**The Parishes of Crail and St Ayle .**

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

**Easter Sunday**

Happy Easter to all my friends in Crail and St Ayle!

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

Welcome to worship on this Easter morning. Please make sure you have a bible and a hymnbook and some means of listening to your favourite music. On this day of all days, you will want to play some music to lift your soul in praise to the Lord of life, who has conquered death.

**Gathering into the Presence of God**

*Light the five candles of Holy Week as a sign that the Light of Christ has overcome the darkness*

*Sit quietly. Listen to (or sing) a favourite Easter hymn.*

Jesus Christ is Risen today. Alleluia!

Our triumphant holy day. Alleluia!

Who did once upon the Cross. Alleluia!

Suffer to redeem our loss. Alleluia!

Say out loud.

*Christ is Risen!*

*He is risen indeed*!

How does our traditional Easter greeting sound in this time of national crisis?

Is this happy optimism?

Is this defiant hope?
Is this a protest of joy?

If it was true last Easter, it is no less true this Easter.

If it is true at the graveside of a friend, it is no less true in the face of many deaths.

If it is true, it is no less true when we are tempted to doubt it.

Say it again.

*Christ is Risen!*

*He is Risen indeed!*

It was true when the first Christians faced persecution and martyrdom.

It was true when Christians through the centuries faced hardship and plagues.

It was true when nations were in the midst of war and economic depression.

Say it again.

*Christ is Risen!*

*He is risen indeed!*

However....

This may be a time to say it differently.

This may be a time say it with awe and wonder.

This may be a time to say in hushed tones before the mystery of the moment.

Say it again in a whisper of amazement.

*Christ is Risen!*

*He is Risen indeed!*

*Hallelujah!*

**Listening for God’s Word**

Read the Gospel of Matthew 28:1-10

*Read this familiar passage aloud slowly.*

 *Notice any* ***word or phrase*** *that catches your attention.*

*Hold that word or phrase in silence.*

*Read the passage again aloud slowly.*

*Is there an* ***invitation*** *to you in these words?*

*Read the passage a third time slowly.*

*Turn the words and the invitation into a* ***prayer****.*

**Reflecting on God’s Word**

Read Revelation 1:9-18

 *Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One. I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever. And I hold the keys of death and Hades. (Rev 1:18)*

**A Personal Encounter**

60 years after that first Easter day, the Risen Jesus appears to the 90 year old apostle John who is in imposed “social isolation” on the island of Patmos. If Jesus can turn up there and then, he can turn up here and now! For he is alive *“for ever and ever*”! That includes 2020 in the passing!

Easter day is full of personal encounters as Jesus meets Mary to turn her grief into joy. He appears to the Twelve in the upper room to allay their fears with a greeting of peace. He walks incognito alongside the disillusioned couple on the Emmaus Road, and restores hope at their kitchen table.

Beyond Easter Day he turns up eight days later to settle the doubts and questions of Thomas. Peter has breakfast with him in Galilee. He teaches the apostles about the Kingdom of God for six weeks. Paul records that on one occasion Jesus appeared to 500 at one time. And then there was the startling conversion of Saul the persecutor on the road to Damascus, after having watched Stephen die declaring that he could see Jesus standing beside his Father in heaven.

Jesus keeps turning up because he is *“alive for ever and ever”.*

History records countless testimonies of people who have had encounters with the Risen Jesus – quietly, dramatically, in dreams, in inward heart warming, in a growing conviction beyond words.

Today, I pray that this Living Lord will stand over you as he did with John, place his hand on your shoulder and speak to you:

*Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last....*Covid-19 does not have the final say.

*I am the Living One. I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever......*Covid-19 is dealing out death in thousands, but Jesus is gathering them up into a greater life beyond all disease.

*And I hold the keys of death and Hades.....*Covid-19 cannot hold him in lock-down, because he holds the keys that unlock death itself.

**A Global Perspective**

In these days we need that personal Gospel for our reassurance, but we also need to know that the scope of the Gospel is greater than the scope of this pandemic. The resurrection of Jesus Christ has cosmic repercussions. The influence of Easter Day is bigger than we think.

The Risen Christ gives John a series of visions of history unfolding with all its chaos, disease and violence. The book of Revelation is not a crystal ball to read the future; rather it is a map setting out the recurring traumas of human history. Just as the retreating tide exposes the hidden rocks, so this “apocalypse” unveils the human story which fills the headlines of our newspapers daily.

This pandemic may be “unprecedented” within the short compass of our lifetimes, but it has been repeated many times over in the history of the world – and at times and places without the medical resources available to us. We are living through another chapter of the dysfunctional human family. It is a season for lament at the suffering, reflection and repentance for our many abuses of people and planet, and for a call for resistance to fight and overcome it for the good of us all.

The “unveiling” (= the Greek “apocalypse”) has another vital dimension – the unveiling of the resurrection power that pervades these visions. The influence of Easter Day resonates throughout all eternity. The scenarios of humanity’s troubled history are punctuated by seven scenes of glorious worship as the resurrected people of God gather around the throne of God and of his Christ.

On this Easter day – amidst our laments for the tragic deaths and disturbing unravelling of life as we have known it – we are invited to join our voices with those heavenly choirs in defiant praise of the One who *is the First and the Last, the Living one, who was dead and now is alive for ever and ever. Hallelujah!*

Shout it out loud, Or speak it in a hushed whisper of awed wonder.

Christ is Risen.

He is risen indeed!

Hallellujah!

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

*On this Easter Day pray for all those affected by the Covid-19*

*ill at home or in hospital*

*the bereaved and those deprived of a proper funeral*

*those working in the NHS and Social Care*

*the army of volunteers in foodbanks and food distribution*

*the afflicted countries beyond our own*

*those who are on our hearts.*

On this day of resurrection hope, we pray particularly for restorationof businesses and the recovery of our economy, and the global economy – perhaps with a rebalancing that reflects the lessons this time has taught us of generosity towards the weakest and our mutual interdependence.

Living Lord of life and death,

who walked with those whose dreams were shattered

and gave life-giving hope,

we pray for the businesses closed down

and people laid off from work

with no income and savings scant or non-existent.

Life-giving Lord,

“Give us this day our daily bread”.

Provide for those who are scared

enough...enough to live without fear.

We pray for those who fear their livelihoods

will not survive this crisis;

give them the resurrection resilience

to be resourceful in finding new ways of providing.

We remember our local businesses

our farmers and our fishermen known to us....

We pray for banks and lenders

for a new open-handedness

so that the systems of support

may flow freely and without hindrance.

May the power of Your resurrection

be felt transforming our economies

to systems of fairness and justice

where all have the chance to flourish

with life in all its fullness.

In the name of Jesus, Lord of Lord and King of Kings, we pray. AMEN

**A Meditation before we Go**

Christ, as a light

illumine and guide me.

Christ, as a shield

overshadow me.

Christ under me;

Christ over me;

Christ beside me

on my left and on my right.

This day be within and without me,

lowly and meek, yet all powerful.

Be in the heart of each to whom I speak;

in the mouth of each who speaks to me.

This day be within and without me,

lowly and meek yet all powerful.

Christ as a light;

Christ as a shield;

Christ beside me

on my left and on my right.

*[St Patrick’sBreastplate, Northumbrian Community Morning Prayer]*

**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 Living Lord.

And the blessing of God Almighty,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit

be with us all

now and always.

AMEN