



The Right Revd Ian Paton
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3 April 2020

Dear Sisters and brothers,

Year by year we celebrate Holy Week and Easter in different circumstances - our lives are different, the church is different, the world is different. This year's Easter is very different indeed. But the pandemic, the death and suffering it is inflicting on so many, and the isolation and we are all having to keep, makes the message of Easter more not less relevant. That message is the good news that our God always brings life out of death. We're called to proclaim that Gospel, to be witnesses to the Resurrection.

Churches across the world are asking how we can share the symbols and message Easter when we can't gather. I'm very encouraged by the way that you, our clergy and members are giving answers to that question. The CMD resource page for Holy Week attached here, edited by Dr Michael Paterson (thank you, Michael), gathers thoughts and suggestions from around the Diocese and from the wider Church. It's a great way for us to share ideas and find new ones.

Alongside what each charge is trying to provide, the Province will continue to offer online Eucharistic worship on Sundays at 11.00am, also viewable at other times for people to participate in as they are able. In Holy Week worship for Maundy Thursday and Good Friday will also be offered. As part of that, I have been asked to provide the Eucharist for Maundy Thursday (from our home), and for Easter Day (from the Cathedral). Details and links will be available on the SEC website.

The pandemic is bringing loss and suffering in so many ways. There have been glimpses of light in the darkness: the recovery of wildlife and the environment in some places; greater appreciation of those who work in health care or essential services; people getting to know their neighbours and helping each other. For Christians, one such glimpse may be the renewal of Christian worship at home. Unlike Judaism, which has never lost this at Passover and the other festivals celebrated in the home, we have often confined our celebrations to the church. But now we have to help people as they bring Holy Week and Easter to life at home. Hanging a branch on the door on Palm Sunday, having an 'agape' celebratory meal on Maundy Thursday, fasting on Good Friday, lighting a fire or a candle and blessing each other with water on Easter Day - these are simple rituals that say 'Christ is risen.' Things like this would help us to re-connect the greatest festival of all with our homes, and with the world of the pandemic.

Anyone looking at our charges' internet posts or receiving their newsletters, can see the creative energy that you are putting into providing worship every Sunday, and also for Holy Week and Easter. As one of our clergy or lay ministers, please accept my thanks to you for all the work you are doing towards this, and to the pastoral care of your congregations.

I hope you will also care for yourself and your colleagues, and for those you live with. Not only that you will stay well and safe, but because it would be too easy for any of us to 'burn out,' long before the situation changes and the emergency is over. Just because public worship and meetings have been suspended does not mean that our ministry is less intense, indeed it is more so. We have to look after vulnerable people in our communities; we have to keep our congregations informed and involved; we have to check on the safety of our buildings; we may increasingly have to conduct funerals and support grieving families (a shortened form of the SEC Funeral Rites from the Liturgy Committee is attached to this). We need the supportive disciplines of prayer we have developed over the years, we need to stay in touch with our spiritual directors and colleagues, we need to accept the love and care of family and friends; we have to '*stir up the gift that has been placed in us.*'

The annual Chrism Eucharist is a moment in we 'stir up' that gift. Because we are not able to celebrate that service on Maundy Thursday this year, I will be inviting you to a special Chrism Eucharist later in the year, at which new Oils will be consecrated. But **on Maundy Thursday itself I am inviting you, all the clergy and lay readers of the Diocese, to join with me at 11.00am (via Zoom if possible) to re-affirm our Ordination and Licensing commitments, and to ask for God's continued blessing on our ministries.** Please let Carol know (bishopsec@standrews.anglican.org) If you can join us. If you are not already signed up to Zoom, Carol will give you information on how to do this (easy and no cost).

I would like to do everything I can do to support and help you. Please don't hesitate to get in touch any time, it would be good to hear from you.

With blessings for a prayerful Holy Week and a joyful Easter,

Bishop Ian