



# Broxburn Parish Church

## *The Bridge Newsletter Edition 1*

### FROM THE INTERIM MODERATOR

***Rev. Derek Henderson***



Dear friends,

We live just now in unprecedented and difficult times and because of this coronavirus epidemic we cannot meet as a congregation. However, we have set up a Task Group (contact details on the back page) with the aims of maintaining communications with you all; of remembering those who are isolated and may need help, and of monitoring our financial position.

This newsletter is intended to be the first of a series to keep us in touch with each other. I remember you in my prayers and ask that you will remember Margaret and I, as she goes into 12 weeks isolation because of her underlying medical condition. It seems to me that if we are to pray for each other it would be good to know that we are doing this at the same time – perhaps we could pray at 10.30am (before our 'elevenses!') and/or 10.30pm (just after the news).

We hope to set up some form of telephone contact system and so you may well receive calls from the elders or others to ensure that you are well and that you have what you need as far as we are able to provide it.

Just the other day our youngest grandson Euan, who is only 8 but has been absorbing the news regularly, suddenly exclaimed: "This coronavirus is doing my head in!" I suspect that we all feel like that at times but even if we cannot have personal contact with each other, we can still send e-mails, texts, use social media or just telephone to ensure that no-one feels alone or forgotten.

***"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."***

*(Philippians 4:6-7)*

***With every blessing, Derek.***

# ***FOLLOWING IN CHRIST'S FOOTSTEPS – A JOURNEY IN HOLY WEEK***

## **Introduction:**

This Easter I want to take us on a journey, walking with Jesus through the events of Holy Week. Although we cannot meet as a church fellowship, we can think and pray about the same things. The Bible tells us much about what happened, but there are some gaps, which we will note as we go along. I have taken the four Gospel accounts of the events of Holy Week and drawn them together, with one or two pieces of information which come from references in other parts of the New Testament. These events tell a remarkable, moving and meaningful story – something, which I am sure will touch us all as we contemplate these events afresh and meditate on them. I intend to focus on a few key highlights.

However, before we begin our journey, let us hear some words from the prophet Isaiah, who tells us of God's servant, the Saviour, who is to come, words which will help to set the scene.

"The people who walk in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone... For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end." (*Isaiah 9:2, 6-7a - ESV*)

"Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law." (*Isaiah 42:1-4 - ESV*)

Our journey begins on that day we now call Palm Sunday...

## **Palm Sunday: 5th April 2020**

Jesus makes his triumphant entrance into Jerusalem, riding on a donkey. A strange choice we might think, but this was in fulfilment of the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9, "Your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey." This declares openly that Jesus is the Messiah and underlines the fact that he does not come as a conquering military leader. He comes as the one who offers salvation. He comes with reconciliation, as did rulers who would sometimes ride a donkey in times of peace. Later on, he spends the night in Bethany, where he was to stay for the rest of the week.

The sad thought is that perhaps some of those who were shouting "hosanna" at this time were a week later shouting "crucify!"

(*See Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:28-44; John 12:12*)

## **Monday: 6th April 2020**

Jesus leaves Bethany and curses the fig tree on the way into the city. And just before he arrives he looks out over the city and weeps over Jerusalem. His image of the hen gathering its chicks under her wings is a very vivid one. Jesus goes on to the Temple where what he sees angers him and leads him to cleanse the temple, upsetting the tables of the moneychangers. Not something which will endear him to the religious leaders and an early sign that not everything will go smoothly in the days ahead. Late in day, he looks into the Temple again, then leaves the city. He spends the night in Bethany. *(See Matthew 21:12-22; Mark 11:15-22; Luke 19:45-48; John 2:13-17)*

## **Tuesday: 7th April 2020**

The next morning dawns and again Jesus leaves Bethany, finds the fig tree withered and teaches his followers on faith. He enters the temple and its precincts; confounds the chief priests and the Pharisees and pronounces woes upon his enemies. He leaves city and gives the 'Olivet Discourse' on way back to Bethany, teaching his disciples. In the meantime, Judas bargains with the Sanhedrin to betray Jesus. Jesus spends the night in Bethany once more. *(Matthew 21:20-24:51; Mark 11:20-13-37; Luke 20:1-21:36; John 12:20-38)*

## **Wednesday: 8th April 2020**

This is a silent day. There is no record in the Gospels of what happened that day, but there must have been much activity as Jesus prepares for the Last Supper and as Judas and the Sanhedrin prepare for Jesus' arrest – Judas agrees to identify Jesus with a kiss. I wonder what Judas was feeling at this time? He must have felt some sense of separation from God, a sense of isolation – something which we experience ourselves at times. So, let us take a moment to pause in prayer to think of those times when we feel isolated.

Let us pray:

**Lord God, we confess that each of us has known times when we have felt alone, empty and abandoned. We have experienced a feeling of isolation from you and those around us. We feel this especially at this time of crisis and coronavirus epidemic.**

**We confess that we easily become anxious about ourselves, our families, our health and our possessions. We confess that we are too easily brought low by our concerns and by our reliance on the false security of earthly things, and we do not stand on the rock that you have provided.**

**Lord, set our feet again on the path of life where you would have us walk. Keep our eyes fixed on Christ, the source of new life, and by your Spirit give us your truth which sets us free.**

**In Christ's name, Amen.**

Jesus remains in Bethany throughout the day and stays the night there.

## Thursday: 9th April 2020

Peter and John are sent to make preparations for the Passover meal. After sunset, he eats the meal with the twelve; washes the disciples feet; and Judas departs out into the darkness. Thus the Lord's Supper is instituted. From there they proceed to the Garden of Gethsemane where we hear of Jesus' agony as he prepared himself for what is to come. Shortly after is his betrayal by Judas and his arrest by the Sanhedrin. From there Jesus is taken to the house of the High Priest and the Sanhedrin is convened; of course, we know how Peter betrays Jesus, by denying him three times.

It seems to me that the part of these events to focus on is when Jesus washes the disciples feet. So, let us think about this in more detail.

*(See Matthew 26:17-15; Mark 14:12-72; Luke 22:7-62; John 13:1-38)*

### **Meditation: Washing the disciples' feet**

So, I want you to imagine the scene...

It has been a long hot day. The city of Jerusalem is packed with jostling, pushing pilgrims coming for the Passover, many of them clamouring for a glimpse of this teacher, Jesus of Nazareth. This man they have heard so much about – the stories, the healings, the miracles. And he is here in Jerusalem.

The spring sun has been warm, but now it is getting dark as evening falls. The streets are dry and dusty, and the disciples are a long way from home. A splash of cool water would be refreshing.

And so, the disciples make their way quietly and secretly along the darkening streets as the shadows lengthen, to an upper room where a meal has been prepared for them. The windows are shuttered, and the room lit by candles, some on the table and some in niches in the walls.

There is a table set for a simple meal, with bread and wine; there is a pitcher of water and a basin on the floor and nearby a stool with a rough towel draped over it. Other objects lie in the shadows. One by one, the disciples enter the room, the draught from the open door making the candles flicker as they take their places around the table.

After a few moments, Jesus stands and takes off his outer garment. He wraps the towel round his waist, takes up the basin, and kneels before one of the disciples. He unlaces their sandal and gently lifts their foot, places it in the basin, covers it with water, and begins to bathe it.

One grimy foot after another, Jesus works his way down the row. Any one of Jesus' disciples could have volunteered for this job, but none of them did. In Jesus' day, the washing of feet was a task reserved not just for servants, but for the lowest of servants. In this case, the one with the basin is the King of the universe: hands that shaped the stars, now wash away filth. Fingers that formed mountains now massage toes. And the one before whom all nations will one day kneel, now kneels before his disciples. Hours before his own death, Jesus' concern is incredible.

He wants his disciples to know how much he loves them.



You can be sure that Jesus knows the future of these feet he is washing. These are the feet that will dash for cover at the glint of a Roman sword. Only one pair of feet won't abandon him in the garden...Judas will already have abandoned Jesus that very night at the table.

Until now, I had never really thought how poignant and evocative a moment that was when Jesus silently lifts the feet of his betrayer and washes them in the basin. Jesus knows what these men are about to do – all of them.

By morning they will bow their heads in shame and look down at their feet in disgust. And when they do, Jesus wants them to remember how his knees knelt before them and he washed their feet...

Jesus forgave their sin, even before they committed it. He offered them mercy before they even sought it.

Let us take a few moments to reflect in silence as we think of the jug of water, bowl and towel and think of what we have been given and forgiven. Imagine Jesus is washing your feet – how would you feel?

### ***Let us pray:***

Lord God, at this difficult time we commit ourselves to serve you by serving one another.

We commit ourselves to love you by loving one another.

We commit ourselves to bring you glory and to honour your name through the lives we live and through our words of witness to your love.

Amen.

## **Friday: 10th April 2020**

### **The Trials of Jesus Christ**

The first trial is before Annas in the night time hours; Annas is looking for an accusation, biding time till the Sanhedrin is gathered at the High Priestly villa.

At the second and primary trial before the Sanhedrin, Jesus is condemned and misused.

The third trial is immediately after at dawn, while, Peter denies Jesus a third time and then Jesus looks upon him; the condemnation of Jesus is repeated, and he is then taken to the Romans.

His fourth trial is before Pilate and his fifth trial is then before Herod, who looks for a miracle.

The sixth trial is once again before Pilate, the Roman governor.

The outcome of this is that Jesus is scourged; the city cries, "Crucify Him or we will tell Rome!" Pilate, in his weakness, finally turns Jesus over to be crucified knowing full well that he was innocent of any crime.

Pilate wanted a quiet life and certainly didn't want anyone writing to Rome to complain of his inadequacies, something which did happen at another time. So, Jesus is mocked by the Roman soldiers and given a crown of thorns. Judas, realising the import of what he has done and full of remorse, hangs himself. Jesus bears his cross to a place on the north of city and is crucified around 9am.

### ***Jesus' Seven Sayings from the Cross:***

- **"Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."**
- **To the criminal hanging beside him: "Today you will be with me in paradise."**
- **To the beloved disciple: "Woman, behold thy son."**  
**[then there was darkness from noon until 3pm]**
- **"My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"**
- **"I thirst."**
- **"It is finished."**
- **"Into Thy hands I commit my spirit."**

The death of Jesus takes place just after 3pm; the veil in the Temple is torn and rocks are broken and rent apart; some graves are opened and people rise [to mortality] and go into the city. Jesus' side is pierced to confirm his death. And of course, we need to remember the irony that Passover lambs were being slain in the Temple as the Lamb of God was being slain on the cross. Jesus is buried by sundown.

*(See Matthew 27:1-62; Mark 14:53-15:47; Luke 22:54-23:56; John 18:13-19:37)*

### **Saturday: 11th April 2020**

At the request of the Jewish leadership, Pilate grants a guard and sets a seal on the tomb of Jesus.

*(See Matthew 27:62-66; Mark 16:1; Luke 23:56; John 19:40)*

### **Easter Sunday: 12th April 2020**

Jesus Christ rises from the dead (before dawn) and makes five appearances on the day of His rising:

- To Mary Magdalene who is given a message to the disciples
- To the other women who come to the tomb intending to complete the burial preparation of His body
- To two disciples on the Road to Emmaus
- To Simon Peter [nowhere recorded, but alluded to in Luke 24:33 and 1 Corinthians 1:5]
- To the astonished disciples when Thomas is absent

### **Christ is risen: he is risen indeed!**

*(See Matthew 28:1-13; Mark 16:1-14; Luke 24:1-49; John 20:1-23)*

# The Moderator's Prayer

Living God, in our hour of need we turn again to you, for we have nowhere else to turn. We put our faith in you, because you have proved your faithfulness time and again. We reaffirm our love for you because you have never let us go. We thank you that you are not distant from us but have drawn near, in your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. He has shared our life, tasted our death and defeated it. He understands our worries and our fears. Help us to respond as your children now.

We pray for this pandemic spreading across our world, remembering all who have lost loved ones and praying for those seriously ill at this time. We uphold the National Health Service, as it responds to this added pressure on its already overstretched services. We pray for doctors and nurses and all in the caring professions, who work to help and support people as best they can.

We remember those working behind the scenes, testing samples, confirming results, giving information to patients. We uphold others trying to understand this virus better, working to create an effective remedy. We pray for our Governments in Westminster and Holyrood, as they work with the best medical advice to guide us on how we should respond and what action we should take. We pray that these guidelines might be taken seriously and that all would put them into action.

May this crisis bring out the best in us, not the worst. Help us to live by faith and not by fear, to build bridges not barriers, and to resist all who would speak ill of any other group. May we not forget our responsibility to one another, not least to the vulnerable and voiceless in our communities. Help us to find ways of keeping in touch and offering reassurance to those with underlying health issues; for any who feel particularly vulnerable or in danger at present.

As the virus spreads we pray for the disruption it causes to normal life, bringing new fears and anxieties: we pray for those who have been laid off as their work disappears; for financial hardship for individuals and businesses; for the impact on the economy and pensions, when austerity has already left its mark.

We pray for those whose trips, both for business and pleasure, have been cancelled; and others where events, long anticipated and planned for, have been postponed; for those making contingency planning for home-based work or childcare or exams.

May our inconvenience not blind us to others' loss. We remember those who cannot visit loved ones in locked-down care homes; for the elderly whose social contacts have been severely curtailed. Help us to find creative ways of keeping in touch, of assuring them they are not forgotten or ignored.

May congregations find new ways of living though this time. May we not forget our faith but draw strength from it. So may our worship be heartfelt, our fellowship deepen and our service increase. Strengthen us, by your Spirit, so that we may carry on our lives as best as we are able, looking out for others, showing love in action, being faithful in prayer, and bringing encouragement, hope and peace; always trusting in you our Rock and our Redeemer.

These prayers we bring to you in Jesus' name. Amen.

*Rt. Rev. Colin Sinclair, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland*



***Task Group  
members:***

Rev. Derek Henderson  
Anne Gunn  
Andy Carter  
David McWilliams  
Sue Sneddon  
Hugh Brown

Although we are not able to meet together for worship, we are all still members of our church family.

So if we can help you in any way, or perhaps you just need a listening ear, please telephone:

**07934 073349**

***And finally...time for a laugh:***

It was a quiet Monday morning in April 2053, when John awoke with a need to go to the toilet. To John this wasn't just any ordinary day - this was the day he would open the last packet of toilet paper his parents had bought in the year 2020!

**Broxburn Parish Church of Scotland**  
**[broxburnparishchurch.org.uk](http://broxburnparishchurch.org.uk)**

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