



Abington Pastoral Letter #9 22.04.2020

Dear friends

How can we find hope in this?

I was writing an email to someone before Easter and I wrote 'I wish you a happy Easter'. Then I thought to myself: Is it okay to say "happy" Easter?

These days it feels hard to say "happy" on anything really. This situation does not only threaten our bodies but also our minds. More people are having difficulties with mental health issues during the lockdown. Those who are working on various frontlines are experiencing shell shock. There are days when I feel more anxious or stressed or tired than before.

Things are even more difficult to those who don't have the luxury as we do. Those who live in Africa, those who live in refugee camps in Syria or in Calais. Every day we sense bereavement, sadness, fear and isolation. Things don't look good.

And yet friends, in the midst of all that, this is not the end of our story. Things didn't look good at the crucifixion either. But our God is the God who turns tragedy into triumph. Before the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, the cross was a sign of shame and despair. It was the way of execution that only the worst kind of criminals and slaves were given. But God has turned that sign of shame and despair into the sign of victory and hope.

Easter is the ultimate manifestation of the truth that the end of our story is not death but God. God is the beginning of our story and he is the end of our story. That is the truth revealed in the resurrection. Therefore we have hope. Hope always comes from the truth.

St. Paul said,

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

(2 Corinthians 4.16-18)

When we stand in the truth, we have hope and this hope transforms our present. It may not immediately change the whole situation we are in but it changes us and how we respond to the situation and the world will be transformed by you and I through whom God works.

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we[a] have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access[b] to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

(Romans 5.1-5)

Sarah's Message

We enjoyed our Crosses of Abington challenge. Sarah who recently has shared with us her marvelous photographs and I would like to suggest another project. Here is a message from Sarah.

Hello everyone! I thought it would be nice to have a picture of as many people as possible from the church family so that we could put them up at the end of the online service one week. Doesn't have to be anything fancy and if you don't have one then now is the time to try a selfie. And don't worry - we are all in the same boat as far as lack of hairdressing is concerned! It would be lovely to see as many faces as possible, either as families or individuals. Sarah

Please would you send your family photos or your selfie to Sarah at sarah.may@rathlin.net? Any questions please contact either myself or Sarah. Thank you Sarah for this lovely idea.

Celia's Message

Celia has recently sent out messages to help the staff of the hospital by providing them bags for their uniforms. Here is her message.

A really big thank you to everyone who sent me pillow cases or duvet covers for making into uniform bags. As a result of your generosity, so far, we have made and delivered 108 uniform bags and have about 50 in the process of being completed. Many, many thanks.

Celia

You can bring pillow cases or duvet covers to Celia at 392 Welford Road NN2 8PS. Any questions please contact Celia at irwin392@aol.com. Thank you Celia for this lovely project and for all that you do to support our hospital.

Online Worship

Our online worship has been very well attended and watched by many from all places. Last Sunday we had almost 100 viewers watching at the same time. Given that some of those viewers were watching as a family, the actual number of worshipers could be higher. I have received many messages not just from our members of the congregation but from those who moved out from the parish long ago and reconnected to the church recently through our online services. I would like to share one of those messages with you here.

I feel I must write to thank you for taking the time and effort to present your Sunday services on-line at this difficult time. Clearly a great deal of thought and love has gone into the preparation of them, by a number of people. I have really enjoyed spending my time engrossed in them.

My family attended Abington Church for many years, my parents Monica & Richard (known as Dick) were married there in 1941. Mum was a Sunday School teacher at first and later became a keen member of the Mother's Union. Dad was a member of the CEMS and a sidesman and he spent his last few years at St Christopher's. I was Christened there in 1947. From then until I went to college, I went to Sunday School, Brownies, Guides (became the first Queen's Guide), Pathfinders & Young Christians groups. I also became a Brownie leader

and Sunday School teacher. In 1970 I was married there, before moving away from the town. So you will realise I have many fond memories of my time at the 'church in the park' and it is absolutely lovely, particularly at this time, to be able to feel I am worshipping there again. So thank you very much.

Best Wishes,

Hannah (nee Bellamy)

You can watch our service again here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rB-JCsLTsQg>

The Church is also constantly reviewing ways to support those who are unable to join our online worship and those who are less connected to the wider community. Liz Kelly's pastoral team has been wonderful in this. Thank you Liz and to our pastoral visitors and to all those who look after our friends and neighbours.

Prayer Exercise

Liz Kelly shared with us a fun prayer exercise called Spiritual Collage. It's suitable for children and adults. I have attached it to this letter.

That's all from me now. Please do send me those things that you want to share: a story, a thought, music, photos, passage from a book or the Bible.

Stay safe and God bless.

With love in Christ

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