. Please see the website below for some robustly encouraging words from CS Lewis and Martin Luther in earlier times of great public concern. Thank you to Neil Swinnerton for finding and forwarding this.

www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/cwn/2020/march/what-c-s-lewis-martin-luther-would-say-about-our-coronavirus-panic

God is God tho' all the earth lay wasted;
God is God, though all men death had tasted.
While nations stumble,
in darkness fumble,
by stars surrounded
countless aboundeth
God's harvest.

From a Norwegian hymn, written by Petter Dass (1640–1707) and translated by Eivind Berggrav.



CHRISTIAN AID WEEK 10th to 16th May

The materials had been ordered before the coronavirus reared its ugly head. Now the advice from Christian Aid is that the house-to-house collection should not go ahead in its usual form. The Forth Bridge Cross is also cancelled.

All this will make a serious dent in Christian Aid's income at a time when it is needed more than ever.

Christian Aid are looking at the possibility of a 'delivery-only' system, with no knocking on doors. When it is clear what, if anything, we are going to do in Davidson's Mains I will be in touch with regular collectors.

To find out more, or to give online, go to the Christian Aid website at christianaid.org.uk

Margaret Deas

FRESH START DONATIONS OF GOODS



A message from Fresh Start:

Coronavirus Update

As you are aware, Fresh Start looks after those in need, but following government advice issued on 16th March, we have taken the difficult decision to **STOP** accepting donations from members of the public and this includes our regular church collections. This is to minimise contact with others and to ensure donations which may be carrying the virus are not being handled.

As an organisation, we are going to strive to continue to deliver services as far as practicably possible and we are working with staff to come up with ideas on how to support people at this concerning time and will be sure to keep you updated. This may mean that we may have to purchase goods in order to continue to deliver our services so if members of the congregation would like to support us during this difficult time in a different way than donating goods, you can do so by donating to our Just Giving page instead: www.freshstartweb.org.uk/donate

We will keep in touch over the next few weeks and update you with any developments as they happen.

CHURCH SERVICES

Currently all public services are suspended at Holy Cross and at all other Episcopal Churches in Scotland, as well as churches of other denominations. Our Rector is still praying regularly in the Church and celebrating the Eucharist for us all. We don't know when services will be resumed but the readings are offered below so we can read them at home and join together in spirit.

We will be sending out the Bible readings for the week in our weekly e-news and readings at all services for the year, both Eucharist and Morning and Evening Prayer, can be found in the Lectionary on the Old St Paul's website at: www.osp.org.uk/worship/calendar-lectionary/

5th April	PALM SUNDAY Liturgy of Palms: Matthew 21.1-11 Eucharist : Philipians 2.5-11 Matthew 26.14-27.66	19th April	EASTER 2 Acts 2.14a,22-32 Psalm 16 1 Peter 1.3-9 John 20.19-31
9th April	MAUNDY THURSDAY Exodus 12.1-14 Psalm 116.1-2,12-19 1 Corinthians 11.23-26 John 13.1-17,31b-35	26th April	EASTER 3 Acts 2.14a,36-41 Psalm 116 1 Peter 1.17-23 Luke 24.13-35
12th March	EASTER DAY Acts 10.34-43 The Easter Anthems Colossians 3.1-4 Matthew 28.1-10	3rd May	EASTER 4 Acts 2.42-47 Psalm 23 1 Peter 2.19-25 John 10.1-10