

The Christian Community

Movement for Religious Renewal

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NEWSLETTER

Passiontide to Easter 2020

The days and nights of the holy Christmas time can offer us hints and impulses concerning what the coming year might bring. This need not only concern the dreams we dream at this time or the weather that is said to foreshadow the next 52 weeks, but can help form our Programme. A number of themes emerged this year that we would like to work with in the coming months, among them a wish to speak more about Communion and an interest in exploring that part of the Act of Consecration of Man (the end of the Offertory) where inserted prayers at Christmas and St John`s appear and where something profound happens in the Ordination Service.

The first theme we shall turn to, however, will be the question of the Resurrection Body of Christ at Easter. The Gospels reveal to us that in the 40 days the Risen One could both enter a locked room yet also be touched by Thomas; His new form was neither pure spirit nor human flesh and bone. What was it? Our mini-Conference at the start of May (1st to 3rd) will deepen this question.

It was wonderful to have a substantial group gathering throughout the Holy Days and Nights to celebrate the daily services and work at our theme of Spaces of Worship. The daily coming-together helped us realise the power and encouragement of living community. We are not a *life-sharing* community in the sense of “living and working together”, but there is a *life we share*. That life springs from the altar and is both nurtured and prepared for in our individual daily activities: conscious work, home-making, prayer, striving to be better people of good will.

Each individual found ways of drawing in the Christmas grace that flows every year between 25 December and 6 January; we did this to a lesser or greater extent wherever we were: perhaps through reading certain texts, walking in nature, meeting with friends to share and sing carols, perhaps through rest and sleepful nights. And then the opportunity to begin the new day at the church warmed the soul: greeting fellow-congregants in the entrance hall, sitting silently before the lighting of the candles as we beheld the Christmas altar, hearing the words and receiving grace-filled communion from heaven; and then social time afterwards, carol-singing and eurythmy, and the spirit-imbued conversations. It was like coming home! Or being on holi-day - on those holy-days!

We can be grateful that, unlike most in Edinburgh, we had the awareness that we could experience Christmas for 12 days. Thank you to all who supported this time and were present: it was a spiritual deed.

Peter Holman

On the Programme

Our Annual Congregation meeting on 23 February will be a chance to look back over an eventful year as well as forward. Among other items up for conversation will be an update on the building process.

A year ago, Sophie Boyd, who has studied music and especially singing in some depth and has done some remarkable work with different groups in Glasgow, presented an evening about singing and breathing, which made a big impression on the audience. Sophie has worked since then on new aspects of the value of singing and will return on Friday 28 February. In exploring the impacts of community singing on wellbeing and social health she will open our souls to the value and benefit of this creative gift we all have.

In preparing for the Easter theme of the Resurrection Body, the talk on 1 March will introduce some fascinating insights into who Christ was speaking about when he referred to the “Son of Man” and how some surprising answers can give us an inkling of what it was that happened at the first Easter.

We are delighted that the Polwarth String Quintet will return on 29 March to share more music with us, following their lovely concert at the end of November.

This year in Holy Week after the daily Service we will consider the character and quality of each day in connection with the different levels of consciousness that mankind has gone through.

See the Programme for more details, and please note that there will only be a short refreshment break before we start the conversation at 11am.

Last year the simple Silent Supper on Maundy Thursday evening was a special event. We will repeat it this year, and please do let Peter know if you intend to partake, as this will greatly help the preparers.

The Good Friday evening service with various contemplations or lay sermons is an exploration of something that was done many years ago in Stourbridge.

Easter Sunday will be extra joyful this year as we will be celebrating a marriage sacrament. Lisa and Sean will tie the knot, or rather the sticks, at noon and there will hopefully be many who can stay on to share this special event. It is not only an event of significance for the couple and the congregation, but is ultimately “for the good and happiness of all mankind”.

Finally, also at Easter time, on the second Sunday, April 19, we will have the first Confirmation service for some years here in Edinburgh. Although there are likely to be several families present for the young people (and our chapel is not yet huge!), we encourage good support for this event, too, from our regular congregation. It is a beautiful and moving service. In connection with this, do attend the talk if you possibly can, that Tom will give on the evening before. It will be a good basis to better understand what takes place in the Confirmation Service - even if you can't actually attend this year.

Peter Holman