**Wrenbury & Nantwich Mission Area Methodist Churches**

**21 March 2021**

In this week’s gospel passage Jesus and the disciples have entered Jerusalem ready to celebrate the Passover. We’re following John’s account. No other gospel tells of this incident where the presence of Greeks coming to worship at Passover is mentioned.

The Greeks voyaged for trade and for commerce, also for sightseeing, but the Greek was more than that. He was characteristically a seeker of truth. He would test through philosophy the various religions in search of truth. Greeks were known for their seeking minds.

Word would have spread about Jesus, a new religion in town. The enquiring might have deliberately planned a trip to Jerusalem at Passover, knowing Jesus had likely been there for every other Passover. They approached Phillip. Why him? Well it’s not known for certain but Phillip is a Greek name, maybe they thought a man with a Greek name would treat them sympathetically. But Phillip did not know what to do, so he went to Andrew for advice. Andrew knew straight away to take them to Jesus, as Jesus would never turn any seeking soul away.

I wonder if someone asked us about our faith, who Jesus was and what he means to us, would we be able to answer? We’ve almost lost our voice, we don’t want to offend anyone so we don’t talk “religion”. Following Jesus is not a religion, it’s a relationship, and we all like to hear about them! We love a good story, catching up on the gossip/news about our friends, family, neighbours. Including conversation about our relationship with Jesus should be as natural as any other part of our life, but somehow it isn’t. It can sometimes feel difficult and unnatural.

Jesus didn’t wait for people to come to the temple or synagogue to meet him. It seems he spent the majority of his time in the community amongst the local people, doing everyday things with everyday people, sharing the gospel “good news” in the most natural and easy to understand way.

What is surprising or even shocking about this passage for those who heard it for the first time is this: it begins with a familiar saying “ *The hour has come”* but then *“for the Son of man to receive his glory”* letting them know he is indeed the Messiah they had been waiting for. The listeners would catch their breath, believing the trumpet call of eternity had sounded, the excitement of such a moment to be dashed in the very next breath by speaking of sacrifice and death. It’s hard to comprehend how it must have been for the expectant Jews to have their hopes and dreams shattered, replacing the dream of conquest with a vision of a cross. But Jesus was teaching the central truth at the heart of the Christian faith and life. He was saying that only by death comes life. The grain of wheat was ineffective and unfruitful so long as it was preserved, as it were, in safety and security. It was only when it was thrown into the cold ground, and buried there as in a tomb, that it bore fruit.

In the summer of 1988 forest fires swept through nearly half of Yellowstone National Park’s 1 million hectares in the USA. At first it seemed as though life in the park could never be the same. The fire seemed to be a total disaster. But it wasn’t. The lodgepole pine trees had cones on them that would only open under intense heat, almost as though they were designed to respond to a forest fire. Yellowstone’s dry climate kept deadwood from decaying quickly, so the ashes from the fire provided nutrients to the ground which resulted in better growth for years to come. Bluebirds and woodpeckers benefitted from the open areas that the fires had created. Other animals flourished with the nearly tenfold increase in plant species that the newly fortified and uncovered earth could offer.

No one at the National Park looks forward to forest fires, but it is known that the fires, however devastating they seem, don’t mean the end of things.

We’ve been in lock down for a year now, almost hard to believe. Some of us managed to gather for worship briefly when restrictions were lifted for a while, whilst others have not been able to. Whilst our buildings have been empty, new things have grown, new ways of being church, new people have found “on line” church more accessible.

Life will never be quite the same for any of us again. We are not, and cannot be, the church we were pre- Covid. Businesses have had to be creative to survive, “click and collect”- phrases that roll off the tongue; just look how enterprising Denise and Steve have been at the Bookshop! Not all businesses will survive, they have lost too many customers with not enough revenue. We’ve heard recently that Debenhams’s will be closing a number of stores.

The church is not exempt from such challenges. Some difficult conversations will have to be had, and some hard decisions made. Many churches have seen a year on year decline in membership. The Methodist Church started off as a “movement” passionate to bring about change, transforming lives and communities through evangelism and social justice working hand in hand. That “movement” has become a “monument” and possibly a “mausoleum”. It’s time for some radical rethinking.

Every church is being asked to review mission, to be “ mission focused”. We have been reminded that it is never the case that the church of God has a mission but “**the God of mission has a church”.**  We “the Church” are the tools God has for doing mission. So how do we know what God’s plans are for us, as individuals, local churches, a circuit and the Methodist Church? **How are we asking and how are we listening to God?** How much time do we spend in prayer?

We are fast approaching Easter. For many of us it’s easy to go from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday without the betrayal of Gethsemane and the suffering, horror and death of the cross. Without Good Friday there can be no resurrection.

With love and prayers ***Deacon Jill x***

**Lectionary**

Mon 22nd Jeremiah 28:1-17 Psalm 38:10-22

Tue 23rd Jeremiah 30: 1-17 Psalm 23

Wed 24th Jeremiah 30: 18-22 Psalm 130

Thur 25th Luke 1: 26-38 Psalm 40

Fri 26th Jeremiah 31: 1-13 Psalm 18: 1-6

Sat 27th Jeremiah 31: 31-34 Psalm 18: 25-30

***Lightwood Green Chapel***

Sunday 21 March 6.30 pm

Telephone conference service

It’s very easy to join : ring 0330 336 0036

Then enter PIN 571297

***Aston Chapel***

Sunday 21 March 11 am

Morning worship in chapel led by

Jenny & David Smith

*Covid restrictions apply - no singing,*

 *& wear a face mask*

***Broomhall & Sound Chapel***

Sunday 21 March 10.30 am Zoom

Led by Rev Robin Fox

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82976672769?pwd=aG9pSjMvR3dzaDJaZlFkcnduSmFTZz09>

Meeting ID: 829 7667 2769

Passcode: 366121

**Wrenbury & Nantwich Mission Area Methodist Churches**

**Worship Sheet No 50 21 March 2021**

**Opening Prayer**

O Lord, I come to you this day, to hear your word and to rejoice in your presence in my life, now, and always.

**Hymn: Great is Thy Faithfulness (StF 51)**

Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father,

there is no shadow of turning with thee;

thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not;

as thou hast been thou for ever wilt be:

 *Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness!*

 *Morning by morning new mercies I see;*

 *all I have needed thy hand hath provided.*

 *Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.*

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,

sun, moon and stars in their courses above,

join with all nature in manifold witness

to thy great faithfulness, mercy and love:

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,

thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;

strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,

blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

*Thomas O. Chisholm (1866-1960)*

**Let us pray together**

O God, I give thanks to you this day for your great faithfulness.

May I match your faithfulness with my own.

You have sustained me in times of trouble, and carried me when I could not bear my own weight.

Thank you for the gift of your love and grace, shown to us in Jesus Christ.

I seek to give my life to you in service, and to love others as you have first loved me.

May I do all these things with the help of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Today’s OT Reading - Jeremiah 31: 31-3**

‘The days are surely coming,’ says the Lord, ‘when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband,’ says the Lord. ‘But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days,’ says the Lord: ‘I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, ‘Know the Lord’, for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,’ says the Lord; ‘for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.’

**Today’s Gospel Reading - John 12: 20-33**

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, ‘Sir, we wish to see Jesus.’ Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, ‘The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour.

‘Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—“Father, save me from this hour”? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.’ Then a voice came from heaven, ‘I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.’ The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, ‘An angel has spoken to him.’ Jesus answered, ‘This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.’ He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

**Time to Reflect**

I love reading multiple translations of a passage to help me make sense of what I am reading. One of my favorites is one called “The Message” - which translates scripture into modern-day English. Here is how The Message interprets John 12:24-25:

*“‘Listen carefully: Unless a grain of wheat is buried in the ground, dead to the world, it is never any more than a grain of wheat. But if it is buried, it sprouts and reproduces itself many times over. In the same way, anyone who holds on to life just as it is destroys that life. But if you let it go, reckless in your love, you’ll have it forever, real and eternal.’”*

 It’s hard to believe, but it has been over a year now since the pandemic began and we all had to change how we go about living our lives. We changed how we work, see family and friends, travel, and worship, among many other things. It has been hard, and awful, and at times, devastating. Many of us wanted, instead, to cling to what life had been before - and many of us are still longing to go back, for life to return to “normal” - whatever that was. We liked being the grain of wheat and we want to continue being the grain of wheat if we can.

 But perhaps we have been given a chance to do what Jesus calls us to do in this passage - to give up our lives for something new, for something more closely resembling the kingdom of God. This time of struggle has made us get more creative about caring for our neighbor. At times it has opened our eyes to neighbors who were in need right under our noses before. If we take this time of continued upheaval to let go of the life we had before, and be reckless in our love, perhaps something new will flourish that looks more like what God wants for us.

 Is God calling you to be more than just a grain of wheat? How has God cared for you and nurtured you in this time of being buried? Where have you seen signs of new life and new growth spring forth? Are there areas of your life you need to tend to? Are there areas of your life you need to let go of and realize that you cannot or should not go back to?

 May we ponder all of these things in our hearts with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

**Take a time to sit quietly**

**A time of prayer**

Loving and gracious God,

 We lift our prayers to you this morning, knowing that you hear all of our prayers, whether spoken or unspoken, for you know all that is on our hearts and minds.

 We pray this day for the world… for the distribution of the vaccine, for people affected by war or natural disaster...

 We pray this day for our nation… for the NHS and all who work hard to care for people within it, for our leaders, for all the people as we find new ways to live in community with one another...

 We pray this day for our church… that we might shine with the light of Christ in the world, that others will come to know him through our actions; help us to be the hands and feet of Jesus...

 We pray this day for our own concerns…

 Oh God, let us pray now as Jesus taught us to pray...

**The Lord’s Prayer**

*Our Father ……*

**Hymn*:* Lord Jesus Christ (StF 594)**

Lord Jesus Christ, You have come to us,

You are one with us, Mary’s Son;
Cleansing our souls from all their sin,
Pouring Your love and goodness in.
Jesus, our love for you we sing,
Living Lord

Lord Jesus Christ, now and every day
Teach us how to pray, Son of God.
You have commanded us to do
This in remembrance Lord of you.
Into our lives your power breaks through,
Living Lord

Lord Jesus Christ, You have come to us,
Born as one with us, Mary’s Son;
Led out to die on Calvary,
Risen from death to set us free.
Living Lord Jesus, help us see
You are Lord

Lord Jesus Christ, I would come to you,
live my life for you, Son of God.
All your commands I know are true,
Your many gifts will make me new,
Into my life your power breaks through,
Living Lord

**A prayer of blessing**

Lord, may I be as a grain of wheat that falls to the ground and dies so I can rise up to new life in Jesus Christ. Amen.

Original Materials by Rev. Bethany Willers

Hymns reproduced under CCLi 155789

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REMINDER …

**Broad Lane** Church Council will meet

 on **Monday 22**nd at **2pm**.

Everyone … please note carefully the article “Mission In Love Unites Us” below.

Church Council Secretaries have all been notified already, but it is hoped that all our congregations will ‘attend’ one or other presentation

as they are able.

***Broomhall & Sound Chapel***

LENT DISCUSSION GROUP by Zoom

Tuesday 7.30 pm

Based on Andrew Roberts’s book “*Holy Habits”.*

Led by Andrew & Jill Taylor

23 March – Habits: “Gladness, generosity &

worship”

Join Zoom Meeting

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87967239246?pwd=NXhxOU1GYXZ4VThXRDBhSmJDVzRqZz09

Meeting ID: 879 6723 9246

Passcode: 212993

 We are committed to producing and distributing a newsletter until we come out of lock down, hopefully at the end of June.

 A circuit plan is likely to be produced from June onwards, when most churches will have reopened. It has been recognized how many people have accessed services in different ways during lock down, from the service sheets produced, zoom, telephone conference to You Tube services.

 As a circuit we are committing to delivering a range of services in the future. To be sustainable we need additional resources.

 We are planning to produce a weekly service sheet as a circuit to be distributed by local churches to anyone they know of who are not able to attend worship.

 We are looking for volunteers willing to be on a rota to produce a “service at home sheet” on a regular basis.

 If you feel this is something you are able to contribute to please get in touch with Deacon Jill.

**POOLE QUIET GARDEN**

The first newsletter, kindly compiled by Sally Graham, is available now. To have one either emailed or delivered, please contact Rev. Malcolm Lorimer (01270 625278).

Also let Malcolm know if you can help with some work in the garden over the next few weeks.

Or if you have any old-style velvet curtains (90” drop) to help with the insulation.

**PRAYER and CHURCH FAMILY NEWS**

 Please pray for everyone you know to be unwell, or perhaps anxious about their health. Alan Mumford hopes to be home by this weekend, while Louise remains in care. Brian and Margaret Tilley would still appreciate prayer. Barbara Barker is at home recovering from recent surgery. Geoff Mace is home again after a spell in hospital.

 Remember also those who are recently bereaved or anxious about loved ones.

 As you pray for the NHS and front-line workers, remember Rev. Charlotte Lorimer and other hospital chaplains, who deal daily with the exhaustion and pain of staff as well as patients and their families.

**Nantwich Food Festival Volunteers**

are holding a

**Spring ‘Drop Off & Go’ Collection**

to support **Nantwich Food Bank**

Saturday 27th March, 10am – 1pm

Brine Leas School, Audlem Road

Needed:

Long-life milk & fruit juice;

tinned meats, fish, vegetables, fruit;

instant coffee,

washing powder, cleaning sprays (no bleach);

shampoo, conditioner, deodorants (men’s and women’s)

***Un***able to accept:

Dairy; fresh Meat, Fish, Fruit or Vegetables;

 opened packets of nappies or baby formula.

***No*** clothing.

All items in date, please

We have police permission

***Asylum Seekers in Crewe***

*If anyone has a bike in good condition that they no longer need and are willing to donate to one of our asylum seekers, or …*

*If anyone has an unwanted tablet or laptop they are willing to donate to a local asylum seeker, to enable them to engage in online learning, please contact …*

Deacon Jill Taylor 01270 618872 *Thank you*

*NEW* ***MONDAY LUNCH CLUB*** *at*

 *BROOMHALL and SOUND CHAPEL*

*STARTING 19TH APRIL 2021*

 Audlem & District Community Action start a new lunch club on the 19thApril 2021 every Monday between 11.30am – 2 pm.

 This new club is part funded by a Covid Recovery Community Grant from Cheshire East Council and has been set up in partnership with Broomhall and Sound Methodist Chapel, local Parish Councils and Wrenbury Together.

 While pandemic restrictions are in place, the lunch club will be for 9 people each week and will provide a two-course hot meal along with coffee or tea on arrival. We aim to enable attendance for up to 18 isolated older people each fortnight, including people living on their own or couples who need company and support. Members who attend will be asked for a £7 contribution towards the running costs which aren’t covered by our grant funding.

 The lunch club will be Covid Secure. Social distancing measures are in place, face masks will need to be worn when not eating or drinking, there will be separate entrance and exits and plenty of hand sanitisers. Temperature tests will be taken on arrival with a forehead remote testing machine.

 For those not able to make their own way to the club, ADCA will be able to provide some transport with local voluntary drivers.

 We already have some referrals but are now looking for more people who may want to come along. If you are interested or know of anyone who you think may be interested, with their permission, please ring our Coordinator, Tracey Humphries, on 07557 102108 who will then follow up with a visit or phone call.

Why don’t local councils teach the men who lay tarmac to recognize a pot hole? They could save a lot of money by not having to send someone round first to mark where they are !

*An asteroid is due to pass the Earth at only one and a quarter million miles away. That’s still closer than the bin men leave my bins !*

My wife asked where I got that trombone.

 I said, “From the man next door.”

But you can’t play it”, she protested.

 “Neither can he now,” I smiled.

*Would you believe that my neighbour banged on my door at 2.30am? Luckily I was still up practising my drums*.

**\* \* \* “Mission in Love Unites Us” \* \* \***

 The Circuit has produced a supportive ‘Webinar’ (online seminar) which as many people as possible are urged to access, so that the Circuit can help each Church and Mission Area to discern its way forward in fulfilling God’s mission after the pandemic. We cannot simply return to ‘normal’ where in reality that is gentle decline.

 The presentation will outline examples of churches in the Connexion that have begun new mission activities. The Circuit will reflect and pray with you, review your resources, and help plan a way forward.

 The pandemic really is a God-given opportunity to look again at who we are, where we are, and where God is leading us into the future.

 The first webinar has already been held. Others will be at 2pm Thursday 25th March, 10am Saturday 27th March, and 7pm Wednesday 21st April. The presentation will be repeated and grow in the months ahead, and arrangements will be made for sharing it with those not online.

 Please tell Daniel (Circuit Administrator - 07598 580541 or 1108info.cheshiresouth@gmail.com) which you will ‘attend’, so he can send the link.

This is a little premature, but as today is the first day of Spring, it seemed appropriate.

**EASTER GREETINGS**

Spring has brought white daisies

 To lie upon the lawn:

The Master’s feet will walk there

 When it is Easter Morn.

 Spring has brought sweet violets

  To scent the morning air,

 And daffodils’ gold trumpets

  To sound a gay fanfare.

Spring has brought wild songsters

 To sing their joyous part.

But I alone can bring Him

 My truly, thankful heart.

(Kindly submitted by Doris Tucker)

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Young child after his first day back at school:

“It was okay, but I couldn’t find out how to mute my teacher”.

*A kid called Andy Zoff was easily the fastest in my school.*