

Salem Methodist Church
Watley's End BS36 1NU

SALEM NEWS

www.salemchurch.org.uk

April 2020



Minister's Letter

April this year includes a really important time in the life of the church, a time of real extremes, a time where the experiences of Jesus and the disciples so clearly combine with our own experiences throughout life.

We begin the holy triduum, or the great three days, on the evening of Maundy Thursday. Maundy Thursday, the final evening Jesus spent with his disciples in the Upper Room eating together. Jesus knew what was ahead of him, and Judas Iscariot knew he was going to betray Jesus, but still all of the disciples ate together.

Jesus, the *King of the Jews*, the *Saviour of the world*, knelt down and washed the feet of his friends. The one who came as the *Son of God*, spent his final evening with friends as their servant, symbolically washing their feet.

We're also told that this is the evening when Jesus took bread and wine, gave thanks to God and shared it with those at the table, the start of what is now Holy Communion, the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist.

Later that evening Judas brings the guards and Jesus is arrested.

This takes us to perhaps the most solemn day in the Church year. The events of Good Friday have been portrayed in many different ways over the years with modern interpretations of Passion Plays still taking place across the world.

Jesus is tried and sentenced to face death on the cross, those final words 'It is finished.'

We can recognise the grief and pain that the disciples of Jesus felt on that Good Friday, because we too experience it in our own lives when those we love journey into glory. And as Christians we experience it every year as we make our own journeys through Good Friday.

Holy Saturday comes next. A rather strange day. A day when the disciples must have been in mourning, not quite sure of what was going to happen next. Jesus had told them that 'the temple' would be rebuilt in three days, but could they really believe it?

For us, we know the end of the story, so Holy Saturday is even stranger, but we are still encouraged to wait in anticipation at what is still to come.

*Up from the grave he arose,
with a mighty triumph o'er his foes;
he arose a victor from the dark domain,
and he lives for ever with his saints to reign:
He arose! He arose!
Alleluia! Christ arose!*

Robert Lowry (1826-1899)

Easter Sunday arrives, the joy of the empty tomb, Jesus is risen!

In all of the darkness of life, the Easter story gives us a sense of hope, for Jesus overcame death, and because of that we can have 'life in all its fullness' (John 10:10).

So, in life as you journey through the pain of Good Friday, know that it is not the end, for there is hope and life through the Easter resurrection.

May you dwell in the light of Christ now and forever more.

Leigh

Some one-liners...

God grades on the cross, not the curve.

Give God what's right – not what's left.

Man's way leads to a hopeless end – God's way leads to an endless hope.

A lot of kneeling will keep you in good standing.

He who kneels before God can stand before anyone.

To be almost saved is to be totally lost.

Why do we paint Easter eggs? Because it's easier than trying to wallpaper them!

Coronavirus

On 11th March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the coronavirus to be a global pandemic. Since its outbreak in January in Wuhan, China, the world has been slowly engulfed by fear of this invisible but deadly threat.

As the virus has spread, so have the efforts of our Governments to slow the virus. Countries are on lock down, and hundreds of millions of people have been told to stay at home. Normal life has shut down for most of us. Businesses, schools, industries, restaurants, sports, theatres and even churches have all been shut.

We express our deep concern and sympathy for all who live in our community at this time. We are committed to praying for them, and looking into ways of showing our care and regard, especially the elderly and most vulnerable in our community.

Every community must now deal with the crisis, in one way or another.

If there was ever a time to turn to God in prayer and supplication, this is it. So, we invite you to join us in praying for:

Our Government and local authorities who bear the responsibility of confronting this challenge. They cannot afford to get their response wrong.

WHO and all health professionals who are working to safeguard our public health.

Industry leaders who must take huge decisions to confront this challenge to our economy.

The leaders of our local community, who provide care and guidance for those they lead.

Finally, let us pray for ourselves and our loved ones, for courage and endurance at this most demanding of times.

Christianity is based on hope in a God that does not fail us. We are the Easter People, and know that even in the worst circumstances, God is with us and will hear our prayers. He will answer us.

As Easter approaches, this is a time to let the light of Christ shine His healing rays throughout the world, and throughout our community.

May the Lord, our Chief Shepherd and our Refuge, grant mercy and grace upon the nations of the world in this time of trouble and distress.

Psalm 22: Why have you forsaken me?

'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Psalm 22:1 & Matt 27:46). *Where is God?* is a common question voiced today and shared by Jesus on the cross on the first Good Friday. This question is answered in the psalm, as we look through the lens of Jesus' crucifixion.

It is a real question: Both David and Jesus question God about the pain and darkness of their experience. It is a real question for all suffer, yet they are still able to hold onto a God of love, who has their lives in His hands: *'Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the one Israel praises.'* (3).

It requires faith to ask: Their complaint about the apparent absence of God is not a sign of losing faith in Him. David remembers those who have trusted God in the past and been saved from their troubles: *'In you our ancestors put their trust; they trusted and You delivered them.'* (4). Just like Jesus on the cross, we are able to entrust ourselves *'to Him who judges justly.'* (1 Peter 2:23).

It is answered in experience: When David cried out to God, he experienced his deliverance: *'For He has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one; He has not hidden His face from him but has listened to his cry for help.'* (24). As a result, David was able to praise God and witness to His faithfulness.

The fulfilment of these verses are seen in Jesus' resurrection, which we celebrate on Easter Sunday. He was vindicated by God and has become the source of life and hope for all who trust themselves to Him.

In answer to the question *'Where is God?'*, we hear the answer, *'Look to the cross of Jesus!'*

Three Silver Linings.

I am sure that everywhere people are missing their regular Sunday contact with their own church or chapel. Leigh-and others-across Methodism and the wider Church are doing their best to provide us with worship material we can use on our own or with our partner, but we know it's not quite the same as meeting with our friends in wider Christian fellowship.

Nevertheless, I discern three silver linings in this situation, which is one that until a fortnight or so ago none of us ever envisaged

The first is rediscovering how much natural beauty there is close to us, in my case in the countryside just to the north of the Ring Road and M4. Not that the two roads are beautiful unless your sole interest is driving fast! It is fortunate the tightening of restrictions by the Government on moving around coincided with the recent week of brilliant sunshine. Each day, I used my one permitted excursion for exercise to walk up towards Moorend and the river and be entranced by the brilliance of the burgeoning greenery everywhere, especially on the smaller trees and shrubs. On the fourth occasion, I encountered, totally by accident, an even more senior local preacher, John Edwards, out for a walk remembering his childhood haunts and walks.

I needed reminding how much beauty there is at hand, a lovely compensation for being more limited than I ever have been before, across 76 years, to my own immediate neighbourhood. All round Winterbourne and Frampton there are beautiful short walks, out from St Peter's to Iron Acton, down to St Michael's and so on.

The second thing to ponder is the fact that, in private prayer, we are never alone. We always pray with Christ, in Him and through Him. That is why he told us to pray 'Our Father', because through adoption in Him, God is our Father. Remember that just before leaving the disciples, Jesus said, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, my God and your God'. We remember this also at Communion services when we pray 'with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven'. We are at one with all who have ever been the friends of Jesus.

This came home very vividly to me once when I was with my Belgian friend, Joseph on Sunday morning. He was at the altar presiding at their communion and I knew that, at about the same time, Caroline would be conducting Communion at Salem, using very similar words. Then, the truth of the old saying that there is really only one act of Communion- thanksgiving for Jesus, but wonderfully carried out faithfully across the ages in a myriad of places came home to me, one act in which we are with Him in the Upper Room, with Mary and the Beloved Disciple at the foot of the Cross, then finally, and most wonderfully, with him at the breaking of bread in Emmaus, came home to me. When we pray, in praise or petition and intercession, we are part of the one royal priesthood of which St Peter speaks in his epistle.

Finally, those of us who are together alone as couples can renew our relationships with each other. When at work, most of us had to be apart in different places most days. In other activities also, we would often be separate. Now, apart from phone calls or perhaps speaking to neighbours from the regulation two metres away, we have time to reflect on what we owe each of us in a couple to the other on the things that we sometimes forget about when we have to concentrate on work or other responsibilities. We now have more than adequate time to reflect on these things and to remember how much we owe to our partners for extraordinary loyalty, patience and support, and perhaps time to be penitent for those occasions when we have not, in our hurry, really noticed how the other is feeling, or have just taken them far too much for granted.

These are just a few of my thoughts. We love and gratitude to all of you at Salem for all that you have meant to both Caroline and me over the last fifteen and a half years,

David.

Who moved the stone?

'When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away.' Mark 16:4

Frank Morrison was an investigative journalist who was a sceptic when it came to religion. He decided to write a book to disprove the claims of Christ, specifically focussed on the last week of His life.

However, when he came to consider the evidence for himself, he was drawn reluctantly to a different outcome than he had imagined. He found that the evidence proved the story to be true, including the fact that Jesus not only died but rose again. In the end he wrote a different kind of book called 'Who Moved the Stone?' with the first chapter entitled, 'The book that refused to be written.'

The veracity of the Christian faith is grounded on historical fact. Not only was Jesus a real person, a figure of history, but His death was real, and so was His resurrection. Examine the evidence for yourself. Read the gospel accounts openly and honestly and see what happens. The truth is there for anyone willing to consider the facts.

Easter reminds us that our faith rests on solid ground. It is why we celebrate Easter Sunday with such gusto. The Resurrection proves that Jesus was who He said He was (the Son of God) and that He did what He set out to do (save us from our sin). But more than that, it reminds us that He can deliver what He promised and help us today because He is alive for evermore.

Jesus is not a figure of history, locked away in the past. No, He is a risen Saviour who is alive today and who invites each of us to receive the gift of salvation, and to live a new life in fellowship with Him.

For I am the Lord your God
who takes hold of your right hand and says to you,
Do not fear; I will help you.

Isaiah 41:13 (NIV)

Prayer Diary

April

6th

Church

Offices of the church

Church membership

Church connections

The pews - the congregation

Treasurer & admin

B

Fromeside council of churches

13th

Church

Offices of the church

Church membership

Church connections

The vestry - stewards

Worship leaders

C

Bristol & South Glos Methodist

Circuit

20th

Church

Offices of the church

Church membership

Church connections

Kitchen - all who provide &
serve drinks after services & re-
freshments

Preachers

D

Church charity - Samaritans

27th

Church

Offices of the church

Church membership

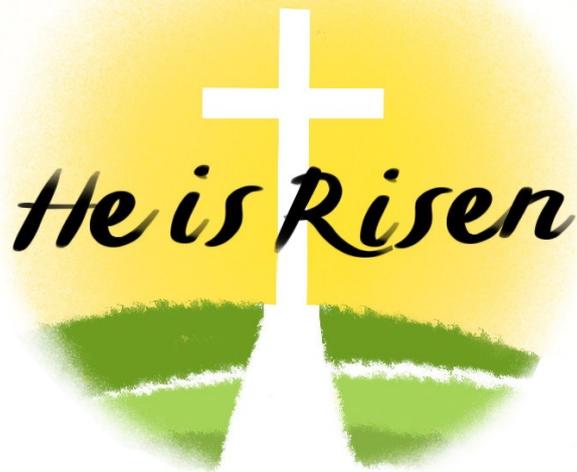
Church connections

Hall & rooms - the various
meetings & groups who use
them

Minister

E

People who use the facilities for
various groups



All services are suspended

BUT

Easter has not been suspended

If it possible we hope to place our Easter cross
outside the front door of the church
and invite anyone to come and place
flowers in the cross

Minister

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