**Messy Church – 20th April 2024**

**Passover**

This month we are looking at an Old Testament story, with direct connections to Jesus, and to the church today, as well as to Jews today.

The activities are:

1. **Bricks (edible):** a fruit mixture that Jews today use to remind them of the bricks they made in Egypt: Exodus chapter
2. **Blue river/red river agamograph**:Exodus chapter 7, verses 14 to 25
3. **Origami frogs**: Exodus chapter 8, verses 1 to 15
4. **Bugs:** Exodus chapter 8, verses 16 to 32, chapter 10, verses1 to 20
   1. pompom and pipecleaner flies, gnats,
   2. pompom and pipecleaner locusts
   3. bead and pipecleaner caterpillars
5. **The Passover meal:** Exodus chapter 12, verses 1 to 27

**Sheep biscuits** – lamb and unleavened bread

1. **Cups:** small pots covered with foil: Luke chapter 22, verses 14 to 20

**Stories and Activities**

Most people will know the story of Joseph and his amazing technicolour dream-coat, and the story of Passover is a direct result of that story. In the bible, the story of Joseph is at the end of the first book, Genesis, and the story of Passover is part of the story of Moses, which starts the second book, Exodus.

Moses was born to a Hebrew (Jewish) family, who were slaves in Egypt. In the four hundred years since Joseph brought his family (11 brothers, remember) to Egypt, the rulers of Egypt had forgotten that the Hebrews had come to Egypt because a Hebrew had saved the Egyptians from famine. As the Hebrews grew in number, the Egyptian rulers got frightened that these “strangers” would take over their country, and so, gradually, they took away the freedoms of the Hebrew people. By the time Moses was born, the Hebrews had become the brickmakers for the public buildings that the Egyptians kept on buildings.

Moses was the baby in the rushes at the edge of the Nile – he was brought up by his mother until he was old enough to live at the palace with his adopted mother, the King’s daughter. Then he was brought up as an Egyptian prince – until he was about 20, when he discovered that he was, in fact, a Hebrew. He killed an Egyptian guard, and had to run away, before he was arrested and killed himself.

**1. Edible mortar:** Exodus chapter 5, verses 1 to 23

When Moses came back to Egypt, he and his brother Aaron went to see the King. Moses asked the King to allow the Hebrews to leave the country to go and worship their God in the desert beyond the Red Sea. The King thought this was just an excuse not to work, and said he would not let them go, not even for a festival. He decided that the slaves were not working hard enough, so he decided that they would now have to collect their own straw for the bricks. (Bricks were made with a mixture of clay and straw, and up to now, the Egyptians were providing the straw, while the Hebrews got the clay to the place the bricks were being made.) When the Hebrews were told that their work was going to be harder, they blamed Moses and Aaron! Moses complained to God, and God decided what would happen next.

We are going to make edible mortar! Mortar is what is used to stick bricks together to make a wall. It is made soft, and it hardens in the air, to keep the bricks in the same place. The edible version is called Charoset or Haroset. During the Passover meal, the “bitter herbs” are dipped in the haroset mixture, and eaten.

**You will need: (for a small amount)** an apple, a pear, some nuts (walnuts are recommended, and can be bought ready shelled and in pieces). You can also add raisins, and cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves or allspice. The Jewish recipe uses red wine for liquid, but we cannot do that at the church, so we are going to use lemon juice (it stops the apple and pear going brown). Instead of nuts, dessicated coconut could be used, especially if someone is allergic to nuts. You will need a bowl to put the mixture in, a peeler, a knife and a spoon for stirring

Peel the apple and pear, and chop them roughly, or as small as you like. Put the pieces in the bowl with the lemon juice, and make sure that they have been covered by the juice. Add the other ingredients, and mix everything together. If you want to really make it like mortar, you could put all the ingredients in a blender and mix it until it looks like a sauce! We will try the taste during the Celebration, along with some of the other foods that are eaten at Passover. (I am buying some horseradish sauce – horseradish would be eaten as a bitter herb, rather than a sauce – and some lettuce – rocket or cos or little gem – which are regarded as bitter.)

**Talk about:** how sometimes things get harder before they get easier – like learning a new topic in maths – or English – or learning verbs in French (or whatever modern language you may learn!)

**2 Blue river/red river agamograph**:Exodus chapter 7, verses 14 to 25

When the Egyptian king said that he would never let the Hebrews leave the country to worship their God, God decided that he would have to force the King to do so. The bible then tells what happened next – there were ten “plagues”, and we will have some activities based on some of them.

The first thing God tried was to make all the water in the river and the wells of Egypt into blood. The King’s own court magicians could do this as well, and change the blood back to water, but they couldn’t change God’s changed water back. The plague lasted about a week, and the Egyptians had to dig new wells to find fresh water. The King still refused to let the Hebrews go.

We will make an agamograph picture of the river.

**You will need:** a pictures of the river (one red, one blue) supplied with this booklet, ruler, pencil, scissors and glue. You will also need a piece of paper for the backing.

Cut out both the pictures, cutting each picture into strips, carefully (you could draw straight lines, using a ruler, across each picture (vertically). Put the picture strips side by side as you cut them out, to be sure you have them in the correct order. There should be the same number of strips for each picture.

Stick the first strip of the blue river to the left hand edge of your backing sheet, then stick the first strip of the red river beside it. Then the second strip of the blue river, followed by the second strip of the red river. Keep alternating the strips until you finish with the last strip of the red river. Cut any extra paper on the backing sheet off.

Concertina fold your stuck together picture along the lines where the strips meet, so that you can hold it all with the first strip of the blue river showing on the top.

Now unfold it so that it will stand up on a table. Look at the picture from each end – you should be able to see the blue river from one end, and the red river from the other. You might find it helpful to sit or kneel down so that your face is at table height, and you are looking at the picture at eye-level.

**Talk about:** suddenly discovering that things are not as they always have been, and so having to do something different, in a hurry. Imagine how other people feel if they have these problems.

**3 Origami frogs:** Exodus chapter 8, verses 1 to 15

When the King of Egypt still refused to let the Hebrews go, even though all the water was turned to blood, Moses and Aaron went again to see him. They told him that the country would be overrun with frogs – not just the water, but on the land, in their houses and temples. Again, the court magicians could do the same thing, and so everywhere was overrun with frogs. The King asked Moses and Aaron to take the frogs away, and he would let the Hebrews have their festival in the desert.

So that the King would recognise that the frogs had been killed by God, Moses asked him to set a time for the frogs to die (or else the King would say that it had happened naturally), and the King said “tomorrow”. The next day, all the frogs on the land and in the buildings died, leaving only the usual ones in the river. Their bodies rotted and stank, but when the frogs had died, the King changed his mind again, and refused to let the Hebrews go.

**You will need:** a square of paper (scrap paper will do) and the origami pattern sent with this booklet.

Follow the instructions to make a frog. See if you can make it hop!

**Talk about:** what would you do if suddenly there were frogs all over your house? What would your parents do? Even if you like frogs, it might be very scary.

**4. Bugs:** Exodus chapter 8, verses 16 to 32, chapter 10, verses1 to 20

After the frogs were dead, and the King changed his mind again, the next plagues were gnats – which, for the first time, the court magicians couldn’t do – and then flies. When the gnats came, the court magicians told the King that it had to be God’s doing, but it made no difference, the Hebrews were not allowed to leave. God told Moses to go and meet the King at the river the next day, and warn him that if the Hebrews were not allowed to go, the country would be overrun with flies – everywhere except the area called Goshen, where the Hebrews lived, just so that the King would understand that this was God doing these things. When the flies came, the King sent for Moses and told him to organise the festival in Egypt, but Moses said that wouldn’t work, because when the Egyptians saw the festival, they would try to kill the Hebrews. The Hebrews wanted to go three days journey into the desert for the festival. The King said they could go, if the flies were taken away, but as soon as God took the flies away, the King changed his mind again, and said that the Hebrews could not leave.

After three more plagues – one in which the farm animals of the Egyptians died, but not the farm animals of the Hebrews, one in which the Egyptians and their animals got boils – nasty spots which would not get better – and then one where there were hailstorms, and any people or animals left outside were seriously hurt, or died. The crops in the fields would be ruined as well. God had warned the King, through Moses that that would happen, and this time the King was seriously worried, when he saw the damage that the hail did, and he promised that this time he would let the Hebrews go – but when the storm stopped, he changed his mind again, and refused to let the Hebrews go. The bible says that the barley and flax crops were ruined because they were ripe, but the wheat wasn’t, because it ripens later than the others.

God sent Moses to the King again, after these three plagues, and told him that the next plague would be locusts. These insects would eat any crops that were left, down to the bare soil. (Even today, a swarm of locusts can kill all the crops in an area – it happens regularly in parts of Africa (Egypt is in Africa) and Asia. Farmers are very frightened when locusts come.) After Moses had gone, before the locusts came, the King’s advisors told him he should let the Hebrew men go, before the country was totally ruined, so the King called Moses back. He said the men could go, but not the women and children (Moses had said everyone was to go, and all their animals). When Moses said that would not be good enough, the King got angry again, and refused to let them go, because he thought they were plotting to take over the country. God blew the locusts in on an East wind, and they settled all over the green fields of wheat that were growing in Egypt. The King summoned Moses and said he would let the people go, if God would take away the locusts. God sent a West wind to blow the locusts away again – and the King changed his mind again!

There are several suggestions here – make them all, or not, as you please.

* 1. pompom and pipecleaner flies, gnats

**You will need:** pompom makers and pipecleaners – if you have long commercial ones, you may also need some wire cutters – for some parts, a full length pipecleaner will be too long – scissors, glue and yarn. If you also have some commercial pompoms, and some wiggly eyes, they might also be useful.

Start by making the wings of your fly or gnat. Take a pipecleaner and make it into a circle, twisting the ends together. Then cross the middle to make a figure of 8. Make the pompom in the usual way, but before you cut round the outside, put the wings in the middle, so that the centre twist will be in the middle of the body. If you are making a small pompom for the body, you might need to cut a long pipecleaner down –see what it looks like before you do any cutting! Then finish the pompom. This is the body of the fly or gnat. If you have made a big pompom for the body, you might like to make a smaller one for the head. If your body is not very big, a small commercial pompom could be used for the head. Stick wiggly eyes on the head, if you have them. Gnats are smaller than flies, so if you have more than one size of pompom, you might like to make two sizes of insect.

* 1. pompom and pipecleaner locusts (locusts are like grasshoppers – see the picture)

**You will need:** pompom makers and pipecleaners – if you have long commercial ones, you may also need some wire cutters – for some parts, a full length pipecleaner will be too long – scissors, glue and yarn, and some paper – we will use sugar paper, but scrap paper will do. If you also have some wiggly eyes, they might be useful.

A close up of a grasshopper

Description automatically generated

Make a pompom in the usual way, but before you cut round the yarn, put three lengths of pipecleaner across the middle of the pompom maker. These will be the legs of the locust, so think about the size of the pompom and the length of the pipecleaners – look at the picture, and note that the back pair of legs is very much longer than the others – that’s why they can jump so far! Finish the pompom, and then trim the ends of the yarn so that it is more oval than round – the legs should stick out in the middle - so that one end is the head and the other the tail. Cut two narrow teardrop shaped pieces of paper, and stick them along the sides of the pompom, with the narrow end about a third of the way along, and the wide end at the tail. Fold the legs so that the long back legs go outside the wings, and stick wiggly eyes close to the front of the head.

* 1. bead and pipecleaner caterpillars – flies, gnats and locusts all start off as caterpillars!

**You will need:** pipecleaners and beads – make sure the beads will fit on the pipecleaners – standard pony beads should be fine, and wiggly eyes

On a long pipecleaner, thread pony beads onto just under half of the length, turning a short length at the very end over and tucking it into the last bead, and then coil the other end round tightly till it reaches the first bead. Put a wiggly eye on each side of the coil

**Talk about:** it is difficult to imagine what this country would look like without green fields, and sheep and cows. The King of Egypt got his country ruined by being stubborn. What could we spoil by being stubborn, and refusing to do what is right – or refusing to let someone else do what they wanted, when it wouldn’t hurt us if they did.

**5. The Passover meal:** Exodus chapter 12, verses 1 to 27

After the locusts had gone, and the King had refused to let the Hebrews go, God made Egypt dark, even in the day time, for three days. None of the Egyptians could see outside, so they stayed in their houses for the whole time. In Goshen, where the Hebrews lived, the light was normal, and life went on as usual. Moses was summoned to see the King, who said that all the people could go and have their festival, but their animals would have to stay in Egypt. Moses said that God said that the people and all their possessions had to go, otherwise they might not have what God wanted for sacrifice. The King lost his temper and said in that case no-one was going anywhere, and Moses should go away from the palace; he said that next time he saw Moses would be the day Moses would die. To which Moses replied that the King was correct, he would never see Moses again. He told the King that that night, he and his officials would beg the Hebrews to leave Egypt and never come back. That night, the firstborn sons of all the Egyptians would die, but the firstborn of the Hebrews would live. Then he left the King.

He told the Hebrews that each household should kill one of their lambs, or a baby goat, depending on how many people would eat it, they should use the blood of the animal to paint on the doorposts and lintels of their front doors, then roast the lamb, make bread with no yeast (because that is quicker), and eat the bread and the meat with “bitter herbs”, dressed and ready to travel, with all their belongings packed and ready to go. This is called the Passover, because, the bible says, God’s angel of death “passed over” the houses with blood on their doorways, and left everyone inside alive, while killing the oldest son in all the other houses.

The King and his officials, when they found their oldest sons dead, told the Hebrews to leave the country now!

We are going to make plain biscuits in the shape of sheep – we can’t roast meat in the time we have available!

**You will need:** a copy of the recipe – or a plain biscuit recipe of your own – and the tools and ingredients as appropriate, including a cutter. If you haven’t got a sheep shaped cutter, cut out a card shape of a sheep and use it as a template – make sure it is clean card!

Make and bake the biscuits.

**Talk about:** the way we remember things. Do we have particular tastes or smells that help us to remember things that happened a long time ago or that we associate with particular days or times, such as hot cross buns for Good Friday or fireworks for Bonfire Night.

**6. Cups:** Luke chapter 22, verses 14 to 20

This is where the connection between the Hebrews of maybe 2000 years before the first Christmas and Christians today comes in. Jews of Jesus’ day celebrated the Passover in as close a way as they could to the original event – roasted lamb or goat, bread made without yeast, bitter herbs and charoset – edible mortar. They told the story of the first Passover, so that everyone in the family – and so the country – knew what God had done for his people. Jews today still celebrate the Passover in the same way, with the same storytelling.

Jesus celebrated the Passover with his friends on the night before he was arrested and tried – so the day before he was killed. In the course of the meal, he broke the bread – made without yeast – blessed it, and gave it to his friends to eat, telling them that the bread was a symbol of his body, which would be broken for the forgiveness of their – and everyone else’s – sins. He also blessed a cup of wine, saying that it was a symbol of his blood, which would be spilled, again, for their forgiveness.

In a communion service in a Christian church today, we break some bread, and bless it, telling the story of what Jesus did, rather than the story of Passover, although we remember that this happened at Passover, and then we share the bread together. Then we bless wine – although in the Methodist Church we use non-alcoholic wine – and share that as well. In the Methodist Church, we use tiny individual glasses. In other churches, they use a big cup and pass that round.

We are going to decorate some cups to remind us that we are remembering both the Passover and the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

**You will need:** small yogurt pots, plastic cups or similar, cooking foil, scissors

Cover the pot or cup with foil. Tucking the excess over the top rim will help to keep it in place. If you wrap the foil carefully, the cup will be smooth and shiny. If you screw up the foil first, and then very carefully spread it out again, it has a different look – but be careful, it tears more easily when it has been screwed up!

**Talk about:** remembering what God has done for us and all people, and how we maintain the remembrance.

**Celebration**

We’ll sing Our God is a great big God

<https://youtu.be/0K3TUFFpmhA?si=DTi6QjciQN7KhDdC>

This year, Passover is celebrated from Monday 22nd to Tuesday 30th April. Part of the celebration is having a meal with the family and/or friends. When Jesus celebrated the Passover, he had a cup of wine. His cup was probably made of clay or wood, or it might have been a non-precious metal. We are going to decorate a cup. It will probably be more elaborate than Jesus’ cup would have been.

Passover is immensely important to Jews and has been for more than 3,000 years. It celebrates the time when God got them set free from slavery in Egypt, and when they started their journey to the land which was to become their home, and which they called Israel. The name Passover comes from God passing over…. Well, before we say that, let’s start closer to the beginning.

Jacob had a favourite son, called Joseph. Joseph annoyed his brothers, who sold him as a slave, but pretended he was dead. Joseph ended up in Egypt. Because God helped Joseph, he became very important in Egypt, only the king (pharaoh) was more important. Joseph brought his whole family to Egypt.

But, after 400 years or so, the family had grown. There was a new Pharaoh who hadn’t heard of Joseph. He saw all the Hebrews and was worried about them. They were immigrants, foreigners in the land. He made them into slaves.

Moses was born, and his mum got him adopted by Pharaoh’s daughter. But when he grew up he saw the way the Hebrews were treated. He killed an Egyptian, and ran away. For years he was a shepherd in Midian. Then one day, God spoke to him from a burning bush…

Sing God speaks in many different ways

<https://youtu.be/iYcKQWiqlb4?si=csFQEEr563iVbXBn>

God told Moses that he had to tell Pharaoh to let the Hebrews go. Moses wasn’t happy about that but God persuaded him that he could. Moses went back to Egypt and spoke to Pharaoh. Pharaoh wasn’t happy. He didn’t see why the slaves who worked for him should just go. He made life harder for them. So God sent plagues to Egypt. First the river turned to blood, then there were frogs, then gnats, then flies, then animals died then people suffered from boils, the hail destroyed the crops, then locusts came and ate what was left and then the sky went dark. After each one Pharaoh said he would let the people go, but then as soon as things went right again he changed his mind.

Finally God told Moses to tell the people to get ready to go, and to mark the doorposts of their houses. Moses told Pharaoh that all the eldest boys would die. God passed over the houses that were marked. When this happened, Pharaoh finally told the Hebrews to go.

So you see where the name “Passover” comes from. The Seder, the special meal, is intended to help the Jews remember what God did for them. All the things they eat in the special meal have significance. We are going to see and taste some of them.

Jesus celebrated the Passover meal with his friends. He took two parts of this, wine and bread, to tell his disciples what would happen to him. Just as Jews use the Passover to remember their history so Christians use bread and wine in Holy Communion to remember what God through Jesus did for us.

Let’s pray.

Dear God, thank you for memory. Help us to remember the good things that happen and the things you did and do for us. Help us to learn how to set aside bad things when we forgive, just as you do for us.

Amen

Sing “Lord I lift your name on high” <https://youtu.be/c12Ta6_WJrw>

Next Messy Church is 18th May. 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’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>