



# SAINT ANDREW'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

306 N. Division Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104 • (734) 663-0518 • [www.standrewsaa.org](http://www.standrewsaa.org)

**Sunday, May 10, 2020**

*The Fifth Sunday of Easter*

Dear Friends:

Happy Mother's Day to all those women who have ever mothered a child. And a deeply heartfelt "thank you" to all those whose responsibilities and duties have tripled and quadrupled during this stay at home time. I hope your dedication and sacrifice is recognized everyday. God bless you all.

**As I mentioned last week, the three Episcopal Bishops of the State of Michigan have prepared a new Pastoral Directive to guide us and our churches in a plan for reopening** when that opportunity begins to become available to us based on recommendations from public health and government officials. You can read the entire Pastoral Directive [HERE](#). The bishops and their staffs have developed this plan in consultation with church leadership throughout the country, state officials, and with the current guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The overall concern is for the health and safety of our people and limiting the spread of Covid-19.

**The plan for reopening is set out in three phases**; we are currently in **Phase One** with the church closed to the public and all our services and other activities being conducted electronically, through the mail and over the phone, with the exception of The Breakfast which continues to operate on a take-out basis. ***We will be in Phase One and continue to operate in this manner until further notice.***

**Phase Two** will see some of the office staff returning to work on a staggered schedule in order to maintain social distancing practices. Those members of the staff who can work from home will continue to do so and will be available by email and by leaving phone messages, as they are now. During Phase Two we will begin offering a weekly service posted on-line from the church. Instructions on how to access these on-line services will be sent out when these services become available. Because of the limitations on the

number of people who can gather in one place, we will not be able to open the church to the public for Sunday services or Church School. The eService Bulletins will continue to be made available each week and a paper copy will be mailed to those without home internet service. Other services, such as baptisms, weddings and funerals can resume, but must be limited to fewer than fifty people in attendance while following social distancing practices. Meetings and classes will continue to be held electronically.

**In Phase Three** the church will reopen for regular services throughout the week and in-person meetings and classes will resume with certain provisions in place to minimize the threat to anyone's health and safety. More specifics will be shared when we prepare to enter Phase Three.

This has been and will continue to be a great challenge for us all; I won't pretend it has been easy. The disappointment for plans not carried out, for expectations that could not be met has been hard on us all. Yet the message of the Good News continues to be proclaimed and lived out in our community. You are all a vital part of that network and I am deeply appreciative of it. I am reminded of advice I received over thirty years ago from the bishop who sent me to seminary: Say your prayers every day, especially on the days you don't feel like.

It is important to show up for God, because God is always ready to show up for us.

God bless, *Fr. Alan*

P. S. While many of you have keys to the church, I need to reemphasize that the church is closed. ***Please do not let yourself into any part of the church unless you are coming to serve Breakfast or have received permission directly from me.*** A few staff members are coming in on a very infrequent basis to maintain basic operations of the church. It is vital that we limit access to our buildings in order to keep everyone well and as safe as possible. Thank you for your cooperation and understanding.



**Prelude:** *Water Music Suite no. 1 in F Major, HWV 348*

III. Allegro; IV. Andante-Allegro      Georg Frederic Handel (1685-1759)

Hear the prelude as performed by Capella Istropolitana/Bohdan Warchal:  
<https://youtu.be/Pg0vSt5Bm8g>

## The Collect

Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlasting life: Grant us so perfectly to know your Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life, that we may steadfastly follow his steps in the way that leads to eternal life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## First Lesson: Acts 7:55-60

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Stephen gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. “Look,” he said, “I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of

God!” But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he died.

### **The Response:** Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16

Hear the entire psalm as performed by the Choir of Salisbury Cathedral:  
<https://youtu.be/z0CnriqJVbA>

- 1 In you, O Lord, have I taken refuge;  
let me never be put to shame; \*  
deliver me in your righteousness.
- 2 Incline your ear to me; \*  
make haste to deliver me.
- 3 Be my strong rock, a castle to keep me safe,  
for you are my crag and my stronghold; \*  
for the sake of your Name, lead me and guide me.
- 4 Take me out of the net that they have secretly set for me, \*  
for you are my tower of strength.
- 5 Into your hands I commend my spirit, \*  
for you have redeemed me,  
O Lord, O God of truth.
- 15 My times are in your hand; \*  
rescue me from the hand of my enemies,  
and from those who persecute me.
- 16 Make your face to shine upon your servant, \*  
and in your loving-kindness save me.”

### **The Epistle:** I Peter 2:2-10

Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God’s sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scripture:

“See, I am laying in Zion a stone,  
a cornerstone chosen and precious;  
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe,

“The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the very head of the corner”,

and

“A stone that makes them stumble,  
and a rock that makes them fall.”

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Once you were not a people,  
but now you are God’s people;  
once you had not received mercy,  
but now you have received mercy.

### **The Gospel:** John 14:1-14

Jesus said, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask

in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.”

**Anthem:** *As with Rosy steps the Morn (Theodora)*

G.F. Handel

*As with rosy steps the morn, advancing, drives the shades of night, so from virtuous toil well-borne, raise Thou our hopes of endless light. Triumphant saviour, Lord of day, Thou art the life, the light, the way!*

Hear the anthem as performed by Lorraine Hunt Lieberson:  
<https://youtu.be/IQIt1UxjvWU>

## The Prayers

Remember, O Lord, according to the multitude of your mercies, all who join with us in prayer, wherever they may be. We stand in need of your grace and comfort. Pour down upon us all the riches of your mercy, so that, preserved in soul and body, and steadfast in our faith, we may ever praise your wonderful and holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
*Amen.*

## Sermon

Fr. Alan Gibson

In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

“I’m not religious, but I am spiritual.”

We’ve all heard people say that. If I had a dollar for every time I’ve heard it, I’d be living in a beach house in Portugal, if I could get to Portugal. Some of you may have even said it yourselves, or at least thought it. If you have, I don’t hold it against you because I’ve certainly thought it when I’ve seen people doing and saying things in the name of Christianity that don’t seem very Christ-like to me. Religion can be an extremely complicated thing that can cause a great deal of confusion and anxiety, all of which tends to get blamed on God. The reason for that is that we (humanity) created religion. God didn’t. So, when people get mistreated by “religion” (and what religious institution doesn’t have some incident of that in their history?) it’s no wonder that people might be hesitant to embrace an organized religion.

Sometimes the foundational elements of a religion can be the greatest barriers to encouraging people to accept it. That can be seen with any religion that relies on an ancient text such as The Bible. That vast, multi-authored, ancient, sometimes contradictory text can be more of a hindrance than a help in bringing seekers into a relationship with God. Especially

when we focus in on particularities and use them for our goals, rather than looking at a larger picture that is meant to reveal something of the Divine. (The technical term for that is, “cherry picking.”) Take a passage from this morning’s gospel. Jesus is with his assembled disciples for the last time before his arrest and execution. A long discourse, covering four chapters in John’s gospel is devoted to a final set of teachings that are to guide and sustain those who have followed Jesus to this point, as well as those who would come after them. Jesus knows his disciples are uneasy and he wants to reassure them by telling them that they will in some fashion be reunited in a life free from fear and worry. He calls it his “Father’s house.” It’s a lovely image, but apprehension overcomes at least one of them, and Thomas asks how they are to get to his “Father’s house.” To which Jesus responds, “I am the way, the truth and the life.” Coming from the person they love above all others that sounds even more lovely. But Jesus doesn’t stop there: “No one comes to the Father except through me.”

That doesn’t quite clear it up for the disciples, but nor does it turn them off. They are devoted followers of a person, not a religion. The reason why most of them were with Jesus is that their religion didn’t satisfy them, and Jesus filled in a lot of those gaps. We might even see in these first followers of Jesus the origins of the ‘I’m not religious, but I am spiritual’ movement. Of course, eventually, that movement became a religion, and that’s when things started to get complicated. One of the complications that is inherent in almost all religions is that in the attempt to articulate and define a system of belief, religions can be exclusionary, even when they don’t mean to be.

“I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” Christianity, as a religion, has a history of using these two sentences to provide blessed assurance and disdainful judgement at the same time: Followers of Jesus are “in” and everyone else is “out,” as far as a place in the “Father’s house” goes. It seems clear cut. It also seems very un-Christ-like.

Jesus the person, the Christ, didn’t spend a lot of time administering loyalty tests or issuing membership cards. He did spend his life conferring blessings, and I think that is what he is doing here. In following Jesus as the way we are to be in the world, in trusting Jesus as the truth that gives us freedom, in experiencing Jesus as the life of the Spirit that connects our life with his, we come into an intimate relationship with the Father which is what he has wanted for everyone, all along.

Many religions and many spiritual systems make lofty claims that seek to connect its followers with the Divine, and there is great good to be found in almost all of them. But they are all human creations that are reflections of us and are by their nature imperfect and often complicated.

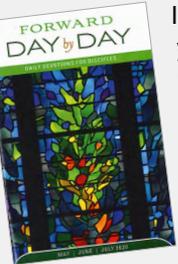
Jesus is the only one who offers to draw us into a relationship with Abba, the Father, a relationship of profound intimacy that the two of them have shared through eternity, and that he offers to us as the greatest of blessings. “If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” There may, indeed, be many ways to God, but only one leads to a loving Father where a home is prepared for us. The Incarnate Son offers himself as this blessing if we will simply accept it.

**Postlude:** *Music for the Royal Fireworks Suite, HWV 351* G. F. Handel  
IV. La Rejouissance

Hear the postlude as performed by Jonathan Scott, organ:  
<https://youtu.be/DpDe-fGQno>

## Announcements

**The May-July edition of the “Forward Day by Day” devotional booklets are now available.**



If you would like one sent to you, please send an email with your mailing address to: [agibson@standrewsaa.org](mailto:agibson@standrewsaa.org), or leave a message on the church voicemail at 734-663-0518, ext. 201.

**Deadline for the summer issue of *The Network***

The deadline for the June-July-August issue of *The Network* is Wednesday, May 20. Please send articles to [communications@standrewsaa.org](mailto:communications@standrewsaa.org). *The Network* will be available to the parish on Friday, May 29.

**Update your phone number!**

Using our current 2019-2020 parish phone directory, Fr. Alan has been calling parishioners to check on them during this unusual time. Unfortunately, he is finding that many of the land-line phone numbers are no longer in service.

**If you have disconnected your landline please be sure to give the office your cell phone number so that we can reach you!**

If you need to update your phone numbers - or any other part of your directory listing - please send an email to [Kathy at kmcpherson@standrewsaa.org](mailto:kmcpherson@standrewsaa.org).

