



Holy Week 2025

*'In very truth I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains that and nothing more; but if it dies, it bears a rich harvest.'* (John 12:24)

Dear friends,

I don't know how you approached Lent this year. Instead of giving something up, I chose a couple of books as my companions. One of the books, *Grain in Winter*, was recommended to me by John Howard. It's a collection of notes, reflections, experiences and quotations put together by Donald Eadie, a Methodist minister and former Chair of the Birmingham District. Some of you may know that Donald Eadie's ministry was deeply affected by a spinal condition which required long periods of convalescence and caused him to retire early. One of the most moving experiences of communion that I can recall was led by Donald who presided at the table reclining in a chair specially designed to support his back. As the title suggests, this is a book for people going through a time of transition, who are encountering unexpected change, who may be unsure of where they are going or what direction to take. There are many life experiences where we find ourselves in just such a place: parenting; changes in (un)employment; health; times of loss; separation; and so on. Churches can find themselves in similar places too.

Donald Eadie calls such people, 'Saturday people'. They (or we) are people trying to make sense of what it means to live through a time of change and transition which can often be messy and bewildering. The Saturday he refers to is the long Holy Saturday between Good Friday and Easter Sunday. A number of us within the district will be sharing a pilgrimage together on Holy Saturday this year, journeying from Chester-le-Street to Durham, stopping at Finchale Priory to share together in communion. As pilgrims we will all have different motivations for walking and each of us will bring with us our own unique set of circumstances, experiences and emotions. But we will also be carrying the journey from Good Friday to Easter Sunday within us as well, each of us seeking moments of grace, of insight, of support from others, of glimpses or experiences of transformation. In that sense we resemble the first disciples who made a similar journey from disillusionment and bewilderment to an unexpected hope.

This is pure Easter gospel. As Donald Eadie puts it:

*'The testimony is that out of the darkest of soil God brings the life we call 'resurrection', out of the ruins of the best made plans, out of bruised and disappointed people, God brings the new creation...within a place of fear and trembling God still opens up in the deep places a future that we could not plan.'*

*(Donald Eadie, Grain in Winter: Reflections for Saturday People, p.132)*

As you journey through Holy Week to Easter Sunday, I pray that you may know God's grace at work within you whatever you may be experiencing at this moment. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed.

Easter blessings,

Revd Richard Andrew

District Chair