

6<sup>th</sup> April 2020

## Anointing

**“Thou hast anointed my head with oil; my cup runneth over.”**

*Bible, Psalm 23:4*

The Presbyterian tradition of the Christian Church doesn't give itself much to anointing. But I was deeply moved in my time as a hospice chaplain by a story from an Anglican chaplain who was often called on as part of her ministry to anoint patients with holy oil in their last days.

There had been a death in her hospice which had affected everyone deeply. The nurses doing the “last offices” asked for her to come to anoint the body as a final act of love and care. She rushed into the room to “do the necessary”, only to find that she'd forgotten the Holy Oil. The nurses were in tears, and the chaplain was soon in tears too. So she did what needed to be done – she took the tears from the cheek of one of the nurses and used that to anoint the patient. A “proper” anointing? You bet it was, for everyone in that room was anointed with holiness and love in their own way.

Years later, on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, our party stopped by River Jordan. Our Muslim coach-driver filled a bottle with water from the river, came over to me, and poured the water over my outstretched hands. In a moment of holiness and healing, I was anointed too.

On this day of Holy Week, we remember a woman using expensive oil to anoint Jesus at Bethany. In an offering of unconditional love, a holy moment was created. If today, you anoint someone with your tears, or offer healing in an act of compassion, or give love unconditionally, you are creating something profoundly holy for them and for you, and a cup of blessing for them and for you, will, once again, brim to overflowing.

### **A prayer for today**

*Anoint me with your love today, Holy God, that I might in compassion offer the sacrament of your blessing to those around me. Amen.*

*An original reflection by © Tom Gordon*

Also available at <https://swallowsnestnet.wordpress.com>