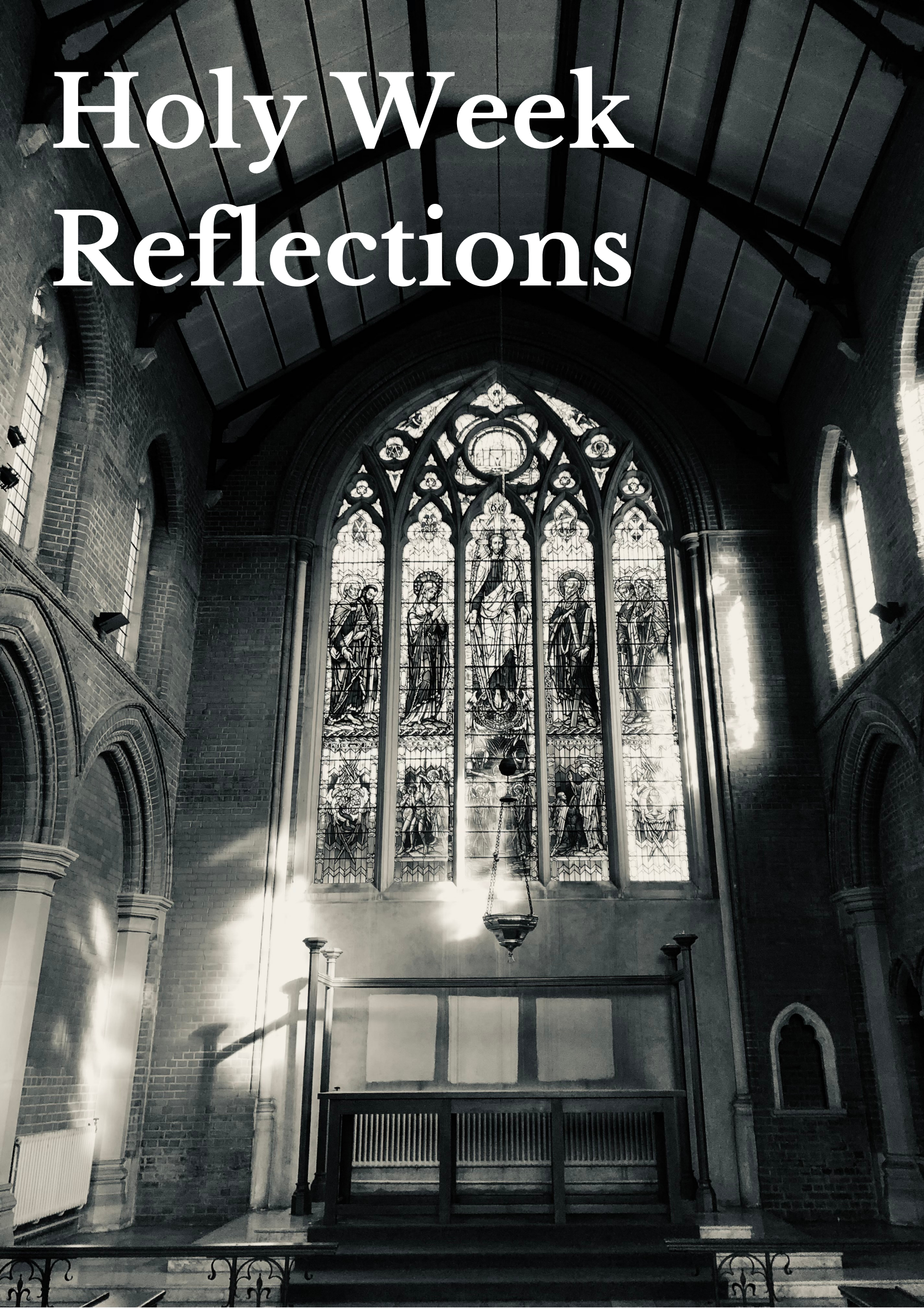


Holy Week Reflections



‘I started this year with a crisis of faith. My Lent was not packed full of stuff as in previous years...Now I'm happy with the less is more idea.

Nevertheless, today (Easter Sunday), I was deeply moved by the whole service, especially during the renewal of my Baptismal promise. Not sure what that was about but I lit a candle in Thanksgiving to God for that experience.

What a crescendo to the season...

I am not saying that I was given a miraculous answer but the experience reminded me of why I am a practising Christian. Praise the Lord indeed!’ -
Georgetta

'I began attending St Andrew's just under a year ago and this was my first period of Lent and Holy Week with the church. The congregation at St Andrew's were all very welcoming and friendly. I attended the four week lent study group focused upon the Lord's Prayer which was really excellent, it was relaxed and informal and at the same time I felt I benefited a great deal from the insight and reflections of Father Andy and the other members of the group.

This lead nicely into Holy Week which was an incredible period of worship, reflection and contemplation for me the like of which I have not experienced in the 23 years since I was confirmed.

The week commenced with a Tuesday night service examining the Stations of the Cross and using the work of Anglican mystic Evelyn Underhill to reflect upon each stage of the passion, the candlelight and music in the church contributed to a beautiful atmosphere that left me and other church family members I spoke with quite emotional.

Maundy Thursday was the most magnificent church service I have attended in many years, emotional and absorbing, again the candle lit environment of the church and the flowers in the lady chapel were quite stunning and I was left with much to reflect upon.

Good Friday again was an emotional service leading to the glory and happiness of Eater Sunday which was wonderful celebration of the fulfillment of the Easter journey.

Overall, it was without doubt the most spiritually nourishing period I have spent in the church in the last 23 years and leaves me feeling better equipped to deal with all that life presents. I am very grateful to Father Andy and the team at St Andrew's for all that they do and I feel truly blessed to have found such a wonderful church family so near to my home. My attendance there has had a profound effect upon my faith and the role it plays in my life which, prior to coming to St Andrew's, I feel had begun to take a back seat, coming to St Andrew's has renewed the sense of meaning and passion in my Christian faith'.

'The journey through Holy Week is very special at St Andrew's. Each service has its own distinct feeling, and so worship, and reflection on Jesus' sacrifice, take many different forms throughout the days leading up to Easter: from the celebrations of Palm Sunday, to the still, bare sorrow of Good Friday. I especially enjoyed Martin's beautiful and poignant rendition of Psalm 22 at the Maundy Thursday service, and the moving meditations of the Stations of the Cross Service'. - Rachel

‘It was great to start the journey up hill on Palm Sunday and singing the hymn was a challenge whilst doing so, I was imagining Jesus entering the city of Jerusalem as we did so on the back of a donkey.

I next attended the Stations of the cross service on the Tuesday. I found this a remarkable reflective experience, witnessing each of the points of the journey Jesus took. I also watched a fascinating documentary about this on YouTube which documented the same route Jesus would have taken and seeing the spots where he fell, I realised how well the plaques in the church reflect this.

The Maundy Thursday service was also very moving, I really enjoyed the incredible moments of the service and after sitting in the side chapel garden vigil.

Good Friday saw the enactment from the gospels of a wonderful play to detail the surrender of Jesus by his disciple, and another who denied him, a poignant moment towards anyone we love surely.

We discussed bringing the holy light to the church next year, so maybe we could walk the holy light to the church from one church to another, and ask everyone to follow, we can encourage everyone to bring their own lanterns and perhaps take the holy light home also perhaps.

Easter Sunday was a wonderful joyful occasion, and the celebration afterwards was also very welcoming. Maybe next year the children could be running around the church shouting ‘Christ has risen, alleluia’ so they feel part of it at the appropriate moment in the service or indeed at the end.

On a personal note, thank you for all your hard work in making a very special Easter week at St Andrew's possible for myself and the congregation’. - Paul

‘This year I concentrated more fully on the idea of the journey from Ash Wednesday to the Easter Triduum. Lent can sometimes seem just much too long, but for some reason this year it seemed the right kind of length, perhaps helped by the 4 sessions of the Lent course and the opportunity to share thoughts from our prayer life with other members of the congregation, which I found very moving and helpful.

I also felt that the liturgy at St Andrew's really allowed us to share in the huge range of experiences of the Easter story; from bearing witness to the worst kind of suffering on Good Friday, to the joyful and hopeful message of Easter Sunday.

The experience of making my confession on Good Friday is difficult to put into words. I found it extremely helpful and inspiring and powerful, to the extent that it really was difficult to talk about (but in a good way). I am grateful to be part of a church that can offer such a thing'.

‘This year, the drama of Holy Week came home to me more forcibly than in any year I can remember. Perhaps it was the close attention to the mood and meaning of each of the days, and the distinctive rituals proper to each. Perhaps it was the sensation of marking these key points of the Christian year together as an enlarged and committed congregation. Probably it was the combination of these. I'm deeply grateful for the opportunity to participate'.

‘My husband and I are new to the Anglo-Catholic tradition and wanted to attend all of the services during Holy Week to experience all this week could bring. My faith has been very rocky for a long time and this week made the gospel feel alive for me and I am very thankful to have been able to participate.

Palm Sunday

I really enjoyed beginning together on the high street nearby where we walked up the road to the church with palms, incense and singing. It felt like we were really being the church out in the community and it provided a fun and inclusive way for everyone of all ages to be involved.

Stations of The Cross

I was surprised by how moving I found the stations of the cross, even tearing up at a few of the stations. Looking at the images of the suffering Christ, and following his journey together as a community with music and stirring words from Evelyn Underhill felt like we were re-entering his steps. I felt like I had been disconnected from God for a while but something happened during these stations that opened up a renewed sense of God’s presence that was really special.

Maundy Thursday

This is my favourite service of the year. I remembered going for the first time last year and the service stayed with me all year at points when I needed to remember a unique stillness. The stripping of the altar reminds me of Aslan being killed in Narnia and the sadness and distress I always felt as a child at this point in the story comes back during this service. I find the embodied drama of the liturgy and re-creation of the Garden of Gethsemane in the side chapel helps to capture the pain of this night - the church also looks so incredibly beautiful that it has an effect on you.

I wasn't brave enough for foot washing, maybe next year!

Good Friday

I am so used to the entrance of the priest and altar servers being one of singing that the silent entry carried with it a huge sense of mourning. This service like none other in the liturgical calendar holds the suffering of Christ's death in a very tangible way. Venerating the cross was a new form of worship for me and I liked how we were each invited to worship as we felt comfortable and I found it touching to offer my own prayer this way and to watch others as they offered theirs in their own way. I even like how we don't all chat after the service but exit in silence as it maintains a reverence and awe that is quite otherworldly.

Easter Sunday

There was a palpable sense of joy and I loved the warmth - flowers, vibrant hymns and busy feel of the church. It felt like good news was here! This was only made more by the Easter bunny's chocolate offering...' - Isabel