



Easter 2019

To my beloved church,

About twenty of us sat around a circle on our first Tuesday evening *Anglicanism 101* class this Lent. The question that we asked each person to answer ('pass' was a permitted answer!) was "Why are you Anglican? Or, why are you considering Anglicanism?" It was a remarkably varied group, including many long-time or even life-time Anglicans taking this course as a sort of spiritual refresher, as well as a number of people quite new to St. George's and to our tradition. The answers reflected this diversity. Some people had no particular draw toward "Anglican," but rather were simply looking for a community that is committed to living its faith through its care for others. Some people had never considered the question: being Anglican was just in their blood. Still others poignantly described journeys that had led them to feel that this might be a tradition in which they could be accepted for who they are. Many of us teared up around the circle as one participant said simply, "I was part of one church and felt like certain parts of me weren't accepted; I was part of another church and felt that other parts of me weren't accepted. I believe that all of me might be accepted here."

Those words have stayed with me. They reinforced my own gladness and gratitude for the welcome and care I have experienced throughout my own thirty-plus years in the Anglican church. My family wandered into St. James' Anglican Church in Hanover when I was a child, and we found that there was space in this tradition for our family. As people who love to learn, read, and explore different ideas, we felt that the Anglican church didn't make us "check our brains at the door." As people who are, by nature, "artsy," we felt that this was also a church whose rituals, symbolism and poetry engaged our hearts and fed our souls. The Anglican church gave me a way in to know and love Jesus, and the communities in which I have lived and served continue to model for me what faithful living looks like.

As I write this letter, our annual participation in Holy Week – the final week of Jesus' life, leading him and his followers into Jerusalem, to the Last Supper, the cross and Resurrection – is drawing near. Our story as Christians, regardless of denomination, is formed by the things we learn, see and receive in this week. I am grateful for the avenue that Anglicanism opens for me to become a follower of Jesus. But of course, it is God's action that is at the heart of the walk of faith for all of us. What we see in Holy Week is our most raw and real human truths gathered up into the healing, love and power of God. We see how fear can imprison us and drive us apart, and how God's forgiveness and mercy can heal relationships that seemed permanently broken. We see how injustice and estrangement and hatred can seem to tighten their iron grip on our lives, and how God will not stop trying to reach out across all that divides us from one another and from God in order to invite us, together, into this New Creation. We see how God takes a group of very flawed and frightened men and women and does not give up on them, speaks healing and love to each of

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them across all of their wounds and waywardness, and that gift does eventually transform them to go out into the world and to sow the seeds of faith that would grow into the church we are today.

This long ago story is alive and continuing in us today. That is why we mark Holy Week in the way that we do, as a day by day journey that we don't merely remember, we become part of it. Voices of hatred continue to rage in our world, and actions of violence and destruction put a loud speaker on those voices. In very personal ways, each one of us must confront those fears and flaws that are in us, and sometimes we fall into believing that those are the things that govern and define our lives. In the grand scheme of things, St. George's Anglican Church in St. Catharines is just a speck on the horizon of the vast and varied Christian church. And yet, we are entrusted with an incredible and holy responsibility: in the specific way that God has created and blessed us, we are inviting and supporting one another into that living story, made known in Jesus, of how God welcomes us, loves us, blesses us, forgives and heals us, and calls us to share what we have received with the world around us. We are entrusted with learning what it is to allow our lives to put a loud speaker on the voice of love. We are entrusted with communicating the promise that was named in our *Anglicanism 101* class: God accepts you; God accepts *all* of you.

I pray that this coming Holy Week will renew us once again in these holy truths. I give thanks for the faith that God is growing and sharing in each one of you.

In Christ's love,

Reverend Martha

### **HOLY WEEK: FAVOURITE TRADITIONS & NEW CONNECTIONS**

**April 14th** - Palm Sunday

**April 15th - 17th** Noon Hour Service

**April 17** - 7pm Advent Café in the Lounge

**April 18th - 12:10pm Maundy Thursday noon hour service**

**6-8pm - Maundy Thursday Dinner & Worship**

**Our foundational worship service as Christians: join us for supper, candlelit procession into the church, a beautiful Eucharist in our Sanctuary with choir & pipe organ, and the stripping of the altar.**

**All generations will be moved by this celebration.**

**April 19th** - 9:45am Downtown Good Friday Walk

Noon Hour Good Friday Worship at St. George's

**April 20th - 7pm Easter Vigil with Resurrection Party**

**April 21st - 8am & 10am - Easter Sunday**

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