

COMFORT in

North Carrick

Caring Observant Mindful Friendly Obliging Responsible Tactful

Providing comfort to the people of North Carrick at a time of crisis

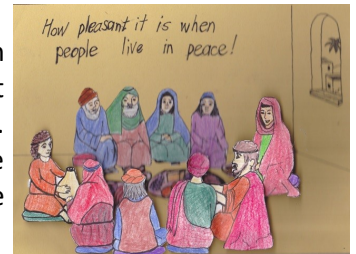
Easter Sunday 12th April 2020

Christians and Community

For centuries, Christians have gathered to worship and enjoy fellowship, as we are meant to live and grow together in community. But the abrupt suspension of church services has put community as we know it on hold.

There have been some creative attempts at bridging the gap by using technology to bring us together. I use the word 'attempt' as this has not always been successful. Some of you might have seen the livestream of a Church of England vicar who accidentally set his jumper on fire as he leaned too close to a candle while delivering a message online. Although this certainly increased the number of views!

For churches, using digital technology is not new but has become a bigger priority in recent years and especially now in our current situation. Many rely on the internet to get news from their churches, listen to sermons and connect with familiar faces. For some Christians, it is not possible to get to church as regularly as they would like due to issues such as persecution or disability, and online resources provide a lifeline for their faith.



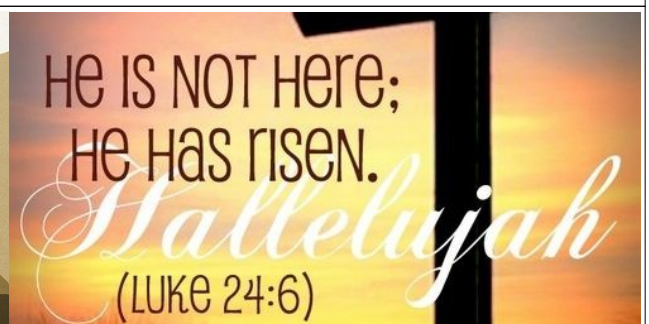
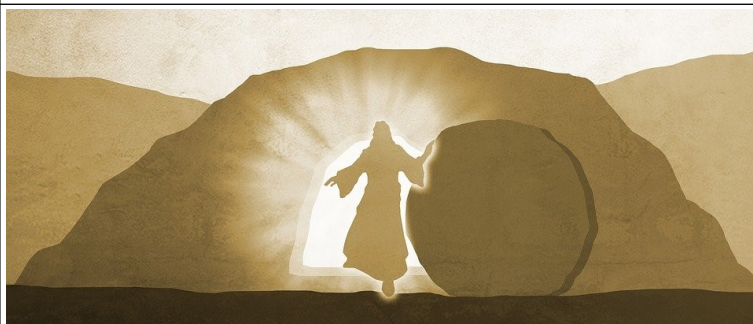
Bishops of the Scottish Episcopal Church have been broadcasting services from their own homes in recent weeks and hundreds of Christians from across Scotland, and beyond, have been gathering virtually to worship together. For more information about this or other online resources, check St Oswald's website: <https://stoswaldsmaybole.org.uk/online/>

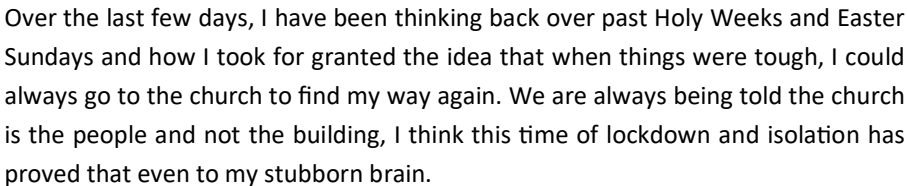
It's not all about tech though. At St Oswald's, we continue to produce our magazine and I have also created a small prayer booklet for members of the congregation to use at home, knowing that as they pray alone or with their families, they still join with Christians all over the world. For those that are interested in receiving the magazine or the prayer book, I would be happy to send them out by email or post. My contact details are below.

And as the current lockdown looks set to continue, pray for those who are sick, for those who are struggling with isolation and for those who are trying their best to create community in a different way.

Matthew Wyllie, St Oswald's Episcopal Church

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Jesus paid the ultimate price for our sins and rose victorious over death on Easter Sunday. Let us keep the memory of His Love, and the Hope of His resurrection, in our hearts this Easter.

HAPPY EASTER

"For God so loved the world,
that He gave His only begotten
Son, that whoever believes in
Him shall not perish, but have
eternal life.

[illegible]

There are many today who believe that this is where Jesus belongs - in a history book or Bible story. They see him as they see any historical figure: as someone who belongs to the past, and whose memory is best preserved on a book shelf. For such people, the crucifixion meant the end of Jesus, and today he is regarded only as a figure of personal interest.

That is what we celebrate on Easter Day. The Easter story points to a Christ who has defeated the powers of darkness - even death itself - and is alive and reigns for evermore. The world can throw its worst at us, but the risen Christ is still among us to strengthen us, and show us the way.

*Christ is alive! No longer bound
to distant years in Palestine,
but saving, healing, here and now,
and touching every place and time.*

A silhouette of a person with arms raised, filled with a word cloud of positive adjectives. The words are arranged to fit the shape of the person, with larger words like 'grateful', 'beautiful', 'inspired', 'joyful', and 'creative' being more prominent. The background is a bright blue sky with white sun rays emanating from behind the figure.

From Marguerite Hunter Blair, Chair of Our Lady and St Cuthbert's Parish Pastoral Council

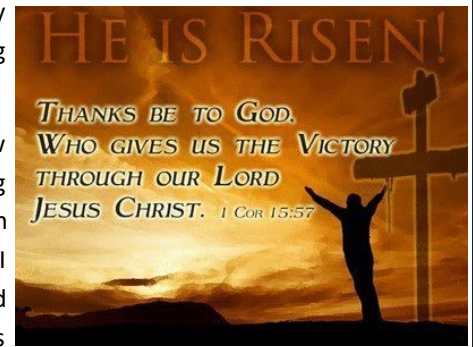
Easter is the greatest, and the most important, feast in the Church. It means literally "the feast of fresh flowers". Easter marks the birthday of our eternal hope following the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, after his crucifixion on Good Friday.

When I think back to Easter as a child, I remember the excitement of something new to wear and the packed church filled with flowers, everyone smiling and singing *Alleluia Alleluia!* Then off as a family to roll our painted eggs down a nearby hill with the smell of fresh grass and bright spring flowers appearing from the bare ground. I still feel excited every year by all the celebrations in our flower-filled church and with the family. But this year is different. Nothing feels the same, nothing feels as good.

And so it is important, more than ever, to remember why we celebrate Easter with pride and jubilation. The Resurrection is the greatest of the miracles - "Jesus is Lord; He is risen". Easter is the guarantee of our own resurrection. It gives us hope and encouragement. Easter reminds us why life is worth living and why we must live the best life we can.

We must continue to share the good news of our faith with others, in countless ordinary ways, through the quality of our daily lives and how we treat others. We can all commit to simple actions like reaching out to a neighbour with a phone call, clapping on our doorstep and supporting our community.

In your quiet place of prayer remember St. Patrick's Breast-Plate "Christ before me, Christ beside me, Christ within me, never to part." Alleluia Alleluia!



After the solemnity of recalling the passion of Christ last week, even if we did so entirely alone, it's such a joy to get to Easter Sunday and celebrate! It encourages us to look forward in earnest to the time we can celebrate victory over the Corona virus, after enduring prolonged restrictions, fears and even bereavements.

For us, Easter Sunday is a real occasion to celebrate not just the resurrection of Jesus but its profound consequences for ourselves. Just as we recall the birth of Jesus with all the joy and sharing at Christmas, so, because of the Resurrection, we can truly turn the passion and death of Jesus into a cause for celebration – birth and death become two sides of the same

coin, so to speak, for us as well as for Jesus.

The first disciples (as many today do) found it hard to believe that Jesus had risen. Death, especially as we are reminded daily of the high cost of the pandemic, seems so final. How blessed we are to believe that life is 'changed not taken away'.

Indeed this year we may have more reason to celebrate Easter than ever in our lifetime. Faith can really make a difference when times are hard. So let's get into the party spirit, thanking God for his activity in our lives and maybe even enjoying an Easter egg – or two!

Ellen Hawkes

EASTER message from Canon McGee, Our Lady and St Cuthbert's

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Those are among the words uttered by Christ from the Cross on the first Good Friday. They are words some people may be tempted to say today in the midst of our present crisis. But the message from the Cross is ultimately one of hope, not despair, for the Cross was not the end. It led to new life in the Resurrection of the Lord. Otherwise it would be incomprehensible that we should call that Friday – GOOD Friday.



It may indeed be hard to see any good in the present suffering and distress of so many people, yet we also see the selfless service and commitment of others who, sometimes at great risk to themselves, dedicate their time and efforts in helping to alleviate the suffering and attend to the needs of the sick, the elderly, the housebound. Many are in the public services, especially in the NHS, but there are many thousands of volunteers in our own communities also involved in similar tasks. We thank them. The suffering and grief - the Cross - is still there, of course, but it also calls forth the best from people, true kindness, compassion and a love of neighbour.

For those of a Christian faith this time of year recalls the great fundamental mystery at the heart of our faith – the Resurrection. As we live through the coming weeks and months we look to the future not with fear or trepidation but with Easter hope in the Lord's continuing presence with us

From Fr Jim , St Oswald's Scottish Episcopal Church



Easter, the Feast of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the most important and joyous celebration in the Churches calendar.

I am sure this is an Easter that will live in our memories for the rest of our lives as it hardly feels like a time for celebration. So many people are suffering the effects of this pandemic, so many people are living in fear and isolation wondering how they are going to cope through a long period of economic and food deprivation, so many people are feeling the separation of family and this is worldwide.

And yet Easter, the resurrection, has possibly its greatest meaning for us at this time. Easter is the culmination of the suffering of Holy Week. Jesus is mocked and tortured before suffering the pain of crucifixion. The disciples see all that they had hoped for dashed, living in fear and isolation lest they suffer the same fate, then comes the glorious light of the resurrection.

History is littered with terrible events that eventually lead to the light of better times, of change for the greater good.

These are horrible times, but they will end, and already we see much to be thankful for.

This Easter, we should try to put aside our personal fears and frustration and look toward the light. The compassion, love, and joy that Christ brings into our lives are evident in these difficult times and we have much to be thankful for.

Those who risk their own health, and lives, on the frontline caring for those infected, the caregivers in our community homes and visiting individuals at home are foremost in our minds but, there are others that we possibly take for granted. Those who put themselves at risk keeping our shops open so we can be fed, the refuse collectors who ensure our environment stays healthy, the volunteers who support the most vulnerable in our community. So many people to be thankful for and to hold in our prayers.

At this Easter time, we celebrate the joy of the resurrection of Christ Our Lord, and the resurrection of our world which will follow this testing time.

The challenge is for us to continue showing the love and compassion of this difficult time into what will be a very different world.

May the joy of the resurrection fill your hearts with love and compassion, may the Holy Spirit fill you with courage and hope and may Almighty God bless you + Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

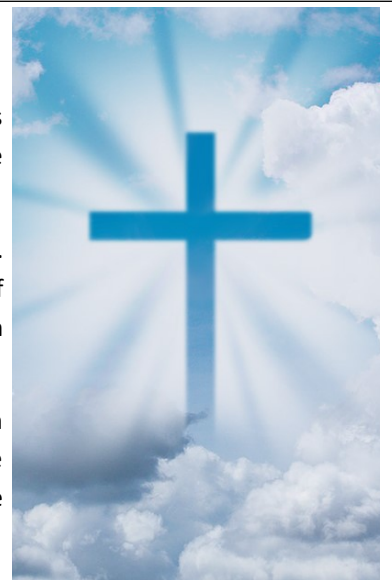
I should also say sorry, this is a bit long but I missed the deadline for the last newsletter, despite David reminding me.

From Rev Dr John Lochrie, Maybole Parish Church

Except for the first Easter this must be the strangest Easter of all. With the church doors locked and everyone under lockdown there are no services, no gatherings of crowds. The only worship will be online or in the privacy of our homes. It will be strange indeed.

Yet the Easter message of hope is one that we all need as we live through these dark days. While it was the Psalmist who said, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me", it is Easter that changes his words from hope to reality.

Thanks to the event in the garden all these years ago we can now face any situation knowing that we are not alone, for the Risen Christ is with us. Through the Holy Spirit he gave as his inheritance at Pentecost we find the power to enable us to face and come through even these dark times.



In a time of crisis, everyone pulls together. With all churches closed until further notice, local church members have come together to produce this newsletter. None will be distributed by hand but will be passed on electronically. If you know someone who may be interested in reading it, please send it on. The hope is that that some COMFORT is available. God bless.