

The Link

May 2021

The Church of Scotland Parishes of Ardoch and Blackford



Rev Mairi Perkins and Charles Robertson, Session Clerk, welcome
The Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland
Rt Rev Dr Martin Fair and his wife, Elaine
Who were with us to lead worship and to mark the
240th Anniversary of public worship in Ardoch Parish Church.

Ardoch Parish Church Scottish Charity Number SC000139
Blackford Parish Church Scottish Charity Number SC005594
ardochparishchurch.org | blackfordparishchurch.org
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Content for the July 2021 edition of *The Link* should be submitted to gordon.roy@outlook.com by the 30th of June for that issue to come out in mid-July and see us into early October.

From the Manse

Spring is upon us once again and yes, this is a time for new beginnings all around us. Our country is once again opening up, coming to life. A time when we can look ahead and see those new buds emerge and blossom in our world. New beginnings are exciting and they will bring new challenges, new obstacles to conquer and new paths to follow.

As a community of faith we are invited to new beginnings by following Christ. As individuals, we too are invited to new beginnings. They can be invitations that are dramatic in nature. They can be quiet and subtle. They can be invitations that linger for a while as we either try to ignore them or we ponder whether to accept them.

The most important thing is however to include Christ in your life, listening for his invitation, you will become stronger in your faith and be better able to make a difference in the lives of others. But this invitation also has challenges. In accepting the forgiveness of Christ, we are opening ourselves to new beginnings in our own lives. With Christ's spirit alive in us, we are ready for new invitations and new challenges. As we prepare to accept our new beginning, let us do so in the knowledge that we do so because we are loved. Let us be reminded that God is with us as we face the challenges ahead. Let us be comforted that we will receive God's blessings as we continue on our journey.

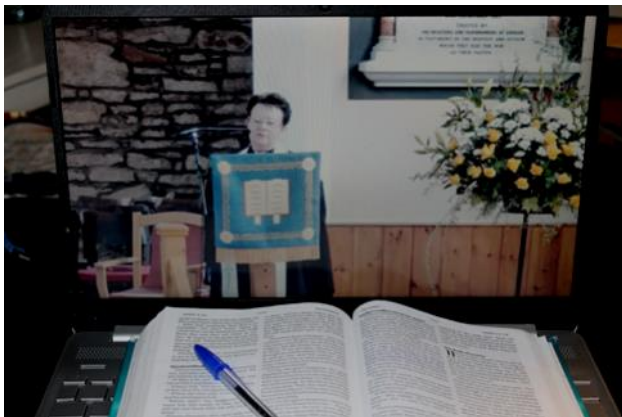
To paraphrase the first chapter of Paul's first letter to Timothy,

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.

God Bless.

Rev Mairi.

Mairi welcomes the Moderator to the 240th Anniversary Service in this image from the livestream of the service through the Ardoch Church website.





240th Anniversary Service

This is a very special year in the history of Ardoch Parish Church, as it is the 240th anniversary of the building being opened as a place of worship. On the 25th April a special service to mark this was conducted by the Right Rev Dr Martin Fair, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. We were very honoured that he chose to come to Ardoch as part of his visit to Perth Presbytery.

On 25th March, 1781, the Chapel of Ease, now known as Ardoch Parish Church was opened for public worship by Rev David Simpson.

Our photograph is the oldest one we own and shows the church with full length windows. In 1862 the galleries on the north and south sides were removed and some of the windows on the south side were built up. The pulpit instead of being in the centre of the church was placed at the east end. Later the entrance vestibule and choir chancel were added.

While the building may be of stone and mortar, it is the congregation it houses that forms the bond that has brought the faith community together over many generations.

We are very grateful to all our ministers throughout the years for keeping our faith community spiritually healthy and making the church's ministry truly impactful in the parish.

Dr Fair presented a framed tartan map of Scotland to the congregation. The tartan was specially designed last year to commemorate the 700th anniversary of the Declaration of Arbroath. The Moderator's own church is St Andrew's Parish Church, Arbroath.

As a token of the congregation's appreciation, Charles Robertson, Session Clerk, presented Dr Fair with a shepherd's crook, made and gifted by one of our members, John Black, Carsemeg Farm. Eleanor Thomas, our youngest member, presented Mrs Fair with a lovely basket of flowers arranged by another member, Mandy Rimmer.



Ardoch Kirk Session

Now that we are slowly moving forward from lockdown, the Kirk Session feels the time is right to open the Ardoch Church building for Sunday Worship. Now that most of our members have had the COVID vaccine, there is an air of confidence for worshippers to come back to church on a regular basis.

At our Anniversary Service the new audio-visual system was used to live-stream the service. We are very pleased to have been able to install this new equipment as this technology will enable us to engage and share worship within our cluster network. It will also enable us to livestream funeral services.

Christine Souter manages our website and keeps all the information up to date on a weekly basis. Please check the website to be kept informed of what is going on within our church family. Details of all our services can be found there. Mairi is recording a five minute chat on the website each month.

After fifteen years as an elder, Alex Anderson has decided to retire from active eldership. We thank Alex for his time as an active and committed elder and wish him well in his retirement.

Finally, I hope you will all support each other and play your part in helping to shape new ways of enabling our worship and witness, and helping us grow in Christ's Church so that it better serves our community.

Charles Robertson. Session Clerk.

Blackford Kirk Session

Over these winter months we've been working on our health.

- Our own spiritual health by discussing our personal discipleship experiences when Jesus' teaching and our relationships with others have changed the way we see God
- Our church health as we come through the pandemic and continue in our mission to inspire the people of Blackford and beyond with the Good News of Jesus Christ
- Our financial health in receiving the annual accounts
- Our global health in joining other churches to sign the Eco-Church pledge to respond to the climate crisis ahead of the COP26 summit by acting on our own engagement with fossil fuels
- Our building's health with significant upgrading of electrics

Gordon Roy, Joint Session Clerk



Edith's Hope Lent Fundraising Challenge

The Edith's Hope Team have been blown away by the support and generosity of so many people as the Lent Fundraising raised £15,000! As a result, a Medical Centre has been built and fully stocked and a full time nurse employed. This will provide 24 hour care for the orphaned children and will be equipped with isolation rooms for COVID infected patients. Thank you so much!

A number of supporters undertook this Lent Fundraising Challenge in various ways including Josh who undertook a 326km run [the distance from Entebbe airport, Kampala to the Edith's Hope project in Ngora) and Jane who swam the distance of the English Channel in her back garden! Charles and Irene Robertson's daughter, Pam Penman, says:

Yes! Finished my Ugandan (beans and rice) diet Lent challenge for Edith's Hope in time to celebrate Emma and Angus's 6th birthday with pizza in the garden. Overwhelmed with the generosity of so many; I had a target of £400 and raised over £2,537! Thanks so much for all your support!

Irene Robertson.

Ardoch Fundraising Team

With us now continuing into 2021 with COVID restrictions and lockdowns the Fundraising Team's activities have been non-existent as can only be expected. It is hoped to have some form of fundraising activity going forward, perhaps the Duck Race in the summer but it will of course be subject to government restrictions.

Meanwhile, I have been advised that Alex Anderson is retiring from the Fundraising Team this month and I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge all the hard work and support he has given over many years. He has been a lively stalwart supporter to the Fundraising Team and will be sorely missed, especially as the BBQ King at the Duck Races! I hope he enjoys his well deserved retirement; all good wishes from the Team.

Maureen James, Team Co-ordinator

Blackford Ways and Means

We are hopeful that it may be possible for us to return to organising some form of social activities later this year obviously subject to COVID restrictions. In the meantime please continue to stay safe and we'll look forward to getting together again when the time is right. If friends or neighbours want Sunshine Bags, please contact Jane Roy. **Sandy Marshall & Laura Peacock**

Hot Chocolate anyone?

Ardoch Youth Group

With much planning by Daniel Thomas, we continued to meet via Zoom on the first Friday of every month, Good Friday's went ahead a week later. Now with the new guidelines coming into force we are hoping to meet up in the church garden on the 7th of May with our regular Hot Chocolate crew who have kept us entertained during the past year at our monthly Zoom meetings.



There will be the usual fun activities, a wee firepit and BBQ, all suitably supervised of course, and all will be asked to bring their own cup. If the weather is against us we will try again the following week. We will start earlier at 6.30 to make the most of the daylight and to avoid the early evening chill.

We are hopeful of meeting up on the 4th of June, once again in the garden will make this a 'come and see' meeting and invite those currently in P5-7 to come along and meet the team and see what Hot Chocolate is all about. If numbers allow we aim to open it up to youngsters in P5-7 who live in the parish but attend other schools.

Blackford Youth Group

We've been meeting on Zoom over the winter months taking in quizzes, games and chat. We've used *Rooted* material from SU to focus our thoughts on how we're finding our identity, worth and security in these times as much as any other time. The *Personal Journal* tasks open to the group between sessions include mapping out typical days, writing to God and reading what he might say to us.

During the school holidays we managed a face-to-face meeting in the church grounds with BBQs and fire pits and we'll continue to mix online with face to face meetings as not everyone is quite ready for that degree of mixing that youthwork allows over household mixing.



We look forward to re-establishing the tradition of the Hot Chocolate Group putting on a Big Brekkie during Christian Aid Week. It will be takeaway only this year on the morning of Saturday 15th May when Blackford is having its Safari Sale (a car boot or table sale around the village). Drop in to pick up a bacon roll or coffee.

I rejoiced with those who said to me,

Sunday Services

“To join regularly with my fellow Christians in worship on the Lord's Day” is one of the promises that we make when we join the church. So we've not taken decisions lightly as Kirk Sessions on when to open and close buildings over the past year, even if we have worked hard together to provide live or recorded services online and in print.

As this issue of The Link comes out, the Ardoch building has just reopened for Sunday Services at 10:00am. Blackford will follow at 11:30am from the 16th of May.

Sunday 9th May is our Communion Sunday. It remains easier to share this at home than in church buildings, so it's a joint service on Zoom that day.



We then plan to offer an online service each Sunday by live-streaming out of Ardoch at 10:00am and the detailed Order of Service in print or PDF will also be available for the time being until we are all gathering again.

We're starting to think about our usual pattern of joint services over the summer months. We all need to get out of the habit of not attending worship together so closing buildings when they are warm might not be an encouragement to that. We'll keep you informed as decisions are made whether face to face, online or in print.

Flower Rota	Ardoch	Blackford
2 May	C Souter	Online
9 May	Joint Communion Service on Zoom	
16 May	G Scott	Jane Roy
23 May	J Kemp	Jeannette Barr
30 May	M James	Sheila Wight
6 June	S Brannen	Doreen Taylor
13 June	S Dawson	Rita Marshall
20 June	M Hay	Pat Graham
27 June	A Walker	Sheila McDonald
4 July		Moira Hanslip
11 July		Jacqui Crawford
18 July		Jeannette Barr
25 July		Ella McEwan



"let us go to the house of the Lord." (Ps 122:1)

Here is the Lectionary pattern of Bible readings that we draw from each week. We don't use them all, but if you don't have any other pattern of regular Bible reading then this gives a breadth of reading over each week to experience the richness, variety and authority of the Word of God.

Date	Readers Ardoch/ Blackford	Lectionary readings for that week
2 May	Liz Patterson Thelma McNaught	Acts 8:26-40; Psalm 22:25-31; 1 John 4:7-21; John 15:1-8
9 May	Peter Scott Jeannette Barr	Acts 10:44-48; Psalm 98; 1 John 5:1-6; John 15:9-17
16 May	John Souter Gordon Roy	Acts 1:15-17, 21-26; Psalm 1; 1 John 5:9-13; John 17:6-19
23 May	Irene Robertson Jane Roy	Ezekiel 37:1-14; Ps 104:24-35; Acts 2:1-21; John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15
30 May	Pat Duncan Richard Bolton	Isaiah 6:1-8; Psalm 29; Romans 8:12-17; John 3:1-17
6 June	Lyndsey Thomas Gala Queens	1 Samuel 8:4-20; Psalm 138; 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1; Mark 3:20-35
13 June	Michael Boxer Laura Peacock	1 Samuel 15:34 - 16:13; Psalm 20; 2 Corinthians 5:6-17; Mark 4:26-34
20 June	Maureen James Isla Peacock	1 Samuel 17; Psalm 133; 2 Corinthians 6:1-13; Mark 4:35-41
27 June	Phyllis Macleod Jacqui Crawford	2 Samuel 1:1, 17-27; Psalm 130; 2 Corinthians 8:7-15; Mark 5:21-43
4 July	Sally Young Thelma McNaught	2 Samuel 5:1-5, 9-10; Psalm 48; 2 Corinthians 12:2-10; Mark 6:1-13
11 July	Charles Robertson Sheila McDonald	2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12b-19; Psalm 24; Ephesians 1:3-14; Mark 6:14-29
18 July	Sue Crorie David McDonald	2 Samuel 7:1-14a; Psalm 89:20-37; Ephesians 2:11-22; Mark 6:30-56
25 July	John Graham	2 Samuel 11:1-15; Psalm 14; Ephesians 3:14-21; John 6:1-21

Should you be unable to find a replacement please contact John Graham (Blackford) on (01764) 218734 or jag_annfield@hotmail.com or Christine Souter (Ardoch) on csouterbraco@aol.com or 07767 380011.

Blackford Moving Forward: Root66

As longer, warmer days draw closer, we'll be focusing our efforts outdoors in our church garden to create our very own "Root66", a biblically themed, reflective, praise and fellowship space for the village community to use and enjoy.

This exciting garden project plans to incorporate a meandering path made up of 66 stepping stones, representing one for each book of the Bible. We will also identify and plant flowers and shrubs as mentioned in the Bible and there will be a BBQ and praise area too. To complement this space, we'll also look to include lighting and water features in addition to giving more emphasis on our wildlife habitat.

As with most gardens, "Root66" will be an on-going and evolving development over the coming years but we do need helpers willing to get involved with either giving advice and ideas or the more physical assistance please!

If you feel you can offer your support in this unique project, please contact Sandy Marshall on 682354.

Blythswood Shoe Box Appeal

Anyone still wanting to knit? We are looking for snoods/neck warmers to put into the shoe boxes this year. It's very easy pattern: size 6 needles, 50 stitches per row, knit until it reaches 18 inches, cast off and sew together the cast on/cast off ends. Any colour of double knitting wool.

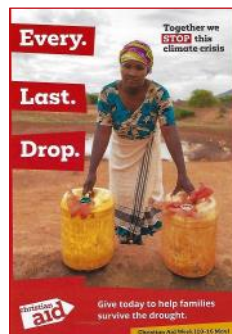


Other items we put into the boxes are gloves/scarves/hats, toiletries, etc. The complete list will be available shortly but if you have any questions please get in touch with Shona Stewart in Blackford. Wrapped shoe boxes will be available from the church.

Christian Aid Week (10-16 May)

As well as the Hot Chocolate Big Brekkie, all Blackford households will receive a Christian Aid envelope which is designed not to be collected. Instead these donation envelopes will be labelled asking to be returned through the church or certain other letter boxes.

If you'd like to help deliver these envelopes please speak to Jane Roy.



Ardoch Church of Scotland Guild

Since the January Link we have had two zoom meetings. Not all members have been able to participate, but those who have been able to attend online meetings seem to have enjoyed the experience.



In February we had a speaker from the Scottish charity 'Malawi Fruits' who are active in northern Malawi. Their influence on local young people has been tremendous. The charity has enabled young farmers to be more sustainable, by providing a means for irrigating crops. That essentially has meant that several harvests are achieved each year with better quantity and quality crops. The improved income helps to pay for schooling, and also for improving living accommodation among other things. A donation of £170 was sent to Guild Projects for the charity.

Our speaker in March was Liz Paterson, who talked about her visit to India. This was well illustrated with photographs Liz took whilst visiting a children's home near Pune. These are children of girls who have been trafficked and work as prostitutes in Pune. The children are all well looked after, and all have the hope of a bright future. The home also houses some girls who have been rescued from prostitution. This presentation gave some interesting background to one of our Guild projects – Seema's Project - and we are to make a donation to this charity in response to Liz's talk.

Two copies of a book by Avril Duncan are circulating among Guild members, so expect a 'pass it on' copy through your letterbox at some point. The book is a novel – in fact it is a thriller - and is based on the reality of the exploitation and trafficking of children from places like India. It is an eye opener about a sordid underworld we know little about.

It has just been announced that Guild Projects for 2021-24 will be in Tanzania, Scotland, Brazil, Uganda and South East Asia. You will get information about these projects in June's *Keeping You in the Loop*.

Our Guild meeting on May 6th is to be another zoom meeting, when our minister Mairi Perkins will give a presentation about her visit to Israel, called "Come See, Go Tell". Details about how to join the zoom meeting will be published on the church website and will go out to members in your *Keeping You in the Loop* by hand, by mail or email and on the church website.

Everyone is invited to attend Guild meetings – whether or not you are a member of the Guild. Do come along and join in.

Pat Duncan, Secretary, Ardoch Church of Scotland Guild.

Ardoch IT Update



The final part of the project installation has now been completed, just in time for the livestreaming of this week's visit (left) of the Moderator of the General Assembly to celebrate the start of worship in the Church some 240 years ago and the start of worship again in the Church after COVID restrictions have been eased.

The Wi-Fi connection has now been installed in the Vestry and the Church. Two cameras have also been installed – a Pan / Tilt / Zoom type has been fixed below the balcony above the aisle. A fixed camera has been installed below the balcony on the right hand side facing the front. This fixed camera can zoom only.

A video transmitter / receiver has been installed to allow camera feed from the fixed camera to be sent to the Hall. This was used on Sun 25th by Sanctus Media to send a livestream feed to the Hall.

Sanctus Media were in charge of livestreaming the service with the Moderator, and we hope to learn from the experience as it is a lot of new technology to come to terms with. We will be trying to livestream further services while the restriction on number of attendees applies.

With this additional equipment we are looking to recruit some people to help with its use. So please get in touch with either Christine Souter or Sue Crorie if you are happy working with new technology.

We are immensely grateful to Gordon and Christine for providing us with such wonderful online worship. They have both put a lot of effort into preparing the services and maintaining and improving the websites and we are truly blessed to have them in our parishes.

Ardoch IT Team

Blackford's Burns Supper was enjoyed by around 70 people this year as we went online and broadened our guest list. Burns would have loved Zoom: It's the giftie that let's us "see ourself as ithers see us."



Ardoch Pastoral Care (Outreach Team)

Our small dedicated team, along with Mairi, take responsibility for the Pastoral Care in our Parish. I hope you have found our support during the pandemic helpful and comforting.

Good communication is vital with our work in the community, so we can deal with situations as they arise. The team has been phoning and emailing regularly to keep in touch with folk who are ill, anxious or lonely. This is vital to ensure we can make a difference to their lives and more importantly, that they are remembered. Flowers have been delivered to people affected by bereavement, illness or recovering from surgery. The team delivered Easter cards.

The team are keen to try their new recipes and would very much like to re-start the community lunches in October, if the COVID guidelines allow this to happen.

I refer to Jesus' commandment "to love God" and "to love our neighbour" The Pastoral Care team tries to fulfil this. May God's rich blessings be with you all.

Team contacts are: Charles 880947, Barbara 880509, Lillian 880483, Heather 880347, Anne 880347.

Ardoch Community Food Boxes

The Ardoch Development Trust and P & K Council continue to support the Give and Take boxes in both Braco and Greenloaning. There is still a need for this practical help in our communities and we are encouraged to support this initiative whenever we can. Most welcome are: Dried foods, tins, jars, toiletries and cleaning products. Thank you!

Bible Study

Having been through Ezekiel (it's much more than dry bones) and a Lent series using Mark's Gospel to speak into the experiences of another lockdown Easter, we're now heading to the second Prayer Course, *Unanswered Prayer*, with Pete Greig and Gemma Hunt.



Describing itself as "an opportunity to process life's most painful questions," may seem a challenge to join, but you can access all the material on the prayercourse.org website if you want to try it for yourself. Join us on Zoom at 8pm most Tuesdays. Check the Blackford website for details and link.

Church Finances

Ardoch Parish Church and Blackford Parish Church are two separate charities despite having the same minister. The scale of the challenges are slightly different although the principles are the same; a dramatic and prolonged fall in offerings and fundraising income during the pandemic. Blackford members had a more detailed letter accompanying the last issue of The Link.

Firstly, thank you to all those who have looked at their pattern of giving over the past year and adjusted when not able to physically put something "in the plate." Some have managed to make changes online; others have handed envelopes to elders on visits and others have dropped a gift through letter boxes.



Secondly as we move to regular, physical gatherings, we want to highlight how to turn intention into action to maintain support.

Gifts in envelopes can be made in the plate as you arrive at a service or dropped through the letter box of Blackford Parish Church or Jeannette Barr in Laurel Cottage, Moray Street, Blackford or Ardoch Treasurer, Stuart Brannen, at 12 Commander's Grove, Braco.

Ask for a paper form (mandate) to set up a Direct Debit or Standing Order with your church to provide that regular, planned giving.

On Blackford's *Worship Without Meeting* webpage, Blackford members can find a link to make a card donation through the Church of Scotland website.

Use your own internet banking to make one-off gifts or set up a Standing Order with your church bank details.

Contact your Treasurer, Session Clerk or the elder you know best to help you help your church. Some phone numbers are on page 2.

Finally, remember that our giving is a response to what Christ has done for us, not what the church does for us.

Do you shop on any of these websites?

**Amazon, Tesco, Asda, M&S, Baker Ross, Currys PC World, Trainline, Screwfix, Lakeland, Just Eat, Moonpig, ebay ...
Anywhere online really!**

You could be raising funds at no cost to yourself for Ardoch (Easy Fundraising) or Blackford (AmazonSmile and GAYLS) by clicking on to your shopping site through one of these sites. It's small percentages but it adds up when you register your church as your charity.



Give as you Live™



How well connected are you?

Not so much socially, or your internet provider, but as we considered in one of our recent services, how well connected are we to the true vine—Jesus Christ? With all the challenges we've been through, this year's global Thy Kingdom Come programme is described as,

**"a gift to refresh our faith
in the time between Ascension Day and Pentecost."**

It's an opportunity and resource to help us wait and pray with the prospect of being renewed by the Spirit and made new in Christ. That's why we've included copies of the Prayer Journal and the re-issued Digital Family Prayer Adventure Map with your copy of The Link.



We'd encourage everyone to take time over that period to use the Prayer Journal—you're allowed to start before the 13th of May if you wish—reading, praying and jotting things down as we go.



If the digital map is not for you, then perhaps send it on to grandchildren, nieces, nephews or those you stood with when presented for baptism. Younger children will also enjoy the Cheeky Pandas films and activity pack.

There are newly produced Youth reflections in YouTube clips.

www.thykingdomcome.global is the site to visit for these ideas and more but our real starting point is prayer. Enjoy the refreshments.

Easter 2021

Our second "lockdown Easter" gave us another feel for the life of the early disciples who were to be found on the evening of that first Easter Day "with the doors locked for fear." We've been sharing the good news in various ways online and in the streets this year as the photos over the page remind us.



The poem is from Dundonald Church (search "Free: A Poem for Easter" on YouTube). Hopefully COVID references will not be topical next year, so we share it now. All our recorded Lent, Easter and Pilgrim's Progress content can be revisited at the Blackford Parish Church YouTube channel (Search "Blackford Parish").

Freddie once sang that he wants to break free;
That pretty much captures the mood, you'll agree.
No hugs, haircuts or holidays for over a year.
The pubs and shops shut, no raucous cheer
Of fans at the game, of kids at school:
"Stay home. Mask on. 2 metre rule!"

But the lockdowns, the measures...they're not without cause.
They've been there because death just will not pause
It's assault on us all through this miserable virus
Death is the reason they've had to require us
To not see our family or friends for so long;
It's death that's the problem - that's what's gone wrong.

So here, then, is the issue, you see:
When all this is over - when they say "You are free!"
When we rip off our masks and we hug once again
When we dance and we sing and we gather with friends
I can't wait...but hold on.
Because despite no restrictions - death hasn't gone.
Virus or not - death wins the day.
Which kinda dampens our 'Hip hip hooray!'.
Unless there was a way which we could be free
From even the grip of death's tyranny.

But how, you may ask, can we beat the grim reaper?
Well that is the wonderful message of Easter.
Jesus, Son of God, came to earth as a man
'The Word became flesh' - it was always God's plan
And the reason he came was to die for our sin
To swap places with us so that we could begin
The life we were made for - free from our shame
At the cross, Jesus took on himself all our blame -
The perfect one coming to die in our place
So that for all who trust him - they're given God's grace.

But the story of Easter doesn't end there
Jesus died, he was buried - but no-one could prepare
For what happened next: He rose from the dead
Meaning death no longer has to fill us with dread
Because on that Easter Sunday, Jesus broke free
The grave couldn't hold him! And if you believe
That Jesus died in your place and then rose
Then listen to this - here's how it goes:
You too no longer have to fear death;
Whenever it is that you take your last breath
Because Jesus has beaten it - here's your guarantee
Come to Jesus this Easter. Believe, and be free.

