

Ministers Monthly Musings

Ah, “the grocers apostrophe”, or in this case the perplexing puzzle of punctuation as the monthly musing from the manse.

Having just submitted my dissertation, 12,000 words I am aware that I tend to write as I speak. Lots of long sentences, with commas to help explain, break down, and expand my thoughts and possibly not enough full stops. The art of the English language I am afraid to say still remains a mystery.

I may have even intentionally left out the apostrophe from the title (*if I really understood what it is meant to do*)

This is the conundrum of the written word; we need help from these punctuation marks to help convey tone, meaning, and intention. These clever (and at times confusing) little symbols are invisible to us when we hear the spoken word, as body language, tone of voice and emotions all help our brains process the information, the personal testimonies we are hearing.

So my monthly musing is this: *What punctuation should we put around the Easter event*

Jesus dies?

A question mark suggests confusion, is this right? The man who spoke about God, love, forgiveness, kindness, the man who could heal others, save others, command creation to obey his word, could not convince those with power and influence that he was sent by God, was God with them?

Jesus dies.

A full stop shows an ending. A new paragraph or thought is expected to follow a full stop and during that first Easter the disciples understanding of God's relationship to them and to their rabbi Jesus changes, and what they saw and heard as a full stop something dramatically new comes to life.

Jesus dies;

A semi colon signifies that there is still more information to come; a pause; and in a breathtaking step of faith Jesus's disciples come to grasp the eternal significance of his life as the risen, cosmic Christ. Their awareness of God's presence is transformed, their perspective on God's Kingdom purpose is expanded, their understanding of what God's love requires of them is heightened.

Christ is risen?

Today, we understand that the early church was not created by, built upon, or motivated by a question mark. This is not to say that questions about the events of Easter are irrelevant or unimportant; of course they matter and of course they can be pressing and perplexing. It is not to deny the place of mystery and uncertainty either. Jesus meets two disciples as they

walk to Emmaus, questioning the events they witnessed and he walks alongside them, revealing himself through the stories of scripture and through the breaking of bread.

Christ is risen.

Only an empowering encounter with the risen Jesus can adequately explain what the gospels portray unfolding from Easter Day onwards in the lives of the disciples, from receiving words of peace as they meet in the week after, shielded and afraid (through locked / closed doors Jesus enters to reassure them), restores and feeds them, and then empowered at Pentecost by the Holy Spirit their declaration of seeing and knowing the risen Christ sustain them as Easter people. As Christians we believe that through the grace of God we can each discover the truth for ourselves.

Christ is risen!

God's revelation of self through Jesus Christ and the continuing presence and power of God's Holy Spirit are the exclamation mark of the New testament witness.

The light of God's love in Christ is the spiritual reality which neither death nor darkness can contain. It rises up constantly in human awareness. We encounter it in our yearning, our struggling, our suffering. Christ comes to us.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

Easter is both an event and a season in the church – it really does take time (even a lifetime) to come to terms with the enormity of the resurrection event and what it meant then, and what it continues to mean now, especially as we today are living in a time of uncertainty, of unknowing what the future holds for us as people, as communities and as church.

What I can say is that I believe that we are held, supported and sustained by God, so may we all in the days ahead, both in the big and little ways be encouraged, equipped and emboldened to proclaim Christ's living exclamation point in our lives, out into our communities and into the world.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!