

The Christian Community

Movement for Religious Renewal

Hollywood Congregation

Rev Ben van Lieshout
3 Stewarts Place
Holywood, Co Down
BT18 9DX
90424254
07974960570
benvl@onetel.com

Newsletter for Easter Sunday, 4 April

Dear friends,

As we are approaching Easter we can be full of hope that we are well on the way towards better times.

Infection rates for Covid are much reduced and more importantly there are now very few people getting seriously ill and needing to be hospitalised, especially among those who have been vaccinated.

In our congregation there are now also more and more of us who are protected and therefore unlikely to carry the virus or pass it on.

Our government is taking a very cautious approach to the lifting of restrictions but the current regulations leave us relatively free to chart our own course out of this pandemic.

Most churches have been closed since Christmas but that was by voluntary arrangement.

Now they are opening up in Holy week so for us in Holywood this can also be a time to take a look at our risk assessment and make some changes.

For the time being we will have to continue wearing masks when moving around and for the foreseeable future we will also have to continue with limited numbers.

Singing is still not recommended in the guidelines but on Easter we will start to sing again.

Then there is the question of Communion, we need to balance our deep conviction that the sacrament offers us healing on the most fundamental level with the fact that the laws of the material world are not completely suspended when we approach the altar.

But we are emerging from this crisis. I am about to receive the 2nd vaccination, so there is much less likelihood of my spreading the virus, even if I were to become infected and its like that for many of us. So after Easter I will start to share out communion again during the Thursday morning service when we are fewer in number.

No-one should feel under any pressure either to come forward or to stay seated and accompany the process inwardly: this is a personal decision for each of us to take as individuals.

According to the guidelines we will also be allowed to have other events taking place on our premises as long as we comply with distancing guidelines.

On Easter Sunday we will again have a children's service, the first one since Christmas and a little Easter festival.

Our community room is again open for study groups and other activities (up to 12 people).

But we will have to wait with having refreshments; maybe we start with those when the hospitality sector opens up.

In the Camphill communities we are also moving forward, in Mourne Grange we eventually hope to move back from the Hall to the chapel and in Clanabogan we are having our first services since Christmas time.

This will mean that Holywood will now return to having fortnightly Sunday services.

But we will continue with the Thursday service so that everyone still has a chance to attend.

And when Glencraig feels ready to have regular services again on Thursdays we may need to move the mid-week service for Holywood to the Wednesday.

I hope that those of you who have been staying at home over the past few months will also feel confident to join us again soon.

Meanwhile, please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Ben van Lieshout

The gospel for Easter Sunday is Mark 16: 1-18

And when the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint Him. And very early on the first day of the week, they went to the tomb just as the sun was rising. And they said to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the door of the tomb?”

And looking up, they saw that the stone was rolled back—and it was very large. And they went into the tomb. There they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clad in a white robe; and they were beside themselves with amazement.

And he said to them, “Do not be startled; you seek Jesus of Nazareth the Crucified One. He is risen; He is not here; see, there is the place where they laid his body. But go, and say to his disciples and Peter “He will lead you to Galilee. There you will see Him as He promised you.”

And they went out and fled from the tomb in great haste, for trembling and astonishment had come upon them; and being awestruck, they were unable to say anything to anyone about what they had experienced.

When He had risen early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene from whom He had driven out seven demons. And she went and told those who had walked with Him, as they mourned and wept. But when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, their hearts could not grasp it.

After this He appeared in another form to two of them on the way as they were walking over the fields. And they went back and told the rest, but they could not open their hearts to their words either.

Afterwards He appeared to the eleven themselves as they were celebrating the meal. He reproached them for their lack of openness and for their hardness of heart, because they had not wanted to believe those who had seen Him, the Risen One.

And He said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the new message from the realm of the angels to the whole of creation. Whoever unites his heart with it and is immersed in me will attain the salvation. But whoever closes himself against it does not let the power of selflessness into his heart will meet his downfall.

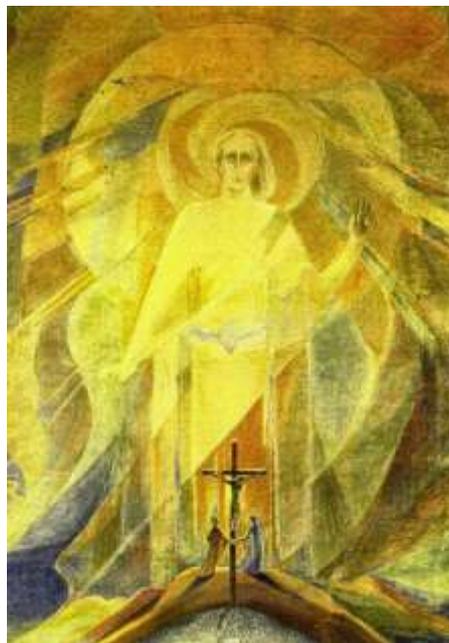
And spiritual powers will stand by those who unite themselves with it and will attend their path: Through the power of my being they will drive out demons; they will speak a new language; serpents they will make upright, and poisons they are given to drink will not harm them.

They will lay their hands on the sick, and give healing forces to them.

A homily on Mark 16: 1-18

The heart is a house with many chambers and many doors. With each beat, doors open and doors close, letting in enlivened blood from the breath, and sending the spent to be renewed. Our heart is also the place where our souls and spirits reside. And the soul's chambers also have doors.

Three days after his death, Christ appears in various unfamiliar ways to those who love Him. To the women at the tomb, He is a young man in white; to Mary Magdalene He seems to be a gardener until He calls her by name. The two on the way to Emmaus don't recognize Him until He breaks bread. 'Did our hearts not burn within us as he was speaking?' they say. Yet even some of his devoted followers cannot open the soul door of their hearts to the possibility that He lives. When finally they all experience Him together, He chides them for their close-heartedness.



Collot d'Herbois

Christ is the being of Love. He says to them, to us—whoever unites his heart with the new message of Life, whoever is immersed in Me, in Love, will be healed of the rift between God and the human.

Our hearts are the key. They are the place where Love would dwell. The Sunday Service for the Children says that although Christ died, He, Love, becomes alive in the hearts of those who make room for Him there.

Every Easter His love is renewed in us. His warmth changes our heartbeat into rejoicing, healing power. 'See', He says, 'Here I am. I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come in and share the holy meal with them and they with me.' (Rev 3:20) So rejoice and open your heart.

Easter, by Adam Bittleston

By His strong thought forgetfulness of God,

By His strong love the hatred of good,

By His pure life the bitterness of death,

Are overcome in depths of earth.

Time is no longer empty, through His deed;

In our heart's beat His living grace awakes;

Into our house the Easter air is breathed

With joy that heals our blood.

Thou makest new our being that from God

Has made the long descent into the dark;

And as immortal brother Thou hast joined

The sojourners of earth.