

VIEW FROM THE HEIGHTS March 2022

Greetings,

When I was studying at Harvard Divinity School, Bengt and I worshipped at the University's Memorial Church. Like countless other students and faculty, we were richly blessed by its then minister - the Rev. Professor Peter Gomes. The wisdom of one of American Baptist Churches' most famous preachers has remained a continual source of guidance and grace.

One of Peter's specialities was Lent. He believed in the importance of preparing our hearts for Easter. But, instead of advocating giving something up for Lent ("*a diet disguised as discipleship!*"), Peter encouraged us to take something on. His recommendations included "study" (of the Bible or a religious work), "silence" (as part our devotions), and "service."

I have tried all three as Lenten practices and strongly endorse them. Your Easter will be the richer. But two years of Covid have left most of us feeling exhausted. This might be the Lent to "let go" rather than "take on."

A talk given by the Dean of St. David's Cathedral (St. David's, Wales) for Lent 2021 offered a different path for our 40-day journey to the Empty Tomb. Drawing on medieval pilgrimages to the Cathedral, the Very Revd. Dr. Sarah Rowland-Jones spoke of Lent as a time of rest, reflection and receiving.

She said that pilgrims paused before reaching St David's.

"They rested and recovered from the hardships of all they'd experienced, and washed off the grime. They reflected on their outer and inner journey. And they prepared themselves for the day they'd walk into the Cathedral and stand on holy ground. [So that] they would feel ready to receive all that God might have for them, before they returned, changed, to ordinary life."

This is the perfect prescription for our bodies and our souls after 24 months of pandemic living. We need to rest from all the stresses (& illnesses) we have experienced. To wash off the "grime" of masking, isolation, and vaccine controversies.

To reflect on these struggles and recognize that, despite all evidence to the contrary, God was with us.

Two years ago, Covid-19 virus interrupted our Lenten journey. This Lent, there is a light at the end of the viral tunnel. Praise God!

Let us take these forty days to **rest** our souls, **reflect** on our pandemic journey, and open our hearts wide to **receive** the many blessings that God is preparing for us this Easter.

May Easter find your spirits restored and your hearts beginning to feel the raindrops...
Brenda

***"I will send down the showers in their season;
they shall be showers of blessing."***

Ezekiel 34: 26b

ⁱ the Very Revd. Dr. Sarah Rowland-Jones, "Rest, Reflect, Receive," stdavidscathedral.org.uk