

I hope that you had a good Easter week, with the journey towards the celebration of Jesus resurrection on Sunday morning. A helpful time as we look forward to a Spring and Summer with a bit more freedom of movement and meeting up with others.

Some of you may have attended services in church buildings locally, while others joined in with TV or online worship. Whatever we were doing it is a time of hope and thanksgiving for the Gospel of Jesus Christ – life, death, resurrection – that we might know life in all its fullness, that the Kingdom of God is among us.

This week I have taken a section from the Church of Scotland Worship series for the 11<sup>th</sup> April:

**Looking at the reading: John Chapter 20 vs 19 to 31.**

These are thoughts from **Rev Allan McCafferty, Minister of Hope Park and Martyrs Parish Church St Andrews.**

<https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/worship/weekly-worship/monthly/april-2021/11-april-second-sunday-of-easter#introduction>

“This is a powerful, rich passage and although it appears each year, there is a wealth of imagery and themes to mine. We start by thinking that all the disciples are gathered together on the evening of the discovery of the empty tomb and that Mary Magdalene has shared with them the news that she has seen the Lord (v.18). The disciples are behind locked doors and feeling fearful; Jesus appears and says, “Peace be with you” – this phrase appears three times in this reading. He shows them His hands and sides, then commissions them and breathes on them saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (quite unlike Acts 2:1-21 and the arrival of the Holy Spirit there, which is read on Pentecost Sunday each year). Jesus then introduces the possibility of His disciples forgiving sins. When the prime focus in the Kirk today is Mission, Murchison’s interpretation of these verses, where peace and the Holy Spirit are given and empower this new missionary community, are quite helpful: “The missionary people empowered by this peace and this inbreathed Holy Spirit bear the forgiving, transforming love of God into every sphere of human experience.” (1) He’s clear that relates to both personal matters (such as families) and public matters (such as economic injustice).

Interestingly most references to forgiveness appear in the synoptic gospels. In all the writings of John (whether the gospel or 1 John, 2 John or 3 John) forgiveness only appears three times and the lectionary readings today include two of the references – the others is 1 John 2:12.

Only in verse 24 do we learn Thomas was not present at that time. When they share the news that made them happy he doubts and will not believe what he has not seen. The following Sunday a similar appearance takes place; Thomas is present and indeed although (unfairly) known as ‘Doubting Thomas’ he becomes the first of them to say aloud, “My Lord and my God!” Indeed it is those disciples who had seen the risen Jesus the week before who find themselves again gathered together behind closed doors even although they first heard the words “Peace be with you” and “Receive the Holy Spirit”.

On the first of the two Sunday evenings the disciples are fearful and behind locked doors. What must be going through their minds after all that has happened since the last days of Jesus life and his death and the news Mary Magdalene brings about having seen the Lord? On Easter evening the appearance of Jesus brings them happiness but by the following week with a further assurance of peace, Thomas goes beyond emotion and demonstrates faith rather than doubt.”

(1) D. Cameron Murchison, Feasting on the Word Year B, Volume 2: p404.

## **Christian Aid Week: 10<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> May 2021**

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/key-appeals/christian-aid-week>

This year we will again be circulating envelopes around the Parish for people to donate as they wish to the amazing, valuable, life saving and life enhancing work of Christian Aid around the world.

OR, you may prefer to donate on line at the above link

OR – you can support Chris Tabraham and myself as we undertake a sponsored Kiltwalk, along the Crinan Canal on the 24<sup>th</sup> April. All proceeds will go to **Christian Aid**.

(Sponsor us by contacting Chris or myself:

Chris Tabraham: [chris.tabraham@icloud.com](mailto:chris.tabraham@icloud.com)

David Logue: [davidlogue286@gmail.com](mailto:davidlogue286@gmail.com)

## **Mid Argyll Ministry Planning:**

Many of you will remember that during the summer of 2019 we held a series of congregational meetings, as requested by the Presbytery Planning group, to discuss how we would like to see the churches in Mid Argyll structured in the light of the changing patterns of church attendance and the pressures on finances and buildings under the current arrangements.

The preferred option from these meetings was to have a shared ministry across the five parishes – North Knapdale, Glassary Kilmartin and Ford, Lochgilphead, Ardrishaig, and South Knapdale, led by an ordained minister with input from readers and worship leaders, and with the support of one (or preferably two), Mission Development staff.

Two or three joint meetings of representatives from the churches took place later in 2019 to discuss this further but unfortunately no decisions were reached before the Covid Lockdown intervened and no further progress was made.

However, I am pleased to say that the Presbytery Planning Convenor, Rev David Mitchell has recently contacted the churches to recommence the discussions. Unfortunately, the first meeting which was to take place on the 7<sup>th</sup> April had to be cancelled at short notice due to an emergency, but a new date will be set. Norma Kelly, Catherine Paterson and myself will represent North Knapdale with our Interim Moderator, Alison Hay.

The experience we have gained during the last year of lockdown will have an impact on our discussions, so I am sure that different ideas or suggestions will come forward and I will keep you informed as these meetings occur.

## Letter and Prayer from Rev Owain Jones,

Hello everyone.

It's an invidious thing to identify with a disciple; there's too much of Peter in me, but also of mouthy James and John, the "Sons of Thunder", and while I abhor violence, I recognize in Luke's story of the disciples who show Jesus two swords just before the arrest in Gethsemane, and have to be told "That's ENOUGH!!" an irascibility and preference for direct solutions in me that seems to have grown, shall we say, with the silvering of my hair! I'm not proud of it, and I have to sit on it more and more. Becoming a grumpy old man is one thing, but an angry old minister would be quite another.

So most of my identifications with any of the disciples are cautionary. Not so much with Thomas. Thomas resonates with an impulse I've always felt to push truth as far as it will go, knowing that what *is* true will survive. If at times I've felt that there's too much of Peter or Boanerges in me, I actually wish that there were more of Thomas.

We remember the doubt, of course, but we misinterpret it, even in the light of what John's Gospel tells us about Thomas. The key, it seems to me, is there in that momentary exchange in the story of Lazarus' resurrection in John 11: "Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead; and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." Thomas doesn't run away from anything. Thomas follows the hardest truth through to the end.

And we never remember that while Thomas wasn't there that first Easter evening, and refused to believe anything on his friends' say-so during the week, he went back the following Sunday, presumably expecting nothing. But he was a disciple, even if Jesus was dead, so back he went.

When (as every year!!) I despair of finding anything new to say about Thomas, something has always turned up. This year, it was the astonishing Denise Levertov's astonishing poem "St Thomas the Apostle", and a sonnet by Malcolm Guite. But every year, I'm drawn to that almost-secular (**achingly** almost-secular) masterpiece of Philip Larkin, "Church Going," and that's really what informed these prayers. Read it, and you'll see. It's about people who venture into church as into a compelling but largely alien space, full of half-understood resonances, evoking the agony of being desperate, yet unable, to believe.

.It's about our parishioners. (At least, I'd say it is!)

It's where Thomas seems to have been, between Easter Sunday and the following Sunday. It's where people we know, sometimes very well, are, now. It's about our calling as a Presbytery to minister to the whole of Argyll, and everyone in it. As is the story of Doubting Thomas.

I hope some of this is helpful. .

No problem deciding how to sign off this week..

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!



Owain

***When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." John 20:19***

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On the evening of the first day,  
The disciples were there,  
And suddenly, Jesus Christ was in the midst.  
He breathed upon them his Pentecostal breath.  
But the doors were locked, for fear, and in timidity;  
there was an "inside" and an "outside",  
and Thomas, that first Sunday,  
was caught outside.

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We reflect on this, God of all-embracing love;  
for you are not the God of "inside" and "out".  
Christ is in the garden, to astound the grieving Magdalen.  
Christ is at the lochside, to confront Peter with his past  
and free him from it.  
Christ is abroad in the world.  
Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

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And yet their doors were locked, for fear.

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You call us to be a special, impossible place,  
an inside without an outside, defined not by a boundary, a perimeter,  
but by the light shines in the darkness,  
out into the darkness...

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You call us to be the sign of a place  
whose limits we in our timidity imagine  
but which *you* do not acknowledge.  
Yet still we work with walls and doors,  
with "in" and "out".  
We confess that we can be so very fearful  
of what is "outside."  
but like them in that room that first Easter evening,  
are defined and constituted by the presence of the Risen Christ in the midst.

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And so we give you thanks  
that over these eerie, pandemic months  
when the lives of our congregations have been turned inside out  
and we have found ourselves shut out of our safe places of worship,  
on the other side of locked doors,  
Christ has been among us, and said to us  
"Peace be with you!"  
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We pray for our congregations in this tentative time,  
those returning to worship,  
those waiting to return,  
all seeking Christ's leading, where they are.  
Guard us from allowing return to slip into retrenchment,  
mere safety behind walls and doors;  
keep us in the new, broad space,  
of mind, and understanding, and worship  
in which Christ has found us, and we have found him.  
You who can keep us from being of the world,  
keep us in the world, for your sake.

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We remember the Church, met that first evening of Resurrection –  
the doors locked, Christ in the midst,  
and Thomas not there.

Do we notice the courage of his return, in disbelief (not unbelief)  
to the fellowship seven days later?

Teach us who this Thomas is to us,  
So that we may recognize him, and minister to him.

He stands betwixt and between, inside and out.

He challenges us, as he has always challenged the Church,  
and his challenge is yours, Lord of Truth.

If his is the voice from outside our cosy, closed circle,  
desperate to believe, yet finding our testimony insufficient,  
let us attend to him.

If his is the uneasy voice from within the congregation,  
holding our life and thought and faith  
demanding more of us than the repetition of comforting formulae,  
let us attend to him.

If he demands the encounter with the tangible Christ,  
let us share with him the Christ whose touch is on our lives.

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Teach us that Thomas is our neighbour, our friend,  
In our parish community, in our congregation.

He stands betwixt and between, both in and out – and neither  
And he – or she – waits for more than our words.

He, she – they look to touch the Christ who is the Life of our shared life as your  
people.

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Hone and burnish our love for each other,  
and show us when and where we have not loved, or supported, enough.  
for who are we, to witness Christ to the world,  
if we cannot know him standing in our midst  
And cannot find him in each other's need?

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Let us pray, as the Church and as members of the Church, to be led beyond the  
thinking of "in" and "out".

Let us pray, as the Church and as members of the Church, to be released from  
behind the locked doors of our timidity.

Let us pray, as this Presbytery, for insight:

- into the thirst for faith, and longing to believe – but not just to believe anything  
– that exists in the communities of Argyll;
- into this strange new place of interface between Church and world into which  
we have been led;

- into the expectations of love, and truth-telling, that people have, who like Thomas expect Christ to be tangible in the life of the Church.

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Let us pray for the mission and outreach of our Presbytery.

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Let us pray for each other, especially those in anguish, or anxiety, or sadness or pain.

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Let us pray for our congregations, in the challenges of this new phase of the pandemic.

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Let us pray for our communities, the people among whom we live, who are ours to minister to in Christ's name; for the needs we know, and for the needs to which we need our eyes to be opened.

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And as Jesus taught us, so we pray: *Our Father...*

**You can find news on our church website: [www.northknapdale.org](http://www.northknapdale.org)**

**And our Face Book page – North Knapdale Church.**

**Contact David Logue – Tel: 01546 870647**

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**North Knapdale Church of Scotland - Charity No: SC001002**