

## Readings after Easter 2026: Year A principal readings

### Introduction

Over the next few weeks, beginning with Easter Sunday, we are looking at the stories within the narrative of the lectionary Bible readings leading up to Pentecost.

As we read, we can consider where we fit into the story, how our encounter of faith, our meeting Jesus in our lives, has affected us and changed us. What would we write down as our story? Perhaps over the next few weeks, we might write down our journey of faith, our encounter with Jesus, and how our Lord impacts our lives day by day. We can also consider how we might share the Gospel story, the story of Jesus, with those around us and how it might impact their lives. Each week, we consider the principal readings for the day and what they might be saying to us. Allow the reading to speak to you throughout the week and let the story open before you.

There are two readings for each day. If you only want to concentrate on one reading, that's fine; maybe one reading speaks to you more than the other, that's okay.

### **Easter Sunday, 5 April**

**Alleluia Christ is risen, He is risen indeed, Alleluia.**

**Easter 2, 12 April**            Acts 2:14a and 22-32,

*Read the account and think about what stands out to you before reading on.*

Peter and the disciples have a story to tell. The one whom they had followed had been crucified, died, and buried, but they had all seen the risen Christ stand before them and commission them to tell others that he is alive. Firstly, they are filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, and then they go out before the crowd to tell the story, which amazes their listeners, and many respond to their call to follow Jesus for themselves.

Peter addresses the crowd and tells his story; Peter and the disciples are witnesses of the fulfilment of prophecy. Jesus has fulfilled Old Testament prophecies about the coming of a special person called the Messiah. It is a fulfilment of a long story that they are called to share, that this Jesus, who was dead and buried, is now alive and risen from the dead. That's surely worth sharing.

What do we know of the Big Story? Do we see how Jesus is the fulfilment of the OT story too? You could write down or draw as pictures the key moments of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

John 20:19-31

*Read the account and think about what stands out to you before reading on.*

Jesus appears to the disciples in the upper room and to Thomas. The story of 'Doubting Thomas', as he is often called, may be familiar. Yet through his doubts, his faith grew. Yes, he was told 'blessed are those who believe without seeing', but he was still blessed by the Lord. We haven't seen Jesus physically, and we believe and receive the blessing of being one who believes without seeing. Tell the Lord about your doubts and fears and allow the presence of the risen Lord to dispel fear and doubt.

Are we fearful of being the storytellers? The witnesses? Do we have doubts like Thomas? How do we address those doubts? Do we bring them to the Lord?

**Easter 3, 19 April** Acts 2:14a and 36-41,

*Read the account and think about what stands out to you before reading on.*

Peter continues the story at Pentecost. Here, Peter is addressing those who have some knowledge of scripture and prophecy, those of the Jewish faith. He called them to consider what has been said and invites a response. We may know many people who have previously been part of the Church, perhaps as a child or teenager, and have a knowledge of the Christian faith. They may even have had an active Christian life, but for some reason have let it slip away and no longer come to worship. Peter may well be addressing, people of faith like these, for whom the impact of Jesus in their lives has waned. They know the story, they may even have lived the life, maybe they need to hear the call again from the Lord who loves them and us.

We may know many who at some point in their lives have been active members of God's family, God's Church. Like us, they have been baptised as a child or as an adult and maybe confirmed their faith in confirmation. Firstly, how important is that sign of baptism to us? Baptism is sometimes referred to as 'an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace'. Going on from that, let us pray for those who, for some reason, are no longer an active part of the worshipping community. Let us pray that the grace of God may be reawakened in them, and whatever the reason has caused this may be healed.

Luke 24:13-35

The Emmaus Road story

We are all on a journey of faith; none of us knows all the answers, and each of us has our questions. As we travel along that road, let us take it one step at a time, as the old song says; 'One more step along the road I go'. As we do that, let's open our eyes to see that our Lord Jesus walks beside us day by day and will listen to all the questions we raise along the way.

Are we trying to take it all in, the Jesus story and what it means? The two on the road to Emmaus found that their engagement with Jesus made their hearts burn within them; it gave them great joy and hope. What joy and hope does the story give to us?

**Easter 4, 26 April**          Acts 2:42-47

*Read the account and think about what stands out to you before reading on.*

The devotion of the early Church was something that those outside the Church were impressed with. A quote from an early Church leader called Tertullian observed that those looking on said, 'See how they (the Christians) love one another, they are ready even to die for one another.' The lives and devotion of the early Christian Church spoke of Jesus without words. It told the story by actions as well as words. They met for teaching, fellowship, prayers, and the breaking of bread. Awe came upon them all. They worshipped together, they shared all they had, and because of this, their number grew day by day.

What impact does the message of Jesus, the Gospel, have upon us individually and as a local church community? What impact should it have upon the wider Church, both within our own Church of England and our relationships with our Christian family in other denominations? What about those outside the church community? How do we relate to them? Do they see us love one another with the same love that Christ loved us with?

John 10:1-10

*Read the account and think about what stands out to you before reading on.*

Jesus said, "I am the gate of the sheepfold", and he also said, 'I am the Good Shepherd,' resonating with Psalm 23, 'The Lord is my Shepherd.' In this account, Jesus is speaking to the scribes and pharisees, those who should know and hear the voice of the Lord in their lives. Yet they seemed deaf to his voice. Jesus uses the example of sheep and a sheepfold to make his point. If you are my sheep, listen to my voice and respond. Sheep know the voice of their shepherd and run from those who are not. Jesus is the shepherd and the safe place we run to, the sheepfold, a place where life is lived in abundance.

Do we understand the concept of 'abundant life'? How has our life changed upon our decision to follow Christ, or if you have never known yourself outside of his loving care, how have we changed over the years? Is life as a Christian easy or hard? Have we heard the voice of the Lord and gone through the 'gate' and found pasture? The disciples were called by name, and you have been called and have been given a new name, as Isaiah says (Isaiah 43:1). In the resurrection garden, Mary heard the Lord call her name; this moment changed her life forever. Listen for the voice of the Lord calling out to you.

**Easter 5, 3 May**                      Acts 7:55-60

*Read the account and think about what stands out to you before reading on.*

Stephen had declared the story to those who were listening, and for him, it cost him his life. As the Church grew and developed, the opposition grew more intense. The infant Christian Church was being sought out, and some were trying to destroy it, even Saul, who would become Paul. However, the faith of the believers would not be daunted; they stood firm and declared in word and deed that Jesus is Lord. For us, opposition may be a little less severe, but it is there. Let us stand firm and be true and faithful to the one who has called us.

Have we experienced opposition in our walk with Jesus? Has telling the story been costly? Do our family and friends share our beliefs? What do we do when the 'stones' start to fly? Being a Christian in this country may not lead to physical persecution, but do we realise that some Christians in other parts of the world suffer greatly, even to the point of death, as Stephen did? Let us pray for them and for boldness to declare our faith as the disciples did when they faced opposition. (Acts 4:23-31)

John 14:1-14

*Read the account and think about what stands out to you before reading on.*

Jesus comforts the disciples, telling them that he is "The Way, The Truth, and The Life." This reading is one of preparation. Jesus knows the disciples will need guidance soon, and he wants them to know where that guidance can be found. The story of their lives will contain moments when their hearts will be troubled, when they need hope and direction. Jesus points them to himself as the one who will show and is the way, the one who gives and is the truth, and the one who gives life.

Does the story help us when faced with guidance in our lives? What do we do? Where do we go? How should I live? Can we recall experiences of knowing God guiding us and showing us the way? Have we faced difficult decisions when guidance

is being given from all directions? What do we do? Do we ask for the guidance and direction from our Jesus?

Having done so, have we experienced that supernatural guidance of God revealing the way, the truth, and the life to us personally, and experienced the joy of seeing the way open before us, leading into life?

**Easter 6, 10 May**, Acts 17:22-31, Paul preaches in the Areopagus in Athens

*Read the account and think about what stands out to you before reading on.*

Paul bravely steps out of his comfort zone, preaching in the synagogues, into the arena of the Areopagus, where he finds altars to many deities worshipped by the people in Athens. He carefully observes that there is an altar to an unknown god. He uses that as his starting point and then goes on to point them to the God of the Christians, even using quotes of their poetry to open their eyes and minds to the truth. He tells them of the resurrection of Jesus, and from his telling of the story, some believe.

How do we communicate the Gospel today? Paul found himself surrounded by people with differing beliefs and ideas. Yet Paul, undaunted, turned to what they knew to help them understand the truths of the Gospel and what Jesus had done for us. He used the poetry of the day to point them to Jesus. If we look at modern-day stories and poetry, even the lyrics of pop songs, some of those words point us to the questions people are asking about faith today. Some of what we read may be uncomfortable or even trite to us, but how can we address the questions people ask and point them to the one who lived among us, died and rose again to give us life in all its fullness?

John 14:15-21

Jesus tells of the coming of the Holy Spirit and gives the greatest commandment, 'to love one another'. As well as eight other fruits, we are told the fruit of the Spirit is love (Galatians 5:22-26). Paul also exhorts the Corinthian Christians that even though they may demonstrate the many gifts of the Holy Spirit, what use are they if they don't have love? In I Corinthians 13, John tells us that, 'God so loved the world that he sent his only son' (John 3:16). Love is the driving force of the Gospel. What is the first truth of the Gospel story we are called to share with those around us? God loves them, for as John would say in his letter. God is love. (1 John 4:7-12) The Gospel is a story of love. God's love.

Do we feel weak or inadequate as a Christian? Who doesn't? Don't despair, we have the promise of the Holy Spirit, the comforter, the one who empowers us and seals us

as God's children. Let us also know that we are loved with an unconditional, sacrificial, everlasting love, a love beyond measure. That love is given to us to strengthen us and to be shared, even with our enemies, Jesus would say. Can we do that? Reflect on how much God loves you.

**Easter 7, 17 May, (Sunday after Ascension) Acts 1:6-14**

*Read the account and think about what stands out to you before reading on.*

Jesus ascends into heaven, and the disciples are told that they are witnesses. Jesus is now leaving the earth and commissions his disciples for the task ahead of sharing the story, sharing Jesus with the world. They will not be alone. Jesus promises to be with them and us always, and we are filled with the Holy Spirit, the very presence of God, to enable us to go into all the world and witness to what we have received from God ourselves.

We are back to the beginning, 'You are my witnesses'. What is our witness statement, what's our story? Our encounter with Jesus? How has our life been affected and changed by our decision to follow his call? Did you write your story down? Maybe share stories with one another, one to one, or if you are able, share them with your congregation. Send them to the diocesan communications team for sharing more widely. See how it encourages you and others to see how God works in and through us day by day.

John 17:1-11

*Read the account and think about what stands out to you before reading on.*

Jesus prays for the disciples, and us. Jesus knows the road ahead for his Church is going to have its difficulties, but it is now the job of the disciples, which includes us, to make Jesus known in the world. He is praying that as they believe, so may others believe, and that the disciples may be protected. He prayed for this because of his love for them and he knew that the story needed to continue through them.

Think of someone you know who you long to accept the love of God in Christ for themselves; a member of your family, a friend, a neighbour, or a colleague. Maybe pray for the street on which you live and any you know who are facing difficulties, for peace on our streets and in our land. Let us pray for one another and for those we long would know this love of God for themselves as we go out in the power of the Holy Spirit to live and work to God's praise and Glory, as our liturgy says.

**Pentecost Sunday 24 May**

May the Holy Spirit fill you with power and love to enable you to go into the world of which you are a part and share the love of Christ in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Come, Holy Spirit.