

The Christian Community

Movement for Religious Renewal

Hollywood Congregation

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Newsletter for the week of Sunday 24th January.

Dear friends,

Earlier this month the leaders of four of our main church denominations met with Stormont's junior ministers to discuss the position of places of worship during the current lockdown.

They decided to cease public worship until at least early in February and only remain open for individual prayer. Most churches have anyway been streaming their services online since many months so it was not such a big step for them to come to this voluntary agreement.

Some of the smaller denominations have decided to go along with it but by no means all.

But the legislation re. places of worship for this new period of lockdown hasn't changed.

On the NI Direct website it says that you are still allowed to leave your home to attend a place of worship. Having services online is not an option for us so we have to make our own decision.

We will carefully monitor the situation over the coming weeks but as of today the Covid 19 rate in the North Down area are still the lowest in Northern Ireland and all over Northern Ireland the rate of infection is slowing down, so I feel that as long as we are very careful and keep to the regulations re face coverings and distancing we can continue with our services in Holywood .

Everyone will need to be extra aware that if you have any kind of symptoms of cough, cold or temperature or if you have been in contact with anyone who is ill you should not come.

And of course, if you do not feel safe then there is always the option of the quieter service on Thursdays or to accompany us in spirit from your home.

The situation is different in the Camphill communities. In Mourne Grange we continue with our service and because they have now all received the second dose of the vaccine they will soon be able to relax their precautions. Whereas Clanabogan and Ballybay are both in areas where transmission rates are still high and they have not had their vaccinations yet so we have cancelled our services there until things get better.

Please get in touch if you have any questions or concerns.

Ben van Lieshout

Hollywood

For Sunday services, please ring (02890424254), text (07974960570) or email (benvl@onetel.com) to book a place as we can only seat 11-13 people.

Epiphany

Thursday 21 st January	The Act of Consecration of Man	10.00
Sunday 24th January	The Act of Consecration of Man Followed by the next of a series of short talks on The Act of Consecration of Man as a path; "Transsubstantiation" (part 1)	
Thursday 28 th January	The Act of Consecration of Man	10.00

Mourne Grange (in Dawn Hall !)

Saturday 23 rd January	The Act of Consecration of Man (Memorial service for Martin Abraham)	9.30
	The Act of Consecration of Man	11.00

The gospel reading for the 3rd Epiphany Sunday, January 24 is John 2, 1-11



On the third day a wedding took place in Cana in Galilee and the mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding.

When the wine ran out, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

And Jesus answered her, "Something still weaves between me and you, o Woman. The hour when I can work out of myself alone has not yet come."

Then his mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

There were six stone jars set up there for the Jewish custom of ceremonial washing, each containing twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with fresh water."

And they filled them to the brim. And he said, "Now draw some out and take it to the Master of the feast. And they brought it to him.

Now when the Master of the feast tasted the water that had become wine, not knowing where it came from—for only the servants who had drawn the water knew—he called the bridegroom aside and said to him,

"Everyone serves the choice wine first, and when the guests have drunk, then the lesser; but you have saved the best until now."

This, the beginning of the signs of the spirit which Jesus performed among men happened at Cana in Galilee and revealed the creating spiritual power that worked through Him. The disciples' hearts opened, the power of faith began to stir in them, and they began to trust in him.



A homily on John 2: 1-11

At the first tender beginnings of spring, new buds break out on old trees; new shoots spring from old bulbs; new plants break forth from old seeds. The new erupts on the basis of what went before.

The Gospel reading is full of signs of spring.

A wedding's promise of new life; fresh water drawn from Mother Earth; vital forces newly arising in Jesus from Christ's indwelling.

These new forces are yet tender – the time of His full flowering yet to come. And so to His power, the mother of his soul adds her support, her love, her concern and compassion.

Their working together creates an effervescence which enlivens all who taste it.

In the Act of Consecration of Man we can experience at any time a new tender spring-like effervescence. Waters drawn up from deep in Mother Earth by the grapevine, ripened in the sun, create grape juice.

Our souls help to mother a transformation by adding the offering of the best of ourselves into the water and juice. Christ's offering of Himself, his forces, into our offering creates a new substance.

It becomes Christ-wine. It is medicine for our blood, darkened by egotism; strength for our spirits in learning to love. The Christ-wine brightens our blood. It gives fresh vitality to our spirits. Strength and joy rise.

Wise words for difficult times; Fra Giovanni said in 1513:

Life is so generous a giver, but we, judging its gifts by their covering, cast them away as ugly or heavy or hard.

Remove the covering, and you will find beneath it a living splendour, woven of love, by wisdom, with power.

Welcome it, grasp it, and you touch the Angel's hand that brings it to you.

Everything we call a trial, a sorrow, or a duty: believe me, that angel's hand is there; the gift is there, and the wonder of an overshadowing Presence.

Our joys, too: be not content with them as joys, they too conceal diviner gifts.

Life is so full of meaning and of purpose, so full of beauty—beneath its covering—that you will find that earth but cloaks your heaven.

Courage, then to claim it: that is all!

But courage you have; and the knowledge that we are pilgrims together, wending through unknown country, home.

And so, I greet you; not quite as the world sends greetings, but with profound esteem, and with the prayer that for you, now and forever, the day breaks and the shadows flee away.