**Messy Church – January 2023**

**Paul’s Missionary Journeys**

The activities are:

1. Baskets – Acts, chapter 9, verses 20 to 25
	1. big one – in the Celebration
	2. little ones
2. Purple tie dye –– Lydia – Acts chapter 16, verses 11 to 15
3. Tentmaking – Priscilla and Aquila – Acts chapter 18, verses 1 – 4, 18 - 19
4. Edible house – Acts chapter 20, verses 7 - 12
5. Cheese pull-aparts – Corinthians chapter 11, verses 17 to 29
6. Where did he go? Maps

In October, we stopped the story of Paul’s life at the point he became Paul, instead of Saul, in the city of Damascus, when Ananias cured him of his blindness. This part of the story is told up to verse 18 in chapter 9 of the book of Acts. The story continues from this point – Paul started telling the the Jews of Damascus about Jesus. They were a bit upset – they had heard that he would come and arrest the Christians, and here he was, supporting them. They got very cross and planned to kill him. They put watchers at the city gates so he could not escape, so the Christians took him to a house which had a window in the outside wall of the city and let him out of the window in a basket, lowered by a rope.

Paul went to Jerusalem, but the trouble followed him, so he went back to Tarsus, where he had been born. From chapter 9 to chapter 12 of the book of Acts, there are stories about Paul and about Peter and the other disciples, but from chapter 13 onwards, all the stories are about Paul. We have chosen several of these later stories to talk about today. You could look at the map and see if you can find the places we talk about. The map shows the routes of Paul’s various journeys.

**Stories and Activities**

1. **Escape in a basket!** Acts, chapter 9, verses 20 to 25
	1. **Big one** – we will make this in the celebration

**You will need:** newspaper – possibly quite a lot; sticky tape, scissors

Separate the newspaper into individual sheets, and roll each one from one corner to the opposite corner. Use a little sticky tape to hold each roll together. Put five or six together on the floor (enough to sit on, cross legged), sticking each one to the ones next to it. When the base is big enough, use the next rolls to build up the sides of the basket. Sit in the basket and imagine being let out of a window with a rope holding the basket! (There is a picture on the website, or attached to this mailing, of what the finished basket looks like.)

**DO NOT LIFT THE BASKET WITH SOMEONE IN IT!**

* 1. **Small ones** – there are two versions of this, one to make if you are at home, and one for children at the church (really designed for small children)
		1. Woven paper basket

**You will need:** paper, scissors, a little glue, a flat space to work in, either a print out of the instructions, or a tablet or phone with the instructions on

Follow the instructions to make your basket. You don’t have to use coloured paper, and you could use newspaper. Don’t use very fragile paper, like tissue or crepe paper.

1. Stick together basket with handle

**You will need:** a basket kit, colouring pencils or pens, a little glue

Colour in your basket – see if you can make it look like a woven basket (see the picture) and then fold the sides up and stick them together. Add the handle.

**Talk about:** having to run away. Lots of people cannot stay where they live, because of flooding, or drought, or war. What might it feel like to go away at night, in the dark, very quietly?

1. **Purple tie-dye – Lydia** – Acts chapter 16, verses 11 to 15

In Acts chapter 16, Paul goes to Philippi. His first action, in any new place, is to go where he thinks the Jewish population will meet for prayer. In Philippi, he goes to the riverside. There he meets Lydia, who originally came from Thyatira, and has moved to Philippi. She was a cloth merchant, specialising in purple cloth. Purple cloth was very expensive, and very few people were allowed to wear it. Purple was restricted to the emperor and members of the senate, the Roman parliament. Senators wore purple bands on white togas – the longer they had been senators, the wider the purple bands got. The emperor wore purple togas with gold embroidery. After hearing Paul talk about Jesus, Lydia became a Christian, and was baptised. She then invited Paul and his friends to live in his house while they were in Philippi.

**You will need:** a piece of plain coloured (preferably white, but any pale colour will do) fabric, some purple dye – or purple paint, and something to paint it on with. You may need some protection for your working surface, instructions for the dye, and any additional equipment it recommends.

If you are using dye, follow the instructions that come with the dye. It may take longer than this afternoon for the dye to take. If you are using paint, spread out your piece of fabric, and paint your design on it. Leave the paint to dry.

**Talk about:** how you make friends. Paul made them by being interested in people, and getting involved in their lives. He met them where they were comfortable, not where he was necessarily comfortable.

1. **Tentmaking – Priscilla and Aquila** – Acts chapter 18, verses 1 – 4, 18 - 19

In Acts chapter 18, Paul went to Corinth. There he met a couple who had recently come from Rome – Claudius the Emperor had made all the Jewish people in Rome leave. Priscilla and Aquila had left, and come to Corinth. They were tentmakers – lots of people did a lot of travelling, and because hotels had not been invented, they stayed in tents. The Roman army also used tents, so being a tentmaker could be a full time job. This story is the only one that tells us that when Paul hadn’t got anything else to do, he too was a tentmaker! He and Priscilla and Aquila worked together whilst they were together. Paul, of course, did do other things – he talked to Jews in the synagogue, and talked to Greeks who showed interest in the new Christian faith. When he left Corinth, Priscilla and Aquila went with him to Ephesus. The bible doesn’t tell us whether Aquila and Priscilla were already Christians when they met Paul, but if you read a little further, in chapter 18, verses 24 to 28, it tells of Aquila and Priscilla telling Apollos more about Jesus and the Church than he had learned. Apollos became very important in the early Church, and a close friend of Paul.

**You will need:** a piece of fabric, some cocktail sticks and short garden canes, a piece of corrugated cardboard for the base, or part of a box made of corrugated cardboard

****Put the cardboard on your worktop, flat. Use the cocktail sticks to pin the fabric to the cardboard, and the short garden canes to prop it up, like tentpoles. In this country, we would make sure there were no gaps between the ground and the tent, to keep out the rain, but in hot countries they might leave gaps to let the heat out. See the picture for some ideas of what your tent could look like.

**Talk about:** Paul had a job – as a tentmaker – but he also did other things – he volunteered (he wasn’t paid) to work for the Christian church. Do you know people who volunteer to do things that are not their paid job?

1. **Edible house** – Acts chapter 20, verses 7 – 12

On his way back to Jerusalem at the end of his third journey, Paul stopped in Troas, in what is now northern Turkey. He was talking to a group of Christians, late one night, just before he left Troas by boat, and one of the people there, a young man called Eutychus, was sitting on the windowsill. He was very tired, and eventually he fell asleep – and fell out of the window! Paul – and probably others – rushed downstairs to see if he was OK, and found that he was. Paul took him back upstairs, and fed him, and then sent him home with friends at sunrise.

**You will need:** ice cream wafers, squirty icing (for sticking them together), knife (for cutting out the windows and doors), Jelly babies, paper plate for working on

The house had an upstairs, so you need a minimum of 8 wafers – two long walls, and a wafer cut in half to make the short walls, one wafer for the floor of the upstairs room, and repeat on the top for the upstairs room. If you have plenty of wafers, you could try to make an outside staircase.

Cut two wafers in half for the end walls. Cut a doorway and a window in one of the long walls downstairs, and again for the upstairs. Make the downstairs room, including the roof, first, using squirty icing for glue, and then glue the upstairs walls on the top. Before you glue the roof on, put a jelly baby by the window, for the man who fell out, and at least one other inside, to be Paul. If you have enough jelly babies, you could add some more, as Paul was talking to a number of people.

**Talk about:** Services you have been to and sermons/talks you have heard. How many do you remember? What helps you remember them? Do some of them make you go to sleep?

1. **Cheese pull-aparts** – Corinthians chapter 11, verses 17 to 29

Our last story today comes from the first letter that Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, after he had left there. Other important Christians visited Corinth, and perhaps some of the people who lived there wrote to Paul, telling him what was going on at the church. There are 16 chapters in the letter, covering all sorts of things that a new church would need to know. The one we are going to focus on was about a special service. The Last Supper was a meal that Jesus shared with his friends just before he was arrested and killed. The Christian church remembered that occasion with a meal they called the Lord’s Supper. In many churches, it was remembered and celebrated with a meal where everyone shared, and then the special words that Jesus had said were remembered and repeated. However, in Corinth, there were people who would not share with others, and just ate and drank as much as possible, and some people who were not allowed to join in the meal, because they could not help provide the meal. Paul said that under those circumstances, it would be better if people ate their meal at home, and when they came to celebrate the Lord’s Supper, they should ALL just have a little bread and a little wine, so that everyone would have the same. He also told them that leaving some Christians to go hungry while they ate too much was not what Jesus would have approved.

**You will need:** recipe (with the mailing, or on the website) – it also tells you what tools and equipment you will need

Follow the instructions to make the pull-aparts – and then share the hot bread.

**Talk about:** what it might be like to have to watch someone else eat, while you are hungry, but haven’t got anything to eat – and what it would be like to be invited to share the meal, even though you haven’t brought any food. Do you think Paul’s advice was good?

**Celebration**

We’ll start by singing Our God is a great big God <https://youtu.be/8Hi8jW1qYsw>

Do you remember what we said last time we talked about Saul? He went to Damascus to arrest Christians, but God stopped him, and he became a Christian. He told people in Damascus to follow Jesus, which came as a big shock to the people who were expecting him to persecute the Christians. He was so successful at getting people to follow Jesus that the people who hated Christians wanted to kill him, and he had to escape by being lowered down from the wall in a basket.

We’ll make a big paper basket that’s big enough to sit in, but it won’t be strong enough to lower someone in. Everybody can help by making tubes from newspaper.

From there, Paul went to Jerusalem. At first the Christians there were afraid of him, but a man called Barnabas persuaded them that Paul really had changed. Paul taught about Jesus but again, because he convinced so many people, the ones who didn’t believe in Jesus hated him and he had to go from there to Tarsus, where he was born.

Meanwhile other Christians who had left Jerusalem because people were trying to kill them went to all sorts of places. Some went to Antioch. Some of them told other people about Jesus. At first they only told other Jews, but some told Gentiles (people who weren’t Jews) When the Christians in Jerusalem heard about this they sent Barnabas to see what was happening. Barnabas was pleased by what was going on, and he went to Tarsus and got Paul to join him.

Barnabas and Paul were chosen to go from Antioch to spread the good news to other places. Paul made three long “missionary” journeys. Have a look at the maps of the journeys. When he arrived in a new place, he first tried to find where their Jewish community met, if there was one. This was how he met Lydia, and Priscila and Aquila. If the Jewish community didn’t accept him, he went and spoke to the Gentiles. Because the Gentiles didn’t know the stories that the Jews did, Paul had to teach them a lot more. He also wrote letters to the churches where he had preached, and to some others he had heard about.

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

Our prayer

Dear God, Paul told people about Jesus even though some people got very angry with him because he did. Give us courage like Paul had to speak about you. Amen.

We’ll sing Walk in the light <https://youtu.be/SDcbYk-9C-Y> to think about Paul walking, about the light, and about Jesus.

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

If you send me pictures of anything you do, I will share some of them on the Church Facebook page or in the Monthly Magazine (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. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTMWR_QCxujkh1zHjTFcoJw/videos>