

# Cupar Old Parish Church

*Where Everyone Matters*

## **Newsletter 22 April 2022**

Dear Friends:

I especially invite you to a time of prayer in the lounge of the parish centre this Saturday, from 10:00 until 11:00am. We will set ourselves into God's care as we prepare for the changes that may be in store for us in our church and community.

Please note that this is not a time for questions and discussion, but one of prayer. But you are always welcome to give me a call if you would like to talk about the presbytery plan. Through all of this, the elders and I will work to keep you informed as best we can.

Part of our prayer time on Saturday will be thanksgiving to God for God's continuing faithfulness to us. Although we have concerns for ourselves and for the world, we trust that God is faithful, and God has good things in store for us and for all of creation.

Warm regards,  
Jeff

### **From Our Prayer Team**

Janice: [janice.geddes2@btinternet.com](mailto:janice.geddes2@btinternet.com)

Thousands of people have been affected by flooding and landslides after a powerful storm hit the Philippines on 10 April. Homes, crops and vital infrastructure, such as power lines, have been destroyed. Please pray for comfort for those whose loved ones have been killed or who are missing.

Please continue to pray for the people of Ukraine as we see and hear weekly of the horror and destruction there.

The prayer group continues to meet weekly through Zoom. If you would like to join us, or have a prayer request, or would like a member of the team to pray with you then please contact either Jeff Martin or Janice Geddes.

### **23 April: Prayer Time**

Jeff: [jmartin@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:jmartin@churchofscotland.org.uk)

Everyone is welcome for a service of prayer beginning at 10:00am in the lounge of the Old Parish Centre. We have invited our sisters and brothers from the cluster churches to join us as well, as we pray for God's guidance and support in the future of our churches.

### **24 April: Worship**

Please join us for gathered worship in the sanctuary at 11:00am or the parish hall at 4:00pm. Sunday Club takes place in the afternoon, after an opening time of worship for all ages. This week our focus is on 'doubting' Thomas, and the reading is from John 20: 19-31.

You may also view a recording of the morning service after it has been uploaded in the afternoon to our YouTube channel:

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdOxFrZ\\_kg94DYogyIFAVEQ](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdOxFrZ_kg94DYogyIFAVEQ)

### **27 April: Coffee and Chat**

Jill: 07929 444 246

Please come along for a warm and welcoming time of fellowship in the lounge of the Old Parish Centre each Wednesday from 10:00 to 11:15am. It's a great time to be together with friends and to make new friends. It's for everyone, so come along, and invite a friend!

### **Reflection from Peter Meager**

Peter: [meager52@btinternet.com](mailto:meager52@btinternet.com)

I recently learned a new word, 'Saffronisation.' This describes an Indian political movement which 'attempts to glorify Hindu contributions to Indian history while undermining other contributions.' (Wikipedia). The word cropped up during a monthly prayer time on Zoom with Indian Military Christians. They explained that, although, on the surface it looks innocuous enough, the way it is being implemented in some states is causing big problems for Christians

who wish to share their faith with people who are searching for answers to the big questions of life. For example, it is now illegal to change your faith or encourage others to do so. The Gideons have been told they are now breaking the law when they give away portions of John's Gospel at the stalls they have traditionally set up in market places. These are some of the obstacles now facing Indian believers who are seen as a by-product of British colonisation of the continent.

William Carey, a Northampton shoemaker, is known as the Father of Modern Christian Missions. In 1793 he went to Calcutta and served there for the rest of his life setting up missions, translating the Bible into Bengali and encouraging many Indian Christians to share in the tasks of ministry. However, they weren't the first to take the Gospel to that vast country. Thomist Christians claim that the Apostle Thomas arrived on the Kerela Coast in 52 AD and was martyred near Madras twenty years later. Members of that tradition were still worshipping and following Jesus when the British arrived centuries later. So, an indigenous Christian Church has existed in India for almost 2,000 years. But, what of the man who founded it?

We meet him in the Gospel reading set for this Sunday, John 20:19-29. It tells us about an encounter he had with Jesus a week after Easter. He hadn't been there on Easter evening when Jesus first appeared to the other disciples in the locked upper room. When the other disciples told him they had seen Jesus, he was dismissive of their claims and was adamant that he would not believe unless he was able to put his finger into the nail holes in Jesus' hands and his hand into the spear wound in Jesus' side. Seven days have passed and the eleven are again gathered on the first day of the week. We are not told what conversations had flowed between them in the intervening days but now Jesus is standing there, right in front of Thomas and offers him the proof he has demanded. *'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side,' says Jesus (verse 27).*

Is what Jesus says next an invitation or a command? *'Stop doubting and believe.'* (verse 27). Thomas no longer needs the proof he demanded. On seeing Jesus with his own eyes and hearing his voice with his own ears, his doubts disappear and he replies, *'My Lord and my God.'* (verse 28).

It has been pointed out that the word, 'believe' can also mean 'trust.' Where 'believe' is more of the head – I believe something to be the case – 'trust' is more about the heart and relationships – 'because I trust you, I will do as you say. Jesus is inviting Thomas to trust him.

When Thomas says, 'My God,' he implies, 'I will praise, worship and adore you.' In saying 'My Lord,' he implies 'I acknowledge that you have the right to direct my life; I surrender the reins of my life into your hands; I will seek to walk in your ways all the days of my life, convinced that this is my highest calling.' Tradition suggests that this was what Thomas faithfully did.

There is something else in these verses. In particular at verse 29, Jesus assures you and me that we are truly blessed. He says, *'Blessed are those*

*who have not seen and yet have believed.'* We have the duty to think through our faith and ask questions of it. Indeed, our faith can only develop and mature when we continue to do so. But the reason for our doing so is not merely to satisfy our intellectual curiosity; it is that we might understand the breadth, height and depth of all that Jesus has done for us in his death and resurrection and then work out what an appropriate response will be for us.

The people of Ukraine will observe Easter this Sunday (In these circumstances, I hesitate to say they will 'celebrate'). It looks like they will be forced to endure their cross for some time to come. We pray that they may know some respite; that they may receive something of the resurrection hope; and that they, and all who walk through dark valleys, may be able to encounter Jesus there and trust him to walk with them until a new dawn breaks.

### **Song: Now the Green Blade Riseth**

The song I have chosen this week reflects on Jesus' words in John 12:24 where he foretells his death and says *'Listen carefully: Unless a grain of wheat is buried in the ground, dead to the world, it is never any more than a grain of wheat. But if it is buried, it sprouts and reproduces itself many times over. In the same way, anyone who holds on to life just as it is destroys that life. But if you let it go, reckless in your love, you'll have it forever, real and eternal.'* (The Message) It is set to a jaunty French carol tune, Noël Nouvelet.

<https://youtu.be/g-5Bi2jM40E>

Now the green blade riseth, from the buried grain,  
Wheat that in dark earth many days has lain;  
Love lives again, that with the dead has been:  
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.

In the grave they laid him, Love who had been slain,  
Thinking that he never would awake again,  
Laid in the earth like grain that sleeps unseen:  
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.

Forth he came at Easter, like the risen grain,  
Jesus who for three days in the grave had lain;  
Quick from the dead the risen One is seen:  
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.

When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain,  
Jesus' touch can call us back to life again,  
Fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been:  
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.

## **Prayer**

I begin with a meditative prayer based on the words of John 20:25 *“Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”* (It comes from **Worshipping God Together**, edited by Michael J Townsend; Epworth Press, as does the Blessing)

“Unless we meet angels at the empty tomb,  
we will go on searching for the living among the dead.  
Unless we have more than the witness of these women,  
we will see their story as mere nonsense.  
Unless I know where they have put my Lord’s body,  
I cannot mourn him.  
Unless he greets us with peace,  
we will go on being afraid.  
Unless he sits at our table and breaks bread with us,  
how will we recognise him?  
Unless there is room for our questions and doubts,  
unless God’s humanity meets ours,  
unless we see the hope that bears the wounds of the world,  
how can we say, ‘My Lord and my God’?”

Lord our God, you alone are worthy of our praise, our adoration and our service. We bow before you now acknowledging that we don’t deserve your love, nor are we worthy of the great sacrifice you made to open up the way to heaven for us and all who falteringly believe. As we confess the fragility of our belief, the frequency of our failings and the fallibility of our witness, we ask you to dispel our doubts, reimagine our thinking, sharpen our reasoning, clarify our vision and rekindle our commitment that we may walk in your ways, love as you love us and care as you care for all your children. Amen

## **A Blessing**

“With all your doubts, may you still find faith; with all your imperfections may God still be revealed in your life; as you grow older may you be renewed inwardly and, in good time, may God raise us all into his presence. Amen.”

## **Reading:** John 20:19-29

*On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you!’ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, ‘Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.’ And with that he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.’*

*Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, ‘We have seen the Lord!’ But he said to them, ‘Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and*

*put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.'*

*A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.' Thomas said to him, 'My Lord and my God!'*

*Then Jesus told him, 'Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'*

The donkey here is somewhat more elegant than the one depicted in Chesterton's poem. In the words, 'The Lord Needs It,' I see an allusion to all that we are and have that might be used in the Lord's service. One of the problems that has led the Church of Scotland to this crisis is a shortage of women and men who are committing themselves to ministry (full or part time) in any of its various guises. The picture caption here says, 'The Lord needs it,' and might we understand the addition of the word, 'Now'. Let everyone who is reading this piece ask themselves, 'Is the Lord saying to you, "I need it, now, whatever your unique gift is"?''

### **Song: Make Way, Make Way**

By Graham Kendrick

<https://youtu.be/tK6XuYhL7JI>

Make way, make way for Christ the King  
in splendour arrives.

Fling wide the gates and welcome him  
into your lives.

Make way! (Make way!)  
Make way! (Make way!)  
For the King of kings!  
(For the King of kings!)  
Make way! (Make way!)  
Make way! (Make way!)  
And let his kingdom in!

He comes the broken hearts to heal,  
the prisoners to free.  
The deaf shall hear, the lame shall dance,  
the blind shall see.

Make way...

And those who mourn with heavy hearts,  
who weep and sigh;  
with laughter, joy and royal crown  
he'll beautify.

May way...

We call you now to worship him  
as Lord of all.  
To have no other gods but him:  
their thrones must fall!

May way for the King of kings  
and let his kingdom in!

### **Bible Reading: Luke 19:28-40**

*After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, 'Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, "Why are you untying it?" say, "The Lord needs it."'*

*Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, 'Why are you untying the colt?' They replied, 'The Lord needs it.'*

*They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of*

*disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:*

*'Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!' 'Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!'*

*Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, 'Teacher, rebuke your disciples!' 'I tell you,' he replied, 'if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.'*

## **Prayer**

Lord our God, we prepare ourselves now to celebrate your triumphal entry into Jerusalem. We look forward to joining with the folk of our own congregation. We look forward to rejoicing in spirit with disciples from all over the world and in fellowship with the saints in heaven. Again we will welcome you as our King and Saviour who came to bear our sins in your own body on the cross and met with sin, pain and death and conquered them for us.

Lord, our hearts are heavy: because of the the continuing stream of heartbreaking news coming out of Ukraine; and locally because of the question mark that has been placed against our church's future. The crowd on the first Palm Sunday gave full voice to the cry, 'Hosanna,' 'Lord save now!' We join in prayer for others and for ourselves. We put ourselves in your hand and ask that we might be at the centre of your will.

Lord, as our hearts goes out to all who are hurting, we renew our vows to serve you and invite your love to enter our lives and rule them. May your Spirit of love and service penetrate the fibre of our beings so that we may be able to sing your praises not only when the sun shines brightly upon our way, but also when life casts long shadows across our backs. In those shadows may we feel the imprint of your cross, our symbol of victory, hope and power. For Jesus' sake. Amen