

# MOTTINGHAM METHODIST CHURCH MESSENGER

April 2021



THE CHURCH  
IN THE MIDDLE OF  
THE VILLAGE!

# FOLLOWING THE DAYS OF EASTER



## MAUNDY THURSDAY

Maundy Thursday is famous for two things. The first is one of the final acts that Jesus did before His death: the washing of His own disciples' feet (see John 13). Jesus washed His disciples' feet for a purpose: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." His disciples were to love through service, not domination, of one another.

In Latin, the opening phrase of this sentence is '*mandatum novum do vobis*'. The word 'mundy' is thus a corruption of the Latin '*mandatum*' (or command). The ceremony of the 'washing of the feet' of members of the congregation came to be an important part of the liturgy (regular worship) of the medieval church, symbolising the humility of the clergy, in obedience to the example of Christ.



But Thursday was also important because it was on that night that Jesus first introduced the Lord's Supper, or what we nowadays call Holy Communion.

Jesus and His close friends had met in a secret upper room to share the Passover meal together - for the last time. And there Jesus transformed the Passover into the Lord's Supper, saying, 'this is my body' and 'this is my blood' as He, the Lamb of God, prepared to die for the sins of the whole world. John's gospel makes it clear that the Last Supper took place the evening BEFORE the regular Passover meal, and that later Jesus died at the same time that the Passover lambs were killed.



## GOOD FRIDAY

### Jesus and the thieves on the Cross

Luke's account of the crucifixion (Luke 23:32-43) emphasises the mocking of the crowd, *'If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself'* (35,37,39). In their view a Messiah does not hang on a cross and suffer. In considering the two men who were crucified with Jesus, we are also confronted with the issue of how Jesus secures salvation for us.

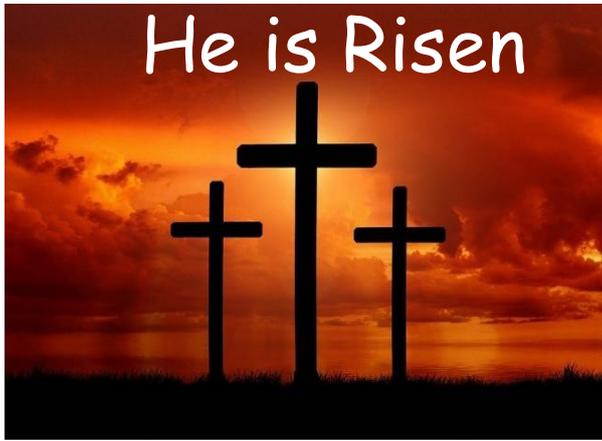
The words of one of those crucified with Jesus reflected the crowd's taunts: *'Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us.'* He highlights the question of Jesus' identity: how can He save others, when He cannot save Himself from death? He failed to see that the cross itself was the means of salvation.

### **So - what kind of Messiah was Jesus?**

The other criminal's response in his last moments is a moving expression of faith. When challenging the other man, he spoke of the utter injustice of the crucifixion: *'this man has done nothing wrong.'* He perceived the truth that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. In a wonderful picture of grace, *'remember me when You come into Your kingdom'*, the second thief confessed his guilt and secured Jesus' forgiveness and mercy.

In reply, Jesus promised the man life from the moment of death; *'Today you will be with Me in paradise.'* Jesus used the picture of a walled garden to help the man understand His promise of protection and security in God's love and acceptance eternally.

Each one of us has to choose how we react to Jesus on the cross. Do we want Him to 'remember' us when He comes into His kingdom, or not? If you were to die tonight, how confident would you be of going to be with Jesus? *'For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God'* (1 Peter 3verse18).



## EASTER

### Easter Hope

*"So many people right across the country are anxious about employment, anxious about food, isolated from loved ones and feel that the future looks dark."* These

are words from the Archbishop of Canterbury's sermon on Easter Day 2020. Who would have thought that we are experiencing the same uncertainties this Easter!

Yet the Easter story remains one of hope overcoming darkness and despair. The women arrived at the tomb on Easter morning with mixed emotions, as they came to anoint Jesus' body. *'But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away.'* (Mark 16 verse 4). They were confused, as they tried to make sense of Jesus' death. Their hopes were dashed with an uncertain future. In the current pandemic, we too are left asking: *Where is God in all this?*

The young man at the tomb reminds them that God is still in control: *"Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him."* (Mark 16 verse 6).

The women had forgotten Jesus' promise to the disciples that He would die and rise from the dead. Jesus' resurrection is also the sure foundation of hope for us in the present crisis. He turns our confusion and fear into joy and wonder! We can trust Jesus' plan for the future of our world and lives, despite the fact that things can't return to the way they were: *"There needs to be a resurrection of our common life, a new normal, something that links to the old, but is different and more beautiful. We must dream it, build it, make it, grasp it, because it is the gift of God and the call of God."* (Justin Welby).

Paul Hardingham



## EASTER PRAYER

Dear generous, loving Father,

How can we thank you for the precious gift of your Son Jesus, for His life of obedience and servanthood, for His choosing to die that agonising death on a cruel cross, so that we can be forgiven, and most of all for His death-defeating resurrection on the first Easter morning and the gift of His Spirit to those who put their trust in Him?

We can't possibly thank you adequately Lord, but we want to try! Thank you, thank you Father, that Jesus, our Servant-King is alive, Lord of heaven and earth - and yet still serving us, so that we too can live and serve.

Help us to be your Easter people and live lives of faithful witness to the living Lord, empowered by your Holy Spirit, building in all that we think, say or do for your kingdom to come. Hallelujah! Amen.

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## AFTER EASTER



## GOD AND THE ARTS

**The walk to Emmaus:**

**Come, risen Lord, and deign to be our guest.**

For the two disciples treading the road to Emmaus, there was no such sense of victory and celebration. Their minds and hearts were numb with the sense of loss and failure. They had seen their Lord tried and crucified. As Luke recounts that walk in his Gospel, he shows how it began with absence and loss, but journeyed to presence. It was a road that took the disciples from blindness and despair to sight and insight. They talked over past events with the stranger who joined them, and Luke uses ten different Greek words to describe that conversation - all stages in their understanding. And when they

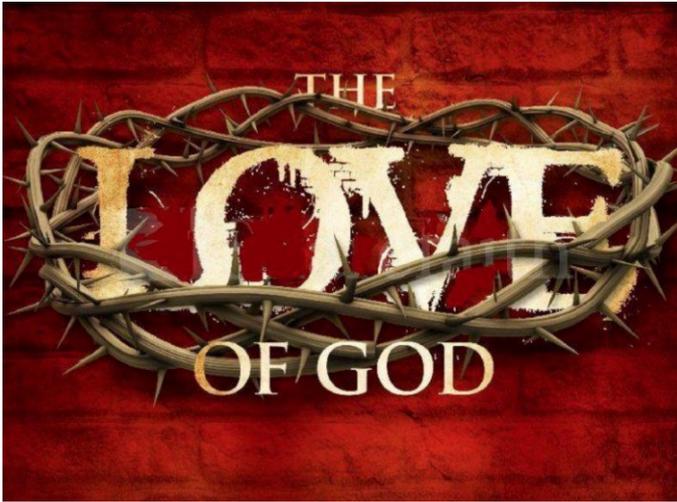
(God and the arts continued) share a meal with the stranger, who becomes the host, taking the bread and giving thanks, then the understanding becomes vision and insight.

That meal is the theme of Caravaggio's painting of 1601, 'The Supper at Emmaus.' Caravaggio had a reputation for being a violent, irrational artist, given to bouts of anger and forced to spend part of his life in exile in Naples and Sicily. His paintings as well as his lifestyle shocked and provoked comment. This portrayal of Jesus with a plump, youthful face and his depiction of the apostles as ordinary labourers upset the church authorities. But by giving Jesus a beardless face, Caravaggio was trying to show Him in the new likeness of Resurrection - an Easter image of our Lord. The light from that Easter Jesus fills the scene as the two disciples look on, astonished and finally understanding.

When we read the Gospel, we are drawn into the scene. For Caravaggio the movement is the other way: the scene reaches out to us from the canvas. Look at the outstretched hand of Jesus, the elbow of one disciple and the left hand of the other: they are being projected into our world. And that basket of fruit, full of apples and figs and grapes, symbols of the fall and the eucharist: it is about to topple off the table and into our laps. It is an Easter encounter two thousand years ago, reaching out to us through light and shade and the skill of the artist.

In many ways the Gospel story in Luke is of an ordinary encounter between travellers and a stranger. But it is made extraordinary by the transforming power of the risen Lord, talking with the disciples in the open air and then going inside for a meal. However, the doors are not shut to us. For Caravaggio shows how that special moment of encounter for the two disciples can reach out to enter our world. And he shows the hand of the risen Lord beckoning us to step into that Easter world of sacrament and new life.

Michael Burgess



## LOVE OF GOD

That's impossible!

'And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that

surpasses knowledge. (Ephesians 3 Verses 17-19)

How can you describe the indescribable? How can you measure the love of God? Who can find words to convey the joy of knowing such amazing love?

The apostle Paul gives us a model for the love of God that is mathematically impossible. Objects normally have only 3 dimensions, but here he gives us 4, such is the greatness of the love he has in mind.

**It is wide**, embracing every person without exception.

**It is long**, lasting for eternity.

**It is high**, coming down from heaven to save us.

**It is deep**, taking the Saviour to the cross and the darkness of the tomb.

Paul wants us to begin to understand (grasp) with our minds how great is God's love. More than that, he wants us to experience (know) it for ourselves, in our hearts.

When this happens, with the help of the Spirit, we will become rooted, like trees with roots anchored in the ground. We will become established, like a building resting on a firm foundation. In other words, we will be secure.

Why not ask God to take you deeper into His amazing love?

*Tony Horsfall*



## MARTYRS OF THE EARLY CHURCH

### Carpus, Papyrus & Agathonice

In the month of Christ's ultimate sacrifice of Himself for us, the martyrdoms of Carpus, Papyrus and Agathonice are well worth remembering. What they said as they died could be said by the many thousands of Christians who are facing persecution all over the world today.

Carpus, Papyrus and Agathonice lived in Pergamum (Asia Minor) in the late second century. Carpus was a bishop, Papyrus was a deacon, and Agathonice was his sister. Trouble began when the proconsul Optimus ordered them to sacrifice in the name of the emperor.

Carpus refused, saying, 'I am a Christian and because of my faith and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I cannot become one of you.' He was hung up and tortured by iron claws.

Papyrus was a wealthy citizen, but he had also led many people to faith in Christ. As he suffered the same fate as Carpus, he said, 'I feel no pain because I have Someone to comfort me; One whom you do not see suffers within me.' Both men were then burnt alive.

Finally, it was his sister's turn. She too refused to sacrifice to demons. 'If I am worthy,' she said, 'I desire to follow the footsteps of my teachers.' On being urged to have pity on her children, she replied, 'My children have God, who watches over them; but I will not obey your commands.' As she was consigned to the flames, she cried out three times: 'Lord Jesus Christ, help me because I am enduring this for you.' She died soon after.

Terrible deaths, but also, triumphant ones. These three Christians loved Jesus so much that the only thing they could NOT bear was to deny Him. Sadly, the persecution goes on today, in countries where Jesus Christ is still bitterly hated. Pray for the Christians who live in these countries, that they too may have courage and endurance - to the end.



## PRAY FOR TODAY'S PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS

Some of the top 10 Open Doors' 2021 World Watch List of Persecution of Christians

### **Eritrea**

Government security forces monitor phone calls, scrutinise activity and conduct countless raids which target Christians, seize Christian materials and damage house churches. Christians can be arrested and imprisoned without trial.

### **Yemen**

Christians in Yemen usually keep their faith secret, because if they are discovered then they could face the death penalty. Leaving Islam is forbidden, and all Yemenis are considered Muslims by the state.

### **Iran**

The Iranian government sees the conversion of Muslims to Christianity as an attempt by Western countries to undermine the Islamic rule of Iran. Christians from a Muslim background are persecuted the most, primarily by the government, but also by their families and communities.

### **Nigeria**

More Christians are murdered for their faith in Nigeria than in any other country. Violent attacks by Boko Haram, Hausa-Fulani Muslim militant herdsmen, ISWAP (an affiliate of ISIS) and other Islamic extremist groups are common in the north and middle belt of the country, and they are becoming more common further south.

### **India**

Hindu extremists believe that all Indians should be Hindus, and that the country should be rid of Christianity and Islam. They use extensive violence to achieve this goal, particularly targeting Christians from a Hindu background.



## WHEN WILL OUR CHURCH BE OPEN AGAIN FOR WORSHIP? ...NOT YET!

A plan was set up by the Church Council ending in a meeting once such a meeting can take place to decide on the way forward for the church.

Deacon maureenspinks will be contacting the church members and those who worship with us over the next weeks.

Meanwhile please join the 500 who meet together on line for worship each week on <http://www.orpchiscircuit.org.uk/> (Videos), or access the printable Sunday worship service from the website.



Join Maureen Spinks' Zoom short Worship meeting at 8.00pm every other Sunday from 12<sup>th</sup> April.

Phone 01689 821956 or E-mail [mdospinks@gmail.com](mailto:mdospinks@gmail.com)

and Maureen will set you up.



## PRAYING FOR OUR CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

We may not be open, but all the people who are part of our church, churches and community families are still out there. They will have various needs and problems and need our prayers.

Dear Father:

We pray for ourselves our members and visitors', and for our ministers - Duncan, Terry and Maureen. We pray for those who have normally gone to the Community Lunch, and for those who normally go to The Youth Club. We pray for the Good Companions and All Sorts Craft Group, for Churches Together in Mottingham - St Andrews, St Albans, St Edwards and Our Lady Help of Christians. Finally we pray for the shop owners, library, Councilors and neighbours.

**Amen**



## IN AND AROUND MOTTINGHAM AND BROMLEY

Most libraries in Bromley are to offer a Click and Collect service with the exception of Bromley Central Library and Orpington Library. Mottingham is operating 10.00 am-2.00 pm on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday.

Tel:020 8857 5406 or e-mail: [mottingham.library@GLL.ORG](mailto:mottingham.library@GLL.ORG)

You can continue to explore all that Bromley Libraries offer on:

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

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### NOTICES:



#### **GERALD WOOD'S FUNERAL: TUESDAY 6<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY**

The funeral of Gerald, who died on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2021, will be held at Hither Green Crematorium at 3.15pm on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> April .



#### **GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE OF WITNESS: FRIDAY 2ND APRIL**

The arrangements have changed for The Churches Together walk of witness to a Service of Witness on 2<sup>nd</sup> April starting at 10.30am at the front of St Edwards Church.



#### **CHRISTIAN AID WEEK 9TH TO 15TH MAY 2021.**

Further information about the programme will be available nearer the time.



Churches together in Mottingham is on Facebook;

<https://www.facebook.com/Churches-Together-in-Mottingham-104482874785693>



## 'KEEP CONNECTED! - serving the community'

This publication prepared by Bob Lawrie broadly cover aspects of life in Mottingham under headings such as, community, environment,

church life, local activity and news in general.

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TEL: 020 8857 0685



## ST GEORGE'S DAY

The film *How to Train your Dragon* is set in a Viking village under attack by dragons,

who steal livestock and burn down houses. Hiccup, the village Chief's son, invents a machine to capture them. However, when he catches the most dangerous one, Night Fury, he cannot kill it. This is because when he looks into the dragon's eyes, he sees that he is just as frightened as himself. Through their friendship, the people and dragons eventually come to live in harmony.

It's appropriate to think about dragons this month, when we remember St. George, England's patron saint, famed for slaying a dragon. Whether he actually killed a dragon is open to question! We do know that the original George was a Roman soldier at the time of Emperor Diocletian. He refused to renounce his faith, as commanded by the Emperor, resulting in his death on 23 April 303 AD.

So, we have here St George who slayed a dragon, while Hiccup refused to kill one. They seem like opposites: one a brave soldier and the other a weak boy! However, both acted according to their conscience, going against what people expected and not worrying about the cost to themselves. St George was martyred for standing up for his faith in Jesus, while Hiccup risked rejection by his father and village because of his compassion.

Today, we are still called to stand for Christ against wrongs and injustice in a daily life, despite the personal cost. We need to look into the eyes of apparent enemies and meet their hostility with love and compassion. And for all of us the most important place where we need to slay evil is in our own hearts. Don't forget that we have the power of the Resurrection at our disposal!