

Dear Heaton Moor United Church,

Holy week greetings to you all.

Hope you are all doing well.

Thanks to Graham for leading the Good Friday service on our YouTube channel, and also for leading the Super Sunday for Easter to the young families. Glad to know that we have about 20 families booked in for the Easter event at our Church on the Saturday, and thanks to Jo for organising this event. Thanks to Jonnie who is working with me on the Easter service for our YouTube channel. Thanks to Sharon for sending us all the Easter card from Church.

Many thanks to all our church friends who are joining on zoom for Circuit Holy week meditations this week. Our church will be open for private prayer on Good Friday. If it were normal times, we would have had a walk of witness on Good Friday with the Heaton churches, and unfortunately due to the restrictions we are unable to do it.

Thank you all for supporting David Smith and his family at the funeral service of Audrey Smith this week.

Rev. Anne Hunt, one of our dear friends at Church entered eternal glory last week, and her funeral will be on Tuesday, the 13th April 2021, and we have the car park prayer at 1.30pm, and the funeral service will be at Stockport Crematorium at 2.30pm.

It is good to do some pastoral walks with our church friends, and if anyone is interested for a walk, do let me know.

Herewith I am sending you the Good Friday reflection and also the Easter reflection for your kind perusal.

Next week, I will be on leave and for any pastoral help contact JoAnne and Linda at church or can contact Cathy Bird, our circuit Superintendent minister.

May you all have a blessed Easter, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
Christ is Risen; indeed, He is risen!

Stay safe and stay blessed,

With warm regards,

Raj

31st March 2021

MESSAGE FROM THE CO-EDITOR



HAPPY EASTER I'm writing this on Wednesday, just after delivering the Space At The Table meals to our dementia friends. Between my little helper and my bunny ears we raised a smile or two! I certainly feel a bit like the Easter Rabbit as my house is currently overrun with plastic eggs in preparation for More Than A Egg Hunt on Saturday.

Not long now until the building will be open once again for services, we open once again on 18th April and as before it is essential you book. Sharon has sent the booking form by email; it is also available on the website. Should you have any problems completing the form please contact the office. We will be open for Private Prayer each Sunday until then and on Good Friday between 11:00 and 12:00. In the meantime we continue to offer the following things we can all do together but apart this week;

- Take part in Tune In to God: Fridays@5:17.
- Watch the weekly reflection posted on Sunday morning on our YouTube channel
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyhynK2FIPDTbOugBiO6D9A>
- On Thursday evening light a candle from 8pm until 9pm

Just as in the time pre-covid the team are here to answer any questions, be a listening ear or signpost to other services. Please do get in touch with us if we can be of any help.

Please note week commencing Monday 5th April

Raj & Sharon will be on Leave so please do not hesitate to contact me in their absence.

If you have anything you would like included in the weekly notices please let me know. As always if you have any questions or comments please do not hesitate to contact me.

JoAnne

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Heaton Moor United Church

 Heaton Moor United Church

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It's great to see the donations on our JustGiving page – to date we have raised £858 so 85% of our target of £1000

If you would like to donate the cost of your vaccine please visit

www.justgiving.com/heaton-moor-united-church

Two doses of the COVID vaccine might be between £4-£30. If you could have afforded to buy it for yourself please celebrate your vaccination by making a donation.



MARK 12:31 love thy (global) neighbour

TWIN YOUR VACCINE

Communities across the UK are being protected against COVID but across the world, there are many countries where this is impossible. It may be that they cannot afford to vaccinate their people or that their infrastructure may not even include basic refrigeration in places.

UNICEF has vast experience in delivering vaccines worldwide and so will be major partners in distributing vaccines to the very poorest in the world through their association with the COVAX programme.

Join Heaton Moor United Church in
raising funds for UNICEF

www.justgiving.com/heaton-moor-united-church

Thursday Prayer shared by Sharon

I do not know how to pray.
I do not know what to say.
I do not have much time.
So?

This candle I light is:
something of what
I have
something of my time
something of myself
that I leave before
the Lord.

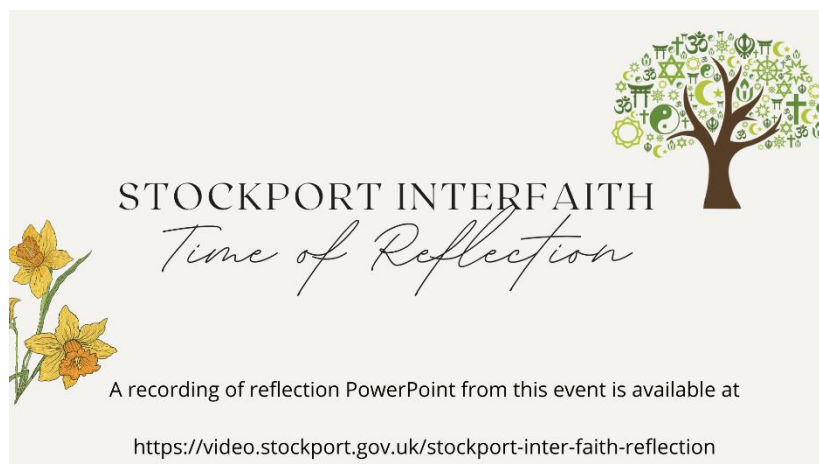
This light that shines stands for
my prayer that I continue to offer
even as I leave this place.

A prayer of French origin

Donations in memory of Audrey Smith

are to be made to M S Society Macclesfield Group

<https://www.memorygiving.com/audreysmith1>



<https://video.stockport.gov.uk/stockport-inter-faith-reflection>



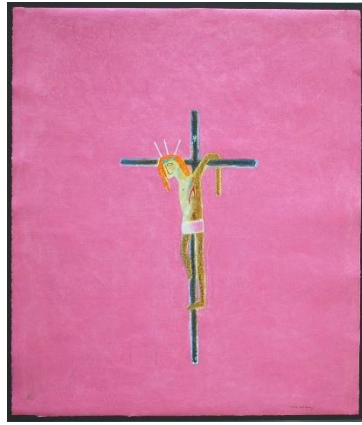
have produced their Easter Alert which aims to tackle the following topics

- The religious importance of Jerusalem
- Jerusalem: a cause of violence or an instrument of peace?
- Jerusalem, a divided or united city?
- Jerusalem is the road to a global peace

The document can be found here <https://www.kairospalestine.ps/images/kairos-easter-alert-2021.pdf> Please don't be put off by the overall size of the document, it is broken down into very manageable sections and is well worth a read.

Pray

*Blessed are You, Holy One. You appeared among us,
pitched your tent, invited us in, and are shaping us for
service in your name. Lead us out now as witnesses
to your love and justice - in Jerusalem, in all Judea and
Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*



EASTER SERVICES

Meditations for Holy Week 29th March - 3rd April (except Maundy Thursday) 7pm

A half hour of reflection, prayer, music and guided meditation led by Rev'd Cathy Bird & Katie Smith

Join Zoom Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87212246881?pwd=VXpyMzRYV21UZ1ZoYlkvc2R4dmV1QT09>

Meeting ID: 872 1224 6881

Passcode: 974333

Maundy Thursday Service 1st April - 7pm

Share together in an Agape meal as we recall the events of the Last Supper

Join Zoom Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87212246881?pwd=VXpyMzRYV21UZ1ZoYlkvc2R4dmV1QT09>

Meeting ID: 872 1224 6881

Passcode: 974333

Good Friday 2nd April

The Church will be open for private prayer between 11:00 - 12:00

Graham Adams will also be uploading a reflection on our YouTube channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyhynK2FIPDTbOuqBiO6D9A>

Easter Saturday 3rd April Children's Easter Service - From Darkness to Life! - 10:30

https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/childrens-easter-saturday-service-tickets-140263376535utm_campaign=post_publish&utm_medium=email&utm_source=eventbrite&utm_content=shortLinkNewEmail

Easter Sunday 4th April Super Sunday - premiering the Easter Video -10:00

Attached to the notices are some suggestions from Graham for Easter activities, but don't worry if you don't get chance to do any. Please bring along a paper plate or cardboard circle, pens or crayons to the service. We will also have a moment of Easter breakfast together so bring something to eat e.g. egg (boiled or chocolate) bit of bread or fruit.

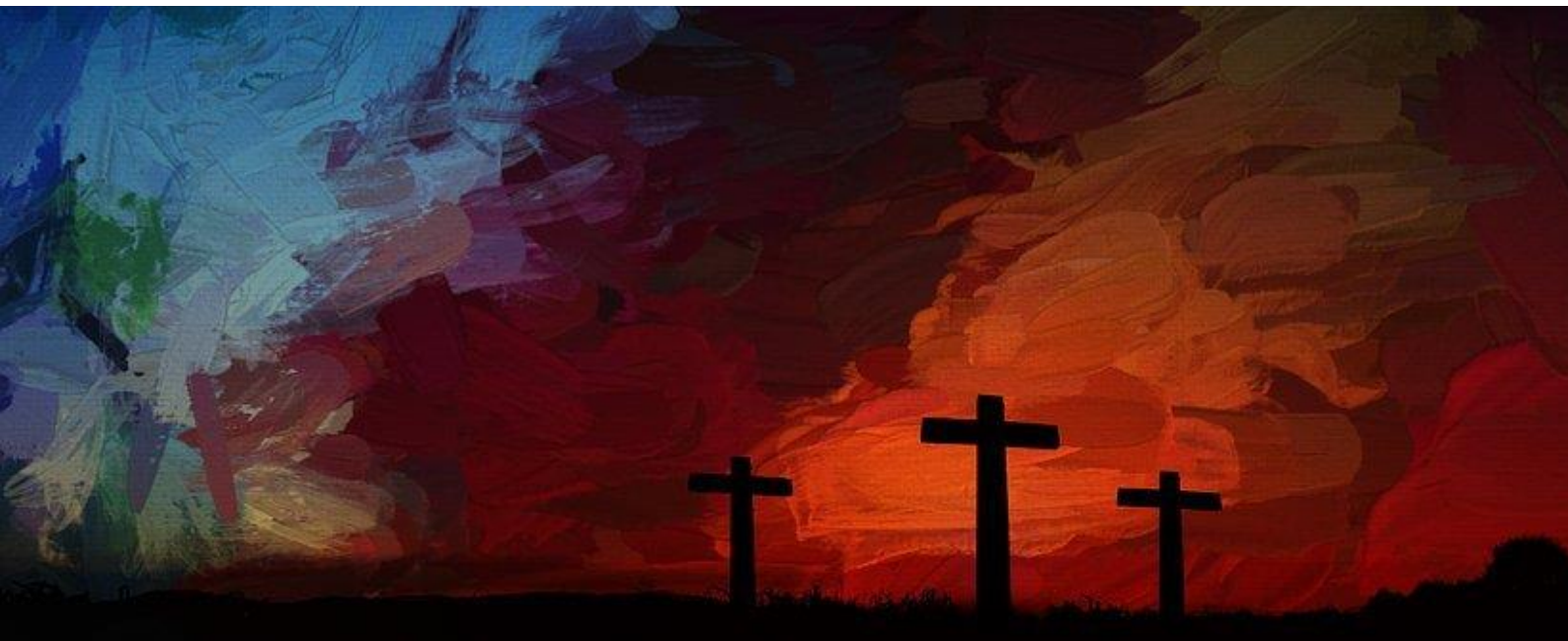
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87840793006?pwd=RjRYSk9PYlNoQWxvQnZpNHVRbnI5Zz09>

Meeting ID: 878 4079 3006

Passcode: zYZ1bS

Passcode for phones: 934491

PLEASE NOTE there are no tickets left for More Than An Egg Hunt!



Easter Services

Missional Partnership

Wednesday – Holy week worship and discussion (7.30pm)

Maundy Thursday – Evening (7.15pm)

Good Friday – Morning (11am)

Holy Saturday retreat – Morning (10.30am to midday)

Easter Sunday & Communion – Morning (10.30pm)

The link for all services and events

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86246349125?pwd=QWNicmhidjBoVG5Fb1BNSFM1OWhtdz09>

Meeting ID: 862 4634 9125

Passcode: 024468



In the last week Parliament has risen for Easter recess and Christians in Parliament are asking us to pray for all politicians as they continue to serve their constituents and make decisions for the country and pray that they will be refreshed over the Easter break. Please be praying that they, as well as others across our nation, will be encouraged by the hope of the Easter story, amidst all the challenges of the last year.

Christians in Parliament have produced a message of hope through the Gospel accounts of Jesus' death and resurrection.

The video is available to watch here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EcLPAF7TLAU&feature=youtu.be>

SHOEBOX UPDATE We have received the following from TEAMS4U who distributed the Christmas Shoeboxes we collected. A huge thank you once again to those who contributed a shoe box.

Although we were in lockdown for a lot of time in 2020 many of us were able to prepare our Shoe Boxes filled with gifts for children and families in Eastern Europe. The boxes brought to me and others from the Stockport area after 'quarantining' were collected by Teams4U and transferred to their processing centre near Wrexham, another problem as different Covid restrictions in Wales.

Despite all the difficulties, restrictions and challenges of lockdown they managed to get all their boxes taken by lorries and distributed by Christmas in Belarus, Bosnia and Romania.

All our boxes and gifts were distributed by T4U partners to Orphanages in Belarus around Minsk area as well as marginalised communities in rural provinces.

Their Project Leader said "The love with which the gifts were collected brought hope to so many! Together with you, we gave hope and were a source of blessings in so many homes."

Other boxes were distributed through the Red Cross Internally Displaced People Group to deprived communities in Bosnia. In Romania boxes were distributed through schools and churches to vulnerable children and families.

The last lorry arrived in Moldova on 20th January which is considered to be the lowest income country in Europe and given to orphans and families.

The total number of boxes distributed by T4U was 48,756 which is wonderful and amazing considering all the problems of the pandemic.

THANK YOU TO ALL WHO SUPPORTED THIS PROJECT Margaret



We know these have been very hard times. For our friends and family at home and for so many people abroad. The pandemic has pushed millions of people over the poverty line and made desperate situations distressingly worse. We were so humbled, that in a time where a lot of us are struggling, to have witnessed such incredible acts of generosity and kindness, spreading joy to children."
Dave Cooke, Founder

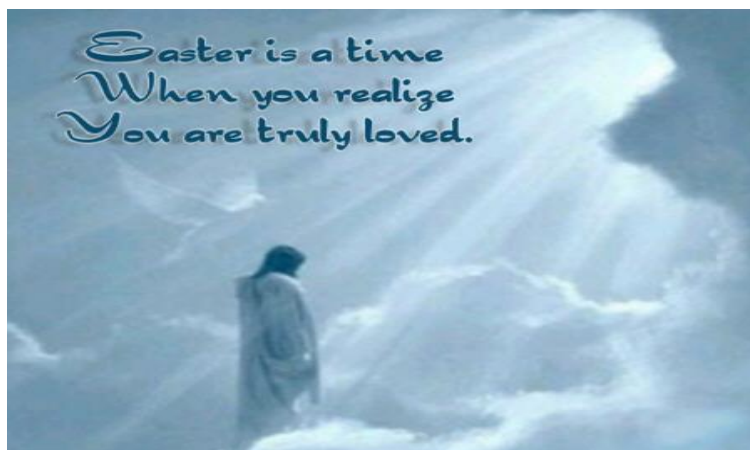


Prayers from Linda

You are being held up in pray, my God our Father comfort and strengthen you at this time.

OUR WORLD

Merciful God, we pray for peace to rule our hearts and that of the people all over the world. Teach us to follow your example, to care and show compassion to people in need. Give us the strength to help lift the fallen and give them hope. Dear Lord, bring hope to children and families who have lost everything to conflict. May they find peace in you and courage to rebuild their lives. Heavenly Father, bless your children here and in other counties who live in fear and poverty. May they find hope in you and opportunities to pursue education, employment, housing we ask all these things in the names of Jesus. Amen.



Thanks

Dear Father God, thank you for your help over the last year of covid-19. Help ourselves and other counties not to be too eager thinking everything is ok now, help us to take each day slowly as we come out of lockdown. We give thanks to you for our health, strength, grace, forgiveness, peace and joy. We do not ask only for ourselves but for our brothers and sisters all over the world, and for our loved ones. Thank you Father God for loving us unconditionally and never failing us. Lead us, Lord that whatever we do, we do it in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen



It is with sad hearts
that we write that
Rev. Anne Hunt has
passed away. Please
hold her family and
friends in your
Prayers

If anyone would like to share a Prayer
with the church family, please call Linda
on 07564839380 or

E-mail lindawfleming625@gmail.com.



No names required because
God Knows.

SUPER SUNDAY 4TH APRIL

Easter activity options – using a paper plate, or circle of cardboard

1) Rising Sun / Son

For this, draw a line across the middle of the circle, and you (or a grown-up) could write 'The Rising Son' on it (across the middle) and decorate the letters

Decorate the top half with a bright sun (appearing over the top of the half-way line) and rays of sunshine coming from it (*you could use: tissue paper, paint, felt tips, crayons*), and decorate the bottom half with happy people (*felt, tissue paper, felt tips, crayons – whatever you've got!*)

2) Breakfast time!

For this, draw or paint your favourite food on the paper plate or cardboard circle

And write 'Come to breakfast' around the edge

3) Freedom!

Create your own picture of 'freedom' on the plate ... whatever 'freedom' makes you think of

4) Empty / Full

Draw a line across the middle of the plate/circle.

On the top half, draw an empty tomb, and maybe an angel – and write 'He is not here!' in that half

Turn it the other way round, and on the other half draw a beach, maybe with a camp-fire on it, and some friends having breakfast – and write ‘Here I am!’ (Here, they are celebrating the ‘fullness of life’!)

The Politics of Good Friday: What is Good in Good Friday?

When thinking of 'good Friday', I always thought, for the person on the Cross to whom Jesus said that 'today you will be with me in paradise', it was a 'good Friday', and to the other person who mocked Jesus it was a 'bad Friday.' What is 'good' in 'good Friday' has always been a perennial question that people of faith communities across the histories and contexts keep interrogating with. How can the brutal killing of Jesus on the Cross be called 'good Friday?' What is the politics of 'good Friday?'

There have been theories on the etymology of the 'good Friday' for some have referred it to 'God's Friday' for it synchronizes with the root meanings of 'goodbye' which means 'God be with you.' The day has always been referred to as 'holy Friday' like that of the rest of the week days in the 'Holy week.' In many Church traditions 'good Friday' is translated as 'great Friday,' where the emphasis of Jesus' act on the Cross has been considered as great sacrifice for the salvation of the entire humanity.

On the one hand, we are aware of Plato's theory of 'Form of Good' which is understood as the 'ultimate principle', for the ultimate 'good' illuminates all other forms, both in the empirical world and in the world outside of time and space. On the other hand, there are philosophies that profess that there is no such a thing as good and evil, and they are only as people desire, where 'good' is recognized as a 'subjective value.' All of these thinking direct us in our grappling with 'good' in 'good Friday.'

'Good Friday' is not about 'romanticizing Jesus suffering and his death,' rather a call to locate God among the crucified. There was a political bargain from the courts of Pilate, whom to crucify and whom to leave scot-free, and we know that the community chose 'Barabbas' (*Bar Abbas* in Hebrew means 'Son of God'), which led Jesus to his crucifixion. Good Friday, the day on which Jesus was killed is highly political, for Jesus died a political martyrdom. Therefore, one cannot unthread the political aspect of Jesus's death on Cross from his holistic act of salvation. 'Good Friday' also calls us to unpack it from the colonial enfleshments that it carries, for this 'good Friday' is also understood in contrast to 'black Fridays' (very colonial term) where consumerism is celebrated to its core. Here is a subversive reading of 'good Friday,' which serves as one perspectives among many, that helps us in problematizing the same for our times today.

1. 'Good Friday' is about exposing the unjust political systems of the state that represses and criminalises Jesus for believing and professing in an alternative value system which is the Kingdom of God, for he was nailed on the Cross with an inscription 'King of Jews.' Jesus' disapproval of a military state led him to be branded as a 'political insurgent' and eventually led him to be killed on the Cross.
2. 'Good Friday' is a day where an innocent Jesus was falsely implicated and was taken to be crucified on a Cross, along with two other bandits of his times, at a public criminal execution place, which was 'outside of the camp.' It was a place where the soldiers gambled on Jesus' clothes, spit on him, and rebuked him with all possible insults. Jesus died as a political martyr.

3. When Jesus cried 'my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' many around his Cross mocked him saying that he was calling on Elijah for help and rescue. To that question, we see that there was silence from God's side. We run a risk of translating God's silence as God's absence. The politic of this saying needs to consider that God joins in the suffering of people, where God grieves along with those that are suffering to lead them into the resurrection experience.
4. The politics of 'good Friday' is always related to the 'best Sunday' to come, the 'Easter day', where God raised him from the death. It displays a politics of hope, for death and regimes of oppression are defeated and chained in the empty tomb of Jesus Christ. Resurrection of Jesus from death was a huge blow to the empire that believed that there is no opposition to their force, for on that day death died and was buried.

'Good Friday' therefore challenges us humanity to locate crucified Jesus' among us, among our histories, among our contexts, who are opposing the repressive regimes of our times, and stand along with them in their struggles for justice, the highest good. 'Good Friday' finds its fuller meaning not in religious sanctuaries, not in our cosy comfortable zones, not in our parochial colonies but on the public streets where people are time and again crucified by the unjust systems of violence. 'Good Friday' comes alive and becomes meaningful 'outside the camps' of our times, in the refugee camps, in the excluded zones, in the prisons, etc. 'Good Friday' becomes relevant by disavowing hegemonic powers and principalities that suppress and marginalize people and communities and by standing for justice and peace of our times. The calling of our spirituality is to become politically sensitive to our contexts and attempt in relating our faith to the times of our times.

Wishing you all a meaningful observance of Good Friday.

Raj Bharat Patta

A Message from the Superintendent Minister

March 29th 2021

Dear Friends,

This time I am copying to you the Easter message from the President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference. I couldn't add much further to their uplifting seasonal greeting which reminds us of the hope which is at the heart of the Easter message. All it takes is for me to add my personal greetings and on behalf of all the Circuit Leadership Team in the United Stockport Circuit to wish you all a very blessed and reflective Holy Week and a joyful Easter. It may be that you will be seeing some friends or relatives for the first time in a long time – if that is the case then take care and have fun! If you are spending the holiday on your own or continuing in lockdown then know that you are held in love and prayer by your friends across the Circuit. I hope that you will all be able to join us for worship – either in person or on Zoom – at some point during the festival.

And please remember as always:

In this time of isolation and separation may we feel the unity of God's spirit in the bonds of peace and love which connect us to one another.

- 1. When we feel lonely let us know that in Christ we are never alone.**
- 2. When we feel isolated may we be reminded that within the worldwide Body of Christ we are always connected.**
- 3. When we need a hug help us to feel the warmth of God's embrace**
- 4. When we are compelled to keep our distance, may we be drawn close to each other within the Spirit of Companionship that flows from God and which moves through and between each one of us.**

With love and blessings. ***Rev Cathy***

A Message from the President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference

Dear Friends

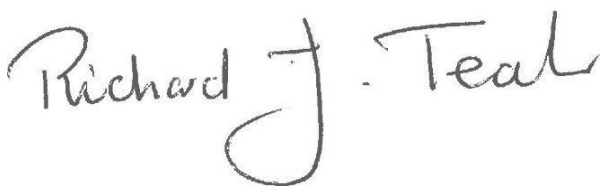
We would like to bring you greetings as we approach Holy Week and to wish you a Happy Easter. This past year has probably been one of the most difficult years many of us can remember and we have all been affected by the Covid pandemic in different ways. We have all experienced the difficulties of lockdowns and restrictions and the losses that accompany those constraints on our everyday lives. We also recognize that some of you will have faced sickness and bereavement as well as concerns over finances, mental health issues and isolation and has in many ways been a wilderness experience for many.

During this Lent season we reflect on Jesus in the wilderness and the lead up to the first Easter, and recall the dashed hopes and dreams of those early disciples as they watched Jesus die, and then celebrate their joy and wonder when their Lord appeared to them again, risen from the dead.

We have been walking a difficult path through this pandemic but just as the longer days, flowers blooming and birds singing remind us that the earth is reawakening after the darkness and gloom of winter, we are reminded that there are signs of hope around us. Those of us who know and love Jesus have found comfort in knowing that he has been walking alongside us even in these difficult circumstances and we are encouraged to lift our heads and fix our eyes on Jesus as we look forward in hope to the future.

We pray that whatever your reflections on this past year, you will know the hope, comfort and peace of the risen Jesus in your heart and life and that you will see those glimmers of light as the dawn breaks. We pray that you will indeed discover the joy of the Lord to be your strength moment by moment and know the truth that 'The best of all is, God is with us.'

With every blessing,



The Revd Richard Teal
**President of the Methodist
Conference 2020/21**



Mrs Carolyn Lawrence
**Vice-President of the Methodist
Conference 2020/21**

NOTICES

Worship

See your local church notices for details but for the time being we are continuing our Circuit wide Zoom service at 3pm on Sundays. Login details as usual as follows:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87212246881?pwd=VXpyMzRYV21UZ1ZoYlkc2R4dmV1QT09>

Meeting ID: 872 1224 6881 Password: 974333

Holy Week and Easter

Some churches will be re-opening for prayer on Good Friday and worship from Easter Sunday (see your local church notices) but there will also be a variety of Circuit wide Zoom events during Holy Week, leading up to Easter Sunday.

Meditations for Holy Week 7pm-7.30pm

Monday 29th March, Tuesday 30th March, Wednesday 31st March, Good Friday 2nd April, Saturday 3rd April
A half hour of reflection, prayer, music and guided meditation led by Revds Cathy Bird and Katie Smith

Maundy Thursday 1st April 7pm

Share together in an Agape meal as we recall the events of the Last Supper.

The Agape is a Christian fellowship meal recalling the meals Jesus shared with disciples during his ministry. The service expresses the joy of sharing, belonging and fellowship enjoyed within the body of Christ. If you wish to take part in the service you are invited to have with you a cake, or bread to eat and something to drink. If you wish, you can bake a special Agape Cake! You might like to make Agape Cup Cakes, or a large cake which can be sliced, and leave some on the doorstep of someone who will be taking part in the service but who may not be able to bake. Here is the recipe.

A traditional Love Feast Cake Recipe Adapted from the Middlesmoor Lovefeast Bread used in the Yorkshire Dales at the time of John Wesley

- 1lb (400g) plain flour • 1oz (25g) baking powder • 5oz (125g) butter • 8oz (200g) sugar
- 2oz (50g) mixed peel • 4oz (100g) sultanas • 2 eggs • About half a pint (280ml) of milk

Mix the flour and baking powder together, rub in the butter, then add the sugar, sultanas and peel. Beat the eggs together with a little milk and add to the dry ingredients. Add the rest of the milk to make a soft consistency. Pour the mixture into two loaf tins or a large cake tin. Cook at 180°C (350°F) or gas mark 4 for at least 45 minutes for the loaf tins, or 1 hour for the large cake tin.

Children's Easter Service: LET'S CELEBRATE EASTER! From Darkness to Life Sat 3rd April 10:30-11:00am

Eventbrite link for tickets - https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/childrens-easter-saturday-service-tickets-140263376535?utm_campaign=post_publish&utm_medium=email&utm_source=eventbrite&utm_content=s hortLinkNewEmail

Easter Sunday

Zoom Worship 3pm with special guest preacher Adrian Plass

All the above Holy Week and Easter events (except Children's service) will use the same Zoom Link as for Sunday Worship.

Other Notices

Circuit Prayer

As we continue into lockdown, let's continue to say this prayer together when we can, at 11am on a Sunday morning if we are not in church. This way we stay connected in a very really and tangible way with all those who are not yet able to come back to church. You can also read more about each church on the Circuit Website www.stockportcircuit.org.uk

God of Love and Life, we pray to you this morning for the life the United Stockport Methodist Circuit, for our sisters and brothers who belong to *(pausing briefly to reflect after each name):*

Christ Church Methodist /URC , Dialstone Lane Methodist Church , Davenport Methodist Church , Edgeley Community Church , Hazel Grove Methodist Church, Heaton Mersey Methodist , Heaton Moor United Church, Jubilee Methodist Church, (Marple Bridge), Marple Methodist Church, The Ridge Methodist Church, (Marple), Romiley Methodist Church, St. Johns Methodist Church, (Cheadle Heath), Tiviot Dale Methodist Church (centre of Stockport), Trinity Methodist Church, (Bramhall Lane), Windlehurst Methodist Church (High Lane), Woodley Methodist Church

We worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory. We ask that this time of crisis might pass and that those who suffer might find comfort and strength within the knowledge of your grace, revealed through the kindness and compassion of the people of God. Eternal God, through the self-offering of your Son you have filled our lives with your presence. Help us in our sufferings and trials. Fill us with hope and strengthen us in our weakness. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen



This image drawn by Rev. Caroline Beckett¹ captures the Good Friday moments of 2020, which I have called it as “Crucified COVID Christ.” Here we see Jesus as a COVID infected person on ventilators lying in an intensive care hospital bed. Caroline has drawn this image so well, that she recognises that the world we live in today is an infectious space and captures this image of Covid Christ on the Cross, bringing in the relevance of Jesus’ crucifixion for our times. She also has drawn two women with their masks on, with social distancing to one another, weeping at the foot of this COVID cross, weeping and grieving for the dying Covid Christ. Many thanks to Caroline for this powerful public contextual Christological imaging, making Jesus relevant for our times today in 2020.

As I meditate on this image on this Holy Saturday, which I call better Saturday (as it is interspersed between Good Friday and Best Sunday, Easter Day), for there is silence behind and hope ahead, the resurrection of Jesus Christ becomes so meaningful and relevant for us. Allow me to stretch this image of Caroline to imagine that this Crucified Covid Christ died on Good Friday and was buried, and laid in the tomb on this better Saturday, for God raised this Christ back to life on the Easter day. The message of Easter is a message of hope to the entire creation today. That by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the sting of death was broken, the root of Coronavirus is addressed and the lockdown is unlocked, calling the creation for a celebration of hope, new life and a new creation. God raised this crucified Christ as a first fruit (I Cor 15:20), promising resurrection to everyone after him.

As a risen Christ, he comes first to Mary consoling her as she was weeping and worrying, and in that encounter when she hears the voice of the Lord in her calling the name, she turns her fears to wonder and witness. Mary Magdalene represents all those weeping for the loss of their dear ones due to this virus and finds solace and comfort on hearing the voice of the risen Christ, inviting us to seek such comfort in the risen Lord. In asking Mary, why are you weeping? Jesus in a way was conveying to Mary when I have taken the virus on me, why are you still weeping? The risen Jesus Christ appeared to Mary as a counter-infectious risen Lord, for she

¹ <https://twitter.com/deaconsamtaylor/status/1248493636167143426>

went and told the men disciples that “I have seen the Lord.” In the context of Covid, when Mary recognises the voice of Jesus, for me that risen Jesus was a counter-infectious Lord, for he joins with the rest of the community in creating a new creation. By counter-infectious I mean to say that God in Jesus is working along with the Easter community in countering the infection to transform the world by offering hope, care, peace and love.

It is instructive here to realise that God is not trying to fix the world through this pandemic, and this can be further understood when Keller invokes the togetherness of all in the community to transform this given situation. Keller says, “But each, only in our all-togetherness — human, animal, vegetable, mineral. That togetherness takes on new meanings now, in all the layers of planetary interdependence, deadly or benign, oppressive or just, at home or in public. Now, as we learn that social distance does not mean separation, right in the midst of catastrophe, that Spirit might turn you, turn me, turn us together — into catalysts of transformation. We might not fix much that is already too badly broken. But in a new, dark hopefulness, might we become creative collaborators? Even with the Creator, the one who triggers the simplest matter and the subtlest minds to new creation? This is not a story of top-down creating. This new creation comes as we cooperate with each other and with the divine source of every other.”² On encountering the risen Jesus, Mary became a channel of carrying that counter-infection of hope, in collaborating with Jesus in sharing that news with the rest of the disciples. This counter-infectious hope that risen Jesus shared became viral and infectious that several people in history and in our world today join in transforming our world.

This counter-infectious risen Jesus then appears to the men disciples who have been under lock down at their home due to the fear of the Empire. These bunch of men disciples today represent all those who have been isolated and are living under lock down situations due to this Coronavirus, for this risen Jesus appears to them and proclaims at three times “peace be with you,” which conveys that these disciples are in need of peace to that extent. In our self-isolations, the risen Lord appears at our own homes to share his peace, a counter-infectious resurrection peace. Isn’t this a message of hope for us today?

This counter-infectious risen Jesus appears to the two disciples walking on the road to Emmaus, who have been walking frustrated and disappointed with the happenings at Jerusalem on the Good Friday. These two disciples represent today those frustrated and disappointed people who are not finding hope amidst this virus, as they are not able to do things that they have normally would have done. This risen Jesus appears to them and opens their hearts, eyes and minds to the hope in Christ, and joins them in eating with them, offering hope and comfort.

This counter-infectious risen Jesus appears to Thomas, who was doubting and questioning, inviting him after that imposed social-distancing to touch his wounds to find that the virus is defeated. Thomas represents for me those people, despite social-distancing have to touch the wounds of people in treating them, in nursing them and in caring for them. On touching

² Catherine Keller, *A Letter from Catherine Keller*,

https://medium.com/@dostlund_42808/a-letter-from-catherine-keller-1930029c4914

this counter-infectious risen Jesus Christ in the infected person, they like Thomas are exclaiming 'My Lord and my God,' testifying to the healing of people.

In the context of this virus, there are many stories of positivity that are being shared as counter-infectious stories of hope. After being tested positive for this virus and living in quarantine, there are many people who have shared their stories of recovery and healing, in such acts I see the relevance of resurrection today, as a counter-infectious act. Communities are today forming as groups to support one another, specially the vulnerable and there has been an increased neighbourliness among people, in which acts I see the relevance of resurrection as a countering the infection together as communities. Doctors, nurses, carers, cleaners, people working at super markets and all other key workers who are risking their lives and are striving to save the lives of the people today, in such acts I see the relevance of resurrection today, for the counter-infectious risen Christ comes alive in their actions. Out of their lockdowns and isolations, when people are trying to be creative with their walking, singing, playing music, cooking different recipes, pitching tents in their gardens, paintings, calling one another by phones, gatherings on zoom, online prayers, participating in virtual faith spaces and discussions, sending e-greeting cards, street whats-app groups, partying on zoom etc., the relevance of resurrection comes alive today, for people are trying to overcome the virus by creating counter-infectious spaces at their own places. In short, the relevance of resurrection today is for us as communities to be and becoming counter-infectious spaces, offering hope like the risen Jesus, sharing peace, collaborating with risen Jesus and by caring for one another. Resurrection of Jesus Christ is real, and all who join with such a counter-infected risen Jesus can offer real hope to this world living in hopelessness.

If Caroline has to draw the image of a counter-infectious risen Jesus, I am sure she would draw it with risen Jesus in collaboration with others striving to heal and share peace with one another. This is just a thought (from my own subjectivity of subalternity), she might again surprise us with a more relevant image. We will wait for that image of the counter-infectious risen Jesus Christ.

Let me conclude with the words of Caroline, "The Covid19 pandemic is a terrible thing. Unspeakable sorrows are playing out hour by hour across our world. But God has always brought light from darkness, faith from despair, life from lifelessness, good from wrong. Whatever this season is, it will pass and become another part of that long story of the people of God. It is not the end but a chapter for us to live well in love. Let's do that."³ The final image I want to leave you with is from Caroline again, a relevant one for our Holy Saturday⁴.

³ <https://workplayrestpray.wordpress.com/2020/04/11/easter-in-lockdown/>

⁴ <https://twitter.com/RevCBeckett/status/124868375223649795>

Caroline writes this commentary for this image, "God. Died. Let that sink in. There's no depth of misery, fear, pain or darkness God has not known, lived, claimed, embraced & healed. God shrinks from no part of us. This is the length, breadth, depth & height of God's love for us. However dark your path, God is on it with you."



May the hope of Jesus resurrection grant us strength to be part of counter-infectious spaces in sharing peace, healing and love with our world today.

Raj Bharat Patta

Sunday 4th April 2021 – Easter Day

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

Opening Prayer

In silence, read John 20:1 then pray quietly, with growing confidence:

After the agony of the cross, Lord Jesus you are here. After the desolation of the grave, Lord Jesus you are here. After your triumphant bursting from the tomb, Lord Jesus you are here.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Hymn: "Christ the Lord is Risen Today"

Sing or read the words or listen to it here
https://youtu.be/peSt3BT_MgM

Christ the Lord is risen today;
Alleluia!
All creation joins to say:
Alleluia!
Raise your joys and triumphs high;
Alleluia!
Sing, you heavens; let earth, reply:
Alleluia!

Love's redeeming work is done,
Alleluia!
Fought the fight, the battle won;
Alleluia!
Vain the stone, the watch, the seal;
Alleluia!
Christ has burst the gates of hell:
Alleluia!

Lives again our glorious King;
Alleluia!
Where, O death, is now your sting?
Alleluia!

Once he died our souls to save;

Alleluia!
Where's your victory, boasting grave?
Alleluia!

Soar we now where Christ has led,
Alleluia!
Following our exalted Head;
Alleluia!
Made like him, like him we rise;
Alleluia!
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies:
Alleluia!

King of Glory! Soul of bliss!
Alleluia!
Everlasting life is this,
Alleluia!
You to know, your power to prove,
Alleluia!
Thus to sing, and thus to love:
Alleluia!

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Let us pray together.

O Lord God, Eternal Creator, you dwell in the hearts of all who worship you today. We praise and thank you for raising Jesus from the dead and setting us free to worship and adore you. To you belongs all the honour!

Jesus Christ, Merciful Saviour, you meet us when we turn to you. On that first Easter morning you rose from the grave to conquer sin and death for ever. To you belongs all the glory!

Holy Spirit, Divine Presence, you are the very Breath of Life. We receive the peace of the risen Christ as did those first disciples in the Upper Room. To you belongs all the praise!

Pause

O God, the Three-in-One, we confess that our lives have been full of death and hate instead of life and love. Forgive us our sins, and strengthen in us all that is good.

Pause

As we receive your assurance of forgiveness, you fill us afresh with love and life, compelling us to pour them out into the lives of others. Amen.

Today's Reading from the Book of Acts:

Acts 10:34-43

Today's Gospel Reading:

John 20:1-18

Time to Reflect

Have you heard? Easter's cancelled – they found the body! So joked my barber to me, with reassuring annual regularity, but always leading on to a surprisingly deep conversation about the impact of Christ's resurrection on the worldwide church.

Those women first, and then the disciples, had far more world-shattering news to share. Have you heard? Death is cancelled – Jesus is alive again! This time they weren't joking.

Without question, the resurrection of Jesus was the one event that blew apart all time and space, resetting clocks and calendars, returning us in that early morning garden to a very reset of Creation. The empty tomb turned timid, fearful disciples into fearless proclaimers of the Gospel. Have you heard? Jesus is alive – and living in your heart!

How does Christ's resurrection help you to face death today?

"Every Sunday is Easter Sunday" – why might people say that?

Take a time to sit quietly.

A time of prayer

*Thine be the glory, risen conquering Son;
Endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won.*

On this Easter Day, we remember those who have gone before us to glory. May we, like them, inherit your eternal kingdom.

We pray for all who are fearful today: people living alone; people who have endured great trials; people who are scared for each new day. Come among them and breathe your resurrection peace.

We pray for your worldwide church, united today in joyful acclamation of the risen Christ. May we, your church, daily witness to the life of the risen Christ in our own lives through our love for God, self and neighbour.

We pray for the leaders of the world, and for the people they govern. Endue them with wisdom and justice, so that they might govern all people with equity.

Finally we pray for ourselves. In Christ we are indeed more than conquerors. May Alleluia! be our triumphant song today and always. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: Listen to 'You're Alive' by Graham Kendrick or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6FouNdegH0o>

Led like a lamb to the slaughter
In silence and shame,
There on Your back You carried a world
Of violence and pain.
Bleeding, dying, bleeding, dying.

*You're alive, You're alive,
You have risen, Alleluia!
And the power and the glory is given,
Alleluia, Jesus, to You.*

At break of dawn, poor Mary,
Still weeping she came,
When through her grief she heard Your voice
Now speaking her name.
Mary, Master, Mary, Master!

At the right hand of the Father
Now seated on high
You have begun Your eternal reign
Of justice and joy.
Glory, glory, glory, glory.

A prayer of blessing

God the Father, by whose glory Christ was
raised from the dead, strengthen us to walk
with him in his risen life; and may almighty
God bless us, the Father, the Son and the Holy
Spirit. Amen

[MWB]

Original Materials by [Stephen Froggatt](#)
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We are grateful to all the Ministers and Local Preachers from
around the Connexion who have contributed to Worship at
Home. This resource is administrated by Ministries: Vocations
and Worship in the Connexional Team. We aim to continue to
provide these resources until the end of August 2021.

Acts 10:34-43

Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly
understand that God shows no partiality, but in
every nation anyone who fears him and does what
is right is acceptable to him. You know the
message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching
peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. That
message spread throughout Judea, beginning in
Galilee after the baptism that John announced:
how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy
Spirit and with power; how he went about doing
good and healing all who were oppressed by the
devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses to
all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They
put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but
God raised him on the third day and allowed him
to appear, not to all the people but to us who were
chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and
drank with him after he rose from the dead. He
commanded us to preach to the people and to
testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge
of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify

about him that everyone who believes in him
receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

John 20:1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still
dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw
that the stone had been removed from the tomb.
So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other
disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to
them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb,
and we do not know where they have laid him."
Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went
toward the tomb. The two were running together,
but the other disciple outran Peter and reached
the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw
the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go
in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and
went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings
lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus'
head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled
up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who
reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw
and believed; for as yet they did not understand
the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.
Then the disciples returned to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she
wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she
saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of
Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the
other at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why
are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have
taken away my Lord, and I do not know where
they have laid him." When she had said this, she
turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but
she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to
her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are
you looking for?" Supposing him to be the
gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried
him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I
will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She
turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!"
(which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not
hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to
the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them,
'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to
my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went
and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the
Lord"; and she told them that he had said these
things to her.