**Messy Church – 19th April 2025**

**Easter**

In March, we talked about Lent up to the cleansing of the Temple, on the Sunday before Easter (or before Passover, as it would have been at the time). Today, we are picking the story up on Thursday evening, the Passover meal.

The activities are:

1. **Easter Thursday:** 
   1. **Foot washing**
   2. **Torches**
   3. **Hand washing**
2. **Good Friday:** 
   1. **Cockerel –** in the Celebration
   2. **Nail crosses**
   3. **Oils and spices**
3. **Easter Sunday**
   1. **Bread roll tomb**
   2. **Footprints**
4. **Modern illustrations of Easter**
5. **Bird’s nests with eggs –** in the Celebration
6. **Easter sticker sets**

**Stories and Activities**

1. **Easter Thursday**

All four Gospels have the story of the Last Supper – which was also the Passover meal – the last supper Jesus would eat with his friends, but they don’t all tell all the bits around the story. Matthew chapter 26, verses 17 to 19, Mark chapter 14, verses 12 to 16, and Luke chapter 22, verses 7 to 13 all tell the bit about the friends asking Jesus about preparing for the Passover meal, and them following his instructions. Matthew chapter 26, verses 20 to 30, Mark chapter 14, verses 17 to 26, Luke chapter 22, verses 14 to 22, tell the story about Jesus eating supper with his friends, including the part where he breaks the bread and shares the wine, which is now part of our Communion service, and also including the bit where he says one of his friends is going to betray him to the authorities, so they can arrest and kill him. Only John (chapter 13, verses 1 to 17) leaves out the bread and wine, and includes the story of Jesus washing his friends’ feet.

* 1. **Foot washing**

In the middle of eating the Passover meal, Jesus got up from the table, took off his tunic and wrapped a towel round his waist. He got a bowl of water, and washed his friends’ feet, drying them with the towel around his waist. This was easy, as they were not sitting on chairs with their feet under the table. Eating was done lying on benches – three or four to a bench – with their heads towards the middle, where the table was, and their feet at the other side, away from the table.

When Jesus got to Peter – so obviously Peter was not the closest round the table to him – Peter objected. He thought that Jesus was too important to wash feet, even his, Peter’s feet. Jesus told him that if he didn’t wash his feet, Peter could no longer be his friend, so Peter said that Jesus should not just was his feet, but wash his hands and head as well. Jesus said that people who have bathed were clean, except for their feet, so there was only a need to wash their feet. (In Jesus’ day, there were no baths in people’s houses. Everyone bathed at the public bath houses, and then dressed in clean clothes and walked home – or in this case, to where they were going to eat – so their feet would be dusty, though the rest of them was still clean.)

Then Jesus explained why he had washed their feet. He was setting an example to them. They regarded him as more important than themselves, and, in that sense, as their teacher and leader, he was. But what he was teaching them was that no-one was more important than any other – everyone was important, so they should all help each other, not worrying about who was most important. They should wash each other’s feet, if that needed doing – and that is how it should be always among his friends.

These days, in England, the Thursday before Easter is called Maundy Thursday. Maundy is apparently the anglicisation (making a foreign word English) of the Latin word “Mandate” or “Order/Instruction”, for this instruction that Jesus gave.

**You will need:** a bowl of warm water, soap and a towel, and two volunteers – one to wash and one to be washed. They could then swap, and so both would have clean feet!

**Talk about:** how it feels to have clean feet; how it feels to have your feet washed for you – does it tickle? Do you like the process? Does it make you feel important to have someone else wash your feet? In Jesus’ day, only rich people would have someone to wash their feet for them.

1. **Torches**

All four gospels say that after the meal, Jesus and his friends went out to a garden called Gethsemane. They may have carried torches – but almost certainly, when Judas came with a crowd of people, including the guards sent by the chief priests, they would have come with torches, and/or lanterns, so that they could see who they had found. Only the gospel of John says this explicitly in chapter 18, verse3. The references are: Matthew chapter 26, verses 36 to 56, Mark chapter 14, verses 32 to 52, Luke chapter 22, verses 39 to 53, and John chapter 18, verses 1 to 11.

**You will need:** a length of tube (the inner tube of a roll of foil, or kitchen towel, will be fine), red or orange and yellow tissue or crepe paper, and glue and/or sticky tape – wide parcel tape would be ideal. An elastic band large enough to go round the tube would also be useful.

Cut the coloured paper into strips about 6 inches (15cm) wide, and long enough to go round the tube at least twice, and put them flat on a table. Alternate the colours so that you have a pile of 4 or so strips. Put the elastic round the tube, about half way down. Put the tube at one end of the pile, so that about 2 inches (5cm) of the paper is against the tube. Roll the tube along the paper, so that the paper wraps around the tube. When all the paper is wrapped, carefully move the elastic band up the tube, stretching it so that it goes over the paper, and holds it in place. Then use the sticky tape – if it is narrow, wind it round the paper over the elastic band, in the first place, and then lower down, so that it overlaps the paper and the tube, so that the paper doesn’t slip – look at the picture. If you are using parcel tape, or wide sticky tape, you can put it over the edges of the paper onto the tube straight away. Cut through all the layers of crepe paper from the top down nearly to the cardboard tube. Loosely tuck a few of the inside layers inside the tube, so that the hole isn’t visible.

**Talk about:** going out in the dark – especially somewhere you don’t know. Jesus and his friends knew the garden, they went there often, but the guards were looking for someone specific, and they didn’t know where he would be. Have you tried to go to the toilet block on a camp site, for example?

1. **Hand washing**

When Jesus had been arrested, he was put on trial three times! Once with the chief priests’ council, once with Herod, and once with Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. You can read the council stories in Matthew chapter 26, verses 57 to 67, Mark chapter 14, verses 53 to 65, Luke chapter 22, verses 66 to 71, and John chapter 18, verses 19 to 24, the Herod story in Luke chapter 23, verses 6 to 12, and the Pontius Pilate stories in Matthew chapter 27, verses 11 to 26, Mark chapter 15, verses 1 to 15, Luke chapter 23, verses 1 to 5 and 13 to 25, and John chapter 18, verse 28 to chapter 19, verse 16.

If you read these different versions, you will notice that Pontius Pilate tried very hard not to find Jesus guilty, especially in the John version. But in the Matthew version, Pontius Pilate does something symbolic. He washes his hands. He says that he is not guilty of the sin the Jewish authorities are making him commit. He doesn’t think that Jesus is guilty, but they are forcing him to have Jesus executed anyway.

**You will need:** a bowl of warm water, some soap and a towel (again)!

Wash your hands carefully – like you do when you go from a messy activity to a food activity! Make sure that you have washed between your fingers, and a little way up your wrists. Then rinse the soap off and dry your hands.

**Talk about:** being clean – what it is really like – how do you feel when you have just had a shower? And what it might mean to say this bad thing has nothing to do with me, and “I wash my hands of it!” Have you ever heard anyone say “I wash my hands of you.”?

**2 Good Friday:**

On Good Friday, the execution the Jewish authorities had asked for, and Pontius Pilate had permitted, happened. Jesus was killed by nailing him to a cross, and leaving him there until he suffocated. But first, in the early hours of the day, when Jesus was being questioned by the chief priests’ council, Peter was outside, in the courtyard, by the guards’ fire. Jesus had predicted, over supper, that Peter would deny that he knew him (Matthew chapter 26, verses 31 to 35, Mark chapter 14, verses 27 to 31, Luke chapter 22, verses 31 to 34, and John chapter 13, verses 36 to 38), and now it happened. Several people said, either to Peter himself, or to others who were around, that they knew he had been with Jesus, as one of his friends. Three times, Peter denied that he knew Jesus, and then he heard a cockerel crow. He knew that he had done precisely what Jesus had said he would, and that he had denied it, and he left the courtyard, crying. (Matthew chapter 27, verses 69 to 75, Mark chapter 14, verses 66 to 72, Luke chapter 22, verses 54 to 62, and John chapter 18, verses 15 to 18 and 25 to 27.

1. **Cockerel**

**You will need:** a square of paper (which can be scrap) and should be white or yellow, a small piece of card, two wiggly eyes, a little glue, and the attached instructions. If you want to make the cockerel’s comb red, use red card, or colour it – so you will need red paint, crayon or felt tip pen

Follow the instructions to make a cockerel.

**Talk about:** being told not to do something, and doing it anyway – how do you feel? Or being warned that something bad will happen if you are not careful, and then you are not careful – again, how do you feel?

1. **Nail crosses**

A nail cross on a pink background

Description automatically generatedCrucifixion was a Roman punishment, where the criminal was nailed by his hands and feet to a wooden cross, and left. The victim usually died of suffocation, when he could no longer support himself on his feet, because of the pain, and so could not breathe, because his arms were so stretched. It could take days, but in Jesus’ case, he died within the day.

**You will need:** three long nails (not sharp) and some wire. We had red craft wire. Pliers and wire cutters will help you make it neat and tight.

Use the wire to fix the nails into a cross. I fastened the two nails for the upright together then added the cross piece. Twist the ends together tightly with the pliers then trim the spare wire. If you have some glue such as from a hot glue gun you can put a bit on the end of the wire to stop it being sharp. Never leave it where it can be knocked onto the floor where someone might walk on it!

**Talk about:** the crucifixion

1. **Oils and spices**

In 1st century Palestine, when a body was buried, it was wrapped in cloth layers with oils and spices. In Matthew chapter 27, verses 57 to 61, Mark chapter 15, verses 42 to 47, Luke chapter 23, verses 50 to 55, the story is told of Joseph of Arimathea going to Pontius Pilate and asking permission to bury the body of Jesus. He took the body, wrapped it in cloth and put it in a tomb, like a cave, that had already been prepared for someone else, in a garden not far from the site of the crucifixion. A large stone was rolled in front of the opening to the tomb. Two women called Mary were watching to see where the body was. Luke says they then went home to prepare the spices for burial, but no-one had time to do anything else, because it was late afternoon on Friday, and the Sabbath would start at sunset. John chapter 19, verses 38 to 42 say that as well as Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus was involved in this process, and that the pair of them did use some oils and spices, though it does not mention the women.

**3 Easter Sunday**

The Sabbath lasts from sunset on Friday evening to sunset on Saturday – it did in Jesus’ day, and it does today. Jesus was buried just before sunset on Good Friday.

If the women did not have time to prepare for a proper burial on Friday, before the Sabbath began, they would have had time on Saturday evening after it ended. Certainly, all the gospels say that they went, early on the Sunday morning, to the tomb where Jesus’ body had been put, taking the proper oils and spices, to make the body properly prepared.

Matthew chapter 28 verses 1 to 10 says that the women simply went to look at the tomb, saw an angel, who was sitting on the rolled away stone, and who said that Jesus was alive again, and they should tell his friends. As they ran away, they met Jesus himself, who told them to tell his friends to meet him in Galilee.

Mark chapter 16, verses 1 to 8 says that the women brought spices to the tomb, wondering who they could get to roll the stone away, but when they got there, they found it rolled away already. Inside the tomb they saw a young man in white, who told them that Jesus was alive again, and that they should tell his friends that they would meet him in Galilee. The women were so upset and scared that they ran away from the tomb, and didn’t say anything to anyone!

Luke chapter 24, verses 1 to 12 says that the women brought spices to the tomb, and found the stone rolled away, and were very puzzled. Then suddenly two men in white were there, who said that Jesus was alive again, as he had promised. The women went to Jesus’ friends, and told them what had happened. Some of the friends thought the women were talking rubbish, and didn’t believe them, but Peter went to the tomb, and didn’t know what to believe.

John chapter 20, verses 1 to 10 says that on Sunday morning, only one woman, Mary Magdalen, went to the tomb, found the stone rolled away, and no body there, and went back to Peter and John, and told them what she had found. Peter and John went to the tomb, and found that what Mary had told them was true. It says that only John believed that Jesus was alive. Verses 11 to 18 say that Mary had gone back to the tomb with Peter and John, and when they went away again, she stayed, crying. She believed that someone had taken Jesus’ body away and put it somewhere else, so when she saw two angels dressed in white sitting in the tomb, she told them why she was crying. Then she turned around and saw Jesus, but she thought he was the gardener. He asked her why she was crying, and she said that if he had moved the body, she would take it to his friends. Jesus said “Mary,” and she recognised him. He told her to go to his friends and tell them that he would go back to heaven, to his father, and she did so.

In all the gospels, these verses are followed by various other stories about what happened after – the friends seeing Jesus, talking to Jesus in various places.

1. **Bread roll tomb**

**You will need:** per person – a paper plate, and a bread roll. Some very thin green icing (icing sugar, green food colouring, and water if necessary), and some jelly babies

Cut a piece of the roll off from one side. Pull out the inside of the roll, to make an empty space. (You can eat the insides if you want.) Make up the icing, and pour it over the roll. Use jelly babies to represent the people who came to the tomb.

**Talk about:** finding something amazing and trying to explain it to those who had not been there – something you find astonishing, or beautiful, or something you find interesting, but they don’t.

1. **Footprints**

Pictures of the resurrection often show Jesus with no sandals on.

There are a couple of ways you could make footprints.

1. **You might want to do this BEFORE you have your feet washed!**

**You will need:** a piece of paper – large enough to put your foot on, some liquid paint, a piece of sponge to put the paint on your foot.

Put the paper on the floor, sponge the paint onto your foot, and then stand on the paper. If there is enough paint on your foot, you could make another print.

THEN GET YOUR FOOT WASHED! We should warn you that blue poster paint will not wash off easily!

1. We have a couple of footprint stamps

**You will need:** a piece of paper, a footprint stamp and some paint.

Stamp footprints onto the paper.

**Talk about:** not recognizing someone when they were not where you usually see them – or when you don’t expect to see them

**4. Modern illustrations of Easter**

Because the Easter stories are so difficult to accept – we tend not to believe that people come back to life – the church has used many other illustrations to show the miracle of new life. One of those illustrations is the egg – which is why we have easter eggs.

1. **Bird’s nests with eggs**

**You will need:** a paper cake case, some shredded wheat, a chocolate bar, and mini eggs, wrapped or unwrapped, two heat-proof bowls, one bigger than the other, a large spoon, a small spoon, and a fork

Half fill the larger bowl with boiling water – ask an adult for help with this – put the smaller bowl in, so it floats, break the chocolate bar in pieces, and put them into the smaller bar. Carefully stir it with the large spoon, using the spoon to mash the bits as they melt, so that the heat reaches all the chocolate pieces, until they are all melted. Break up a shredded wheat bar, and put pieces into the chocolate, stirring with a fork to make sure all the bits are coated with chocolate. Put a large spoonful into a cake case, and use the small spoon to make a hollow in the middle. Leave the cake cases on one side until they have cooled and the chocolate has set.

When the cases are cooled, add three eggs.

1. **Easter sticker sets** (for younger children)

**You will need:** an Easter sticker set

Use the stickers as you like, to make a picture.

**Talk about:** the Easter story.

**Celebration**

Holy week starts with Palm Sunday, which we talked about last time so we’ll start by singing “We have a king who rides a donkey” <https://youtu.be/gSbEEwik2hs?si=e9Mss7wjbREGb-e2>

Lots of things happened in that week. It was during the week that Judas went to the religious leaders and agreed to betray Jesus.

One thing we always remember is the Last Supper. Jesus and his friends celebrated Passover together. Before the meal Jesus washed the disciples’ feet. During the meal, Jesus told the disciple that he was going to die. He used some of the Passover ritual, and changed it. He took some bread, it would have been unleavened, that’s made without yeast, so it wouldn’t have risen. He broke it into pieces and said to his disciples that this was his body, broken for them. He took a cup of wine, it would have been red wine, and he said this was his blood which would spill for them. He also said that one disciple would betray him, and that Peter would say he didn’t know him. At the end of the meal Judas went to tell people where they could find Jesus.

After the meal the disciples went with Jesus to the garden of Gethsemane. He prayed there. Peter and James and John fell asleep when they were supposed to be praying!

That’s when Judas came with soldiers to arrest Jesus. Some of them had torches. Judas had said that he would kiss Jesus so the soldiers would know which one he was, Peter started to fight, but Jesus stopped him. The disciples then ran away, and Jesus was taken to the Chief Priest to be tried. Jesus knew he was going to die so that the disciples and other people, including us, wouldn’t have to suffer the consequences of things they have done wrong.

Meanwhile Peter was outside. Three people asked him if he was with Jesus, and Peter said he didn’t know him. Jesus had said this would happen before the cock crowed for morning. And that is when the cockerel crowed. We will make a simple origami cockerel.

We’ll sing Jesus’ love is very wonderful. <https://youtu.be/WcgplHIntJc?si=pz5o8refQ6XvdiMW>

The Chief Priest wanted Jesus dead, but he wasn’t allowed to execute him, so they took him to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, who tried him again. Pilate didn’t think Jesus was guilty of anything, but allowed himself to be bullied into killing Jesus on a cross. He washed his hands to show that he didn’t accept any blame for what he knew was wrong.

Pilate also tried to pass the responsibly to King Herod. This was the third trial. Herod wanted Jesus to show he was important, but Jesus kept quiet.

Jesus died on Good Friday. On the Saturday, the Sabbath, nothing could be done, so on the Sunday people came to bury Jesus properly, only to discover the body was gone. Jesus had come back to life! Mary Magdalene was the first to see him, but over the next few weeks a lot of his followers saw him and talked to him.

Let’s pray.

Dear God, we don’t really understand why Jesus had to die, but we know he died for everybody, including us. Thank you for that. Help us remember that Jesus dies for everyone, and treat people the way Jesus would.

Amen

When we eat Easter eggs, let’s remember that these are the symbol for new life and the empty tomb.

We’ll sing Lord I lift your name on high. <https://youtu.be/WcgplHIntJc?si=pz5o8refQ6XvdiMW>

Next Messy Church is 17th May 2025. See you then.

Now have tea or a treat if it isn’t tea time!

If you send me pictures of anything you do, I will share them on the Church Facebook page (if you want to send pictures that you don’t want shared, just tell me. I’ll only share the one’s you’re happy to share.)

Harlington Messy Church Team

We’ll have a Zoom meeting open for those who can’t come to the church. Our end of Zoom will go on YouTube during the celebration, but we won’t put pictures from your end on. Contact me if you want the link for Zoom. Look out for the broadcast on the Harlington Methodist Church YouTube Channel.