

Friday 1 May 2020

Dear Friends,

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹ for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

1 Peter 1:3-9

I hope this letter finds you well. I know for some the strains of the last six weeks have proved painful. We long for reunion with family and friends. For now, that is something we can only long for. Yet we are not to be people without hope.

Have you noticed how the news media seek to cheer us up with their version of good news? So, for example a new baby takes up residence in 10 Downing Street and this is the lead item. We hear little of what is happening in lockdown in poorer nations of the world. We are stirred up to applaud frontline carers every Thursday or celebrate the amazing response to the efforts of one man to the possible overwhelming of the NHS (all the while underplaying the fact that the same NHS is not a charity and has been under resourced through several different governments both UK and devolved). These efforts are designed to give us a 'wartime spirit'. They are rather effective! But do they dull us to the greater spiritual realities of these days? We are to be people who interpret in spiritual terms what is happening around us (*You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.* Matthew 16:3).

Many of us are of the generation which is being 'shielded' from the effects of Covid-19. Self-isolation and social distancing creates discomfort and some emotional pain. The passage in 1 Peter reminds us that we need to be shielded from the judgement of sin and that the Lord makes that happen through his Son, Jesus Christ. Notice the following:

1. Everything of now will disappear (v4a) but what we inherit is eternal (v4b).
2. We are shielded by God's power through faith from the terrible effects of sin and death (v5).
3. In the grand scheme of things, the trials of today are for a little while (v6).
4. Perhaps counterintuitively, our response in the face of this grander vision of the present and future hope is one of joy (v6a, v7b, v8b).
5. The greatest gift we can ever receive is salvation from sin (v9).

We have a glorious message to share in these difficult days. Let's do it with confidence and joy. It has NEVER been more needed or relevant.

Online Worship, Gathering and Communications

With this letter, we include

1. An update from the Chair of vestry, Alastair Brown.
2. A financial update from our treasurer, Agnes Murray.

Please read beyond my signature at the bottom of this letter for details of our online gatherings this week.

We continue to use Facebook Live for much of our online presence. A reminder that you do not need a Facebook account to participate in our live worship times. You simply need to go to <https://www.facebook.com/stthomasedin> and look for a red symbol which says 'Live'.

Online worship is also available live on our YouTube Channel (please subscribe!) at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1r0Eq3PqBmxioDssYXCbGQ>

New this week, we are also streaming to <https://www.pscp.tv/StThomasEdin> if you want to try something different!

Most days during the week, I'll publish a short video 'Thought for the Day' during our (early!) morning exercise. These are available on the St Thomas' Facebook Page and our YouTube Channel.

Some serious work has been going on to enhance our website. This is ongoing but please do visit <https://www.saintthomas.org.uk>. Thanks to Angela Benzies for all of her effort on this.

Our Twitter account has also been reactivated. Search for @StThomasEdin.

If you are interested in taking part in Online Worship on Sundays either with reading or praying, please let us know. You'll have to be able to make an audio recording of your reading or intercessions in advance and then send the file to me electronically.

We are thankful for all the work the musicians and technical people are putting in to making videos of the worship songs for Sunday. Please keep those involved in prayer.

Lastly, thanks to Phil Busby who mowed the lawns at church this week and Ian Divine who cut the hedge. Great job, my friends!

If you have prayer concerns or needs, please let me have them by email, text or message. You are very much in my thoughts and prayers.

All love In Christ,

St Thomas' Church Online

Week Beginning 3 May 2020

Online Worship & Gathering

All worship events are available online at:

<https://www.facebook.com/sthomasedin>

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1r0Eq3PqBmxioDssYXCbGQ>

<https://www.pscp.tv/StThomasEdin>

Sunday 3 May

Online Worship @ 10.30am – 'When In Exile'

@6.30pm Prayer Base

Zoom Meeting – see church email of Fri 1st May for joining details

Monday 4 May

@12pm – Midday Prayer

Tuesday 5 May

@9.30pm Night Prayer

Wednesday 6 May

@12pm Midday Prayer

@2-3.30pm Rooted Bible Study

Zoom Meeting – see church email of Fri 1st May for joining details

Thursday 7 April

@ 10am - 'Zoom' Coffee Online

Zoom Meeting – see church email of Fri 1st May for joining details

@ 9.30pm Night Prayer