

GATHERING REGAINED AGAIN!

28th March 2021 Palm Sunday



**'HOSANNA IN THE
HIGHEST!'**

**WE CRY TO THE GREAT
HIGH PRIEST OF HUMILITY,
THE SERVANT KING, THE
LORD OF LORDS, OUR
SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST!**

READINGS:

PHILIPPIANS

CH2 V1-11

CHRIST'S HUMILITY

EXODUS CH39 V1

**PRIESTLY
GARMENTS**



PRAYERS

*'Humble and riding on a donkey, we greet you;
Acclaimed by crowds and caroled by children, we cheer you;
Moving from the peace of the countryside to the corridors
of power, We salute you: Christ our Lord.*

*You are giving the beast of burden a new dignity;
you are giving majesty a new face;*

*you are giving those who long for redemption: A new song
to sing.*

*With them, with heart and voice, we shout: Hosanna! Blessed is
the one who comes in the name of the Lord!'*

◆ Take a moment to pray for all those affected by coronavirus in whatever way, the NHS and frontline workers, the world and church near and far- lift to God the people and places that lie heavy upon your heart

*"Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has
ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold
firmly to the faith we profess."*

Hebrews ch4 v14

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY

Thinking back

Hopefully this will be the last update sent out. From Easter we will be back at church and, all being well, we will not have to close up again. Take time to talk about what not being at church has been like, what you have missed, what you have learned about God and your faith in him over the lockdown, what you want to do to grow more in your faith now that church is back, what you want to thank God for and what you would like him to help you, or others, with.

Have a think about the update activities that you did- which ones stood out and why? Maybe as you look back through the updates

you could do again the activity that you enjoyed the most.

It's going to be really easy to start getting busy again, as we start to enjoy the things in life we have missed, so take the time to write a letter to God, or even draw a picture, so you don't forget about what you have learned about him over lockdown and how you want to love and serve him more in the days that come. Keep it safe and anytime you feel like you are forgetting God or slipping in your faith, have a look and remind yourself.

Pray: 'Father, thank you for our church family, bless each member and help them all. Thank you for all that we have been able to do and all we have been able to learn about you during these strange days. Help us to keep learning and growing as followers of Jesus, please help us as a church to come together again as people who love you and want the whole world to know all about your Son, we pray in his name. Amen'



DEVOTIONAL

King, Priest, Servant

I always find the events of Palm Sunday very interesting. Nowhere else in the gospels do we see Jesus so publicly displayed and honoured, yes there is the Transfiguration, which is a more glorious demonstration perhaps, but only given to a select audience. The Cross is by far the most public of all yet the man upon it is not an honoured king but a gruesome and seemingly defeated suffering servant. The

significance of the events of Easter are enhanced with the backdrop of Palm Sunday, for Jesus riding into Jerusalem to acclaim reminds us of who would eventually go to the cross in our stead. Jesus was not some clever teacher or political leader celebrating his fifteen minutes of fame, but he who truly deserves praise and adoration, who deserves the glory of the spotlight. Jesus is the King of Kings, to whom the shouts of ***'Hosanna in the highest!'*** are rightfully given, yet it is this same king who will fulfil the prophet's famous words by suffering and dying as a servant of those he came to save. This beautiful and profound connection between the king and the servant is also wondrously displayed when we consider Jesus as the Great High Priest.

As Exodus begins to draw to a close, with the pieces and furniture of the Tabernacle constructed, it comes to the time when the previous instructions regarding clothing for the priests, and of course the High Priest, are to be carried out. The garments are to be made to exact specifications and presented to the holy officers so they could begin ministering to the people by performing sacrifices on their behalf. We read of stunning items of clothing expertly woven with precious purple and scarlet yarn, these were not everyday articles but were special, denoting the distinct and noteworthy office and function of the wearer. In fact, Aaron, the High Priest would end up with an extremely elaborate grab including gold and gems, full of little intricate details that made him stand apart even further from the ordinary Israelites. However, when we look at the High Priest in all his wonder there is one detail that is often missed and that is, before the Tabernacle, this man of great authority and position stands with his feet bare. The High Priest doesn't have fancy footwear to cover his feet or even to protect them from the work he does, he ministers and serves with bare feet. Here is a remarkable picture of supremacy and humility, the High Priest is of great importance but that honour comes through humble service to the people. With Jesus this idea is displayed in abundance. When we look to Christ, we should of course see he who is worthy of honour simply because he is God's Son but we can also look again and come to be in awe of how he reveals himself to us. We see the true greatness of his character as he who came to serve in humility, he who came as the Great High Priest, shown to us in Hebrews ch9, to perform a sacrifice greater than anyone else ever could but also to be that very sacrifice himself, by the offering of his blood on Calvary's tree. As Paul expresses, of Jesus, in the second chapter of his letter to the Christians in Philippi: ***'Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!'***

So, as Easter approaches, we can remember and cry ***'Hosanna in the highest!'*** to that Great High Priest of humility, that servant King who on Palm Sunday rode into Jerusalem to applause and acclamation that previewed the rightful position that he will, after the victory that Golgotha truly was, occupy forevermore- an inheritance due to his mighty work that those who call upon his name will one day share. As Paul continues: ***'Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.'***

***Where high the heavenly temple stands,
the house of God not made with hands,
a great High Priest our nature wears,
the guardian of our race appears.***

***He who for us our surety stood,
and poured on earth His precious blood,
pursues in heaven His mighty will,
our Saviour and our helper still.***

ANNOUNCEMENTS

'PREACHING TO THE CHOIR'

The final 'preaching to the choir', focusing on Maundy Thursday will be available on Thursday evening at 6:30pm via our YouTube channel and website.

OPEN CHURCH

The church building is open for private prayer on Fridays 10am-12noon. There is also the facility to drop off offering envelopes.

PRAYER LINK

While Morning Watch cannot meet at the moment the Prayer Link will still be circulated, if you have any prayer requests please pass them along and if you would like a copy of the Prayer Link emailed or delivered please ask

ZOOM BIBLE STUDY

The Zoom Bible study meets on Monday evenings at 7pm, this season we are exploring the Gospel of Luke together, everyone is very welcome!

CHURCH FLOWERS

Church flowers on Sunday 28th March would have been:

(Pedestal) Mr & Mrs Jim McCurry, Albert Drive 'In Memory of Dad'

(Sanctuary) Mr Brian Douglas and Mrs Joan Lunn 'In Memory of Gertie'

COVID-19 VACCINATIONS

PCI has released the following statement to be shared with members:

'The Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) encourages all of its members to actively consider receiving vaccination against Covid-19 when it is offered to them. While recognising that this is ultimately a matter of personal judgement, PCI neither discourages its members from taking up the vaccine offer nor is it supportive of those who seek to discourage the take-up of the vaccine.'

MODERATOR'S SERVICE

The Moderator of the General Assembly, the Rt. Rev. Dr. David Bruce, has recorded a special easter themed service which can be viewed by using the following link <https://vimeo.com/528282051/dbc1df9045>

PCI STATEMENT

Please find the text of a recent statement made by PCI: 'Grave concern' at NIO proposals'

-The Presbyterian Church in Ireland has expressed its 'grave concern' at proposals to allow the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to give direction to Northern Ireland's Department of Health, over the head of the Northern Ireland Executive.

In a statement it said, "The Presbyterian Church in Ireland's General Council Standing Committee, meeting (19 March), noted with grave concern the proposal of the Secretary for State for Northern Ireland to seek powers to give direction to Northern Ireland's Department of Health.

“To do so at a time when the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive is functioning, represents a serious undermining of the devolved settlement, when there is already significant tension regarding other aspects of the way Northern Ireland is being affected post Brexit.

“The Presbyterian Church in Ireland objected strongly to the Westminster government previously imposing laws on Northern Ireland that removed the protection of the lives of unborn children. This damaging step was taken over the heads of our elected Assembly, with the excuse given that the devolved institutions were not functioning at that time. No such excuse for the undermining of devolution can be used at this time.

The statement concluded by saying, “The Presbyterian Church calls upon the Secretary of State not to take the step he proposes and to let the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly seek to find a consensus way forward, in line with the principle upon which devolution is founded.”

Ends.

‘PREACHING TO THE CHOIR’ PRAYER

It has been requested by a member of the congregation that the text of the closing prayer, used at the ‘*Preaching to the Choir*’ service on 18th March be printed in the announcements as it may be of value to us all at this time:

‘Heavenly Father, pour out your Holy Spirit like a mighty flood into the hearts of all your people, those who are called by the name of your Son. May our hearts be washed by the water of the Word and may the purifying light of the Holy Spirit cleanse the thoughts, wash the hearts and purify the minds of those who are part of the church, which is the body of Christ.

Lord, we pray that you would purify the hearts and minds of all your people so that our thoughts are ever turned toward the Lord Jesus. May we as individual members and also as a body of believers, learn to seek your will in our lives, so that our prayers inspired by the light of your will, are tuned to your perfect plans and purposes. May the desire of all believers be to lift up the name of Jesus so that he is honoured in the fellowships and local churches of this land in his rightful position as head of the church and champion of heaven, may he remain the central focus of the intent of our hearts.

Lord, we pray that You would revive the hearts of all believers and especially those who have left their first love, become involved in a distorted gospel, fallen into legalism or become lukewarm toward you. Draw each one back into a right and deeper relationship with you and with each other. Revive your people we pray.

As we pray for your church we pray for this Provence and island that we call home, we pray for all people who make up the cities, towns and villages, turn the hearts of all your people to yourself and as you do so, turn the hearts of many who hear the gospel spread for the first time, or grasp it for the first time, in a glorious revival, we pray. Be close to the broken hearted and comfort the grieving, encourage those who are feeling down and lonely because of the pandemic and bless those who work hard to help others.

Bless us, here in Cregagh, this little corner of your vineyard, we pray for the businesses and houses up and down the road and roundabout. We lift to you our members in hospital and their families and ask that they would know in increasing measures your help and blessing.

Hear these our prayers, for Christ’s sake, Amen.’

REOPENING FOR SERVICES OF IN-PERSON PUBLIC WORSHIP

We are delighted to announce the reopening of our church building for services of in-person public worship and in doing so we wish to create an environment that is both welcoming and safe. While we would actively encourage all members to come back to worship, believing it safe to do so with the measures we have taken, we also wish to highlight that no one should come to services if they have COVID symptoms.

As we hope to move forward towards something more like normal it is imperative that we do so by ensuring that all actions are in line with current guidelines and restrictions. PCI guidelines regarding 2m social distancing, the wearing of face masks while entering the building-during the service- exiting the building as well as chatting outside have been reemphasised as important migrations to allow services to safely begin again.

At Cregagh, **from Easter Sunday 4th April, we will provide a service of worship at 10am and 12noon**, accommodating around 60 people on each occasion (*separate arrangements for Good Friday explained below*). Doors will be opened at 9:30am and 11:30am so that folk can be guided and seated. Members are still being asked to register, due to 'contact tracing', by contacting Michael on email michaelgraham112@gmail.com or phone 07548635075 , indicating which Sunday(s), how many are 'in their bubble' and attending with them, as well as which time slot(s). As before those who have registered will be asked to inform Michael if for whatever reason someone cannot attend so that the register can be as accurate as possible. It is strongly requested that members register by Thursday of each week.

The services themselves will be slightly shorter than normal and previous arrangements regarding offering will remain in place. There will be no offering plate passed around during services but there are three stations where you can drop your offering off as you leave the building.

It also great to have KidZone back, and all are warmly invited to come along, this is an additional reason why registering by Thursday is helpful, so required preparations can take place. Unfortunately, the restrictions are still extremely tight regarding crèche so it will not be available for the time being. However, babies are very welcome at our services!

The issue of offering lifts to church continues to be a difficult one but the official position in terms of the guidelines is that folk should still not offer nor provide lifts to anyone outside of their bubble. Unfortunately, by advice from Presbytery, pastoral visitation from the Minster is still to be limited to emergencies, bereavements or at special request.

All these procedures will be kept under review and any changes will be communicated to the congregation at the earliest convenience.

GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE There will be a special 'Service of Communion and Reflection' on Good Friday, 2nd April, at 7:30pm. Since this is not on a Sunday, and there is little capability to make alternative arrangements, there can only be a limited number admitted to the service. Please register as soon as possible and not later than Thursday 1st April. Please do not come to this service unregistered as admittance cannot be guaranteed. There will be no requirement for communion tokens, as on this occasion, attendance will be taken from the contact tracing list.

GET IN TOUCH Please do not hesitate to get in touch:

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