**Messy Church – 16th March 2024**

**Easter**

The activities are:

1. **Palm Sunday:** Matthew chapter 21, verses 1 to 11
   1. **Flags**
   2. **3d Donkey**
2. **Mary and Martha:** Luke chapter 10, verses 38 to 42: microwave cakes
3. **Last supper:** Matthew 26, 17 – 30: **paper plate chalice** (in the Celebration)
4. **Trial and crucifixion: –** Luke chapter 22, verse 66 to chapter 23, verse 56,
   1. **Palm crosses** (in the Celebration)
   2. **scratch art crosses**
   3. **torn paper crosses** (in the Celebration)
5. **Resurrection story:** Matthew chapter 27, verse 62 to chapter 28, verse 20

**Stories and Activities**

The last days of Jesus’ life story in the Bible are crammed with things that Jesus said, and did, and the people he met and who saw him. We have picked out a few of these stories to link with activities, but there is much more to read about.

1. **Palm Sunday:**  Matthew chapter 21, verses 1 to 11

On the day that we call Palm Sunday, Jesus set out from somewhere beyond the Mount of Olives, to the east of Jerusalem. The story is also told in Mark chapter 11, in Luke chapter 19, and in John chapter 12, with minor variations in each one.

When Jesus and his friends got near the village of Bethphage, Jesus sent two of his friends into the village to find a donkey. He said they would find one tied up outside a house, with her colt beside her. They were to untie both animals and bring them to Jesus. If anyone tried to stop them, they were to say “The Lord needs them.” So Jesus’ friends did what he said, and brought the donkey and her colt back to him. They didn’t have a saddle, so some of his friends put their coats over the donkey’s back, and Jesus sat on the coats, and they all set off down the hill towards Jerusalem. The bible says there was a large crowd of people with them, so I think that, because lots of people would have been going to Jerusalem for the Passover festival, just as Jesus was, this is who the crowd was. Some of Jesus’ friends, who hadn’t put their coats on the donkey, put their coats on the ground, for the donkey to walk on, and some of the other people around did the same thing, and some pulled branches off the trees – palm trees – and put those on the road. Matthew says that the crowd began to shout “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!”. Luke says that the friends of Jesus started the shouting, and some pharisees in the crowd tried to stop them, and told Jesus to stop them – to which he said that if the people didn’t shout, the stones in the road would! John says that the crowd of people were the people who had come to Jerusalem for the festival, and when they heard that Jesus was coming too, they went out to meet him, waving palm branches, and shouting “Hosanna”. John also says the friends of Jesus did not understand what was going on until later.

We have two activities to go with this story: flags to wave, and a 3 dimensional donkey to make.

1. **flag**

**You will need:** a piece of thin cotton or polycotton fabric, about 6 inches by 12 inches – pieces of an old shirt will do - sewing thread and needle (or access to a sewing machine!, or fabric glue), scissors, fabric crayons (but felt tip pens will work), and a length of bamboo or garden cane. Fabric crayons may need to be ironed.

We have cut up the fabric with pinking shears so that the edges don’t fray too far. Sew a channel down one side of the flag, wide enough to put your stick in. Lie the flag down on your working surface, and draw or write on it with the crayons. You can draw a palm leaf, or write some of the words the crowd shouted, or anything else that you like. “Hosanna” means “save us”. If you are using fabric crayons, follow the instructions to fix the colours, and then put your stick into the channel, ready to wave your flag.

1. **3d donkey**

**You will need:** two copies of the donkey template sent with this booklet (if you can’t print on card, stick paper prints to card and cut them out, a piece of cardboard tube, not too fat – like the inside of a tin foil roll – and some strips of card – off-cuts from the donkey card will be fine – and crayons, felt tips or paints to colour the donkey.

Colour each print out on one side (opposite sides, so that when you put the model together, the donkey is coloured on both sides), and cut them out. Cut the cardboard tube so that it is the same length as the horizontal length of the donkey’s body. Stick the donkey pieces one on each side of the cardboard tube, so that the legs on each side reach the surface, so the donkey stands up. To strengthen the legs, cut strips of card the width of the legs, and long enough to go from one hoof to the hoof on the other side, touching the cardboard tube at the top. Stick on carefully.

**Talk about:** the big parade into Jerusalem. What would you have done – waved and shouted, or pretend it was nothing to do with you?

**2 Mary and Martha:** Luke chapter 10, verses 38 to 42: cakes

Mary and Martha lived with their brother Lazarus in Bethany, on the Mount of Olives. Jesus stayed with them at various times – you can find other stories about them in John chapters 11 and 12.

On this occasion, Jesus was talking to his friends in the house, and Martha was preparing a meal, in a different part of the house. Usually, it would have been expected that all the women were working on the meal, while the men were with Jesus, but this time, Mary was sitting on the floor beside Jesus, listening to him. Martha came in and asked Jesus to tell Mary to come and help her with the food. Jesus said that Mary had chosen a worthwhile thing to do, and he would not stop her doing it. He told Martha, really, that she shouldn’t worry so much about little things!

**You will need:**  the ingredients and tools from the recipe sent with this booklet. If you have time, the cakes can be iced – when cakes are cooked in a microwave, they do not darken, so look uncooked, even when they are cooked! Use the variations in the recipe if you like – not everyone likes chocolate, or dried fruit!

Cook the cakes according to the recipe. If you want to ice them, leave them for long enough to cool first.

**Talk about:** what is important in life. Yes, we all need to eat, but was doing the cooking the most important thing that Martha could be doing? Do we always do the important things we need to do, or do we sometimes waste time?

**3 Last Supper:** Matthew chapter 26, verses 17 to 30: **paper plate chalice** Matthew 26, 17 – 30

This story, with variations, is in all the gospels: Mark chapter 14, 12 – 26, Luke 22, 7 – 23, John 13, 1 – 30

Jesus and his friends met in someone’s upstairs room to eat the Passover meal. In the course of the meal, John tells the story of Jesus washing his friends feet, but the other three gospels tell the story of Jesus breaking the bread and sharing it with his friends, and blessing a cup of wine, and sharing that with his friends. This story is the basis of the communion service, and in that service we re-tell the story of this meal, which we call the Last Supper, because it was the last meal Jesus shared with his friends, before he was arrested and killed.

We are going to make a paper plate cup – the fancy word is chalice.

**You will need:** a paper plate per person, scissors, colouring pencils, felt tip pens, or paint, glue, (if available, yellow watercolour paint, or very thin poster paint, and paintbrushes), and the image of the completed chalice (with the booklet)

Cut the paper plate in half. Cut one of the halves in half again. Out of one of the quarter pieces, cut a circle. On the half plate, write “poured out for you”. Decorate the rim of the half plate, using felt tip pens if you intend to paint over it (if you paint it, and then paint over it, the various colours might smear and spoil what you have done), and the remaining quarter plate, as you like. Glue the quarter plate to the bottom of the half plate, as shown in the image. If you have the right paint, paint a very thin yellow water colour or poster paint over the whole cup, to make it look gold (the paint needs to be thin so it doesn’t hide the decorations!) Draw a cross on the circle, and glue it to the half plate as shown in the image.

**Talk about:** sharing a meal with friends. What makes it special? What would you remember later?

**4. Trial and crucifixion:** Luke chapter 22, verse 66 to chapter 23, verse 56

Again, these stories are in all four gospels – Matthew chapter 26, verse 57 to chapter 27, verse 61, Mark chapter 14, verse 53 to chapter 15, verse 47, and John chapter 18, verse 12 to chapter 19, verse 42

After Jesus and his friends had eaten supper, they went out to the Garden of Gethsemane, which was on the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives. There Jesus prayed, and at least some of the friends went to sleep! Then soldiers came and arrested Jesus, and took him to the high priest’s house. The Jewish authorities were determined to get rid of Jesus completely, so they had looked for people to tell lies about what Jesus had said. However, eventually Jesus himself used words that they could call blasphemous (claiming to be equal to God, in this case), so the high priest sent Jesus to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, because the Jews were not allowed to execute anyone without his permission.

Pilate questioned Jesus, but he didn’t see any reason to execute him, and then he discovered that Jesus came from Galilee, so he sent him to Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee, to be questioned. Jesus refused to talk to Herod, who allowed his soldiers to mock him, and sent him back to Pilate. Pilate told the high priest that he saw no reason to execute Jesus, and neither had Herod, but the priests, according to John, threatened Pilate that they would tell Caesar that he, Pilate, had allowed someone who wanted to rule the empire to go free. The other gospels merely say that they insisted that Jesus should be executed until Pilate gave in.

Crucifixion was they way the Romans killed people if they rebelled against Roman rule.

Again, we have a choice of activities. We will do the palm cross and the torn cross in the celebration.

1. **Palm crosses**

**You will need:** a strip of paper – quite narrow – about ½ an inch wide, the length of an A4 sheet of paper – scrap paper will do – and the video <https://youtu.be/x5dcu-pOIpY>

Follow the video to make the cross.

1. **Scratch art crosses**

**You will need:** a scratch card cross and a scraper (these can be got from Baker Ross, and possibly also in craft shops such as The Range or The Works)

Use the scraper to scratch patterns on the cross – or scratch off all the black paint to show a brightly coloured cross underneath

1. **Torn paper crosses**

**You will need:** a piece of scrap paper (or if you want to make a big cross, use a sheet of newspaper), and a pair of scissors – this can be torn, but Clive says it’s easier to cut!

Put your piece of paper flat on your work surface with the short end at the top. Fold one top corner over to the opposite side, to make a point at the top of the sheet, and then fold that point over to the other side, to make a roof shape. Press the creases in firmly. From half way down the roof shape, on each side, tear or cut the paper right down to the bottom of the page. Throw away the torn off pieces. Unfold the remaining shape – and you will have a cross.

**Talk about:**

Talk about times people let themselves be bullied into doing wrong things, either by their “friends” or by their enemies. You can also talk about people who have suffered trying to help others, particularly when it comes to keeping other people out of trouble.

1. **Resurrection story:** Matthew chapter 27, verse 62 to chapter 28, verse 20

Once more, all the gospels tell the story of the Resurrection, but they all have different stories about the people involved. You can find the other stories in Mark chapter 16, Luke chapter 24 – which has lots of stories about the days after Easter – and John chapter 20. John chapter 21 has more stories about the days after Easter.

After Jesus died on the cross, his body was taken down and buried, with the assistance of Joseph of Arimathea, who only appears in these stories, and Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish council who had talked to Jesus. Jesus’s body was quickly put into a tomb in a cave, but not properly prepared according to Jewish law, because there wasn’t time before the Sabbath, the Jewish Holy Day, started. A stone was rolled across the opening to the cave, and the Jewish council had put soldiers on guard, to stop anyone stealing the body. The women whose job it was to prepare bodies for burial, in this case Mary Magdalene, another Mary, the mother of James, and Salome, went to the tomb on the Sunday morning, after the Sabbath, to finish preparing the body. They took ointment and spices, and cloths. They expected to find the stone in place, and must have wondered if the soldiers would help them move it. Matthew says there was a sudden earthquake, and when the ground was still, the stone had been rolled away. The women saw an angel dressed in white sitting on the stone, and the guards lying on the ground, but the angel told them not to be scared, to look at the place where Jesus had been, and to go and tell his friends that they should go to Galilee, where they would see Jesus.

The picture story we are going to make tells part of this story.

**You will need:** the scanned images sent with the booklet, printed onto card – or onto paper and at least panel A stuck on card. Felt tip pens or colouring pencils or crayons, scissors,

Colour in both panels, and cut them out. Cut out (carefully) the slits (the dotted lines) on panel A. If you stick this panel to card, remember to cut through both the paper and the card. Thread panel B through panel A from the back, so that as you move panel B across, the pictures of the story show in turn.

**Talk about:** things that happen unexpectedly – sometimes good, and sometimes not so good. How do we deal with the unexpected? Sometimes this can be hard, and some people find it very difficult to cope with surprises. What are you like?

**Celebration**

We’ll start by singing “We have a king who rides a donkey” <https://youtu.be/gSbEEwik2hs?si=e9Mss7wjbREGb-e2>

If you made a flag, wave it while you sing!

When Jesus told his disciples to get a donkey, because he was going to ride it into Jerusalem, they were surprised. They were surprised because Jesus was setting out to make a big, noisy entrance into Jerusalem. Jesus often had crowds with him when he entered or left towns, but usually he hadn’t set out to create a crowd, the crowd had come to him. But when Jesus rode a donkey it meant something. You see, the prophet Zechariah had written to the people of Jerusalem many years before that their king would come to them riding on a young donkey, so to those who knew the passage, this was Jesus declaring himself king. When Zechariah wrote about a donkey, he meant it to contrast with a warhorse. A horse was for fighting but a donkey meant peace.

There would have been a lot of people going into Jerusalem at that time. They were people who wanted to celebrate Passover in Jerusalem, so they were in a good mood. The disciples made this into a parade, and the crowd joined in. Everyone cheered. They waved palm branches. They made a noise.

People who didn’t like Jesus, and people who were afraid that the Romans would object and that there would be trouble tried to get Jesus to keep people quiet, but he said, “If the people are quiet, the stones will yell out”.

Lots of things happened in that week. We made cakes to think about Mary and Martha. 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.

We’ll make the paper plate chalice.

Jesus was showing his followers that he was going to die so that they and other people wouldn’t have to suffer the consequences of things they have done wrong. That includes us, as well.

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

After the Supper, Jesus and the disciples went out to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. That’s where Jesus was arrested by the Temple guards. He was taken to be tried by the Chief Priest. They wanted him dead, but weren’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.

We’ll make some crosses. There’s a simple paper cross, or a complicated cross pattern that can be used with palm leaves to make a Palm Cross like we hand out on Palm Sunday.

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

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

Next Messy Church is 20th April. See you then.

Enjoy our celebration on the Harlington Methodist Church YouTube channel at

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’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.