

# FIRST

serving and proclaiming

2015 Vol 1 / Issue 3

Holy Week &  
Easter

UNSETTLED  
KEEPING HOLY WEEK  
THE WHOLE WEEK

HE IS RISEN!  
APOCALYPSE AND THE  
EMPTY TOMB

PLUS POETRY,  
REFLECTIONS

a seasonal publication of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

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*a seasonal publication of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church*

*Holy Week and Easter 2015*

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Pentecost Deadline: May 15, 2015

# CONTENTS

- 4 From the Rector: Unsettled
- 6 Reflections: on Holy Week
- 8 Poetry and The Triduum
- 11 Easter Message from the Presiding Bishop

# SAVE THE DATE

## April

- 2-4 The Triduum (see p. 9)
- 5 Easter
- 12 175th Celebration w/ Bishop visitation
- 15 175th Anniversary Dinner
- 25 Spring Diocesan Convention

## May

- 2 Tag Sale
- 14 Ascension Day
- 24 Pentecost

"Prior to his experience on the Damascus road, [Paul] was Saul the Pharisee, a zealous prosecutor of the movement that had come into existence around Jesus (Phil. 3:4-6). His experience had a crucial corollary. It generated the conviction not only that "Jesus lives," but that God had vindicated Jesus, said "yes" to the one who had been executed by the authorities and

whose movement Paul was persecuting. In short, to use Paul's most concise affirmation, his experience of the risen Jesus led him to the conviction, "Jesus is Lord.""

*from The Last Week by Marcus Borg  
& John Dominic Crossan*

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# FROM THE PULPIT

by the Rev. Andrew D. Downs, Rector of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

## WHY WE'RE DOING HOLY WEEK A LITTLE DIFFERENT

Holy Week is unsettling. It is supposed to be. We are called to remember the unsettling story of Jesus's entrance into Jerusalem, and ultimately, his death and resurrection.

When we remember this story, we can find ourselves unsettled by the story itself. Not just the gruesome brutality at the end of the week, but the events that lead up to it, beginning with Jesus's arrival on a donkey in a profound expression of weakness when everyone, including his disciples would expect a show of strength.

Traditionally, our own experience is of forty days of being unsettled. First, by our gathering on Ash Wednesday, with its cryptic reminder that each of us is to

“Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return”

We say this to one another as a corporate act of unsettling, of having our whole selves taken out of our present lived experience and into a state of reflection about our lives and in the end, our deaths.

It is in this Ash Wednesday liturgy that we are also compelled to keep a holy Lent as a season of reflection and fasting, that we can remain unsettled for 6 weeks as we approach the lowest point and the highest point of our faith story.

We are supposed to be unsettled. And yet, for our tradition, we have made this holy week into a well-scripted event with incredible predictability. Not only because of the story we'll be reading, but in the sameness of the liturgy.

I am certainly not against predictability. It is through the predictability of stories that we learn to read and the predictability of worship that we come to know how to pray as a congregation. And this story in particular is one we are called to know and remember.

Since this is my first year, and we are all still a little unsettled from the interim and as we begin to settle ourselves, I am inviting us to take on *this* Holy Week as a teaching week. As a week in which we explore the unsettling nature of Holy Week, not as we *predictably* do, but as we can experience it as *new*.

# UNSETTLED

## KEEPING HOLY WEEK THE WHOLE WEEK

It is in this spirit that I am inviting us to gather daily this Holy Week to reflect on the daily experience of Jesus's last week. On Sunday, March 29th, we will celebrate Jesus's Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem. Monday will be Jesus's arrival at the Temple. Tuesday, his teaching at the Temple. Wednesday, the anointing. Maundy Thursday, the commissioning. Good Friday, the passion and crucifixion. Then late on Saturday we begin celebrating the third day and the Resurrection. You can find the complete schedule on the back page.

We are supposed to be unsettled.

This pattern, while *mostly* the same as our traditional approach is different in one essential way: it comes with the idea that the *whole story* is important, not just the bits where Jesus is killed and then comes back. It comes with the mindset that the church can reflect, not the lowest expectation of understanding and participation, but an expectation that **there is too much here to gulp in a single service.**

I recognize that I may be the only one in church



every day this week. Work certainly gets in the way. For many, so does Spring Break. That's why a daily meditation will be prepared for each day. We will

send them out by email to the congregation (paper copies will also be available). This will give us the opportunity to read and pray together and at home. To take the opportunity to give some of ourselves every day of Holy Week.

Holy Week, our journey toward Easter is an unsettled time, but a time in which we prepare for new life. Emphasis on the new.

Please join me in making this Holy Week a blessed time of growth, challenge, and perhaps even new life.

Peace after unsettlings!

The Rev. Drew Downs

# REFLECTIONS

## ON HOLY WEEK

Holy Week from the Killing Fields

by Dorothy Drummond

As I write, the streets of Saigon are gaily decorated, but not for Palm Sunday or Easter. It's for the Fortieth Anniversary of Independence and unification (under a communist regime). Ten percent of Vietnamese are Catholic, and most throughout the country will be going to special services in the coming Holy Week as will some Christians in the West. By this time the Communist government here has become somewhat benign, economic-growth oriented, and there is no religious persecution. But in neighboring Cambodia, which also was formerly a part of French Indochina, -- from which I've just returned-- there are no Christian churches, and seemingly few Catholics. Pol Pot wiped them out, literally, in the Killing Fields of the late 1970s. Christians were targeted deliberately, and so overwhelming is Buddhist culture in Cambodia that somehow the Khmer Rouge managed to destroy even the roots of Christianity, even though Cambodia is now peaceful. This has happened before, in many parts of Asia, and is happening today in much of the Middle East,

where Christianity is far older than in Europe but is rapidly disappearing.

We take our religious freedom for granted, for it has never been tested. And so many will observe tradition and go to church on Easter Sunday and Christmas. But the roots of our faith, in the events that preceded Easter, we ignore too easily. These are the thoughts going through my mind today as I pack to return home. I will be spending Palm Sunday and Easter with family, but in the interim there will be Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. Wherever I am on those days, I will be thinking of the Killing Fields, and my obligation to renew my faith, my heritage.

A Continuing Message

by William Denton

For the past several weeks as a Lenten discipline I participated in a St. Stephen's sponsored reading and discussion of a book by Borg and Crossan, **The Last Week**. The authors discussed the Gospel of Mark's day-by-day account of Holy Week, the week leading up to Easter. The author's explained how the "domination system," the system used to organize societies in ancient

# AND WHAT WE LEARN

times, influenced the events associated with Holy Week.

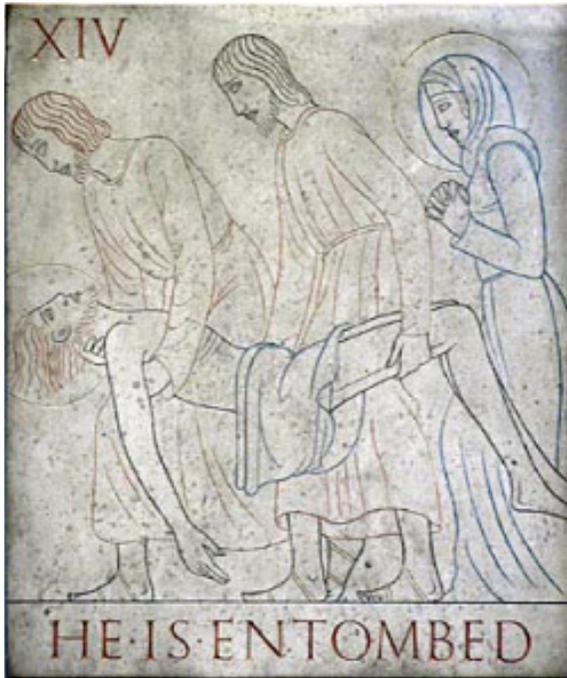
Many of us have heard the story of Holy Week as a composite of the gospels and the New Testament as a whole. However, I found it challenging to view Mark's version of Holy Week without instinctively drawing upon the filters provided by the other books of the New Testament. Becoming overly preoccupied with the historical factuality of the Easter stories may get in the way of understanding what the writers of the gospels were trying to say. For the authors of the gospels the most important question was what do the stories mean, not are they factually true. If viewed as parables the stories can be truth-filled independent of their factuality. I came to realize that, when taken as a composite, the Easter gospel stories produced two major themes: 1) Jesus' message continues to be experienced after his death, and 2) by allowing his teachings to continue to live today God is confirming his message of forgiveness and love.

A Continuing Message

by Kim Wagley

To me, 'Holy Week' has always been code for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter. The word 'week' implies seven days, but it has always been associated with only those three in my mind. In fact, in the past if I thought about Holy Week it was to ponder why we refer to it as Holy Week instead of Holy Weekend. Not only has that been short changing the concept of a week, it has been short changing my experience of arguably the most important week of the Christian calendar. No more! Thanks to the Lenten Soup and Study sessions, I now know what happened each of those days and have an understanding of the relevance of those events to the overall Easter season. I also have an answer to my long unvoiced question of how the crowds went from venerating Christ on Sunday to calling for his crucifixion just five days later. This year I am looking forward to a full week of Holy Week!

# JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB



## XIV Jesus is laid in the tomb

Here at the centre everything is still  
Before the stir and movement of our grief  
Which bears it's pain with rhythm, ritual,  
Beautiful useless gestures of relief.  
So they anoint the skin that cannot feel  
Soothing his ruined flesh with tender care,  
Kissing the wounds they know they cannot heal,  
With incense scenting only empty air.  
He blesses every love that weeps and grieves  
And makes our grief the pangs of a new birth.  
The love that's poured in silence at old graves  
Renewing flowers, tending the bare earth,  
Is never lost. In him all love is found  
And sown with him, a seed in the rich ground.

from Good Friday: the Stations of the Cross  
by Malcolm Guite

For this and all the stations, visit Malcolm Guite's website at:  
<https://malcolmguite.wordpress.com/2012/04/04/good-friday-the-stations-of-the-cross/>

# THE TRIDUUM

One of the great struggles for Christians is describing the Trinity.

Try to explain to people that our God is one and three at the same time. Most of the time we stumble through the words and end up tumbling into heresies we don't even know the names to.

It is hard because we are being asked by our tradition to have two sets of lines and boundaries at the same time: three persons and one God.

We have the same struggle with our holy weekend. Three services and one event. Or is it three events and one service? Ugh.

Instead of trying to define The Triduum, let me explain what is truly powerful *about* it for us.

We worship for three days without end. When we enter on Thursday night, we push the pause button on our worship until the next day, when we resume for the Passion. Then we pause again until we gather in the dark of night to explore our history and discover the empty tomb. No self-contained services with beginnings and endings, like a neat bookend. For three days of the year, we continue our prayers without ceasing. We wait for Christ's return. We make holy time for the coming of the light.

It is one service because it is one story. A story that doesn't end in darkness, but one that only truly *begins* with the coming again of the light.

Maundy Thursday (4/2) 7 pm

Good Friday (4/3) noon

The Great Vigil (4/4) 8 pm

# Apocalypse

## An Easter Meditation

Let there be fire, Torch, sun, hearth,  
Spirits incendiary, rising up  
And everywhere, and everywhere  
Burn out the humid breath of night,  
The cold, dry, brittle breathing of the night.  
Flame, candle, altar,  
Sacrament!  
Lava of purity, white hot,  
Purge out the fetid smell of death  
And dance in writhing flames, in rising swirls  
Of golden sparks, in firestorms irresistible  
To heaven.

C.W. Christian (1992)

# THE PRESIDING BISHOP

Easter Message 2015

It's still dark when Mary ventures out to find the tomb. The graveyards around Jerusalem don't have much greenery today. The earth is mostly rock and stone, and it is far from easy to make a place to secure a body. Jesus' body was put in a cave-like space, with a stone rolled across the opening to close it up. Mary has made the journey from wherever she's sheltered over the last day, through darkened streets, perhaps hearing cocks begin to crow and townspeople start to stir.

She nears the place, but somehow it seems different than they left it – this can't be it, can it? Who moved the stone? A trip begun in tears and grief now has added burden— confusion, anger, shock, chaos, abandonment. His very body has been stolen.

She runs to tell the others. The three tear back to the tomb – no, the body is not there, though some of the burial cloths remain. Who has torn away the shroud and stolen him away? Why must the cruel torture continue, sacrilege and insult even after death? Who has done this awful thing? The men run away again, leaving her to weep at even greater loss.

She peers in once more – who are these, so bold appearing? “Fear not, woman... why do you weep?” She turns away and meets another, who says the same – why do you weep, who are you looking for? This gardener

has himself been planted and now springs up green and vibrant, still rising into greater life. He challenges her to go and share that rising, great news of green and life, with those who have fled.

Still rising, still seeking union with Creator, making tender offering to beloved friends – briefly I am with you, I am on my way. Go and you will find me if you look.

The risen one still offers life to those who will look for evidence of his gardening – hope, friendship, healing, reunion, restoration – to all who have been uprooted, cut off, to those who are parched and withered, to those who lie wasting in the desert. Why do we weep or run away when that promise abides?

We can find that green one, still rising, if we will go stand with the grieving Marys of this world, if we will draw out the terrified who have retreated to their holes, if we will walk the Emmaus road with the lost and confused, if we will search out the hungry in the neighborhood called Galilee. We will find him already there before us, bringing new and verdant life. The only place we will not find him is in the tomb.

The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori

Presiding Bishop and Primate

The Episcopal Church

# THE FIRST 175 YEARS

We're sitting at a table, eating with strangers, to celebrate the life of one of our favorite people and the conversation turns to church. They say to us "Tell me about St. Stephen's." And we say...well, what do we say?

We aren't likely to speak to the exploits of Jackson Kemper or when our buildings were built or added onto. What we *will* say is that we felt welcome. We will say we felt safe to doubt, question, and struggle with our faith. We'll talk about eating, sharing, liturgy, music. We'll say all these things that have been part of our lives.

We'll speak to the ways God has been with us in

these moments: in worship, in the repairing of the roof, in the times we have felt fully alive.

St. Stephen's first 175 years aren't only characterized by official history and story, but by our willingness to share it and make new story.

Please join us on **April 12th at 10:00 am** for a special worship celebration with the bishop.

Then again on **Wednesday the 15th at 5:30 pm** for a carry-in dinner celebration with compline.

And may we make the memories in the coming weeks that will bring alive the next 175 years.

## WORSHIP FOR HOLY WEEK AND EASTER

Sunday, March 29	8 & 10 am	Palm Sunday with Procession
Monday, March 30	8 am	Morning Prayer (chapel)
Tuesday, March 31	8 am	Morning Prayer (chapel)
Wednesday, April 1	8 am	Morning Prayer (chapel)
Thursday, April 2	7 pm	Holy Eucharist w/ Footwashing
Friday, April 3	noon	Good Friday
	2:15 pm	Stations of the Cross
Saturday, April 4	8 pm	The Great Vigil w/ Baptism
		The church's high feast celebration of the Resurrection. We will begin in the garden.
Sunday, April 5	8 & 10 am	Easter (Egg hunt after the 10)

NOTE: Our Thursday noon service will be cancelled on April 2