

## Friday 3 April 2020

Dear Friends,

*'Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.'*

1 Peter 5:6-7

As we enter the third week of social distancing, we also begin Holy Week. It will be kept in a way that none of us have ever experienced.

There will be added grief as we remember the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we will be unable to gather in one another's company to receive Holy Communion. There will be real loss in this. Many of us will feel that loss acutely. I know that I will. Yet, in that sense of grief and loss, I wonder whether it might cause us to value what the Lord has done for us all the more? When we are unable to do things we value, it can be very hard. However, this time of absence from our gathering around the Lord's Table will make the day we are able to resume our meeting together so much sweeter. Remember too, that we have spiritual communion with the Lord every day as we draw near to him in prayer and in reading His Word. More counsel on this is available at the end of this letter.

We continue to meet together online. I have been thrilled and made proud as I have watched and heard people master the intricacies of Facebook Live and Zoom calling. Like you I am having to learn new skills for these days. Well done to those of you who have offered IT support to one another so patiently. Thanks too to all those who have gone online – many of you have lifted my mood as you made me smile with your contributions.

For those who are unable or perhaps unwilling to get online, we understand the difficulties and your reasons. I am at the end of the phone line if you need to talk. We can also offer a measure of technical encouragement should you feel the need to engage!

Lastly, the news this week has not improved as we have heard of more people getting infected or passing away. We remember those people and families affected.

But we are a people of hope, even in the face of our anxiety. There is hope! We pray – 'Try Praying'! For example, we believe that one of our own members was sick with the virus this week. He is now recovering. One of the children of a St T's couple seemed to be stranded in Cameroon with little prospect of returning as the borders had been closed. He returned via Brussels on Tuesday night, after hard work, not a little anxiety and much prayer. We can remain hopeful in the face of despair as we turn to the Lord who cares for us.

This week may not bring good news. Indeed we are told to expect things to get worse. Yet it is the week that does truly bring Good News. *'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.'*

May God bless you this Holy Week as you contemplate the Lord's great love for you.

David McCarthy



## Holy Week 2020 @ St Thomas' Church Online

**Online Worship & Gathering** – <https://www.facebook.com/sthomasedin>

### Sunday 5 April

#### 10.30am - Palm & Passion Sunday

*Some suggested activities:*

- *Make your own 'palm' cross out of paper or card.*
- *Families/households: make your own cross out of paper or card, and blu-tack to window*

#### 6.30pm Prayer Base – 'Zoom' Meeting

*Bishop Andy Lines will be joining us. To join please refer to the joining instructions within the email from the office or message us via our Facebook page.*

**Monday 6 April @ 12pm - Midday Prayer**

**Tuesday 7 April @ 9.30pm - Night Prayer**

**Wednesday 8 April @ 7pm - Midday Prayer**

### Thursday 9 April

#### **@ 10am - 'Zoom' Coffee Morning**

*To join please refer to the joining instructions within the email from the office or message us via our Facebook page.*

#### **@ 7pm - A Meditation for Maundy Thursday**

**Friday 10 April @ 12-1pm - A Meditation for Good Friday**

### **Guidance on Spiritual Communion and Coronavirus**

During Holy Week, we would normally be present together to receive Holy Communion. This year that will not be possible because of the restrictions our nation is currently living with.

The term 'Spiritual Communion' has been used historically to describe the means of grace by which a person, prevented for some serious reason from sharing in a celebration of Holy Communion, nonetheless shares in the communion of Jesus Christ. The form of prayer below offers Christians an opportunity to give thanks for their communion with him, particularly at times when they would ordinarily be present at Holy Communion.

The Book of Common Prayer instructs us that if we offer ourselves in penitence and faith, giving thanks for the redemption won by Christ crucified, we may truly 'eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ', although we cannot receive the sacrament physically in ourselves. Making a Spiritual Communion is particularly fitting for those who cannot receive the sacrament at the great feasts of the Church, and it fulfils the duty of receiving Holy Communion 'regularly, and especially at the festivals of Christmas, Easter and Whitsun or Pentecost' (*Church of England Canon B 15*).

The Church of which we are members is not defined by the walls of a building but by the Body of Christ of which we are members. In making our communion spiritually, we are joining with Christians everywhere to be nourished by the one who tells us, 'I am the Bread of Life'.

In making a Spiritual Communion, you may wish to pray all or part of the following, as you are able.

#### **An act of Spiritual Communion**

*You may wish to find a space for prayer in front of a cross, a candle, or a special place. You might choose to make your Spiritual Communion at a particular time of day, or after viewing a live streamed service.*

*Reflect on the day and on your relationships.*

- *What good things have come from God today?*
- *Where have I fallen short?*
- *What might I do tomorrow?*

*You may wish to say or pray*

Lord, have mercy.  
Christ, have mercy.  
Lord, have mercy.

*Read the following words from Scripture. If you have access to today's readings for Holy Communion, you may wish to read and reflect on them.*

Jesus said, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.' John 6.35

*Pray for the needs of the world, for your local community, and for those close to you. End with the Lord's Prayer.*

Our Father...

*Give thanks for the saving death and resurrection of Jesus and ask him to be with you now.*

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,  
for all the benefits you have given me,  
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.  
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,  
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.  
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,  
may I know you more clearly, love you more dearly,  
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.

*After the Prayer of St Richard of Chichester*

*You might then add one or more of the following prayers:*

Be with me today, as I offer myself to you.  
Hear my prayers for others and for myself,  
and keep me in your care. Amen.

O God, help me to trust you,  
help me to know that you are with me,  
help me to believe that nothing can separate me  
from your love revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord, in these days of mercy,  
make us quiet and prayerful;  
in these days of challenge, make us stronger in you;  
in these days of emptiness, take possession of us;  
in these days of waiting, open our hearts to the mystery of your cross.

*Angela Ashwin*

Almighty God, Father of all mercies,  
we your unworthy servants  
give you most humble and hearty thanks  
for all your goodness and loving kindness.  
We bless you for our creation, preservation,  
and all the blessings of this life;  
but above all for your immeasurable love  
in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ,  
for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.  
And give us, we pray,  
such a sense of all your mercies  
that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful,  
and that we show forth your praise,  
not only with our lips but in our lives,  
by giving up ourselves to your service,  
and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit,  
be all honour and glory, for ever and ever.

Amen.

*Conclude with the following:*

The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil,  
and keep us in eternal life. Amen.