

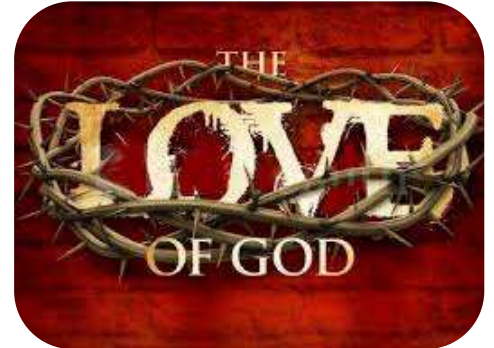
St. John's and St. Columba's Strathpray

Let us pray for one another and for the world ...

Sunday March 30th Fourth Sunday of Lent.

'What happiness for those whose guilt has been forgiven! What joys when sins are covered over! What relief for those who have confessed their sins and God has cleared their record.' Psalm 32:1-2.

'Love is the meaning of the Christian faith and the cross is where we see the tenacity of God's love for us. We can choose to ignore, or ridicule and deny, God's love, but we cannot stop him loving us. Whether we like it or not, we are his beloved children. His cross is not just the turning point of human history, the place where God reconciles all things to himself, the place of peace; it is the sign for all eternity of what God is like, the "surest, truest and deepest window on the very heart and character of the living and loving God", as Tom Wright puts it.' (Stephen Cottrell – *I Thirst*)



Praise be to you. O God, who hears our prayer and gives us the daily resources to live and pray and witness to your loving kindness. Amen.

We pray for the congregations of Christ Church, Huntly; Holy Trinity, Keith; Gordon Chapel, Fochabers; St. Michael, Dufftown and St. Marnan's, Aberchirder: Michael Last, Peter Shaw. Lay Reader: Megan Cambridge.

Monday March 31st

'Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.' Mark 1:35-36.

'Prayer is the vital basis for all Christian action. But the prayer that Jesus modelled was not so much a "God bless ..." approach, but rather a passionate personal desire for God himself, leading to a fresh insight to discern situations and discover what was pleasing to God. Without a similar hunger to know God and his will, our own ideas of what is right will crowd out any openness to the divine vision.' (Robert Warren – *Living Well*)



Lord Jesus, I pray that I may be steadfast in my commitment to you. Help me by your Spirit to be faithful, to walk with you in every aspect of my life, so that I may really please you and you may be able to work through me. Help me to live so that other people may see you in me; but keep me utterly unselfconscious, a channel of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

We pray for Vestry members and others who hold a church office.

Tuesday April 1st

"Love is patient; love is kind," says St. Paul. "It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful ... it bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends." (1 Corinthians 13:4-8) This is the love we see in what we might dare to call the passivity of God revealed in the cross of Christ. Through his refusal to run away, fight back or have the last word, Jesus shows us the capacity of love to endure all things. His silence before his accusers, his forgiveness of those who persecute him, his complete lack of hatred, most reveal the true nature of God's unconditional love. Do your

worst, Jesus seems to say from the cross, and I will go on loving. And ultimately, in my dying and refusing to let your hate beat me, I will love you into submission, and you will learn to love in return.' (Stephen Cottrell – I Thirst)

Jesus, make our hearts ever gentler and more humble, so that we may be present to those we meet today, and in this way make us instruments of your love which gives life and joy and real freedom. Amen.

We pray for Bishop Mark and all the Bishops of the SEC.



Focus on the world during Lent.

These prayers have a focus of “spring-cleaning”.

Lord of Lent, renew our lives.

Lord of Lent, come to the nations and challenge our idolatries. Spring-clean the sordid cupboard of this world’s false gods.

Sweep out the false pride, the self-seeking, the deceit, the corruption and lies. May the kingdoms of this earth seek justice, peace and the integrity of creation. May we look beyond immediate advantage to seek the common good, and be drawn to it, as a lark to the dawn. **Lord of Lent, renew our lives.**



Lord of Lent, look with compassion on those whose minds are full of anxiety and bewilderment. We remember people who are lonely, imprisoned, despairing and humiliated. Clear away from them all unnecessary feelings of fear, guilt and self-hatred. Assure them that when you spring-clean our hearts and minds you know what you are doing, for you have been there, one of us, and you are to be trusted. **Lord of Lent, renew our lives.**

Lord of Lent, turn your healing love towards those who are sick and in pain today. We have in our hearts some known to us, and some known only through the news. We bring them to mind now ... Clear away from them, we pray, those things that hurt, harm and hinder them. May your healing touch still have its ancient power. **Lord of Lent, renew our lives.**

For ourselves, Lord, we pray that your spring-clean would be thorough and true this Lent. Show us clearly those effortless sins we no longer even notice, and help us to address the sins which sit on our shoulder every day, our constant companions. Give us both discipline in dealing with some faults and gentleness in dealing with others, and help us to know the difference. Create in us a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within us. Renew our world, renew our hearts, our cleansing Lord of Lent. Amen.

Wednesday April 2nd

‘A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee’s house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is - that she is a sinner.”

Then Jesus turned toward the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her

tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet.” Luke 7:37-39,44-46.

‘The threshold of our home is a place of welcome. As people enter our home, they are welcomed into our place of safety. Yet, as Simon the Pharisee was to discover, inviting people across the threshold is to court judgement. Simon has gone down in history as the man who did not welcome Jesus, and who received strong criticism from his guest. It is the same for us, for while Christ stands and knocks, if we let him in, we let in not only light but also judgement. Our Lord, in love and mercy, will look around our spiritual home and point out the error of our ways, the dirty corners and the neglected nooks and crannies of our conscience. If we let Christ across our threshold in Lent, he will, we hope, lead us to see the faults. Yet he will not judge and leave, but dwell within as constant guide and guardian.’ (Gordon Giles – At Home In Lent)



Father God, as we look forward to Spring and Easter, help us prepare to welcome the risen Christ by self-examination, honest reflection and creative engagement with your word and the world. Amen.

We pray for King Charles and members of the Royal Family.

Thursday April 3rd

‘Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division!’ Luke 12:51.

‘How far removed that is from notions of “gentle Jesus meek and mild”. We see him living out this truth when he speaks of Herod as “that fox”, challenges the Scribes and Pharisees, warns of the dangers of hypocrisy, confronts the disciples’ “lust for power”, casts out demons and overturns the tables of the money-changers in the Temple. None of these actions fits easily into our stained-glass image of Jesus as a man who would never disturb anyone. The truth is he was a powerful and uncomfortable presence on the edge of society, whom the powers-that-be continually felt threatened by.

To share today in Christ’s peace-making work involves us in the same range of activities: addressing underlying negative and hostile attitudes that block wholeness and justice, engaging in radical actions, and being prepared for the deep conflicts that are required if we are to “give peace a chance”.’ (Robert Warren)

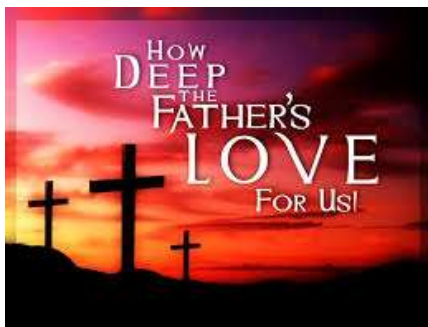
Lord Jesus Christ, you called your disciples to go forward with you on the way to the cross. Since you first walked the road countless millions have followed you. In all that we do as your disciples, save us from false familiarity with your journey. May we never presume to step into your shoes, but make us small enough to fit into our own, and to walk in love and wonder behind you. Amen.

We pray for those who serve in the police force.

Friday April 4th

‘He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.’ 1 Peter 2:24.

‘All people have had the experience of going to bed at night, unable to sleep, turning the events of the day over in their head and thinking, “Why did I say that?” or “Why did I fail to



do the other?" It is normal to think these things. What is becoming less normal is to do something about it. Yet unacknowledged and unrepented sin does not simply go away – it poisons our system, excusing the persistent sins of negligence, intolerance, unkindness, and orienting our whole approach to life in a fundamentally self-centred way. Indeed, sin is best understood as that tendency in human beings to put themselves first. Acknowledging sin, seeking forgiveness, is the

right way of responding. It is the way to health. (Stephen Cottrell)

Father God, you are the one who leads us from darkness into light, from captivity into freedom, from anxiety into peace, from despair into joy. Yet we long to break free, choosing independence, convinced of our own wisdom, forgetting your love and grace. Forgive us, draw close to us, embrace us once again in your loving arms, and enable us to follow you in worship and grateful service each day of our lives. Amen

We pray for our link Diocese of Quebec.

Saturday April 5th

***'Annually, on the tenth day of this month each family shall get a lamb On the evening of the fourteenth day of this month, all these lambs shall be killed, and their blood shall be placed on the two side-frames of the door of every home and on the panel above the door... Everyone shall eat roast lamb that night, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs ... Eat it with your travelling clothes on, prepared for a long journey, wearing your walking shoes and carrying your walking sticks in your hands; eat it hurriedly. This observance shall be called the Lord's Passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt tonight and kill all the oldest sons and firstborn male animals in all the land of Egypt, and execute judgment upon all the gods of Egypt - for I am Jehovah. The blood you have placed on the doorposts will be proof that you obey me, and when I see the blood I will pass over you and I will not destroy your firstborn children when I smite the land of Egypt.'* Exodus 12:3-13.**

'The first Passover was a practical event. Since the Israelites were about to flee in haste, lambs or goats had to be killed quickly and their blood used as marker paint. Unusually, the people had to rush their meal, dressed for departure, which they knew would have to be swift and efficient. Later the Passover meal, commemorating this exodus, turned into a festival rich in ritual and meaning. By the time Jesus celebrated it with his disciples, it was steeped in tradition. Nowadays our celebration of Holy Communion links us back to the day God called Israel out of Egypt, requiring them to gird their loins and dine in anticipation of freedom.' (Gordon Giles – Fasting And Feasting)

Father God, who gave your people the Passover of salvation, keep us fed with your Spirit so that we may always be ready to drop everything and do your will. Amen.

We pray for peace negotiations in the trouble spots of the world.

