



CHRIST CHURCH, DARTMOUTH

An inclusive church welcoming everyone

61 Dundas Street, Dartmouth, NS
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Easter 2020

And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. 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. Matthew 28:2-6

Dear Friends in Christ,

As we enter the Easter season, we give thanks and celebrate the rolling away of the stone and the gift of faith, which tells us that Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to his friends. Let us give thanks for all the wonder and majesty that the resurrection represents. Let us live out the Easter story and spread the Good News of Christ to those who are near and far.

This Easter is one for the ages. As we continue in physical isolation, we watch the world cope with the pandemic of COVID-19. Our churches are empty. Dust settles on the pews, and no Holy Communion shared—this is upsetting. Within England, this is the first time of massive church closures since 1213. Of course, the reason then was political, not because of a “plague.” Yet, I find myself asking the question, “is the church empty?” The more I reflect, I truly believe that the church is more engaged, fuller than it has been for quite some time.

I have seen the church in action this season of Lent. People are stepping up to support the online ministry, phone chains established to continue connections. Parish staff going above and beyond. This delights my heart. This is the Easter story; we rise out of the tomb to spread the Gospel in a new way. In a radical way.

Today I encourage us to laugh. Of course, we all have a different sense of humour, but it helps us cope. COVID-19 is no laughing matter, but trying to connect through this gift, I believe, can be life-giving. For me, humour is the most significant activity of the brain. Laugh, you say? What do you mean? The study of laughter is relatively new. Some believe that it increases our catecholamine levels, which affect our mental functions, including our interpersonal responsiveness, alertness, and memory. It is also suggested that it stimulates the release of endorphins, which can result in decreased pain and a sense of euphoria. Finally, laughter has been shown to reduce the secretion of the stress hormone, serum cortisol.



Beato Angelico 1395-1455 - Resurrection

A favourite play of mine is *Lazarus Laughs*. A play by Eugene O'Neill and written in 1925 it tells the story of the man from Bethany. Within the play, Lazarus explains to his friends that there is no such thing as death, only God's Eternal Laughter.

In the drama, the following scene plays out:

Lazarus' friends ask: What is beyond there, Lazarus? What is beyond there? What is beyond?

Lazarus responds: There is only life! I heard the heart of Jesus laughing in my heart; "There is Eternal Life in No," it said, "and there is the same Eternal Life in Yes! Death is the fear between!" And my heart reborn to love of life cried "Yes!" and I laughed in the laughter of God!

After reflecting on Lazarus' words, his friends begin to sing:

*Lazarus laughs!
Our hearts grow happy!
Laughter like music!
The wind laughs!
The sea laughs!
Spring laughs from the earth!
Summer laughs in the air!
Lazarus laughs!*

*Laugh! Laugh!
Laugh with Lazarus!
Fear is no more!
There is no death!*

*Laugh! Laugh!
Fear is no more!
There is no death!*

At this time of year, let's thank God for the gifts we have. Let's continue to pray for the world, for the church, and new life beyond this pandemic. During springtime, the earth rises from the winter season. Signs of new life are visible as flowers that have been planted, tulips and crocuses begin to emerge from the ground. My prayer is that you and your family will take great delight in the gift of nature, the Easter story, and of course, laughter! May you allow God to be central in your life and the life of your family.

With Easter blessings, faithfully yours in Christ,



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