



Val's Voice

For a year now, we have been away from each other. For a year we have missed friendship in its old shape – seeing each other in person. Seeing each other without a mask obscuring who we are. For a year many of us

have missed gathering in our church, our building, as God's people.

It has been a strange year, and though I speak of it in the past, we are also aware that this time of strangeness is not over. We still are living odd lives, in a sense. Solitary. More fearful than usual.

And yet this week, this Holy Week also comes. This is a time when we are reminded that Christ, - though in the form of God did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, something to be taken advantage of - came and lived among us. Whatever our frailties and failings, the sicknesses of virus or violence, Christ made himself available.

Jesus was born a little child. He no doubt had chubby little hands as he grew, and mischievous moments, like all little kids – part of being human! He wandered off at the age of 12, we are told, to debate with elders. Through the years of his ministry, he challenged the status quo, healed the sick, fed the hungry, spoke of God and meaning to those with power and those without. And now, this week, those with power seek to take back their power.

In the Empire, which was from Rome, challenge was not taken lightly, and Jesus had challenged it too many times. Among his own people, as well, disagreements between those from here and there, those from within this group and that, were magnified until disagreement and intrigue took centre stage.

In our world, too, hatred and violence have been amplified. People with power, it seems, seek too much of the time to keep it – to the detriment of those without.

In a way, we know Holy Week is the story of how the powers won... abusing and mocking Jesus; but

of course not just him, countless others in that time and since. The powers do win – too often.

But we are reminded in Holy Week also of the holiness which is from God. The holiness, which breathes over all creation. The Spirit which inspires God's people to speak up for those in need. Jesus' life which could not be kept down by the violence of his time. The failings of Jesus' friends and followers to understand was met with forgiveness – forgiveness from Jesus himself, and from God.

There are so many ways to fail, but in this week of all others, we are reminded that Jesus, who lived his life and gave his life, did so for the good of all the world. He did so with the intent that all God's beloved children, all of Jesus' beloved brothers and sisters, would have a chance.



In the midst of our games of power and race and wealth, naming people as able or disabled, old or young, Jesus' intent this week is to make it all new. A new creation, breathing with hope and love, breathing the joy of heaven on earth, the joy of humanity living as God intended, and forgiveness and healing given in abundance...

So as we hear the struggle of this week, whether in Jesus' time or our own, remember and wait also for the joy of God's gift... life which rises always beyond what would keep it down... life which rises in our hearts and minds, life which rises beyond winter and hate, life which rises when we need it at the depth of our being. At the end of this holy week we hear of that life: "Christ is risen! He is risen indeed."

Blessings to each of you in your lives and spirits. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

Val

Vestry Notes from March 23, 2021

We will be **joining our sister parishes** of St. Mark's and St Bart's for worship on Zoom for Maundy Thursday. There will be shared leadership from each of our parishes. It will be good to be together!

Our **Easter Offering** will be split several ways this year. With one third, we will assist *Grow Hope*, PWRDF's contribution to the Foodgrains Bank, and contribute to the food bank in Puerto Vallarta where Rev. Bob Webster is serving. (Mexico seems far removed, but imagine the people out of work in that resort area who are usually sustained by tourism). The remaining two-thirds of our offering will be used to cover parish expenses.

Vestry decided to **hold off on in-person worship** at this time. Although we realize that government regulations have loosened and in-person worship is possible, we feel that at this time as we wait for increased vaccination appointments and wonder what will happen with variants, it is perhaps prudent to hold off for now. We will speak again at Vestry in April.

Our parish has begun **celebrating Eucharist together online**. Once we move into April, we will aim to share at the Lord's Table on the first and third Sundays of every month. Vestry members and Worship Committee members have heard from parishioners how much they appreciate being able to receive Eucharist in this way. With bread prepared in each person's home, we are able to recognize Christ's presence with us in our homes and lives, and recognize that we offer what we have to Christ for his meal.

Over the last several months, the **Refugee Ministry** of our parish has taken a bit of a hiatus, after a busy year in 2020. But although breaks are good, the need has not decreased! Thankfully, Bryan Bjerring has taken on the task of working to pull together terms of reference for a renewed parish Refugee Ministry committee. With the wisdom of Marlene, who is now doing volunteer Refugee Support for the Diocese, and Qaiser, who with ACF has done so much work in recent years, the committee is re-forming. New Vestry members Ifey Echezona and Irene Puloski have offered to join Bryan in this work, and others have promised their time once we are into the fall.

On Sunday, May 2, **Primate Linda Nicholls will be joining us on Zoom for worship!** She offered her online presence in any parishes that wished to invite her. She will be preaching that evening – a gift, we are sure!

The Pastoral Care committee and Vestry are **providing simple bouquets to some parishioners** who haven't been able to be very involved this year. There will be about 20 deliveries of flowers in and around Holy Week and Easter – helping to connect all in our parish, even during these times. If you would like help cover the costs, you can make a special offering marked "Flowers." The faithfulness of all of our parish is appreciated! The deliveries will, of course, follow health guidelines: a simple drop-off and a brief chat at the door, if it works.

Holy Week schedule

Maundy Thursday: April 1st, 7 pm on Zoom

Good Friday: April 2nd, 10:30 am on Zoom

Easter Sunday: April 4th

- Morning Worship
(prerecorded and available all day on stmarymagdalenenewpg.org)
- Evening Worship 7 pm on Zoom



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