**The Parishes of Crail and St Ayle**

**Reflections for the Locked out - Locked Down Church from Peter Neilson**

Hello to all my friends in Crail and St Ayle.

It is Palm Sunday and the beginning of Holy Week. Many of us will miss the Holy Week services and times of quiet meditation. Along with this guide to worship for today, I am sending round a focus for reflection to be used during the week, called “**A Centrepiece for Holy Week**”. It is like an Advent wreath in reverse. The week begins with five candles, and each day one is extinguished until they are all out by Friday. On Easter Sunday you light them all again to mark the Resurrection. There is more to it than that, as you will see for those who want to use it.

For those who will miss meeting on Good Friday, I suggest that we take time to read the Passion Narrative on one of the Gospels. (Mathew 27; Mark 15; Luke 22:56 – 23:56; John 18:28-19:42). Read slowly. Sit quietly. Let that ancient story merge with the story we are living through, and listen for the Spirit’s word for this unique time.

My suggestion is that on Sunday mornings, at the time we would normally be at worship, set aside 15-20 minutes to “drink from our own well”, as we travel together through the familiar movement of worship.

You might want to have your Bible and hymnbook to hand. I have not recommended hymns, but you may want to read, sing or listen to appropriate hymns, songs or music that are important for you.

What follows is in the familiar shape of morning worship.

**Gathering into the Presence of God**

**Listening for God’s Word**

**Reflecting on God’s Word**

**Responding to God’s Word and God’s Spirit**

**A Meditation before we Go**

**A Blessing**

Use it all at a sitting, or select what is helpful for the moment. Hold on to what will sustain you through the week. My hope is that this takes us all deeper into God as we worship “alone together.”

**Gathering into the Presence of God**

*Sit quietly. Light a Candle. Listen to some music.*

***Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.***

Hosanna to the Son of David.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Make way, make way for Christ the King

Make way, make way, and let his Kingdom in.

And those who mourn with heavy hearts

Who weep and sigh

With laughter, joy and royal crown

He’ll beautify.

Make way, make way for Christ the King

Make way, make way, and let his Kingdom in.

Come, Lord Jesus, and take centre stage in our imaginations.

Our hearts and minds have been colonised by images of death,

Let the sight of joyful palm branches, sweep away the pall of gloom.

“The joy of the Lord shall be your strength.”

Come, Lord Jesus, and take your place as our gentle King.

Our hearts and minds are teeming with statistics of a stealthy enemy

Let your entry into Jerusalem speak of a deeper victory, quietly won.

“Take heart! I have overcome the world!”

Come Lord Jesus, and enter our cities and villages across the nation.

Our hearts and minds are overloaded with unanswered questions.

Let the questioning of the crowds awaken in us a deeper yearning for God.

“”See you King comes to you!”

Amen, let it be.

**Listening for God’s Word**

A Psalm of Celebration - Psalm 118

*Try reading this Psalm aloud. It would be sung with cantor and chorus. Catch the rhythm and repetitions which were the Hebrew equivalent of rhyming in English poetry – a form of emphasis.*

*Linger on the opening and closing words.*

“Give thanks to the Lord for he is good;

His love endures forever.”

“In order to travel light along the path of our inner journey, we do not have to devour more and more books; we only have to continually reflect on the few lines of truth that nourish the heart, and to put that wisdom into practice.” [“Travelling Light”, Daniel O’Leary]

Crowds welcome Jesus into Jerusalem - Matthew 21:1-17

**Reflecting on God’s Word**

*See your king comes to you*

*Gentle, and riding on a donkey.(5)*

I wonder if I appreciate that God is like this Jesus, and there nothing un-Jesus-like about God.

I wonder if I need to trust and reflect the gentleness of our God at this time.

I wonder......

I wonder if the Palm Sunday crowds got the political message: in the face of the hubris and arrogance of Rome, Jesus came in humility and gentleness.

I wonder if world leaders are getting the message: to let go the hubris of seeking power and control and to learn a new humility in seeking to care for the weakest and most vulnerable.

I wonder....

I wonder if all leaders need to learn from this gentle Leader of leaders, who had no need to parade his strength to satisfy his ego.

I wonder if our politics will take on a gentler tone, seeing gentleness not as weakness, but strength tamed and harnessed to let others flourish.

I wonder......

*He overturned the tables of the money changers (12)*

I wonder what the economic impact was of that outburst against greed, exploitation and manipulation of the market.

I wonder if God is cleansing our society of its greed and all-consuming consumerism, and calling us to a new simplicity, and more equitable community.

I wonder....

*My house shall be called a house of prayer. (*13) (“for all nations” – see Isaiah 56:7; Mark 11:13)

I wonder if God is clearing our churches of the clutter, and bringing us back to the centre – to be a house of prayer, learning to be with God and to cry for his Kingdom to come as “creation healed”.

I wonder if God is lifting us out of ourselves to pray for nations beyond our own, not least Africa and India without our health care facilities

I wonder......

I wonder what you wondering as you recall this familiar story in these unfamiliar times......

**Responding to God’s Word and God’s Spirit**

*The blind and the lame come to him at the temple and he healed them. (14)*

Healing Lord,

Relieve the suffering of those affected by this virus – near and far, directly and indirectly;

Give wisdom and stamina to the medical teams and care workers;

Guide the public health advisers on strategy and resourcing the frontline folks.

*Jesus, stand among them, with your healing power.*

Listening Lord,

Hear the cries of those fearful of losing work and livelihoods

Listen to those whose finances are meagre and whose debts are looming.

Watch over those whose businesses are crumbling before their eyes.

*Jesus, stand among them, with your listening ear.*

Gentle Lord,

Comfort the bereaved, who have been deprived of their comforters;

Uphold the anxious and depressed, who fear isolation;

Watch over families, who feel the tensions of living too close for too long.

*Jesus, stand among them, with your word of calm.*

Courageous Lord,

As you faced your last days with courage, be with those whose last days are near.

As you entered the darkness of the Cross, be with us all in the dark days to come.

As you disarmed the forces of darkness on the Cross, be for us the One who cuts off this evil disease.

*Jesus, stand among us* .....*stand with us......That is enough. AMEN*

**A Prayer of St Aidan of Lindisfarne**

Leave me alone with God

as much as may be.

As the tide draws the waters

close in upon the shore,

make me an island,

set apart,

alone with you, God,

holy to you.

Then with the turning of the tide

prepare me to carry your presence

to the busy world beyond,

the world that rushes in on me

till the waters come again

and fold me back to you.

**Blessing**

*Imagine saying this blessing with and for our friends in church and community.*

And now may the peace of God that passes all understanding

keep our hearts and our minds

in the knowledge and in the love of God

and of his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

And the blessing of God Almighty,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit

be with us all

now and always.

AMEN