



ST COLUMBA'S
Church of Scotland

CONGREGATIONAL PASTORAL LETTER

Lent 2023



*A home
away from
home*



A daily habit of quietness in life



"The most sensible and compassionate thing we can give our children today is respite from the noise reverberating within their young minds. That doesn't mean simply a quiet room. They need quiet inside themselves. We need to demonstrate to our children that it is possible for you to stop, be still and allow that grey matter in your skull to reflect on those things most important to you. Not those things the world screams at you about. Not the voices that tell you who you must be, what you must enjoy, what you have to buy to be cool – but to a small, still voice inside that asks, "Who am I? What am I doing here? What is this all about?" We need to introduce a daily habit of quietness into life." (Jewish educational website)

Each year Lent offers opportunity to introduce/re-introduce a daily habit of quietness into our lives. St Columba's members have often related that Lent was never part of their childhood upbringing

in the faith. Lent was more "a Catholic, or Anglican thing" – either ignored, or held in suspicion by "good" Presbyterians. Thankfully, alternative attitudes are permissible.

The traditional "works of Lent" are prayer, fasting and almsgiving. More recently, spiritual reading and the study of Scripture have been added. Beginning with the Ash Wednesday reminder of our mortality – ashes crossed onto foreheads – the season invites us to deeper consideration of Christ and potential reordering of priorities. If we choose to "give something up for Lent," the purpose is not to fill up with pious gloom and doom, but to make room for something wonderful.

If we choose to "take something up for Lent" there are a variety of resources available from St Columba's to sustain the journey towards Easter.

“In prayer I have no need to explain, no need to persuade or convince...”

- Follow the Gospel readings and prayers set for the Sundays of Lent, laid out below.
- Pick up a copy of *Daily Bible Readings, Meditations & Prayers, 22 February – 9 April 2023*. Devotions prepared by Revd Andrew Anderson, free and available via the office. Give a copy to a friend or neighbour.
- Learn about the Irene Taylor Trust, this year’s selected Lent Appeal charity; meet those involved.
- Join the weekly *Psalms, Poetry & Silent Prayer* in the London Scottish Chapel, Sundays 10.00 – 10.15am.

Coming together to pray silently can seem a bit daunting, particularly if you haven’t done it before. What’s the point? What will I pray? Will I just end up being distracted? Perhaps the words of Frank Topping, Methodist minister and actor, and Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York can reassure:

“In honesty, most of us struggle with both silence and prayer, but let us not be disheartened. How often have I fought a losing battle with wandering thoughts, lost and distracted in a maze of anxiety. How often have I felt that my prayers were inadequate, feeble, wretched and impoverished; when the only word I needed was “Father.” In prayer I have no need to explain, no need to persuade or convince. There is no formula of words to gain a right access to God. All I need to

*do is to dare to come into his presence with the single word, “Father.” (Frank Topping, *Wings of the Morning*, 1987)*

“I think it is very helpful to be silent in the company of other people. There is no reason for silent prayer to be solitary prayer. The support of another person in the silence is hugely beneficial. It makes it easier to sit still and to relax into the silence. It allows us to stick with the silence when we would prefer to be busy doing something else. Silent prayer with another person or in a group creates an invisible bond. I still remember with a thankful heart different people with whom I have prayed regularly.” Archbishop Stephen Cottrell

At the start of Lent, maybe, rather than a vague wish “to make this a better Lent” – perhaps we can be specific about our intentions: “What will I do today? What would I like to see in myself by the time Easter arrives?” To introduce a daily habit of quietness into life requires a discipline and a sense of its importance. When the Psalmist declares, “Be still, and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46:10), this stillness is not just about silence, it is about waiting on God. Or, as this recent prayer neatly puts it:

*“Lord, help me to see
that when I am still in your presence,
I am still about your business.”*
Revd Tom Gordon,
swallowsnestnet.wordpress.com

Prayer for Lent

God of all seasons, in your pattern of things there is a time for keeping and a time for losing, a time for building up and a time for pulling down. In this holy season of Lent, as we journey with our Lord to the cross, help us to discern in our lives what we must lay down and what we must take up; what we must end and what we must begin. Give us grace to lead a disciplined life, in glad obedience and with the joy which comes from a closer walk with Christ. Amen.

Ash Wednesday 22nd February 2023

Text: *Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.* Matthew 6:19-21

Read: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Pray: Almighty and everlasting God, you despise nothing you have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent. Create and make in us new and contrite hearts. Give us grace worthily to lament our sins and acknowledge our brokenness, that we may receive from you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

First Sunday in Lent 26th February 2023

Jesus tempted in the Wilderness

Text: *Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil... Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.* Matthew 4:1 & 11

Read: Matthew 4:1-11

Pray: Almighty God, your Son Jesus Christ fasted forty days in the wilderness, and was tempted as we are but did not sin. Give us grace to discipline ourselves in obedience to your Spirit; and, as you know our weakness, so may we know your power to save: through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Second Sunday in Lent

5th March 2023

Nicodemus meets Jesus at night

Text: *For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.* John 3:16-17

Read: John 3:1-17

Pray: Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Third Sunday in Lent

12th March 2023

The Samaritan Woman at the Well

Text: *Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life."* John 4:13-14

Read: John 4:5-42

Pray: Almighty God, you give the water of eternal life through Jesus Christ your Son. May we always thirst for you, the spring of life and source of goodness; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Fourth Sunday in Lent

19th March 2023

Jesus heals the man blind from birth

Text: *"As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."* John 9:5

Read: John 9:1-41

Pray: Discerner of hearts, you look beneath our outward appearance and see your image in each of us. Banish in us the blindness that prevents us from recognizing truth, so we may see the world through your eyes and with the compassion of Jesus Christ who redeems us. Amen.

Fifth Sunday in Lent

26th March 2023

The raising of Lazarus

Text: *When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"* John 11:33-36

Read: John 11:1-45

Pray: God of all consolation and compassion, your Son comforted the grieving sisters, Martha and Mary; your breath alone brings life to dry bones and weary souls. Pour out your Spirit upon us, that we may face despair and death with the hope of resurrection and faith in the One who called Lazarus forth from the grave. Amen.

Palm Sunday

Sunday 2nd April 2023

Text: *When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."* Matthew 21:10-11

Read: Matthew 21:1-11

Pray: Lord Jesus Christ, on the first Palm Sunday you entered the rebellious city where you were to die. Enter our hearts, we pray, and subdue them to yourself. And as your disciples blessed your coming and spread garments and branches in your way, make us ready to lay at your feet all that we have and are, that we too may bless your coming in the name of the Lord. Amen.

Easter Morning

Sunday 9th April

Text: *But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you."* Matthew 28:5-7

Read: Matthew 28:1-10

Pray: Lord of life and power, through the mighty resurrection of your Son, you have overcome death and opened the gate of everlasting life. Grant that we, being dead to sin and alive to you in Jesus Christ, may reign with him in glory, who with you and the Holy Spirit is alive, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Second Sunday of Easter

Sunday 16th April

Jesus appears to his disciples after the Resurrection

Text: *Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.* John 20:30-31

Read: John 20:19-31

Pray: Almighty and eternal God, the strength of those who believe and the hope of those who doubt, may we, who have not seen, have faith and receive the fullness of Christ's blessing, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.



Journey to Easter

Lent 2023

Ways to travel through Lent this year



Lent Appeal 2023

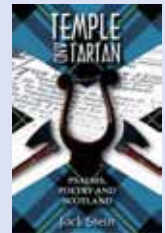
Established in 1995, through the powerful medium of music making, The Irene Taylor Trust facilitates positive change in the lives of people in and on the fringes of the Criminal Justice System by raising their self-confidence and aspirations and opening doors to education, learning and training, promoting positive relationships and contributing to reduced levels of offending/re-offending, increased transferable skills and employability. Participants are shown how much they can achieve by providing a high quality, meaningful, creative experience which they will remember proudly.

Daily Devotions

Daily Bible Readings, Meditations & Prayers, 22 February – 9 April 2023 offers a daily scripture, meditation & prayer, prepared by Revd Andrew Anderson. Aimed at busy people seeking a short time of prayer each day, or those who find prayer difficult and seek encouragement and a simple plan to start.

Psalms, Poetry & Silent Prayer

A short time of silent prayer, in the company of others, centred on the Psalms and a weekly poem from Revd Dr Jock Stein, Haddington piper, poet and preacher and author of *Temple and Tartan: Psalms, Poetry and Scotland* (www.handselfpress.co.uk) (10.00 – 10.15am all Sundays in Lent, London Scottish Chapel)



Thai Chi

Time for body, mind and soul. Join Revd Christopher Rowe (Colston Milton Parish Church, Glasgow) online for weekly Capacitar Tai Chi.

Ancient movement practices to reduce stress and restore balance. Wednesdays, 10.00-10.45am. All welcome. No requirement to keep camera on. Contact Church Office for zoom details.

Palm Crosses

Traditionally gifted and received on Palm Sunday; compass and companion for the journey to Easter resurrection. In uncertain times, posted early.

Services in Holy Week

Short meditations for Monday 3rd – Wednesday 5th & Saturday 8th April, via the website.

In person & Livestream:

Sunday 2nd April Palm Celebration, Reading of the Passion & Sunday School Easter Experience (11am)

Thursday 6th April Maundy Thursday Communion Service (8pm)

Friday 7th April Words & Music for Good Friday (11am)

Sunday 9th April Easter Morning Holy Communion (11am)

Sunday School

Sundays of particular welcome for our young people. 1st & 3rd Sunday of the month.

Sunday 19th February

Sunday 5th March

Sunday 19th March Mothering Sunday

Sunday 2nd April Easter Experience

Sounds of St Columba's Recital Series

Bring your friends and enjoy some magnificent music. 1.30pm.

Sunday 19th February 2023

Jonathan Radford, classical saxophonist

Sunday 19th March 2023

Axel Krogness, classical guitarist

Sunday 21st May 2023

Fredrick Seines, classical guitarist

Summer Events

Looking forward, come and be part of future celebrations.

Sunday 7th May Coronation "Street Party" Lunch

Sunday 11th June St Columba's Day

Maintaining Community and Supporting Each Other

Everybody can play a part in maintaining our community via telephone, e-mail, letter or visit. Our elders are encouraged to stay in touch with those in their districts, and church members are welcome to approach the church office to request a contact from their elder or the ministers.

Lent Website Resources and Weekly Newsletter

For all additional Lent resources www.stcolumbas.org.uk/lent-and-easter-2023

and for latest updates of St Columba's news and activities go to

www.stcolumbas.org.uk/news/



Pont Street, London SW1X 0BD

T: 020 7584 2321

E: office@stcolumbas.org.uk

W: www.stcolumbas.org.uk

Minister: Reverend Angus MacLeod

Associate Minister: Reverend William McLaren

Registered charity Number: 236173

If you would like IT help to access services/support online, contact the office.

The annual Trustees' report and accounts will be available online and, on request, in hard copy from the office, from early April.