

A reason to rejoice



Heather Smith *reflects on* John 20:1-18

After living through the long week leading up to the crucifixion, today we celebrate Christ's resurrection. The future looks bright and positive and we can, and should, spend some time in simple rejoicing. We can affirm that life is good in the same way as when we celebrate a baptism. Although nobody expects the newly baptised to experience the rest of their lives as a fairytale, we believe that a baptism provides a solid foundation based on spiritual birth and for that reason we want to celebrate. The resurrection is the greater foundation that makes all this possible. It affirms life – death cannot overcome it.

John does not say whether Peter and the other disciple rejoiced. He tells us simply that they saw that the tomb was empty and believed. Having seen it, they returned to their houses. They did not yet understand the scripture about Christ's resurrection, but all the same, they believed. Not understanding what it meant, they were perhaps too bemused to think of rejoicing. But we have the advantage of knowing how the story unfolds. Perhaps we do not yet understand what it means for us this Easter – for with God there is always the new and unexpected – but we can return home, rejoice in this affirmation of life and wait for God to reveal what comes next, just as God did for the disciples. 🍷

Life-giving God, you underpin everything that we do and everything that we are. Give us your everlasting joy today and direct our lives, as we seek to live out the resurrection in all we do. Amen.

National Pet Month

Passing time

by Gillian Cooper

Our pets make us aware of the swift passage of time. Pets have shorter lifespans than us. Pets die, as many children with hamsters painfully learn. Even long-lived dogs and cats die before us. The joy of our life with them is tinged with the sadness of this knowledge.

Today we celebrate the resurrection. We rejoice that there is more for us beyond death. Is the same true for our pets? I would like to think so, though we cannot know. But resurrection does not alter the fact that our precious life on earth is short, a truth we prefer to forget. Jonathan Wittenberg ends his wonderful book *Things My Dog Has Taught Me* with the words: "And I know, I must not waste it: this fragile gift of fleeting time for wonder, companionship and love." By reminding us of mortality, our pets encourage us to make the most of every moment, in the light of eternity. 🍷

Lesser-known Bible characters

Hosea

by Caroline Fletcher

Hosea was a prophet who lived more than seven hundred years before Christ in Israel's northern kingdom. His prophecies are recorded in the Old Testament book of Hosea. He warned people to stop worshipping idols or God would destroy the nation. Unfortunately, nobody listened and the Assyrians invaded, taking many captives.

Although Hosea proclaimed God's judgement, his personal circumstances showed him much about God's love, revealing that God did not punish his people lightly. The pain Hosea felt when his wife was repeatedly unfaithful, helped him understand God's pain over Israel's unfaithfulness: Israel had rejected and hurt God, just as his wife had rejected and hurt him. Yet despite this, God could not stop loving Israel and punishing them was heart-breaking: Hosea describes God crying, "How can I give you up, Ephraim (Israel)?"

Hosea shows us a God who, despite our faithlessness, just keeps on loving us. 🍷

“ I know that my redeemer lives, and that at the last he will stand upon the earth.

Job 19:25

Church of Scotland: Orphir and Stenness Parish

www.orkneycommunities.co.uk/ORPHIRANDSTENNESS

Interim Moderator: Rev June Freeth 721449

Locum Minister Rev Martin Prentice 851139

Session Clerk: Nicol 811242

Kirk Information There is a loop system. Adjust hearing aids to benefit. Switch off phones. They cause interference with the organ. Thank you.

A warm invitation is extended to everyone to meet in the hall at the back of the church, after the service, for a cup of tea or coffee.

Intimations

Tuesday 8 pm: Choir

Thursday 10am – 12noon: Community Café in the kirk hall

Volunteers: Required to help garden tidy up, contact Olivia 811392 evenings.

Readings: Acts 10: 34-43: (NCV)
Luke 24: 1-12:

Hymns: **410** Jesus Christ is risen today
412 The strife is o'er
421 Our Lord Christ hath risen
425 The Saviour died, but rose again
411 Christ the Lord is risen today

Call to worship

Gathered now this Easter morning,
we join our voices with the whole church,
across the world and across time,
as we proclaim:

L: Alleluia! Christ is risen

All: He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Christ is risen. Hallelujah.

Alleluia! The Lord is risen!

He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

To God be the Glory. Amen.

Doxology: (Hy. 786)

May God's blessing surround you each day,

As you trust Him and walk in his way,

May his presence within guard and keep you from sin,

Go in peace, go in joy, go in love.