**Messy Church – March 2021**

**Passion and Palms**

The activities are:

1. **Palm Sunday – make a palm leaf**

Matthew 21: 1 – 11, Mark 11: 1 – 10, Luke 19: 28 – 40,

John 12: 12 - 19

1. **Cleansing the Temple – make a dove**

Matthew 21: 12 – 13, Mark 11: 15 – 19, Luke 19: 45 – 46,

John 2: 13 - 22

1. **Last Supper**

Matthew 26: 17 – 30, Mark 14: 12 – 26, Luke 22: 7 – 23,

John 13: 1 - 30

1. **Gethsemane – make praying hands**

Matthew 26: 31 – 56, Mark 14: 27 – 52, Luke 22: 31 – 53,

John 14: 36 – 38, 18: 1 - 12

1. **Trials**

Matthew 26: 57 – 27: 2, 11 – 26, Mark 14: 53 – 15: 15,

Luke 22: 54 – 23: 25, John 18: 12 – 19: 16

1. **Crucifixion – make a palm cross**

Matthew 27: 27 – 66, Mark 15: 16 – 47, Luke 23: 26 – 56,

John 19: 17 – 42

1. **Resurrection – make the empty tomb**

Matthew 28: 1 – 10, Mark 16: 1 – 11, Luke 24: 1 – 12,

John 20: 1 – 18

**Stories and Activities**

**1 Palm Sunday – make a palm leaf**

**You will need:** green paper (or paper you can paint green after you have made the leaf, so green paint!), scissors, small garden cane, or straight twig, or cardboard to stiffen your leaf, glue or sellotape to attach the stiffening to your leaf, template of a palm leaf (with the booklet)

Fasten your stiffening to the paper. If you are using A4 paper, fasten it along the diagonal of the paper. If you are using cardboard, you can glue it to the paper, but twigs or garden canes will need Sellotape. Draw an oval from the top corner, almost to the bottom corner (look at the template). Cut the notches almost to whatever you are using as stiffening. (Make sure you don’t cut right to the middle!). If you are using white paper, paint it on one side, and when it is dry, paint it on the other side.

When Jesus came to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, he rode a donkey. There was no saddle on the donkey, so some of his friends put their coats over the donkey, for Jesus to sit on. Others of his friends put their coats on the road for the donkey to walk on. When other people saw them, they got really excited and started shouting “Hosanna” and “Here comes the Son of David”, or . When they didn’t have coats to put down, they tore branches off the trees and put them on the road. This is why it is called Palm Sunday.

It is important to the story that Jesus rode a donkey. He knew that he was God’s son, and therefore the King, but he would not be a King like Herod, or like the Roman Emperor. That sort of king would ride a horse. Because Jesus was different, he would not ride a horse. The sort of king he would be was loving, not bossy, and so he rode a donkey.

**Talk about:** the difference between a horse and a donkey. Then talk about the difference between someone who rules by force (by making people do what you want) and somebody who rules by kindness and love (by persuading people to do what is right).

**2 Cleansing the Temple – make a paper dove**

**You will need:** a square piece of paper (if you have a piece of A4 paper, you can make a square by folding a diagonal from one corner so that the two sides are together. There will be part of the paper that is not inside the fold. Cut this part off, and the rest will be square.

Either use the instructions to make a dove, or follow the video <https://youtu.be/0GskZpOv7YY> – the doves are the same. You could, of course, use both!

Look at the picture of the model of the Temple. The wide courtyards either side of the central building were called “The Court of the Gentiles” and it was the furthest into the Temple that anyone who wasn’t Jewish got. Because Jewish worship was based on sacrifice to God, of animals or birds, people who were not farmers would need to buy their sacrifice. Jewish law said that animals or birds offered to God had to be perfect, and the best way of making sure that only perfect sacrifices were made was for the Temple to sell the birds and animals to people who came to worship. Of course, then the best place for the best animals and birds to be sold was at the Temple, as well as by the Temple, and the best place at the Temple was the wide spaces of the Court of the Gentiles. The next problem was that the Temple only accepted Jewish money, but the world outside the Temple used Roman money, because Judea was part of the Roman Empire. So people wanting to buy sacrifices had to change their Roman money for Jewish money. This meant that there had to be space to do the money changing, as we change money when we are going abroad to somewhere where English pounds can’t be used. And where was the best place to find the space? The Court of the Gentiles, of course.

When Jesus arrived at the Temple with his friends, he was disgusted at what was going on. He turned over the tables of the men who were changing the money, and he let out the doves and chased the other animals, and all their keepers, out of the Temple. He said that God’s house should be a house of prayer for all nations, but that these people were making it a den of robbers.

**Talk about:** what might be the right place for doing things, or the best place for doing things – school might be the best place to learn, but sometimes, as we have found, it is not the only place, or perhaps for some people, it might not be the best place.

Or talk about the difference between shopping at a supermarket – which may be convenient, everything being in one place – or shopping at specialist shops – one for fruit and veg, and one for meat, and one for clothing.

**3 Last Supper**

Every year, the Jews of Jesus’ time celebrated the Passover. This festival was a retelling and remembering of when Moses helped them escape from slavery in Egypt. Everything they ate, and how they dressed was part of the story. The book of told them how to do the remembering – they had to be ready to travel, so with their coats and shoes on (which they wouldn’t normally wear at a meal), they had to eat standing up, ready to do, and the meal had to be prepared quickly. That meant that their bread was made without yeast – so it didn’t have to have time to rise. The meat had to be lamb – because it was small and easy to cook. And the herbs, or greens, they ate were bitter, because being a slave was horrible. By the time of Jesus, it seems that the bits about being ready to travel were no longer part of the remembering, but even today, the youngest child present for the meal, in a Jewish household, is expected to ask why things are done the way they are, so that the story can be told.

This is the meal that the disciples prepared for, and Jesus and the disciples ate on the day before Good Friday. The story is told in the first three Gospels – Matthew, Mark and Luke, that the disciples asked Jesus where they should prepare the meal, Jesus told them, and they ate together, including the blessing of bread and of wine, which is called the Lord’s Supper, and which we call Communion, and including something about one of the disciples betraying Jesus, which they all deny. A slightly different story is told in the Gospel of John. John tells the story of Jesus washing the disciples’ feet, before the meal, and includes the bit about betraying Jesus, but doesn’t have the Communion words.

**Talk about:** sharing a meal which is special, maybe Christmas, or a family birthday. Would you talk about why you were sharing the meal? Or share stories about sharing this meal before, especially if people came to the meal who you didn’t often see.

**4 Gethsemane – make praying hands**

**You will need:** a piece of A4 paper, pencil or pen, scissors

Fold your piece of paper in half, so that it looks like a card. Put one hand on the paper, with your little finger and the side of your hand on the fold, keeping your fingers together. If you can get part of your wrist onto the page as well, that is fine, but you should get the top of your longest finger onto the page.

Draw around your hand, from the fold, where the top of your little finger touches it, down to your wrist, or the bottom of the paper, whichever comes first.

Cut around the drawn outline (through both layers of the paper), and stand your card up – it should look like your hands are praying!

After supper, Jesus and his friends went to a garden on the Mount of Olives, called Gethsemane. On the way, Jesus told Peter that before the cock crowed the next morning, Peter would three times say that he didn’t know Jesus. Peter said that it would never happen, and Jesus said it would, and that all the disciples would run away from him. At Gethsemane, Jesus went away from his disciples to pray, asking them to pray as well. They kept going to sleep! Jesus asked God not to make him do the next part of his life, if that were possible, and still achieve what God had sent him to do, but he said that he knew God’s way was best.

Finally, Jesus woke his disciples up, and at that moment, Judas arrived with some men with weapons. Judas kissed Jesus to let them know that this was the man they had to arrest. Some of the disciples tried to fight, to stop the men taking Jesus away, but Jesus told them to stop, the disciples ran away, and the men took him back to Jerusalem. Jesus knew that this was what God wanted.

**Talk about:** praying. What do you pray for? When do you pray? It is really easy to go to sleep when you are praying, especially if you have had a busy day, and you relax.

1. **Trials**

The men who arrested Jesus were soldiers commanded by the Jewish High Priest, so they took Jesus back to Jerusalem to the High Priest’s house. There, the priests asked Jesus lots of questions, some of which he didn’t answer, and when he did answer they didn’t like the answers he gave. They wanted to execute him, but only the Roman governor could give an order of execution, so they send the soldiers, with Jesus, to the Roman governor, who was called Pontius Pilate.

While the priests were questioning Jesus, Peter had followed Jesus back into Jerusalem, and was sitting in the High Priest’s courtyard, by the fire that the guards had built, to keep them warm on duty. Three times while Jesus was being questioned, people asked Peter whether he knew Jesus, either because his accent was the same (they both came from the same place), or because they had seen him with Jesus. Each time, Peter denied that he knew Jesus, getting more and more scared, and sounding more and more cross. After the last time, the cock crowed, and Peter remembered what Jesus had said. He left the courtyard crying.

When the soldiers took Jesus to Pilate, Pilate asked him if the priests were telling the truth – did Jesus claim to be the King of the Jews. Luke says that Pilate, finding that Jesus came from Galilee, send Jesus to Herod, who was the ruler of Galilee, but Jesus refused to answer Herod’s questions, and Herod sent him back to Pilate. The priests asked for Jesus to be executed, but Pilate said he couldn’t see any reason to execute him. At Passover, Pilate used to release one of his prisoners from jail, so he offered the crowd that had gathered, with all this to-ing and fro-ing, to release Jesus. The priests organised the crowd to ask for a man called Barabbas, a bandit or rioter, and to ask for Jesus to be executed. In the end, when the priests threatened to tell Caesar that Pilate had released a man who claimed to be a King, and therefore a rival to Caesar, Pilate gave in, and ordered that Jesus should be killed.

**Talk about:** being too scared to tell the truth – like Peter, or like Pilate.

1. **Crucifixion – make a palm cross**

**You will need:** a piece of A4 paper, scissors

Cut a strip not more than ½ an inch (1 centimetre) wide, the full length of the piece of paper. Follow the video to make the palm cross. <https://youtu.be/x5dcu-pOIpY>

Some of the Gospels talk about Jesus being beaten and laughed at before he is sentenced to death, and some talk about it after, but whichever way round it was, at some point the soldiers dressed Jesus up like the King they said he claimed to be, and beat him. It was actually illegal under Roman law to beat someone and then execute them, but this is what is said to have happened. Then, Jesus was taken out to the place where criminals were executed. It was normal for people to carry the cross piece of their cross to their execution, but because Jesus had been so badly treated already, he could not carry his cross, so Matthew, Mark and Luke say the soldiers made someone from the crowd carry it for him.

All four Gospels say that two criminals were crucified with Jesus, but Luke quotes a conversation between the three men. John quotes Jesus as telling John, his disciple, to look after Mary, his mother. After Jesus dies, he is buried in an already prepared tomb, in a garden. Matthew says that soldiers were put on guard, in case the body should be stolen by Jesus’ disciples, but all four Gospels say that a stone was rolled in front of the tomb.

**Talk about:** watching something really bad happen – like the tsunami that hit Japan ten years ago (videos taken at the time are on the internet (look for Japanese tsunami 2011) – they mostly show what people saw during the tsunami, not the aftermath and the clear up), and not being able to do anything about it. Or talk about being in a crowd for something exciting, a concert, or a parade, and how everybody reacts the same.

1. **Resurrection – make the empty tomb**

**You will need:** a plate, a knife, a bread roll (brown or white, but preferably not with seeds on!), some thin green icing, jelly babies, cocktail sticks if you want to make crosses

Cut a slice off the roll on one side, and pull out most of the inside of the roll – you can eat it if you like. Put the cut off slice back over the hole. Pour the icing over the roll, to make a green hill. If you want to use a paper plate, and decorate the plate as well, colour the plate green too. If you want to make the three crosses on the hill, fasten two cocktail sticks together for each cross, and stick them in the top of the roll.

If you want to use your roll to tell the story of Easter Sunday morning, move the cut off slice a little bit away from the hole in the side of the roll, and put some jelly baby figures on the plate to be Mary Magdalene and the other people who came – Matthew says another lady called Mary, and an angel, and then Jesus; Mark says the two Marys and a lady called Salome and an angel; Luke says two Marys and Joanna, and two angels, and then Peter; and John says Mary Magdalene, Peter, John and two angels, and then Jesus.

If you read the various stories, sometimes the angels are in the tomb, so you could put your angels in the roll, and sometimes they are outside. Whenever Jesus is included in the story, he is outside the tomb, in the garden. In all these stories, Jesus is talked about as being alive, and seeing people, who see him, or who are going to see him. Nobody ever talks about seeing the dead body of Jesus after the time they bury him on Good Friday.

**Talk about:** being scared about something you don’t want to do, and then discovering that it is not bad at all, but exciting and different. Would you like to do something exciting on your next holiday, when we are allowed to go on holiday again? What would you like to do?

**Celebration**

At the end of the time we call “Lent”, the church starts thinking about Easter. We particularly think about the last week in Jesus’ life on earth, but because there are so many things that happened, we have to start talking about them before Holy Week, which is the week leading up to Easter. Because of that, the Sunday 2 weeks before Easter Sunday is known as “Passion Sunday”, and the Sunday before Easter Sunday is called “Palm Sunday”.

On Palm Sunday we think about Jesus going into Jerusalem. Jesus and his friends, the disciples, had been staying outside Jerusalem. It was coming to the time of Passover, the special festival when the Jews remembered the story of their escape from slavery in Egypt, a thousand years or more earlier. There were a number of parts to the celebration, but the most important was the Passover meal, which a Jewish family tried to get together to eat. Each part of the meal had its own significance, and together they enabled the whole story to be told. Jews always hope to have the meal in Jerusalem, so a lot of people were journeying to Jerusalem.

The disciple expected to have the meal with Jesus and asked him where they would have it. Jesus told them to go and find a particular donkey, and he would ride into Jerusalem on it. So they went where he told then and found the donkey. They didn’t have a saddle, so they put their cloaks on the donkey’s back, to give Jesus a comfortable seat. Some of the disciples couldn’t put their cloaks on the donkey, because there were too many, so they spread them on the ground. Then others pulled down palm branches and put them on the ground, or waved them in the air like banners. The started yelling “Here comes the Son of David!”. There was a big crowd of people going in for the festival, and some of them started yelling as well. Soon everyone was waving palm branches and yelling “Hosanna!” It became one big procession, with Jesus, at the front, on a donkey.

Before we sing a song, let’s make a big palm leaf to wave while we sing (if the glue dries quickly enough).

We’ll sing “We have a king who rides a donkey”. <https://youtu.be/gSbEEwik2hs>

While a lot of people cheered Jesus, some people didn’t. They didn’t like the procession at all. These were the religious leaders at the time. What you may not realise was that there was a prophesy. It said “Shout, children of Jerusalem, for your king is coming. He’s riding on a donkey, and not just any donkey but a small young donkey”. The leaders realised that Jesus was applying the prophesy to himself. Normally a king would ride a big fast horse, but this prophesy said that for the Jews, their king would ride a donkey. Here is a video we made last year to tell the story. <https://youtu.be/6ultRI6819Y>

The next day Jesus went to the temple. Do you remember the pictures from last month? Well, one of the areas of the temple was called “the Court of the Gentiles”. A gentile was anyone who wasn’t a Jew. The Court of the Gentiles was the only bit of the temple they were allowed in. There were marker stones, with a warning to gentiles that if they went any further they would be killed! The court was a place that the gentiles could come to pray. But when Jesus got there, he found it was like a market. There were people selling sheep, people selling doves, people changing Roman money into the special temple money, and noise and activity everywhere. What was worse, a lot of the trading was dishonest. Jesus got very cross. He turned the tables over and drove the traders out. He told them that they were making the house of God into a den of thieves. This annoyed the religious leaders even more. They made a lot of money from the trade in the temple.

Have a go at making the origami dove. Just imagine what it would be like if a whole lot of doves were set loose at the same time.

Later in the week, on Thursday evening, the disciples and Jesus got together for the Passover meal. At this meal Jesus:

 Washed his disciple’s feet

 Told Peter that he would say that he didn’t know Jesus

 Let Judas know that he knew he would betray him

 Told the disciples that the bread was like his body and the wine was like his blood, and that he would be broken and bleeding and die. This is the origin of our communion services.

After the meal Jesus and the disciples went out in the dark to the garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus was arrested, when Judas pointed him out. He was then taken to be tried, first at the high priest’s house, which is where Peter, when asked if he was one of Jesus’ followers, said three times that he didn’t know Jesus. Next Jesus was taken to Pilate’s house, because only the Romans had the authority to execute someone. He also went to King Herod’s, but Herod sent him back to Pilate. Pilate didn’t think Jesus should be killed, but he was worried that there could be a riot, so he sentenced Jesus to death. On Friday, which we now call “Good Friday”, Jesus was killed.

It seems funny to call it “Good” when such a terrible thing happened but the reason for this is that Jesus died so that we wouldn’t have to suffer the consequences of all the wrong things we do. He came to show us how we can be forgiven by God, and that’s a good thing.

We’ll sing “Lord I lift your name on high” <https://youtu.be/c12Ta6_WJrw>

Jesus was buried very quickly, in a rock tomb, and on the Saturday the disciples and all Jesus’ friends were very sad. They couldn’t do anything, because Saturday is the Jewish Sabbath, and they weren’t allowed to do anything that might be work. So on the Sunday morning, the women took all the things they needed for a proper burial, and went to the tomb. But when they got there, they found it was empty, and they saw two angels who told them Jesus had risen from the dead. Most of them went back to tell the disciples, who, of course, wouldn’t believe what women told them, but went to look for themselves. Mary Magdalen stayed close to the tomb. She was crying a lot, and when she saw someone, she couldn’t see him properly. She still thought that someone had moved Jesus’ body, so asked the man where it had been taken. The man said her name, “Mary”, and she realised it was Jesus. She was the first person to see him after the resurrection.

If you have a bread roll, you can make a model of the empty tomb. White bread can taste quite sweet, so with icing it tastes nice.

We’ll say a prayer.

Thank you, Jesus, that you care about us, and want us to follow you. Thank you that we are forgiven for the wrong things when we are truly sorry. Thank you that you died for us, to save us and show us how much you love us. And thank you that because you rose from the dead we know that we can have eternal life as well.

Amen.

We’ll sing “Lord of the dance” <https://youtu.be/zDdQhsjNHcw>

Next Messy Church is 17th April. See you then.

Enjoy our celebration on the Harlington Methodist Church YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTMWR_QCxujkh1zHjTFcoJw>

Then 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 now manage the YouTube channel, and Zoom for talk back to us. Our end of Zoom will be what is going on YouTube, 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. We live stream at 4pm, but it then stays up as a recording. Like last time we will mix activities into the story.