



MINI MACCLESFIELD MESSENGER

EASTER EDITION 2020

Welcome to the special Easter edition of the Mini Messenger.

Please feel free to distribute this 'Mini Messenger' to others within the church community who may find it of interest.

EASTER MESSAGES FROM OUR MINISTERS.....

Dear Friends,

The Easter message is a wonderful, powerful, liberating thing! It is hope-filled, life-giving, and in the life of the church it is a glorious day of celebration. Yet this year, we are told to say at home, to sit and watch the TV and stay safe – and rightly so! It's easy to think we simply have to let this Easter pass because we can't do anything from our chairs and sofas, because sitting does not do anything – well I'm not so sure!

Many years ago, when I was growing up, we had a bean bag. It was a big red thing filled with thousands of tiny polystyrene beads, I'm sure you know the kind of thing I mean! The bean bag was quite popular with my brother, sister and I, and for quite some time things went well with it. That was until one day someone sat on the bean bag rather too enthusiastically. I am neither confirming or denying that it was me – some things are best left unsaid! The problem was, however, that the bean bag exploded, and those thousands of polystyrene beads were spread across the living room. Once the dust had settled, there was a command: "you are going to pick all those up!" We did our best, but it could not be done! Sometimes, sitting can be a powerful thing!

However hard we try, the Easter message cannot be hidden away, it cannot be pushed into some dark corner, it cannot be suppressed, and it cannot be sat upon! Because every time the great truth of Easter finds its way out – it bursts the seams of anything that tries to contain it, it finds a way out and it cannot be gathered back in!

In Luke's version of the resurrection story the women come to the tomb and find it empty, and then they are asked the most wonderful question - "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!" – what are you doing here? This place has no more power, it is finished, it is no longer needed! Don't wait here, because the Lord isn't here among the dead he is among the living – in unexpected and amazing places! So often people linger at the tomb, the site of a great miracle - when the call of Easter morning is to look beyond! Our churches are places of great miracles, years of worship and fellowship resounding with decades of songs! And they will be again, but for now – look for Christ in unexpected places – even as we sit on our sofas!

So, this Easter sit – sit enthusiastically and watch as the wonder of the risen Christ bursts out into the world! Watch as he bursts out in the way we treat one another, watch as he bursts out in the way we care for the stranger and outcast, watch as he bursts out in the hope we proclaim, watch as he bursts out in the way we value our life together. The great story cannot be contained, and neither can the risen Saviour – at times those first disciples found themselves full of fear, doubt and confusion – but the Saviour and his truth burst out despite all that!

Pope John Paul II said “ Do not abandon yourselves to despair: We are the Easter people, and Hallelujah is our song”. Wherever we find ourselves this year – let us make hallelujah our song like never before! We echo the words of the great hymn proclaiming:

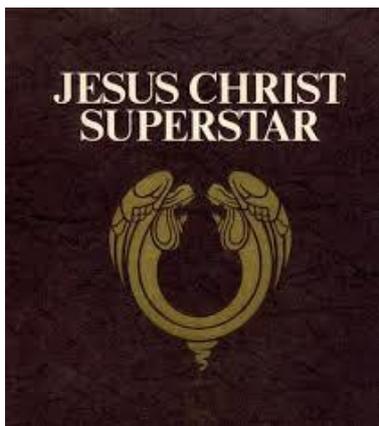
God sent His son, they called Him Jesus
He came to love, heal and forgive
He lived and died to buy my pardon
An empty grave is there to prove my saviour lives

*Because He lives, I can face tomorrow
Because He lives, all fear is gone
Because I know He holds the future
And life is worth the living, just because He lives*

Hallelujah!

*With every blessing
Graham*

One of my favourite musicals is '*Jesus Christ Superstar*' which I watch every Easter in holy week and find it is part of my Easter experience.



I know all the songs off by heart! The song '*Could we Start Again Please*', which is Mary and Peter after Jesus' arrest, wanting to start over again, is one I find particularly moving and relevant to today. '*Could we start again please*' is a good phrase for this Easter Sunday, wishing the pandemic wasn't here (or anywhere else!) and praying for it all to go away and venturing out again into society.....

Both these songs are written in the midst of the struggles Jesus and his followers were facing in the journey to the cross. Another song, sung by Mary amidst mockery from the disciples is '*Everything's alright*' - a song she sings to Jesus, wanting him to rest and assuring him everything's going to be alright. Whatever some may think of this portrayal of Mary, I find it moving that one person is calm, assuring, hopeful and caring whilst the others all seem to be getting crosser and crosser with themselves, with one another and with Jesus. The current anxieties we have for ourselves, for loved ones and for the world at this time can lead us to be frustrated, cross and irritable. How to stay calm, be assured, hopeful is a challenge for us all.

My brother lives in Italy, just outside Rome. The children there have been painting rainbows, with the words "Andrà tutto bene" which means 'everything will be all right.' In a country completely locked down with high death rates from the virus, the children paint pictures of hope in the form of rainbows and people have drawn strength from these innocent works of art, even hope that one day everything will be all right.



We are an Easter People which means we remain ever hopeful in what God has done for us through Christ. We draw strength from his victory over death, his resurrection and his promise 'I will be with you always to the end of the age', believing with confidence everything will be alright. The Easter message gives us confidence that we can start again, can re-discover joy, even when all around the world may seem a bit saddened.

Easter is a time for hope, renewal and joy.



When I was in the hospital yesterday, the NHS teams there were smiling, staying positive and working their socks off to care for the sick, rejoicing when patients recover and go home. Each day there are blessings to be found, even in the most challenging of situations, when we stay hopeful. Is that not the message of Easter? Hope for tomorrow became a reality that first Easter. Hope indeed for the whole world!

I invite us all to draw and colour our own rainbows, display them in our windows and share them online with friends. Wishing you all a hopeful, colourful and joyful Easter.

"Andrà tutto bene!"
Helen

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I hope that you are well and managing to adjust to these strange times and the changes that have come to all of our lives so suddenly.

It is certainly true that there has never been a Lent like this before. It has made me reflect a great deal about what are essential in my life and also the things that I can go without! It has also made me reflect on how many things I take for granted, especially when I have gone to a shop and found empty shelves. It has given me a tiny glimpse, perhaps, of how life is for many people across the world all of the time. Similarly with worship, we often pray for the persecuted church and how our sisters and brothers in Christ cannot meet together. Of course we aren't being persecuted

but suddenly not being able to meet together for prayer, worship, Bible study and fellowship is very hard. In times like these we naturally want to meet together more and not less. Again, perhaps, this gives a tiny glimpse of what life is like when you can't meet together.

We know that this time will pass for us. The shops will open again and have full shelves, our churches will reopen and we will be able to meet at will and all of the other current restrictions will be lifted...for us this is a difficult and hard time but transient, for many across the world this, and worse, is daily life seemingly without end.

Perhaps this experience will sharpen our concern for others and our resolve to show God's love by working harder for peace, justice and freedom for all people. Ours is a relational faith. Our God is a relational being, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and we, as individuals and as a community of believers, are called by God's grace into this relationship. This means that God is not watching all this going on from a disinterested distance but is right here in the middle of the crisis and confusion with us.

There is nowhere that we can be that God is not and so God is still with us and will never leave us.

We celebrated Christmas a few months ago. The message of Christmas is just that, Immanuel meaning 'God is with us'. That doesn't mean just for Christmas Day but for every day, always and in all circumstances. So we can be confident that God is walking with us as we pass through this time of pandemic.

This is a time that we are *passing through*, it will not last forever and so we can be confident that God is with us and that this crisis will pass and a new day will dawn. This is the message of Easter which we will celebrate soon. It is a message of new life in Christ. A new start offered to us all.

Wherever we have reached in the pandemic by then we will still have God with us, we will still have the Holy Spirit to comfort and strengthen us and we will have the offer of light, life and hope through Jesus.

I pray that you and your loved ones will keep well and that you will know God's love and presence surrounding you at all times.

May the Lord bless you and keep you; may the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; may the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace. Amen

Ros

Services to view...

Maundy Thursday Service led by Ros. Link below...

<http://tiny.cc/3c4kmz>

Good Friday Service link below...

<http://tiny.cc/js1omz>

Versions will be on Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/MacclefieldCircuit/>

And Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCh1PS5ox80YSZj71WMDHVmQ>

Fb and YouTube scheduled to be available from 4pm Thursday & 8am Good Friday

Easter Day service links will be emailed out on Easter Saturday

12 April Easter Day – two services will be available led by Graham & Helen: an ‘all age worship’ with puppets & traditional worship – choose your theme or watch both! Plus a live short time of prayer on Sunday evening.

Please keep an eye on your email Inbox.

Children & Families

How are you all doing? I don't think I have ever had a time where my work has changed direction day after day, even hour after hour. I have gone from helping to plan 4 Easter events, a monthly Messy Church, helping in local school events, 4 assemblies and the normal day to day work. To trying to think how we can stay connected to all the children and families in our circuit. We were planning to hand out ‘Messy Church Kit Bags’. These would have been an Easter theme and would have contained craft items, a cross, a candle, games, interactive bible stories and much more, to keep the children entertained and to host their own ‘Mini Messy Church @ Home’. All they would need to provide was the food. But with the latest Government restrictions this is not possible now. But once it is possible, I have everything on standby to but a Messy Church Kit Bag together.

In the meantime, all my work has gone online. With help of the teams in the churches who have Children's Facebook Pages, I am posting things to do on there. It is a new way of working. We have already posted Mothering Sunday themed crafts and our first ‘Mini Messy Church @ Home’. Two of the toddler groups in the circuit will be posting a mini session online each week, Puppet Tree and Tots Café. There will be a story, craft and song. If any other churches would like to do something like this, please get in touch with me.

Every other Tuesday we will be publishing a ‘Mini Messy Church @ Home’. This resource includes several craft ideas, games, activities, a bible verse and hopefully a video too. All our families have to do is provide the venue and the food. Our first theme was ‘being lights’ and was based around Matthew 5: 14-16.

¹⁴ “You are the light that gives light to the world. A city that is built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ And people don't hide a light under a bowl. They put the light on a lampstand. Then the light shines for all the people in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, you should be a light for other people. Live so that they will see the good things you do. Live so that they will praise your Father in heaven.

I have also forwarded these sessions to the local schools and some of them have included them in their newsletters, which is great as it is keeping the Methodist Church in their school community. I know not everyone is on Facebook so I have been emailing copies to my support group, so that they can share them with families

from their church who are not on Facebook. If anyone knows someone who would like to receive an email copy, please let me know.

As we have had to cancel all our Easter events, we have decided that during Holy week we will post something every day to tell the story of Easter. The children will be creating their own 'Holy Week Box' and everyday will add a craft to the box to symbolise the Easter story. Each session will have a small bible reading and video clip, simple crafts, games and activities for all the family to join in.

I have joined several new groups on Facebook for inspiration and ideas. There are a lot of good websites and pages out there, but The Well on the Methodist website has lots of resources for children and families and Pinterest is a great place for craft ideas. If any of you are gifted in being crafty and would like me to share anything, please get in touch.

There is a lot of information out there and good ideas for children to do every day. We just need to make sure we are not bombarding our followers, so that the important things do not get missed.

As you will be aware, we have had to cancel everything, so the volunteer day on the 2nd of May will now take part sometime during the new church year. We will wait till everything gets back to normal to set a new date.

Holiday club we are still planning to go ahead with it at this moment in time. I am going to be planning it over the next month, so if you helped last year and would like to again please can you email or phone me. If you didn't help last year but would like to, again please get in touch. Holiday club will be week commencing 27th July.

It has saddened us all that we have had to close our church buildings, but we must remember we are the church and we will keep the church going in a new way.

Please find below links for YouTube clips.

Bible Reading Matthew 28: 1-10

Bible story clip

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TikWatDJGuk>

Easter story according to kids

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wdn1R90kX9A>

Take care everyone and remember follow us on Facebook

@BrokenCrossChildren @MaccMethodistKids

@PrestburyMethodistKids @MacclesfieldCircuit

God Bless

Email: methodistfamilies@gmail.com

Phone: 07901777506

Angela

Examples of crafts that we have already shared on Facebook



Prayer – in our Circuit Prayer Cycle we remember Poynton this week. This prayer has been composed by Mandy Hawkyard.

Let us pray together

In our imagination let us go again to an empty tomb. We stand with Mary in her grief and we hear Jesus simply say her name. We watch the dawn break.

We stand in the upper room with the confused and fearful disciples, behind a locked door and hear Jesus say, "Peace be with you." We see their faces change in wonder and thankfulness.

We walk with the two on the road to Emmaus listening to a stranger explaining the scriptures to them, and as they share bread together, we see them recognise Him, as understanding warms their hearts.

Lord, in this time of darkness and confusion, fear and helplessness may we share their joy and wonder and say out loud, "Christ is risen, He is risen indeed." Come in resurrection power to each one of us, give us new confidence, hope and joy for –

Light has met darkness and the darkness has not put it out.

Love has met sin and sin has been forgiven.

Life has met death and death has met its end. Alleluia

Members' voice

Social Distancing, Drawing Closer to the Cross, and Resurrection Hope

These strange covid-19 stricken times have caused us all to make many important changes to our daily routines. Take social distancing for example. It feels so unnatural doesn't it? When I take our dog out for my one daily walk (not the dog's walk, of course; she would rather stay on the sofa dreaming of a promised land of overflowing milk and 'bonios') I occasionally come across someone else advancing towards me on a narrow path. My immediate reaction is to feel a welcome sense of community; ah, so there are other life forms in Tytherington after all; it's nice to see someone else that shares my space on this planet of ours, a planet which suddenly seems to have grown in size so much that it has separated people into an infinite number of far-off corners. But with untidy Boris's pandemic instructions whispering in my sub-conscious I creep to one side to allow the prescribed 2m distance, straining hard to do it gradually to make the point that I do this reluctantly.... and in true British style I apologise as I do so of course.

Both Matthew and Mark report in their gospels that as Jesus was arrested ahead of that first Easter Day 2000 years ago, all the disciples ran away. The courageous Peter eventually followed to see what was going to happen as Jesus was taken to the High Priest, but as we know, he still kept his distance and went on to deny any association with Jesus three times before the predicted cockerel's cry is heard.



Peter's denial by Anton Robert Leinweber (1845-1921)

And when by popular demand Jesus is nailed to the cross it seems likely that not many of Jesus' friends were there by his side. Matthew and Mark report that a few women who knew Jesus watched from a distance. Luke also reports of people (not specifically women) standing at a distance to watch. Only John reports that some people drew close to the cross - Jesus's mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, Mary Magdalene, and one 'beloved' disciple.

When things are going badly for us; when life becomes so unrecognisable compared to what we have been used to for so long; when there is great sorrow about what has happened; or fear about what is about to happen, distancing ourselves from God may seem a preferable option. And yet Easter places before us an important opportunity to draw closer to the cross. It gives us a chance to accept that in all situations, whether we are good or bad, we are precious to God. Death on the cross wasn't the end of the story of course, and knowing about the resurrection gives us unconquerable hope, knowing that our God, who holds all the pieces of the universe, will bring us through all difficulties, including covid-19, without letting us slip from his loving embrace. As we accept Jesus as our friend who laid down his life for all

humanity including ourselves, we are invited to proceed with him along a path that leads to us becoming more Christ-like – extravagantly loving and daringly generous.



This Easter, will you draw nearer to the cross, and whether it's for the hundredth time or the first time, declare your acceptance of God's Easter gift?

'You set before us a great choice,
Therefore we choose life.
The dance of resurrection soars and surges
through the whole creation.
It sets gifts of bread and wine upon our table.
This is grace, dying we live.
So let us live.'

(Kathy Galloway of the Iona Community
from the SPCK Christian Book of Prayer)

Steve Oliver

Circuit Facebook page

For the latest information on what is happening within the circuit, follow....

<https://www.facebook.com/MacclefieldCircuit/>

Other important links

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/coronavirus-guidance/>

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

Please don't forget....

'Telling the Easter Story from Home' - an idea to help us to reflect on the events of Holy Week and Easter and to share these with each other. The idea is to use items from your garden or around the home to depict the events of Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Take a photograph and we will share these around the Circuit. You could do one day at a time or an arrangement of the whole week.

Please send your photos to Graham on graham.edwards@methodist.org.uk



EMERGENCY CORONAVIRUS APPEAL

Pray. Give. Save lives >>

The Methodist Church



Can you imagine having to face Coronavirus without access to running water and soap? In cramped and unhygienic conditions, where social distancing simply isn't possible?

This is the reality facing people living in some of the world's poorest communities right now. All We Can and the Methodist Church in Britain have launched an Emergency Coronavirus Appeal, to help equip vulnerable communities across the globe to combat Coronavirus (COVID-19).

For communities with weaker healthcare systems, or who lack access to clean water and handwashing facilities, the impact of Coronavirus will be catastrophic. That's why we're asking:

please do all that you can to help save lives today.

www.allwecan.org.uk

All We Can and the Methodist Church in Britain are responding across the globe, enabling vulnerable communities to access the support they need. We are working to maintain essential health services, deliver soap and hygiene items, and provide vital community healthcare education to Rohingya refugees living in the camps of Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh; in Cameroon, internally displaced families are being provided with vital hand sanitiser to help protect themselves from the virus; and in Uganda, families who have no means of accessing markets following the banning of public transport by the Ugandan government are being lent regularly sanitised bicycles.

All We Can and the Methodist Church in Britain have already begun responding by providing essential grants to help churches overseas meet the challenges posed by Coronavirus, as well as providing staff on the frontline of Maua Methodist Hospital in Kenya with essential personal protective equipment. Anything that you give today will help us do more of this vital work.

We know that many people are facing financially difficult situations at this time – and so we are only asking you to donate if you are able to. Any gift, no matter how small, will help equip vulnerable communities to face Coronavirus.

Pray. Give. Save Lives.

Thank you.

Graeme Hodge