

Palm Sunday

5th April 2020

Including Readings and Prayers for Good Friday



St Francis Weekly News

This bulletin may have come to you by email or through your letterbox, if you received it on paper but are happy to receive an email in future please email deborah.lechmere@ntlworld.com If you know anybody else who would like this delivered or emailed please contact Deborah or Revd Janet: revdjanetwyer@outlook.com

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN ST FRANCIS CHURCH?

The doors to the church space may be closed, but the work of St Francis Church continues.

In the window overlooking our beloved Heartsease community there is a candle burning 24/7. This is a reminder that Jesus is with us always and that the light of Christ will never be overcome by darkness.

Above the candle, taped to the window is a simple prayer that those who pass by can see and maybe help them to pause for a moment in prayer before they carry on their way to shop or enjoy a time taking a little exercise in the fresh air and spring weather.

St Francis is also taking part in the worldwide 'Bear Hunt' that was introduced to give children a fun and safe activity while walking around their neighbourhood with their parents.



The Church of St Francis
Heartsease



**Heavenly Father
We ask your blessing upon us.
Hold the Heartsease Community,
and all the world,
in your arms of love.
Be with us.
Give us your strength,
peace, and healing grace.
Watch over us,
protect us from harm;
and keep in safety
all those who care for the sick
and attend to our needs,
in Jesus name we pray.
Amen**

In our window, Winnie the Pooh and Eeyore are having a picnic [at a safe social distance] and giving out the message:

"I'm never afraid with you" said Winnie the Pooh
Don't forget that Jesus is always with you,
and that you are in our prayers!
Much Love from all at St Francis Church x

ST FRANCIS FRIDGE

As the week has gone by we have seen a steady increase in the amount of food that is being collected from the supermarkets [thank you Michael, Danny, Glynis and Gary]. We are also receiving amazing support from Morrisons Riverside [delivered to the door by Donna].

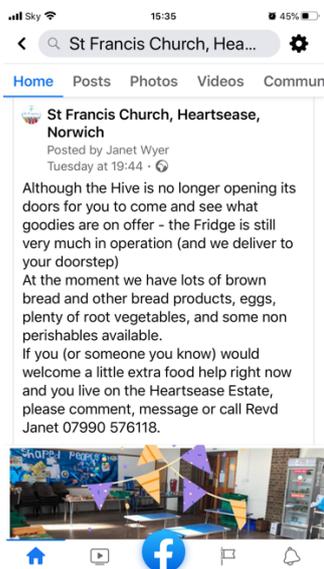
So, alongside the fresh fruit and vegetables bought through the funding given to us by our generous benefactor and other donors, at the moment, we have plenty of food.

Amazingly, the more requests we get and the more we give out – the food supply seems to be miraculously replenished; gifts of grace indeed.

To date we have packed and delivered in excess of three dozen parcels, and all of them so very gratefully received that it is humbling.

Thanks to all who have added their name to the list of people willing to pack and deliver, as time goes by be assured you will be called upon as day by day we are seeing an increase in the number of people making themselves known or requesting help for a neighbour or a friend.

You may be wondering quite how all this is happening, [and I have to say that I too am wondering] but by God's grace it is simply falling into place as we go along.



A recent Facebook post

We have been advertising on Facebook, and word of mouth means that the message is slowly getting around the Heartsease community – but please feel free to tell as many people as possible what we have available to those who need a helping hand. Our aim is that no one on the estate ever finds themselves without food.

I am receiving all the incoming phone calls, messages and Facebook communications and coordinating the response with Eleanor.

With the help of Jeanette, Eleanor and I have been packing and delivering – but I will be looking to step down from this side of the operation as time progresses. [see note to volunteers above!]

On the practical side Jim is keeping an eye on the management of the food in terms of stock rotation, and Johnny is making sure that the Fridge, hall and associated areas are kept clean and sanitized.

All in all, we are responding to these days of challenge with hearts filled with deep gratitude. Gratitude for the generosity that is making all this possible, appreciative of the fact that we are fit and well and able to do what we are doing – and thankful to God in whose strength we nestle.

PASTORAL CARE

It is only in times of trouble perhaps that we really appreciate the love and nurture that is ours through being a part of a church family.

When all is well it is too easy to take for granted the friendships and companionship that we find in church or the many groups and clubs that meet under the wing of the Church of St Francis.

When all that is taken away from us suddenly life becomes very different and the world we find ourselves inhabiting becomes confined and filled with strange new ways of being.

So now, more than ever, is the time to draw on those friendships and relationships to find mutual support, companionship and reassurance.

No matter how tenuous or fleeting the contact we may have had with someone before coronavirus, now is the time to make that call – or send that email. Not only for our own sense of connectedness, but for the wellbeing and love of another who may well be struggling.

Please, whoever you are – make the effort to get in touch with someone you haven't spoken to in a while [or even someone you've never spoken to!]

There's never been a more important time to reach out to let someone know that they have been thought of and that they matter.

We do have a formal system in place for the pastoral support of everyone who has expressed the desire to belong to the Church of St Francis – but that can never take the place of informal, spontaneous expressions of care and concern.



If you would like to make contact with someone and you don't have their details, please do not hesitate to call, text or email me and I will ensure that you will be put in touch with each other.

Master Edward Lake
Revd Janet's Grandson [2015]

WORSHIP & PRAYER

For those of you with online skills The Revd Tracy Williams, who is licensed to St Francis Church through our mission partnership with St Matthews, Thorpe Hamlet, has produced a beautiful video called 'Spiritual Communion'.

This four minute film leads us through prayer into an act of communion with God by receiving as a beloved child of God Jesus' promised 'bread of life'.



<https://youtu.be/UGaKox9ywzo>

I offer this to you as a very real and moving alternative to receiving the Holy Sacrament which is denied to us at this troubling time.



I am continuing to ring the church bell throughout the day as a call to prayer, a sign of God's love and my way of audibly praying a blessing upon the Heartsease community.

Below is an email I received very recently...

Dear Reverend Janet,
I just wanted to say thank you for the ringing of the bells of St Francis in the mornings and evenings during this worrying time. After going through some very difficult years I have been left with extremely high anxiety and all this has made it a lot worse. I don't know why but hearing the bells really helps. They feel like a warm, genuine hug every time I hear them,
Thank you,

A very moving reminder that the smallest act of prayer is heard and answered.

If you would like resources for prayer throughout the day and guidance in that prayer, Revd Isaac is available to give help and spiritual support.

Because he is confined to his home for the next few months, Isaac will be much more readily contactable than I, as I am spending a great deal of time on overseeing our practical and pastoral response to this crisis.

REVD ISAAC



Something from your Curate

A very warm greeting from me to you, I would like to start by saying thank you all for all your prayer and support during the time I was ill and off work. It is your prayers that kept me going. I must admit that I have missed you greatly, so too our beautiful building and all the activity there within.

As you can imagine due to my health, I am following the advice to isolate myself for 12 weeks. Becky is also working from home and is keeping me company. As can be expected I am trying to do bits and pieces from home, mostly it's giving me a chance to reflect, rather do my theological reflections for my curate's portfolio. I'm betting many of you expected to see lots of videos and live streaming on my Facebook page. It is something I have thought about but currently do not feel any urgency to do such a thing. There are plenty of priests doing it currently. I would like to encourage you during this difficult time to keep going, to keep following the advice and stay safe. I feel it is also important to say that we should be kind to each other and especially ourselves.

However, we may be feeling whatever emotions we may be going through this is an incredibly difficult time for many and it'll take us time to adjust and deal with the trauma of the situation. Because of my health I have found myself in this scenario many times, on many occasions I have had to stop everything I was doing and take some time out or isolate myself at home for recovery. It is not easy, but with time we will all adjust and find ways of surviving and perhaps possibly thriving.

I have also reflected on many of the kind things that people are doing for each other, the positive way in which social media is being used. A welcome change from so much of the negativity and unkindness that we were experienced before this happened.

It seems that we are all to be pilgrims, we find ourselves on a journey of spiritual reflection, thinking about the state of the world, thinking about our faith and how a season that is so familiar may now have to be very different. I am a strong believer that wherever we may look there Christ will be, and even as I sit in my office I can't but help shake the feeling, that he is here beside me. A friend shared a joke with me, "they asked where is God"...? The reply was he is working from home. We can all agree that if God is working from home, his home is with his people are and so he is with us.

I value any contact, email, telephone, video chat or other.

Please know that you are all in my prayers and in my heart, and I look forward to seeing you all.

God Bless

Isaac

News from Churches Together England



As our nation faces the unprecedented challenge of the coronavirus pandemic, Churches Together in England (CTE) is encouraging Christians across our nations to continue uniting in prayer, praying #PrayersOfHope in their homes at 7.00 pm each Sunday evening.

Following the overwhelming response which the National Call to Prayer and Action received on Mothering Sunday, CTE has prepared a candle poster for those who would like to place a permanent symbol in their front windows of Christ's light shining in the darkness. Visit www.cte.org.uk/prayersofhope

This poster has been made available due to our awareness of the potential fire risk posed by lighting live candles, particularly on windowsills. We are keen to avoid adding any pressure to our emergency service personnel, particularly at this difficult time.

'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.' John 1:5

A WORD FROM THE VICAR

As you can imagine, I have spent a good deal of time in church buildings. As a member of a number of congregations, a Verger, an Ordinand, a Curate, an Associate Priest, a Rector and now finally a Vicar.



Verger @ St Peter Mancroft
2002

I have heard, and preached, a lot of sermons!

And one of the recurrent themes that weaves its way through many, many sermons is the deep truth that even in the most testing of times God's hand is hard at work. That in the midst of disaster, tragedy and difficult times God is always with us and working to bring about hope, peace, love and new beginnings.

I have perceived God's hand at work many times – so I have always preached this word of good news from personal experience. But I can honestly say that I have never before seen God at work as clearly and profoundly as I have witnessed over these past few weeks.

I have seen countless breath taking acts of love, blessing and providence that witness beyond all doubt and with wonderful reassurance that God really is with us.

As we approach Holy Week and Good Friday 2020, there has never in our lifetimes been a more anxious time; this thing that threatens so many of us is unseen and unknown, how could we not be fearful?

But, the cross of Christ stands as a strong and immovable promise that no matter what may happen to us, God through Jesus is indeed with us. And he knows what it is to be fearful and to suffer. There is no path that we take that Jesus has not walked before us.

The pathway may seem dark and scary, but the light shines – and by his cross Jesus has promised us that the light of his loving presence will never leave us; especially when we in turn choose to take that light into ourselves and shine as a light for others.

There are many frightened people out there, alone and anxious who do not know about the promise, the gift of Good Friday, the good news that God is with us – in these dark times we are the ones called to tell them.

A word of love, a smile across the street, a wave from a window, a friendly voice on the end of a phone line; these given in love in the service of Jesus - these are just some of the gifts of grace we can give

They are enough, and they are evidence, real living proof, that God's hand really is at work, even in these unprecedented, challenging times.

But, if you, like Thomas, need to see evidence of God at work with your own eyes; it is literally in front of your eyes right now – a weekly newsletter!

Who would have thought that was possible?



I've been on the lookout for rainbows – this one made me smile

+ God's blessing and protection be upon you and yours throughout this Holy Week.

Revd Janet xx

FOR OUR PRAYERS

We pray for those who are in acute need of prayer at this time: Paula, Gill, Karen, Maegan, John R, Sonia & Lola, Colin, Lynn, Pete, Lauren, Fr Brian, David and Hazel L.

We continue to pray for all those in our Church, friends and family who are managing long term health issues including Alma, Rosemary, Sheila, John, Joy, Molly, Shirley.

We remember with love Tom Farrell and all those who have died in recent days and pray for their family and friends

FROM THE PARISH REGISTERS

FUNERALS

3rd April Ethel Norman St Faith's Crematorium

A PRAYER FOR THESE UNCERTAIN TIMES

God of compassion,
be close to those who are ill, afraid or in isolation.
In their loneliness, be their consolation;
in their anxiety, be their hope;
in their darkness, be their light;
through him who suffered alone on the cross,
but reigns with you in glory,
Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

PRAYERS FOR PALM SUNDAY

Almighty and everlasting God,
who in your tender love towards the human race
sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ
to take upon him our flesh
and to suffer death upon the cross:
grant that we may follow the example of his
patience and humility,
and also be made partakers of his resurrection;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen

True and humble king,
hailed by the crowd as Messiah:
grant us the faith to know you and love you,
that we may be found beside you
on the way of the cross,
which is the path of glory. Amen

Lord Jesus Christ,
you humbled yourself in taking the form of a
servant, and in obedience died on the cross for our
salvation: give us the mind to follow you
and to proclaim you as Lord and King,
to the glory of God the Father. Amen



READINGS FROM SCRIPTURE FOR PALM SUNDAY

THE PALM GOSPEL

MATTHEW 21 – 1 – 11

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, 'Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me.

If anyone says anything to you, just say this, "The Lord needs them." And he will send them immediately.'

This took place to fulfil what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,

'Tell the daughter of Zion,
Look, your king is coming to you,
humble, and mounted on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; 7 they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them.

A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,

'Hosanna to the Son of David!
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!'

When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, 'Who is this?'

The crowds were saying, 'This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.'



ISAIAH 50: 4-9a

The Lord God has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word.

Morning by morning he wakens — wakens my ear to listen as those who are taught.

The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I did not turn backwards.

I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting.

The Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame; he who vindicates me is near.

Who will contend with me?

Let us stand up together.

Who are my adversaries?

Let them confront me.

It is the Lord God who helps me; who will declare me guilty?

PSALM 31: 9 – 16

Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress; my eye wastes away from grief, my soul and body also.

For my life is spent with sorrow,
and my years with sighing;
my strength fails because of my misery,
and my bones waste away.

I am the scorn of all my adversaries,
a horror to my neighbours,
an object of dread to my acquaintances;
those who see me in the street flee from me.

I have passed out of mind like one who is dead;
I have become like a broken vessel.

For I hear the whispering of many — terror all around — as they scheme together against me, as they plot to take my life.

But I trust in you, O Lord; I say, 'You are my God.'

My times are in your hand;
deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors.

Let your face shine upon your servant;
save me in your steadfast love.

PHILIPPIANS 2: 5-11

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death — even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

THE GOSPEL FOR PALM SUNDAY

[The Passion Gospel has been printed in full for ease of use throughout Holy Week]

MATTHEW 26: 14 – END OF 27

Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, “What will you give me if I betray him to you?” They paid him thirty pieces of silver. And from that moment he began to look for an opportunity to betray him. **The Passover with the Disciples**

On the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Where do you want us to make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?” ¹⁸ He said, “Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, My time is near; I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.’” So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover meal.

When it was evening, he took his place with the twelve; and while they were eating, he said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.” And they became greatly distressed and began to say to him one after another, “Surely not I, Lord?” He answered, “The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born.” Judas, who betrayed him, said, “Surely not I, Rabbi?” He replied, “You have said so.”

While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said,

“Take, eat; this is my body.” Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Then Jesus said to them, “You will all become deserters because of me this night; for it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd,

and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’ But after I am raised up, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.” Peter said to him, “Though all become deserters because of you, I will never desert you.” Jesus said to him, “Truly I tell you, this very night, before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.”

Peter said to him, “Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you.” And so said all the disciples.

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. Then he said to them, “I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me.” And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.” Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, “So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? ⁴¹ Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Again he went away for the second time and prayed, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.” Again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words. ⁴⁵ Then he came to the disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶ Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.”

While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; with him was a large crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him.” At once he came up to Jesus and said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed him. Jesus said to him, “Friend, do what you are here to do.” Then

they came and laid hands on Jesus and arrested him. Suddenly, one of those with Jesus put his hand on his sword, drew it, and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the scriptures be fulfilled, which say it must happen in this way?" At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But all this has taken place, so that the scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled." Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas the high priest, in whose house the scribes and the elders had gathered. But Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest; and going inside, he sat with the guards in order to see how this would end. Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for false testimony against Jesus so that they might put him to death, but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward and said, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.'" The high priest stood up and said, "Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?" But Jesus was silent. Then the high priest said to him, "I put you under oath before the living God, tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you,

From now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "He has blasphemed! Why do we still need witnesses? You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your verdict?" They answered, "He deserves death." Then they spat in his face and struck him; and some slapped him, saying, "Prophecy to us, you Messiah! Who is it that struck you?"

Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant-girl came to him and said, "You also were with Jesus the Galilean." But he denied it before all of them, saying, "I do not know what you are talking about." When he went out to the porch, another servant-girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." Again he denied it with an oath,

"I do not know the man." After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you." Then he began to curse, and he swore an oath, "I do not know the man!" At that moment the cock crowed. Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said: "Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.

When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Jesus in order to bring about his death. They bound him, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate the governor.

When Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he repented and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. He said, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? See to it yourself." Throwing down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed; and he went and hanged himself. But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since they are blood money." After conferring together, they used them to buy the potter's field as a place to bury foreigners. For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one on whom a price had been set, on whom some of the people of Israel had set a price, and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me."

Now Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus said, "You say so." But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer. Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?" But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

Now at the festival the governor was accustomed to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone whom they wanted. At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Jesus Barabbas. So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you, Jesus Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?" For he realized that it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over. While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for today I have suffered a great deal

because of a dream about him.” Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. The governor again said to them, “Which of the two do you want me to release for you?” And they said, “Barabbas.” Pilate said to them, “Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?” All of them said, “Let him be crucified!” Then he asked, “Why, what evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Let him be crucified!”

So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood; see to it yourselves.” Then the people as a whole answered, “His blood be on us and on our children!” So he released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor’s headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” They spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; then they sat down there and kept watch over him. Over his head they put the charge against him, which read, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.”

Then two bandits were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking him, saying, “He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to; for he said,

‘I am God’s Son.’” The bandits who were crucified with him also taunted him in the same way.

From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o’clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, “This man is calling for Elijah.” At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.” Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many. Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, “Truly this man was God’s Son!”

Many women were also there, looking on from a distance; they had followed Jesus from Galilee and had provided for him. Among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.

The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said, “Sir, we remember what that impostor said while he was still alive, ‘After three days I will rise again.’ Therefore command the tomb to be made secure until the third day; otherwise his disciples may go and steal him away, and tell the people, ‘He has been raised from the dead,’ and the last deception would be worse than the first.” Pilate said to them, “You have a guard of soldiers; go, make it as secure as you can.” So they went with the guard and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone.

A REFLECTION FOR PALM SUNDAY

On this 1st Sunday in Holy Week, we have a reading Matthew starting at chapter 26 verse 14 and ending at the end of chapter 27. As per usual we are following the Church of England lectionary. The first thing I would like to say to you all is that this reading is very very long, there is no way in such a short reflection I will be able to do it justice. However, I have picked out one main theme and a tangent to reflect upon.

In my usual "Isaac" style I'm going to start in a completely different place, I will start by asking all of you if you have been following the daily readings from morning prayer, particularly the readings in Exodus and the story of Moses and pharaoh? If you have been following this story you will know that it is the one where we find those those famous words "let my people go" spoken a few times. I'm sure most of you will recall the story well.

I am always surprised when I hear Christians speak of pharaoh and God's relationship towards him as harsh, unkind, and unloving. The case of "hardening one's heart", in the story we are told that God hardened Pharaoh's heart and so Pharaoh would not let the Israelites leave. I believe most people read this and wrongly interpret this as God hardening Pharaoh's heart, making him purposefully God enemy. In fact, it's quite the contrary, what we see in Exodus is a loving God who gives pharaoh multiple chances to repent, multiple chances to turn back, multiple chances to accept that God is the one true God. In essence what we see is God holding up a metaphorical mirror for pharaoh and letting him see the nature of his own character. Confronted by this image pharaoh is displeased and so chooses to harden his heart. Ultimately this leads to great suffering for his people, his loved ones, and his own destruction.

At the start of our gospel reading we are confronted by, Judas asking the question "what will you give me if I betray him to you"? And so, I must ask the question, what is the reward we seek when in our own lives we sometimes betray Christ, through failing to love one another or the beautiful creation he has given to us? We are all guilty in some small way of being unfaithful.

The beauty of the Passover meal that Jesus shares with his disciples is that all the disciples are present at the table, we know that Judas is there, so too Peter, James and John and the rest of the twelve. This is the Last Supper that Jesus will share with his companions, a final meal he will share with those he loves and holds dear. For us Christians this is an important meal, if not the most important meal. It is where we get the roots of our Eucharist, Communion, and Mass. In the sharing of food, the breaking of bread and the drinking of wine and fellowship with God and neighbour. It is important for us to remember that at this table all are welcome, friend and foe alike. At this table Peter the rock, sits across Judas the betrayer and yet they both share the bread and the wine after it has been blessed by Christ.

Though due to current events and circumstances, many Christian communities may feel a sense of pain and sorrow, because they may not be able to share in that meal or enjoy the benefits of gathering together to worship. They will still remember that they too are always welcome at Christ's table and so to any who seek God.

As we read on in the passage, we see that Judas like pharaoh is confronted by Christ about his nature, and yet he runs off into the night to complete his task. A reminder that even those who frequent Christ's table are still capable of making mistakes. As we continue to read this account we come to the garden where Jesus and those who seemed to be more faithful go to pray. But even in the most trying of times we see that those who are meant to be more faithful also betrayed Jesus, for they cannot stay awake not even for a single hour. Brothers and sisters, I encourage you, let us always try our best to keep praying, especially when the night seems darkest, let us encourage one another in this.

Finally, even in the darkest of night "the rock" Peter is also confronted by Christ, he is told he too will betray Christ, but Peter denies this. It is only after the cock crows that he realises what he has done. Later on, Judas upon seeing Christ's condemnation at the hands of the chief priests repents and realises that the treasure he was seeking was not worth the cost of betraying the one who had always loved him. Sadly, he could not live with himself.

I ask you all dear readers to picture the scene, where Peter is outside sitting in the courtyard, it seems he is the only disciple left, where are the rest of that twelve? Judas, we know but what of James, John, Thomas, Matthew, and the rest. Is there really no one else left, have they all abandoned Christ?

So, brothers and sisters I want to remind you gain that we have all abandoned Christ, we are like pharaoh we sometimes harden our hearts. We are like Judas seeking other treasure instead of Christ, and so too we are like Peter, we always think we will not abandon Christ, but we have already and will again and again and again. I say this to you not to condemn you, not to make you feel a sense of shame or guilt, but to then be able to extol and point to the glory of the cross. The amazing love and forgiveness of God.

For us, like pharaoh, God keeps confronting us in love, wishing us to repent, and like Peter and Judas we will always be invited at the table of love, forgiveness and friendship. So, I implore you that during this time of Easter you hold on to that truth, that it does not matter if you are a faithful disciple call vey early on in life or are like the prisoner Jesus meets on the cross begging for mercy on his last day. Christs love and welcome are always extended to all. We may be going through a dark night at this time, or we may just be experiencing a trial, what we can rely upon in all things, is the love of God. If nothing else is able to comfort or consoles you i promise the love of God will always be enough for your needs.

Amen

The Revd Isaac Sibanda
Palm Sunday 202



God our Saviour,
whose Son Jesus Christ
entered Jerusalem as Messiah
to suffer and to die;
let this palm cross be for me
a sign of his victory
and grant that we who bear them in his name
may ever hail him as our King,
and follow him in the way
that leads to eternal life;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Name

ROOTS ⁺ Colouring Sheet

5-11 April 2020

Colouring time

The crowds see Jesus coming into Jerusalem.



Name _____



Matthew 21.1-11

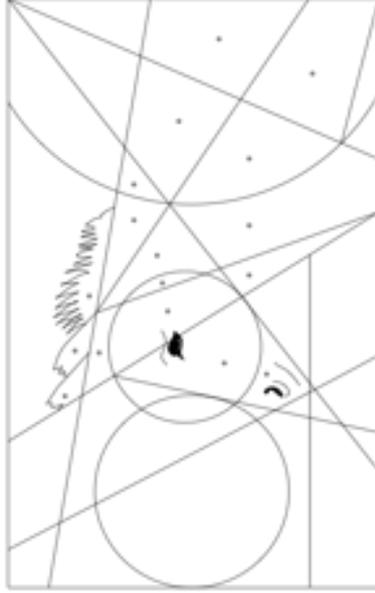
Jesus comes into Jerusalem for the Passover festival.



Activity time



Colour the dotted sections to see how Jesus arrived in Jerusalem.



The festival was exciting! Write words on the acrostic to describe the scene. One has already been completed to help you

H O S a n noisy a



What words should replace the images to complete this newspaper headline?

JERUSALEM TIMES

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE CITY



Family time

Talk Are you good about inviting other people to join in your fun and celebrations?

Do Who could you invite to take part in the Easter celebrations next week? Make an invitation card to give them.

Pray Hold the invitation card when you have made it, and ask God to bless it and the person you are giving it to.

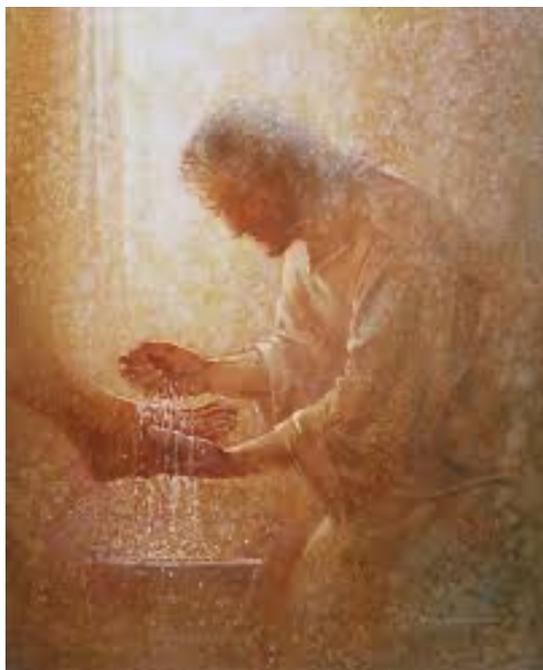
PRAYERS FOR MAUNDY THURSDAY

God our Father,
you have invited us to share in the supper
which your Son gave to his Church
to proclaim his death until he comes:
may he nourish us by his presence,
and unite us in his love;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen

God our Father,
your Son Jesus Christ was obedient to the end
and drank the cup prepared for him:
may we who share his table
watch with him through the night of suffering
and be faithful. Amen

THE READINGS FOR MAUNDY THURSDAY

EXODUS 12: 1 – 14
PSALM 116: 9 – end
1 CORINTHIANS 11: 23 – 26
JOHN 13: 1 – 17. 31b – 35



PRAYERS FOR GOOD FRIDAY

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
Because by your holy cross
You have redeemed the world.

Almighty Father,
look with mercy on this your family
for which our Lord Jesus Christ
was content to be betrayed
and given up into the hands of sinners
and to suffer death upon the cross;
who is alive and glorified with you
and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen

Eternal God,
in the cross of Jesus we see the cost of sin
and the depth of your love:
in humble hope and fear may we place at his feet
all that we have and all that we are,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

THE READINGS FOR GOOD FRIDAY

ISAIAH 52: 13 – end of 53
PSALM 22
HEBREWS 4: 14 – 16
JOHN 18: 1 – end of 19



There is a green hill far away,
Without a city wall,
Where the dear Lord was crucified,
Who died to save us all.

We may not know, we cannot tell,
What pains he had to bear,
But we believe it was for us
He hung and suffered there There there

There was no other good enough
To pay the price of sin.
He only could unlock the gate
Of heav'n and let us in.

Oh, dearly, dearly has he loved!
And we must love him too,
And trust in his redeeming blood,
And try his works to do.