

Talent Easter 2020

Newsletter



HE IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED. ALLELUIA!

TAMWORTH AND LICHFIELD METHODIST CIRCUIT

Welcome from The Circuit Office

This edition of Talent is somewhat different to usual, and is much more a Newsletter rather than a magazine, but we hope that it will bring you a sense of continued belonging to your sisters and brothers around the Circuit.

The arrival of Coronavirus has had a great impact on the whole of life, for us as individuals and us as a church community. Even though we are not able to gather each week in our buildings, that has not stopped us from gathering as a worshipping community and sharing in the 'worship at home' resources, and for those who are able, to share in our on line worship.

We have celebrated Easter and have witnessed to our neighbours and communities. The front cover of this newsletter is just a small sample of the decorated crosses that have been displayed in our windows, witnessing that Christ is Risen.

I have the privilege of being in touch with many of you, via email and phone and have received so much encouragement for the resources that are being made available to you. I have heard of numerous stories of kindness and expressions of the love of God; the 94 year old member from Shenstone who bakes 18 cakes each week to be given out to the lonely and isolated in the village. On Easter Day one family in Lichfield, made small boxes and filled them with mini eggs and left them on doorsteps of those who are isolated – many people are shopping for their vulnerable neighbours – just a few stories where our members are demonstrating what it means to be Church Without Walls.

In this newsletter we have words of encouragement from Roger, a couple of articles from around the circuit; an Easter Reflection, and looking ahead to June, an introduction to Bible Month, when we shall be exploring the book of Ruth. Interesting articles, as well as a word search and a recipe for Easter Brownies for our bakers! Enjoy!

God bless, *Gill*

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CALLING ALL KNITTERS! A number of churches are making knitted angels again this year. Lichfield Methodist Church will be distributing angels out in the town the week before Christmas. If you would like to join the team of knitters and would like a pattern please contact the circuit office via email churchoffice.tamlich@gmail.com or if you don't have an email address please pass the request to your church steward.

Letter from the Manse

'Isolation' has taken on a whole new meaning in recent weeks. Also 'social distancing' is a phrase we never thought we'd hear ourselves using, nor did we ever think we'd be so acutely aware of how far 2 meters actually is!

Yet in our isolation it has been amazing how we have found new ways of communicating, whether it's using technology for the first time, or using it in new ways, or communicating our thanks to NHS and other key workers by clapping at 8.00 pm every Thursday.

Of course isolation from each other has only emphasized that actually we need each other. As far as the church is concerned isolation goes against the very grain of what we are. Fellowship and sharing together is what the church is about as together we worship God. But in these times of enforced isolation the church has discovered new ways of communicating. Using technology to beam out worship, singing, prayer and bible reading, and sermons. In the services we have been able to send out throughout the circuit, online and by post we have discovered that whilst we cannot be together physically in worship, we can certainly feel together as one as we share in the service at 10.30 on a Sunday morning, online or quietly reading and worshipping using the paper version.

I believe this is evidence of the power of the risen Christ and his Spirit reaching out to us, and, holding us together in fellowship. We are reminded of how fellowship really works in being one in Christ and our common desire to love and worship him, and united by his Spirit in this mystical body of the church, you and me.

Despair, along with fear may have struck us when we first knew about Covid-19, like a great plague of biblical proportions it has spread its dark tentacles over the world. Just like sin and death is that dark blot upon our race and the world. Just like the dark gloom that spread over the world on Good Friday.

Yet you joined with me on Easter Sunday when the declaration was made '*Alleluia, Christ is risen, He is risen indeed, Alleluia!*' We continue to know in these days what the disciples first knew on that Sunday morning. That darkness of sin, and death was not the end, that Christ has conquered both, and in his risen power the light of his love still reaches into our hearts.

However much in these days of isolation we may feel apart, we are one, we are together in the love and power of the risen Christ. I think there is a sense which as a circuit we are even more together now as we have become more acutely aware of each other and of our common identity in Christ and as the Tamworth & Lichfield Circuit. I have heard some amazing stories of the way in which we have been caring for each other in these days. Long may it continue.

So know this, that the dark shadow of Covid-19, however long it lasts, will not ultimately triumph. Christ has conquered darkness and now dwells in light. Through Christ we are children of God and people of the light.

Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever... and his love for you has not changed and in your isolation he wraps his arms of love around you. Social distancing rules do not apply! The risen Christ be with you.

Bless you all, Roger

Easter Wordsearch

P	C	O	S	B	O	M	A	K	B	U	E	M	R
B	L	E	F	B	E	A	C	C	S	O	A	N	S
A	I	I	P	E	B	R	Y	I	A	E	E	H	R
E	V	E	L	O	B	Y	I	H	C	C	T	G	E
T	T	S	B	I	H	B	P	C	R	I	L	A	S
Y	O	J	L	U	E	E	P	H	I	I	B	O	U
U	M	N	L	S	N	S	E	L	F	U	S	V	R
R	B	E	B	A	R	N	I	E	I	V	U	L	R
E	V	E	I	L	E	B	Y	E	C	E	S	A	E
T	C	S	H	C	G	N	I	K	E	E	E	M	C
S	E	S	A	V	I	O	U	R	U	E	J	B	T
A	I	P	E	A	C	E	E	E	I	R	R	S	I
E	R	R	O	B	A	I	U	L	E	L	L	A	O
C	L	O	V	E	E	C	N	E	S	I	R	L	N

LILIES
TOMB
PEACE
SAVIOUR
RESURRECTION
KING
JESUS
CHICK
HOPE
BELIEVE
BUNNY
RISEN
LOVE
MARY
JOY
LAMBS
SACRIFICE
LIFE
ALLELUIA
EASTER

EASTER OFFERING

As a result of the current pandemic and the ceasing of public worship in our churches the Easter Offering has been **postponed**. It is therefore suggested that envelopes should be put out in our churches at the beginning of October and that there be an Easter Offering service in November. There will be no Advent Offering for the Mission in Britain Fund this year so it is felt this course of action will create no conflict.

Easter Reflection from Revd Roger Cresswell

There can be very few people unaffected by the coronavirus which has spread so dramatically around the world. The scale, the speed and the severity of the virus have meant life has become not only very strange but difficult and frightening. The danger it poses has led to lockdown, the suspension of activities that we take for granted in normal times and major changes to our daily life. For many covid-19 has meant being cut off from loved ones, financial hardship, restricted movement and meeting.



When we cannot visit a member of our own family, when we are genuinely afraid for the well-being of someone exposed to the virus, when we see some ignoring advice and acting in ways that endanger others and themselves and when we don't know how and when it will all end, the effect upon us is very real. Anxiety, anger, fear, helplessness and uncertainty are among the feelings we all may have in the present exceptional situation.

The first followers of Jesus reacted as we react in difficult and challenging circumstances and it is not hard to imagine their anxiety and anger as events unfolded; their helplessness in the face of his conviction and crucifixion; their deep sense of loss; their uncertainty and confusion.

The women's report that the tomb in which Jesus' body had been placed was empty was received by the fearful disciples with disbelief. But as they encountered the risen Jesus themselves - in the garden, in the rooms where they were staying and on the road - they began to understand the power of God's love that led to the truly unprecedented event we know as Easter, which transformed their lives.

The virus of selfishness may still be in the world, but in Christ's life and death we have the perfect example of selfless love and through his resurrection the confident hope of a life in God's love from which nothing can ever separate us.

THE BOOK OF RUTH : An introductory Taster for the forthcoming Bible Month.

Perhaps the most familiar part of the story of Ruth, for most of us, is where she declares her loyalty to her mother-in-law Naomi before they journey back to Bethlehem together. But there's far more to the Book of Ruth than that and there are of course several different ways of reading even this most familiar of passages. Despite having only four short chapters the Book of Ruth is a complex story, set in an androcentric and patriarchal society but offering perspectives seen through the eyes of strong female characters.

This is a book with many contemporary resonances: refugees from famine; exiles forced by circumstances to flee their former homes; asylum seekers in a foreign land; potential dangers facing migrant workers trying to make ends meet; sex slaves and forced marriages; racial tensions and prejudice; questions about who can belong to the covenant community and who're the outsiders. It is read each year at Shavuot, the Jewish harvest festival which also celebrates the giving of the Torah, the Law; thus how should we live together, what are our responsibilities towards others and especially to 'widows and aliens'?

The Bible month materials will offer us the opportunity to explore the Book of Ruth by focusing on key characters: Orpah (ch.1, she definitely needs rehabilitation); Boaz (ch.2, what are his motivations?); Ruth (ch.3, what is the significance of 'feet?'); and Naomi (ch.4, why is Obed called the child of Naomi rather than Ruth?). Whose story is this? How does it fit with the wider stories of the Bible and with our own stories? And where is God in this story? He's certainly not centre stage.

There is much gleaning to be done with and from the Book of Ruth.

Robert Bates

AGREEING TO DIFFER

Some years ago now, while I was living in Swindon in Wiltshire, I became good friends with a couple who worshipped at one of the rural Methodist chapels in the circuit. He was a Local Preacher and his wife played the organ for their services. They were both very generous and would frequently invite me to join them for Sunday lunch, after which we would sit in the lounge and chat. I well remember one such Sunday, when as usual after lunch we settled ourselves in the lounge. In the course of conversation, we drifted into a discussion of some biblical interpretations and it soon became apparent that on one particular issue my views and theirs were the complete opposite. I recall there was a very awkward silence and just when I was wondering what to do or say, my preacher friend quietly said: "I think we will just have to agree to differ on this". I agreed wholeheartedly and we all voiced that it would not get in the way of our friendship – and it never did. In the future, when our sharing veered close to that topic, we would all stop and smile and agree not to go there.

Some might see this as an unsatisfactory conclusion, because there is no conclusive answer and the issue is left as something of an impasse. But thinking about it, sometimes the most loving thing to do is to agree to differ. And it is an optimistic strategy, because it starts with agreement – which is a positive beginning – even if it is agreeing to differ.

Of course, not all differences can just be ring-fenced as out of bounds for discussion. Sometimes issues need to be addressed.

The Methodist Conference has invited us all to consider the issue of marriage and sexuality in its report "God in love unites us" and by now we have all had the opportunity

to come together and share our thoughts and concerns. I personally have found the convened discussion sessions to be both informative and enlightening, encouraging open and honest sharing around the challenging issues. There are clearly very different viewpoints held and one could be left wondering where on earth we go from here. But I believe the answer is to start by agreeing to differ and respectfully acknowledging that opposing opinions exist. Going on further will then require working together to find a compromise that will accommodate all perspectives.

A tall order perhaps, but by starting from a point of agreeing, I trust that we will continue to journey together, recognising that God in love unites us.

Lesley Cox – Hopwas Methodist Church

CLIMATE CHANGE AND OUR CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

The major climate incidents in the world over the winter months – forest fires in Australia, flooding in the UK – demonstrate that the scientific analysis on climate change is real and happening apace. The current scientific view is that the global temperature increase has to be kept below 1.5 degrees centigrade by 2030.

Genesis Chapter 1 shows God's creative power culminates in the creation of mankind. We are created to know God, to enjoy the relationship with our God through Jesus, and to enjoy God's creation. Equally important we are to be co-stewards of the creation which carries a responsibility to practice love and justice to our human neighbours and other living creatures. There have been a number of responses to climate change around the circuit; the response at Lichfield has been to look at ways to approach our stewardship responsibilities.

There are things we do as a church which are environmentally friendly but there is a challenging journey of improvement we can follow. An Eco-Church Action group has met on several occasions to plan for the future. However, we wanted to share with you the progress made over the last 12 months:

- A number of services have focused on caring for God's earth.
- Our electrical supply is now from a renewable source. More LED light bulbs will be used.
- A few of the young people took part in a Water Aid sponsored walk; the young people's group, Participate, ran a successful programme raising funds for the Toilet Twinning charity.
- The coffee shop has changed a number of things to reduce their carbon footprint.

Assisting the involvement and thinking of the wider church community is the study of a book on the subject - 'Saying Yes to Life' (author is Ruth Valerio). The book centres on the Genesis creation stories to guide our individual

thinking on living more sustainably. Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, says in the Foreword to the book: "It is of the utmost importance that we now stand in solidarity together, repenting of our sins towards our earth and committing to face our responsibilities as God's people.....We are obliged to live out our life that Christ calls us to live, to care for our neighbours, for the creatures and the creation that God has so generously given us."

David Shaw - Lichfield Methodist Church.

EASTER BROWNIE BITES:

Why not have some baking fun with these tasty treats!



Ingredients:

175 g butter chopped
150g dark chocolate
250g light brown soft sugar
85g self-raising flour
50g cocoa powder
3 large eggs beaten
100g milk chocolate chips
24 mini chocolate eggs,
plus extra to decorate

METHOD

Heat oven to 180C/160C fan/gas 4. Line 24 holes of a mini muffin tray with paper cases. Put the butter, dark chocolate and sugar in a pan and heat it very gently, stirring all the time until the butter and chocolate have melted. Remove from the heat and leave to cool for a few mins.

Meanwhile, sift the flour, cocoa and a good pinch of salt into a large bowl. Stir in the warm, melted chocolate mixture and the beaten eggs, then add half the chocolate chips and mix until just combined.

Divide the mixture between the cases and place a mini egg into the middle of each muffin, pushing down gently. Bake for 12-15 mins until cooked but still gooey in the centre – they will continue cooking a little as they cool down. Leave to cool for 10 mins in the tin before transferring to a wire rack to cool completely.

Melt the rest of the chocolate chips in short bursts in the microwave, or in a bowl set over a pan of simmering water, stirring frequently. Leave to cool until it is quite thick, then dot a small amount on each cake and stick on some more mini eggs.

Now all you have to do is sit back and enjoy your tasty treat!

(Taken from the Good Food Magazine April 2019)