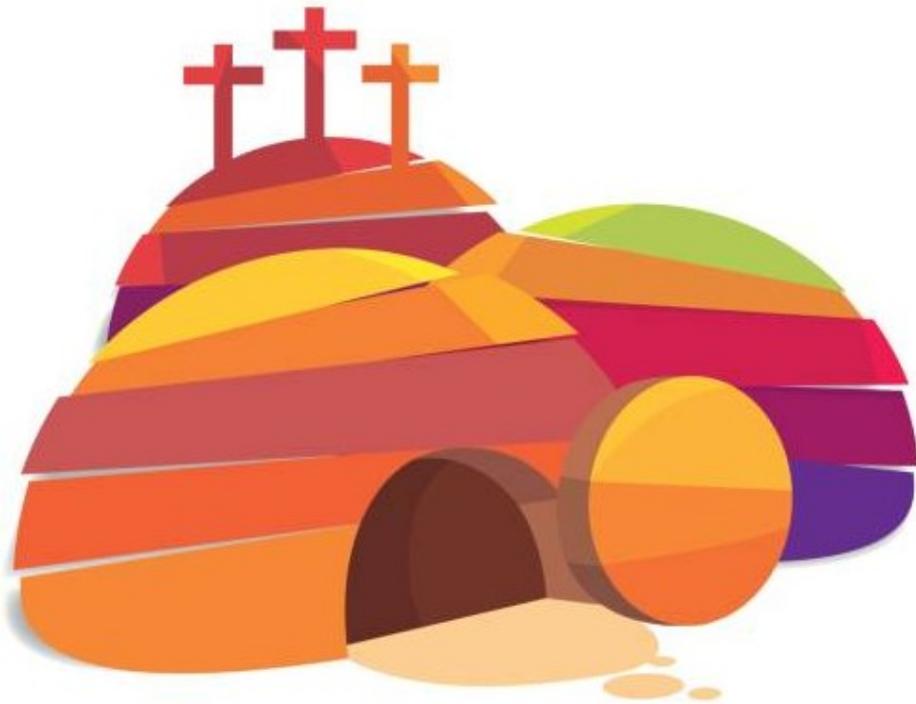


# MOTTINGHAM METHODIST CHURCH MESSENGER

April 2020



THE CHURCHES MAY BE EMPTY, BUT SO IS  
THE GRAVE!  
HE IS RISEN, HALLELUJAH!



THE CHURCH  
IN THE MIDDLE OF  
THE VILLAGE!



## 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 3:18).



## WHY DID JESUS DIE?

'God proved His love on the Cross. When Christ hung, and bled, and died, it was God saying to the world, 'I love you.'" (Billy Graham).

God showed His love for us, when Jesus dealt with the problem of our sin on the cross. *'He himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed'* (1 Peter 2:24). Jesus died in our place to bear our sin and guilt, to pay the full penalty for our sin and to set us free from death.

In the 75th anniversary year of the liberation of the Auschwitz Concentration Camp, it's appropriate to remember the story of Fr Maximilian Kolbe, a Polish priest imprisoned in Auschwitz. On 31<sup>st</sup> July 1941 a prisoner escaped from the camp and in response the authorities selected ten men to die in the starvation bunker.

One of the men, Francis Gajinisdek, cried, *'My poor wife and my children. They'll never see me again!'* Then Kolbe stepped forward and said, *"I'm a Catholic priest. I don't have a wife and children and I am willing to die instead of this man."* He followed the other nine into the bunker. Remarkably he got the prisoners praying and singing hymns and transformed the atmosphere in the bunker. He was the last person to die and after two weeks he was given a lethal injection and died at the age of 47.

Jesus' death was even more amazing than this, because He didn't simply die for one man, but for every individual in the world. If you or I had been the only person in the world, Jesus Christ would still have died in our place.

**'HALLELUJAH, WHAT A SAVIOUR'!!**

*Paul Hardingham*



## EASTER MORNING:

### - the 'Other' Mary.

The 'other' Mary - is Mary Magdalene, who stood at the cross and became the first human being actually to meet the risen Christ.

That's quite a record for a woman who, the Gospels tell us, had been delivered by Jesus from 'seven devils' - New Testament language for some dark and horrible affliction of body, mind or spirit. As a result, her devotion to Him was total.

In church history Mary Magdalene became the 'fallen woman' a harlot rescued and forgiven by Jesus but there is no evidence to prove she was a 'fallen woman' but the contrast is sublime, Mary the virgin mother, the symbol of purity. Mary Magdalene, the scarlet woman who was saved and forgiven, the symbol of redemption. Surely, we all fall somewhere between those two extremes.

What we do know is that the two contrasting women stood together at the cross.

The second great moment for Mary was as unexpected as it was momentous. She had gone with other women to the tomb of Jesus and found it empty. An angelic figure told them that Jesus was not there, He had risen - and the others drifted off. Mary stayed. She became aware of a man nearby, whom she took to be the gardener. She explained to Him that the body of 'her Lord' had been taken away and she didn't know where to find Him.

The man simply said her name 'Mary' and she instantly realised it was Jesus. She made to hug Him, but He told her not to touch Him because his resurrection was not yet complete. She was, however, to go to the male disciples and tell them she had met Him. She did, saying '**I have seen the Lord**' - but they couldn't believe her.

Her words - '**I have seen the Lord**' - echo down the centuries. She was the first of many witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus.

*Canon David Winter*



## I BELIEVE, HELP MY UNBELIEF

I was in a discussion recently as to whether or not a Christian can have doubts. The father in Mark's story (9:17-27) speaks for many people. He knew that Jesus *could* heal his son, but just wasn't quite sure *if* He would.

Doubt comes in many forms. It may be intellectual, a form of wrestling with the truth of certain key Christian beliefs like the Virgin Birth or the inerrancy of the Bible. It may be philosophical, a pondering of the problem of evil and why God allows bad things to happen to good people. Sometimes it is spiritual, and doubting whether or not we are saved. Occasionally it is emotional, wondering if we are loveable, if we have any worth or value in God's sight.

Such doubts are painful and debilitating, but true faith does not exclude the possibility of doubt. Indeed, we could say that faith would not be faith if there was not an element of doubt!

Often doubt is a way by which we discover the truth in a deeper way as we wrestle honestly with the questions we have. For many it is a way by which faith grows and matures, leading us to a greater understanding of the mystery of God and the reality that with our finite minds we can never understand everything about God or the way in which He works.

Doubt is not the same as unbelief, which is a stubborn refusal to believe what the Bible says to be true. Doubt is more a normal part of faith development and is not to be feared, especially if we bring our questions to God.

The great Methodist minister Dr William Sangster was asked if he ever doubted. "Yes," he replied, "of course I have doubts. But I also doubt my doubts!"

*By Tony Horsfall*





# ONCE A MONTH CONGREGATION CALLED MESSY CHURCH

What do bible journeys tell us about being prepared?

Lent is the time of preparation for Easter. So we thought



about the importance of being prepared. We thought about God's instruction to the people of Israel to make unleavened bread ready to have food when God led them out of slavery in Egypt.

We remembered the story of the Good Samaritan who was prepared to help a man who had been

attacked and badly hurt by dressing his wounds and taking him to an Inn to get better.



We thought about an Ethiopian man who was reading the bible but didn't understand it. A man called Philip who had studied the bible explained it to him.



Finally we thought about lent and prepared a snakes and ladders board to demonstrate the pathway of preparation for Easter.

EASTER DAY 47	HOLY WEEK 46 SATURDAY	GOOD FRIDAY 45	THURSDAY 44	43	42
36	37	38	39	PALM SUNDAY 40	41
35	34	33 5TH SUNDAY OF LENT	32	31	30
24	25	26 MOTHERS DAY	27	28	29
23	22	21	20	19 3RD SUNDAY OF LENT	18
12 2ND SUNDAY OF LENT	13	14	15	16	17
11	10	9	8	7	6
START	ASH WEDNESDAY 1	2	3	4	5 1ST SUNDAY OF LENT



## THINKING ABOUT THE PSALMS

*'Most of Scripture speaks to us; the Psalms speak FOR us.'* (St Athanasius).

### 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.' (verse3).

**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.' (verse4). 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.' (verse24). 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 in Him.

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

*Paul Hardingham*



It was with great sadness that we heard of the death on the 5<sup>th</sup> March of Elsie Hudson who was 104 years old. Elsie was a regular member of the Community Lunch family. Her church membership was with St Andrews. Our condolences go to Dianne and Michael.



## PRAYING FOR OUR CHURCH AND COMMUNITY FAMILY

In the Bible Timothy urges us not to neglect our intercessions: "I urge then, first of all, that prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made for all people..." (1 Tim 2 verse 1)

The doors of our church might be closed and all the activities suspended, but all the people who are part of our church, churches and community families are still out there. All our 'people' will have various needs and problems and need our prayers.

As I started to prepare this Messenger I was sad that there was no need to fill in the different activities which it usually carries. But it occurred to me that we could use the activities as a timetable to guide how we as a church might respond to the instructions in Timothy. We don't know everybody who is involved in all the activities but God does. Below, then, could be the guidance for our prayers based on our normal activities and links.

From Ruth.

**Sunday:** Worship and Messy Church - Our preachers this month were to be Chris Price, Maureen Spinks and Maggie Ayres with Dallas organising the Songs of Praise

**Monday:** Our ministers - Duncan on sabbatical, Terry and Maureen.

**Tuesday:** Good Companions and All Sorts Craft Group

**Wednesday:** Community Lunch

**Thursday:** Churches Together in Mottingham - St Andrews, St Albans, St Edwards and Our Lady Help of Christians

**Friday:** Our shop owners, library, Councilors and Neighbours.

**Saturday:** The Youth Club