

THE VOICE

MERROW METHODIST CHURCH MAGAZINE



April 2019

MESSAGE FROM THE MANSE – EASTER 2019

Jesus is the risen King who is victorious over death, recognized by his disciples, validated by Scripture, and enthroned over all creation. If we are not in awe of the resurrection of Jesus as a historical event, we may only see it as a fairytale. It is history making, earth shaking, life transforming, and eternity changing truth. Gospel of Luke, chapter 24 shows us how Jesus' resurrection does this.

First, Jesus' resurrection changes our conversations (Luke 24:13-24). Two of Jesus' disciples walked together down a seven mile stretch of road, having a conversation. It was about the resurrection of Jesus, obviously the most shocking news they had ever heard. A stranger began to walk with them (Jesus incognito), and they were astounded to learn this man had apparently not heard about the resurrection. Their conversation was not just about the details of the resurrection, but also who he was supposed to be, his life, his death and what it all meant. The truth of the resurrection is just as shocking today as it was the day it occurred. We must not treat the resurrection as some cold truth we have always heard or allow our understanding of the gospel to be about the death of Jesus alone. Let Jesus' resurrection change our conversation. Talk about it with the same excitement as if it just happened.

Second, Jesus' resurrection changes our Bible Study (Luke 24:25-44). Staying in stealth mode with his two disciples, Jesus "the stranger" called them a couple of fools and began a Bible study during the journey. If there were any conversation in history you would want to overhear, this would be the one. Jesus walked the men through the entire Scriptures to tell them how it all refers to him - his death and suffering, and his resurrection and glory (Luke 24: 27, 44). He began

with the book of Moses and led them through the Prophets (ending with Malachi). I am certain that you would agree with me that this was the best Bible Study ever! We need to be fully aware of the fact that in our personal devotions, Bible studies and Church worship and Junior Church classes, the resurrection theme runs throughout Scripture.

Third, as Jesus revealed his true identity to his disciples; he taught them a very important truth and how their lives will change because of that. Repentance and forgiveness should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning with Jerusalem (Luke 24:47). This is really important, for repentance does not just mean to turn away from sins, repentance also means turning to Jesus.

Repentance and forgiveness should not be whispered, muttered, or mumbled, for turning away from sin and to Jesus is a joy worth shouting from the roof tops. Jesus says repentance and forgiveness are to be proclaimed because people want to hear this. Let the resurrection of Jesus change how we witness by proclaiming its truth.

Every blessing in Christ,

Asif Das

Can we in our thoughts and prayers remember Michael Savage, Wendy Rockhill and Helen Belsham and their families, all of which have lost someone very dear to them.

Roy Vinall

	7th April	14th April
Preacher 10.30am 6.30pm	Rev. Asif Das HC	Rev. Claire Hargreaves
Vestry	Suzanne Burnham	Joyce Sturt
Organ	Joan Tabraham	Gillian Brierley
P/A	Jane Vinall	Roy Vinall
A/V	Ruth McCulloch	Cari Rayner
Door	Derek Varley, Joyce Goodall	Maggie Woolcock, Margaret Hyam
Flowers	Joy Kendal	Wendy Bradley
Coffee	Wendy and Hugh Bradley	Glenys Magill
Worship Leaders		Jenny Jackson
Communion Stewards	Glenys Magill, John Wallis	

	21st April Easter Sunday	28th April
Preacher 10.30am 6.30pm	Rev. Barrie Tabraham HC	Mr. Philip Beastall
Vestry	Joan Wells	Doreen Siame
Organ	Gillian Brierley	Joan Tabraham
P/A	Roy Vinall	Jan Walker
A/V	Julie Wallis	John Wallis
Door	Gill Vinall, Janet Williams	Wendy and Hugh Bradley
Flowers	Beryl Miles, Wendy Rockhill, Gill Vinall	Beryl Miles, Wendy Rockhill, Gill Vinall
Coffee	Megan Swayne, Jan Kemp	Wendy Rockhill, Margriet Jones
Worship Leaders	Gillian Brierley	Doreen Siame
Communion Stewards	Doreen Siame, John Wallis	

IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR IN THE GARDEN!

The time of year when Spring is really here, the daffodils are out, (if not over this year), and flowers and shrubs are shooting everywhere. The most urgent job for me is to finish pruning the hybrid tea roses, it always seems a pity to cut back all those new shoots, but it pays to remove any growth that is too thin to support a full bloom and then cut good branches down to an unopened bud. It's a good idea to give them a feed of fish, blood and bone meal and get rid of any weeds, while there is less prickly growth!

The lawn is growing quite strongly now so, unfortunately, regular mowing has to restart. However to make the biggest improvement to the garden's appearance simply trim the lawn edges, with shears or an edging iron.

I must also prepare the ground for my Dahlias and Chrysanthus, currently in the greenhouse until frosts are over in late May, by digging in some compost and fertiliser.

The garden centres are filling with trays of annuals, but it is too early to buy, unless you are prepared to grow them on for a month or so in a sheltered place.

My vegetable beds are looking decidedly empty at present although I have sown some Broad Beans for an early harvest. Potatoes are chitting in the greenhouse ready to plant when the soil warms up a bit. This year I'm growing Pentland Javelin (early) and Kestrel (2nd early), both of which have given me good crops in past years.

Vegetable seeds to sow outside this month, when the soil is warm, include; carrots, radish, lettuce, parsnips and leeks.

F W Gardener

Joan Savage

Joan Heather was born in Tolworth on March 2nd 1937. Life soon became difficult when a stray bomb fell on the Heather family home. Joan was not injured but both her mother and father were injured and hospitalised. Joan and her older brother, Eric, were both fostered out for a while until the family could come together again. Later, Joan's sister Grace, became an addition to the family.

In these early years times were pretty hard. Joan recalled her pride on having her first dolls pram and doll with which she would charge along the path, the doll bouncing about because Joan had no bedding for the doll. But possession was a great pleasure.

Joan's parents were regular churchgoers and Joan's Christian belief and commitment was picked up early and never waned.

The Heathers moved to Chessington and Joan went to Tolworth Girls School. When she left school she worked in a shop for a while before working for Ronson Lighters in Leatherhead. She cycled between Chessington and Leatherhead every day – even then she was full of energy and fitness.

Then came Joan's inspired decision to move to work for the Inland Revenue at Hinchley Wood and it was there she and Michael met. They married in June 1965 and bought their first home on the Sunday Estate in Tolworth, close to where Michael's parents lived, and with whom Joan had immediately built up a close and loving relationship. Philip was born in August 1968 and Debbie joined the team in June 1971, the only other additions to the family were a King Charles Spaniel and a Budgerigar who repeatedly recited “ Humpty Dumpty sat on the stupid dog”

Michael took the opportunity to study to become an Inspector of Taxes, a 3 year course with 4 examinations. He prepared dozens of crib cards with jottings about tax law and issues decided by the Courts. In the evenings Joan would test Michael's knowledge by pulling out cards at random one after the other and questioning him on the details, in the end Michael was convinced that Joan knew more about taxation than he did.

The family moved to Merrow when Michael went to the Guildford tax office. Joan became an active member of Merrow Methodist Church and for several years she was one of the cooks who served up a meal

for elderly local folk. She loved knitting and produced an endless stream of jumpers, dolls and toys for friends and for charity.

She was a very determined lady illustrated by her decision to lose weight, she went to Wednesday evening keep fit classes and watched the Rosemary Conley Video daily. She lost 3 stone and was very proud of her slim figure which she never lost.

The Savage family had enjoyed camping holidays and cottages across Europe, especially after Michael retired they enjoyed holidays all over the world. Joan loved walking and exploring beautiful countryside and loved seeing the animals, she developed a love of Ostriches; sitting astride one and racing on it in Argentina and being in an intimate embrace with one in South Africa with it's neck wrapped 360 degrees around her.

Joan also loved and sat with Philip's prehistoric looking bearded lizards but drew the line at his large hairy Tarantula spider.

By 2010 Joan had begun to develop early signs of dementia eventually confirmed as Alzheimers. In those early days the impact was not serious and Joan thoroughly enjoyed their continued holiday adventures, again Joan showed her determination and was not going to have her enjoyment of the fullest possible life deflected even when, in Australia she was fitted with a knee length boot to protect 3 broken toes. That did not stop her a jot.

Eventually the illness took its toll and Joan first went into residential care in May 2018. She suffered acute anxiety and depression but prolonged specialist treatment with finely balanced medication enabled her to continue more calmly. She moved to Jubilee House Care in October where she received super care supported by Michael, Debbie and Philip.

Alzheimers continued to take its toll and Joan had increasing difficulty putting words together, but when Sophie, her granddaughter, came to visit and showed Joan her newly acquired engagement ring Joan looked at it, paused and then said so clearly "congratulations". Joan had dug deep and managed to express her heartfelt comment.

Joan's braveness and dogged determination continued to the end but finally her body had taken all it could and she passed away quickly

and peacefully on Friday 8th February at the age of 81 and after a wonderful 53 years of marriage.

The family have lost their greatly loved wife, mother and grandmother ,a wonderful caring companion: their soul mate. God bless you Joan.

I asked Michael if we could include the above in the magazine and he readily agreed, he asked if I would pass on his thanks from him and all the family to Merrow Methodist for all their wishes and kindness ;and is very grateful for all Merrow Methodist had done for Joan over the years.

He also says he will keep in touch and hopes to see us all in the coming years.

UNLOCK ANNUAL LONDON SPONSORED WALK SATURDAY 27th APRIL 2019

The sponsored London walk for "Unlock" this year is around the Merton, Morden and Wimbledon area of South West London. The walk is 7.25 miles in total, with visits to 7 churches and to the YMCA in Wimbledon. The title of the walk is "Shining a Light". This reflects the fact that the churches visited this year are all in their different ways, bringing the light of Christ into people's lives. Also two of the Churches have "light" references in their names: the Lantern Methodist Church in Raynes Park and the Lighthouse Church in West Barnes.

The walk is an ecumenical event, open to all, and is always an interesting and unique way of discovering the different areas and communities of London and engaging with some of its churches. The walk regularly attracts around 700 + walkers from around the country and there is a good sense of fellowship. We often spot faces familiar from previous walks. There is always something new to discover and something to learn from visiting the different churches and learning how they relate to their local communities.

So what is Unlock? Unlock is a small, inter-denominational organisation that works to support Christian mission within Inner City areas and to make the messages of the Gospel relevant to those who would not normally attend church or read the Bible. Unlock supports and funds project workers working in deprived urban areas in the UK. These projects have been shown to make a real difference, bringing the gospel to people that the churches haven't been able to reach. In 2015 Unlock entered into a formal partnership with the Bible Society. This partnership is of benefit to both organisations as they share a focus on the Bible as a means of reaching people and changing lives. The work of Unlock will be show-cased at one of the churches featured on the walk.

The annual walk is the main fundraising event for Unlock and raises essential funds for the running costs of the organisation. It has always been difficult for Unlock to secure funding from charitable trusts, because there are very few trusts that will support Christian Mission and in the current climate this is more difficult than ever. At Merrow Methodist Church, we have been supporting Unlock through sponsorship of our walkers, since the first walk 36 years ago. Thanks to the generosity of those at the Church, we have raised significant sums for Unlock over the years. We are one of the "top ten" supporting churches in terms of our sponsorship and I hope we can maintain this level of support again for this year's walk.

This will be a full day's walk and we will walk whatever the weather. Comfortable walking shoes are essential and it is a good idea to bring some light refreshments although these can usually be purchased along the way or at some of the churches visited. You will also need some small change for donations to the churches visited. This year's walk is well-served by buses so this can be helpful for the foot-weary if needed at any stage. Arrangements will be finalised closer to the time but we will meet around 8.45 - 9am to travel by train from Clandon to Wimbledon where we will start the walk.

Please let me know in advance if you intend joining this year's walk so that I can order sufficient route maps, finalise travel arrangements and arrange discounted group travel if needed. I am happy to provide further information about the walk on request. There will be further information on the Notice Board plus a sign-up list for walkers and a group sponsorship list.

Please do support this event again this year by either walking or sponsoring our walkers, or ideally both!

Maggie Woolcock

Church news

Drivers required for Sunday transport rota.

It would be helpful to have a reserve list of drivers for Sunday transport so if you are able to help on an regular or an occasional basis, please let me know!

Thanks Ruth McCulloch 570824 or email me on ruthmcc52@gmail.com.

Tuesday Bible Study Group

The Tuesday morning bible study group meets at the home of Pauline Daniels in Jacobs Well. It will be meeting every Tuesday during Lent, looking at the book "The Way of the Desert" by Bishop Andrew Watson. This is the material being followed by all the TIC Lent groups this year.

After Easter the group will revert to meeting on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month, and having just ended a series of studies on the different ways God has spoken in the past and speaks to us today, will move on to considering how we speak to God, beginning with a fresh look at the Lord's Prayer.

Gillian Brierley

Outlet

Monday April 8th 7.30 for 8.00 pm “ All you need to know about recycling” we will welcome a speaker from Guildford Borough Council who will tell us all about recycling
Megan Swayne

Women’s Fellowship

We have two meetings this month

April 1st we have a speaker from The Salvation Army

April 15th will be our Easter communion service led by Rev. Asif Das both meeting start at 2.30pm and we would love to see you all there
Suzanne Burnham

House Groups these will start again after lent, please keep an eye out for further information next month Joan Tabraham

The May 2019 issue of “The Voice” will be in church on **SUNDAY 5TH MAY 2019** and the close off date for this **TUESDAY 23RD APRIL 2019** any items should be to me by then via my email royvinall@gmail.com or in my pigeon hole.

I am sorry about the early close off date but we are away 25th – 30th April and need to get all done before we go.

MINISTER: REV.ASIF DAS 01483 575432 asifdas@hotmail.co.uk

CHURCH OFFICE

Bushy Hill Drive, Guildford, GU1 2SH. 01483 537655

office@merrowmethodistchurch.org.uk

PROPERTY LETTINGS ADMINISTRATOR 01483 537655

lettings@merrowmethodistchurch.org.uk

REGULAR CHURCH ACTIVITIES – March 2019

COMMUNITY LUNCH CLUB: Tuesdays (by invitation).

TUESDAY CLUB for parents and under-fives from 1.45pm to 3.15pm in term time.

LADIES' BADMINTON CLUB: On Wednesdays. 1.30pm to 3.30pm.

THURSDAY BADMINTON CLUB: Adults: 8.15pm to 10.15pm.

MERROW METHODIST SHORT MAT BOWLS CLUB: Fridays from 7.30pm.

HOLY COMMUNION: **Thursday 18th April** Tenerbrae Service

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP: Mondays at 2.pm. for 2.30pm

Monday 1st April The Salvation Army

15thApril Rev. Asif Das Easter Holy Communion

OUTLET: **Monday 8th April** " All you need to know about recycling"

7.30 for 8.00 pm

COFFEE MORNINGS: **Thursday 11th April.** Guildford No.5 project

10.30 to 12.30pm

HOUSE GROUP: Next meeting after Lent groups 2nd May 2019

THURSDAY PRAYER GROUP: **Thursday 4th April** 9.30am in the Church

QUIET PRAYER SUNDAY: **Sunday 28th April @ 10.00am**

BREAD and SOUP **Thursday 25th April** from 12.00pm

PRAYER SUPPORT GROUP

This is a small group willing to put time aside for praying each day for special needs within the Church community. The contact for April is

Helen Belsham 01483 823742

your request will be passed onto other members of the group, where it will remain confidential

CHURCH CLEANING: (Week ending)

7th April Suzanne and Margaret

21st April Jan and Margriet

A JEWISH MEAL, AN EMPEROR’S MOTHER, A SPANISH NUN AND EASTER

Idle thoughts of a supernumerary minister, by Peter Hills

Our Editor asked me to write about how Easter is celebrated in different parts of the world. In fact, Easter traditions are fairly similar throughout the world. Just as in the eyes of the eastern churches there is little difference between Catholic and Protestant worship, we see little difference between the various groups of eastern churches – Armenian, Byzantine (Orthodox), East Syrian and Alexandrian (including Copts). There is, incidentally, a Coptic church very close to us, in Gomshall. In these churches worship may seem quite strange: one difference is the separation between what the clergy do and what the worshipping people do – it’s as though there are two services going on simultaneously, with moments when priests and people come together. But when you sort out the wood from the trees, the pattern of worship is remarkably similar: Opening Worship, including praise and penitence; the Ministry of the Word; Intercessions; and Sacrament. Easter, too, has a familiar feel.

Easter (definitely) is not the Christian adoption of a pagan spring festival, just as Christmas (arguably) is not the Christian adoption of a pagan winter festival, despite its name – Easter – being derived from that of a pagan goddess. In much of the world, including Europe, it is known as Pascha, from ‘Passover’: ‘For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed’¹.

The entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, betrayal, last supper, vigil in Gethsemane, trial, execution, burial and resurrection, all took place around Passover. Passover recalls God saving the people God loves (through Moses and, later, Joshua); Easter recalls God saving the people God loves through Jesus (Greek for Joshua, meaning ‘God saves’). To followers of Jesus the Resurrection confirmed not only his status as Son of God, but also that God, through Jesus, experienced human life in all its joys and sorrows, and human death. It has been called ‘the paradox of the God who cannot suffer becoming one of his own creatures in order to share their pain and

¹ 1 Corinthians 5.7 (NIV)

mortality, so that he can heal them and raise them to share his own undying life'².

Early Christians remembered both the death and resurrection of Christ every Sunday; but the Sunday following Passover soon became a 'Christian Passover' (thus following the thirteen-month lunar calendar, instead of the twelve-month (solar) western calendar, making Easter a variable feast.) Passion Week as we know it slowly took shape: Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Day. (A one-day fast before Easter expanded to forty days, and became a time of preparation for Easter baptisms.)

We owe our Easter celebrations to two women: Helena, mother of Constantine, the first Christian Emperor of Rome; and Egeria (or Etheria), a Spanish nun, both of whom visited Jerusalem in the fourth century. Helena was there as the sites of the crucifixion and burial of Jesus were being identified. The churches standing on the Mount of Olives and in nearby Bethlehem are said to have been founded by her, and she sparked an interest in the places mentioned in the gospels.

Egeria travelled through the region in the 380s, and wrote an account of what she saw and experienced. She described how the events of the last week of Christ's life were commemorated at the places where they happened – a Palm Sunday procession from Bethany to Jerusalem, an overnight vigil in the Garden of Gethsemane on Thursday, a solemn walk along the route to Calvary and a symbolic burial on Friday, a Saturday vigil, and a Service of Light at midnight, followed by Communion. Egeria's account certainly influenced how Easter is observed today. It's largely thanks to her that we have palm crosses on Palm Sunday, the Easter Vigil, the Service of Light and the Easter Candle³.

Easter is less a spring festival than a festival which happens to take place during spring in the northern hemisphere – though the theme of new life runs through both season and festival. A prayer from Australia begins: 'In the midst of the dead places, in the heart of doubt and confusion: Christ is risen! On the ground where the bindings of life lie in memory of our dyings, grieving in the earth around our tears and our loneliness, Christ is risen!'⁴

² Hugh Wybrew: 'Orthodox Lent, Holy Week and Easter', SPCK 1995, p.3

³ See the Methodist Worship Book pages 267-280 for a Methodist version of the Vigil and Service of Light.

⁴ Dorothy McRae-McMahon: 'Liturgies for Daily Life' SPCK 2004, p.40

One odd feature of Orthodox worship during Holy Week is that everything takes place half a day early. Morning Prayer takes place in the evening before, and Evening Prayer in the morning. Easter Sunday begins at midnight! I remember taking a friend, another Methodist minister, who was staying with us in Cyprus, to the local monastery at midnight, a week after our own Easter. We were invited into the choir, and sang along (drawing on our college New Testament Greek). After the service we went outside where a fire was lit symbolising the Light of the risen Christ. *'Day of Resurrection! Be aglow all peoples. The Lord's Passover! From death to life, from earth to heaven, Christ our God has brought us, singing triumphantly.'*⁵

⁵ Hugh Wybrew, 'Orthodox Lent, Holy Week and Easter', p.121

MERROW Methodist Church



SERVICE OF THE
TENEBRAE
Maundy Thursday
8.00 pm, 18th April 2019

EASTER SERVICES

MERROW METHODIST CHURCH

COME AND WORSHIP

- 14 April - Palm Sunday worship at 10.30 am
- 18 April - Service of the Tenebrae at 8.00 pm
- 19 April - Good Friday worship at 2.00 pm
- 21 April - Easter Day worship at 10.30 am



Alleluia! Christ is Risen!
He is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

A browse through the greatest Easter Music – by Gillian Brierley
Some of the greatest music throughout the centuries has been inspired by the Easter story. Composers have been moved to explore new ways of re-telling this unfolding of human tragedy into divine celebration from the earliest mediaeval plainsong

The 16th century gave us a beautiful motet, “Aurora lucis rutilat” by Orlando de Lassus which leads us from the gentle dawn of Easter morning in to a triumphant double-choir song of the resurrection.

Many composers have portrayed Mary’s grief as she watched the crucifixion of her Son in works named “Stabat Mater”. These include most famously Palestrina (~1590), Vivaldi (1712), Pergolesi (1736), Haydn (1767), Rossini (1831–42) and Dvořák (1876–77)
Neither should we pass over Haydn’s “Seven last words of our Saviour on the Cross”, commissioned as orchestral music to punctuate seven readings during an Easter service, but ending its life as a fully fledged oratorio.

Perhaps the greatest pieces of music ever written however are Bach’s two Passions: St. John and St. Matthew. The latter contains such a variety of musical styles: Chorales: short 4 part choruses with complex harmonies which create moments of stillness between dramatic choral writing and emotive arias including Peter’s outpouring “Have mercy Lord on me”, a plaintive duet between voice and violin. The work then ends with a sublime double chorus.

Though the St. Matthew Passion may be the greatest of Easter oratorios, the most famous must be Handel’s “Messiah”. Parts 2 and 3 tell the whole Easter story from crucifixion to resurrection and who can fail to be moved by Handel’s choral settings of “Behold the Lamb of God” and “Surely he hath borne our griefs, or the poignancy of the arias “He was despised” and “Behold and see”?

The music of the resurrection victory begins with the Hallelujah chorus, is re-iterated in the soprano aria, “I know that my redeemer

liveth” and the bass aria “The trumpet shall sound” and comes to a superb climax in the final chorus “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain”.

The late 19th century brought us Stainer’s “Crucifixion with the famous chorus “God so loved the world”, and the early 20th century, Maunder's short oratorio “Olivet to Calvary. Both works are characteristic of the Victorian style of music, but none the less worthy for that.

Many church choirs used to sing these works at Passiontide in alternate years, including my own in Yorkshire, so they, along with the Messiah, were a big part of my own choral heritage, as was attending the annual performance of “The Messiah” by the Huddersfield Choral Society at Huddersfield Town Hall.

Worship Forum: March 4th 2019

Although this meeting was open to all members of the congregation only a few took up the invitation to attend. However there was lively discussion on how we can improve our time of worship to enable us to honour our God more fully.

It was felt that our busy-ness on Sunday mornings sometimes gets in the way of our being ready to offer meaningful worship to God.

Several suggestions were put forward which might help us to focus our thoughts on God right at the beginning of a service. These included:

- Having a short text on the screen to read and reflect on.
- Having a quiet time (perhaps 2 or 3 minutes) of ‘gathering in God’s presence’ at the beginning of a service, preceding the Call to Worship and the first hymn.

With this latter in mind it has been decided that, after Easter, the bible will be pre-set in the church and no longer carried in.

The congregation will remain seated as the preacher and steward enter at 10.30am.

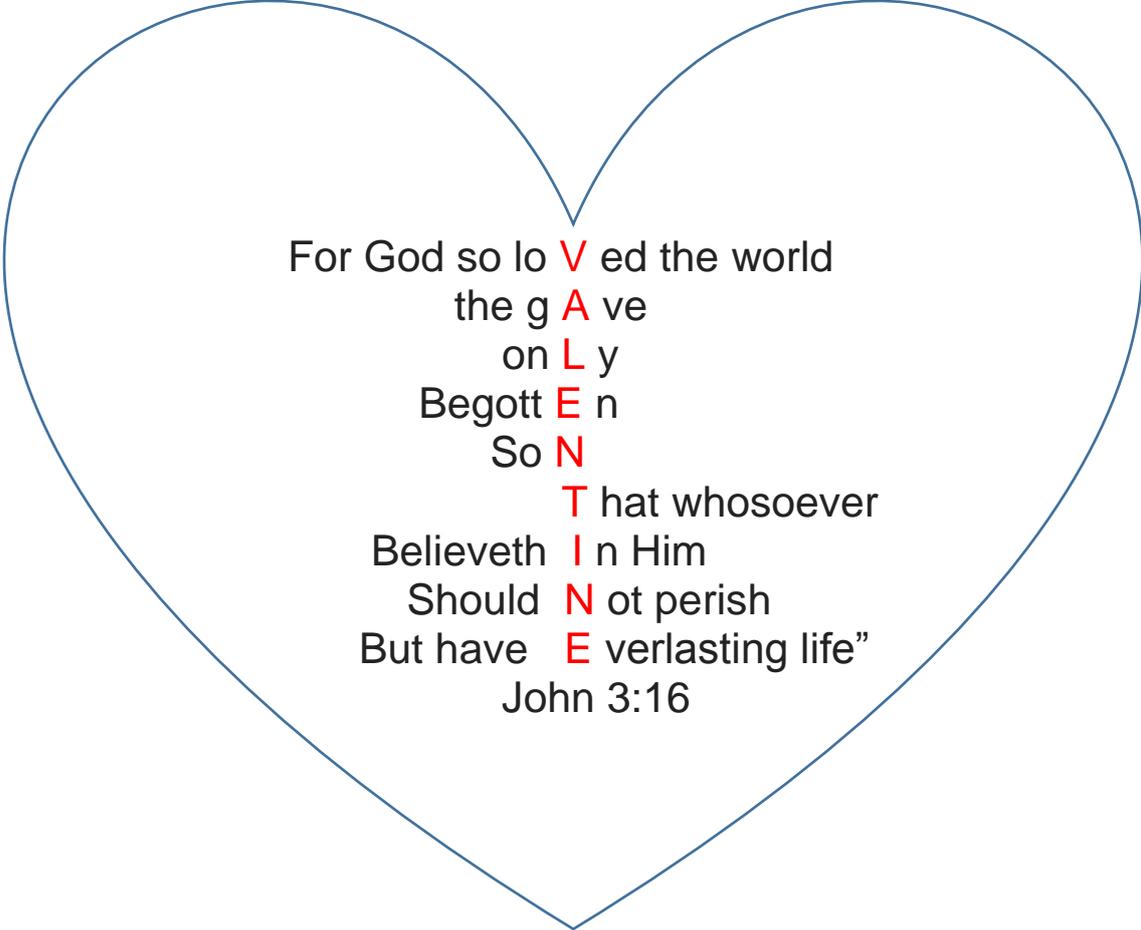
After the steward's welcome and notices, the steward will announce a short time of 'preparation for worship' which will consist of one of the following:

- Worship songs led by Helen
- A short time of quiet reflection leading into an Introit by the choir
- Quiet recorded music
- A time of silent reflection

If you have any further thoughts please bring them to the September Worship Forum.

A full report of the meeting is on the notice board in the foyer.

Gillian Brierley



For God so lo **V** ed the world
the g **A** ve
on **L** y
Begott **E** n
So **N**
T hat whosoever
Believeth **I** n Him
Should **N** ot perish
But have **E** verlasting life”
John 3:16

You are God's Valentine!, how wonderful is that ? Thanks to Derek Varley for passing this onto to us all.

Cotswold Corner: Robert Raikes – the man who changed lives by Catherine Winder

In Gloucester's Southgate Street, there is an unassuming church called St Mary de Crypt (so called because it has a large crypt beneath its west end). It has Norman origins but was substantially rebuilt in the 1300s. Adjoining it is the beautiful Crypt Schoolroom, established in Tudor times thanks to a wealthy mercer John Cooke who left instructions in his will to his wife Joan to set up a free school with a permanent schoolmaster. When the school outgrew its premises in the late 19th century, it was bought by the church for use as the parish rooms; the Crypt School is now on its fourth site and at the annual Founders' Day service, the head boy gives the Rector of St Mary de Crypt a red rose as a token rent. Across the street from the church and schoolroom is a fine timber-framed building, built as a merchant's

house in the 1550s but now a pub called the 'Robert Raikes House', because it became the Raikes' family home for many years. Some of you may have heard of Robert Raikes and if not, you may well have experienced something of his legacy because most of us will have been to Sunday School...

Robert Raikes was born on 14 September 1736 around the corner from St Mary de Crypt in Longsmith Street, in a beautiful Queen Anne building called Ladybellegate House which survives to this day amid a welter of 1960s concrete, and was baptised 10 days later in St Mary De Crypt. George Whitefield, a contemporary of the Wesleys, preached his first sermon there later that year. His father, Robert Raikes the Elder founded the Gloucester Journal newspaper. Young Robert was educated at the Crypt Schoolroom and later at the King's School at the cathedral. His father trained Robert in printing and journalism so when Raikes the Elder died in 1757, Robert became proprietor of the Gloucester Journal.

During the 1760s there were food shortages that provoked riots in the county and Gloucester gaol began to fill up. Robert watched court cases and met prisoners; having heard their tales of deprivation and seen the atrocious prison conditions and harsh sentences such as transportation, he was moved to arrange charitable collections for prisoners and their families. He became a friend of John Howard (founder of the League for Penal Reform) during his visits to the gaol and realising what scant education the prisoners had, he became a prison visitor so he could teach them and he encouraged literate prisoners to teach their fellow inmates. It's interesting to note that over 60% of prisoners in the UK today were excluded from school at some point.

Gloucester has a long history of metalworking which by the 18th century had moved from nail- and bell-founding to pin-making. This work often involved the whole family and Sunday was their only day off. While in a poor part of the city one Sunday, Raikes noticed a group of 'wretchedly ragged' children playing noisily in the street – a local lady told him there were many such groups causing nuisance to residents while they let rip on their day off, but a local curate, Rev

Thomas Stock, had 'put some of them to school'. By now Raikes was living in the large house in Southgate Street with his family of ten and he wanted to improve the lot of less fortunate children. He met with Rev Stock and they agreed to set up a Sunday school to be held in the home of Hannah Meredith, the teacher they appointed. This opened in July 1780 in Sooty Alley, a slum area where the chimney sweeps lived because Raikes wanted these to be open to 'the poorest and most neglected'. Raikes and Stock visited many poor families to encourage attendance. The school's schedule was: "the children were to come after ten in the morning, and stay till twelve; they were then to go home and return at one; and after reading a lesson, they were to be conducted to Church. After Church, they were to be employed in repeating the catechism till after five, and then dismissed, with an injunction to go home without making a noise". Their text book was the Bible but Raikes also published *The Sunday Scholar's Companion* in 1785. There was no dress code – 'if you can loiter about without shoes and in a ragged coat, you may as well come to school and learn what may tend to your good in that garb' said Raikes, but he did like them to have clean hands and faces as well as combed hair, giving combs to those who'd never had one. To begin with, only boys aged 5 to 14 attended, and in time the older boys coached the younger ones; girls were later allowed to attend. They learnt to read and to write as well as being taught about the Christian faith. Within a couple of years there were at least four schools although no evidence of them remains, having been swept away in slum clearances. As well as providing much of the funding, Raikes was actively involved in the schools, teaching them and accompanying the children to church, giving small prizes for good work and inviting the children to dine with him on roast beef and plum pudding on New Year's Day.

Robert Raikes did not start Sunday Schools; the first recorded one was founded in High Wycombe by Hannah Ball in 1769 (which John Wesley knew of) and there were numerous other examples. But Raikes had the advantage of being able to publicise his work through his newspaper and other publications and so he became a pioneer of what became a wider movement – by 1786 about 200 000 children

were going to Sunday Schools all over the country and by 1831, this had grown to 1.25 million children, or about 25% of the population. These were the only free schools at a time when there was no state provision. Raikes had connections in the USA and he was instrumental in setting up a Sunday School in Virginia. The idea wasn't universally popular; some referred to them derisively as 'Raikes' Ragged Schools' and condemned Christians being employed on the Sabbath or the risk of them being used to spread political propaganda. But Adam Smith, the famous economist, endorsed them, saying "*No plan has promised to effect a change of manners with equal ease and simplicity since the days of the Apostles.*" Raikes often came across former pupils who told him how much their education had changed their lives. When he died on 5th April 1811, he was buried in the family vault in what became the Raikes Chapel of St Mary de Crypt; the Sunday School children who attended the funeral were given a shilling and plum cake.

If Raikes were to return to Southgate Street today, he would recognise the exterior of his old home and church but there are substantial changes inside. After his death, the family home reverted to being a merchant's house and shop from a printer's home and business. In the 1970s it became a restaurant and later a pub; in 2006, it was bought by Samuel Smith's Brewery who spent 2 years and £4.5 million restoring the grade 2 listed building to what feels like the house Raikes would have known – apart from the bar in the middle room! St Mary de Crypt re-opens on 22 March after the 18-month 'Discover DeCrypt' project renovated the church and schoolroom to make it a warm (it could only be used during the summer), flexible (the pews have gone) and inclusive space (the once-rotting schoolroom is open to community groups) to serve a widening community as housing returns to the city centre. There will be daily communion services in the Raikes Chapel and the church's history will be celebrated. And that tradition of ministering God's love to the citizens, particularly those in need, which Raikes pursued with such vigour will continue

“The Voice”

It is our practice to publish each edition of “The Voice” on the Merrow Methodist Website. It is an important source of information about church life in Merrow and something we want to share with others.

At the same time we recognise that some contributors may be uncomfortable for their personal details to appear on the internet in this way.

We will be happy to omit names and any other personal details in any future issue if requested to do so.



**GUILDFORD'S NIGHTSHELTER FOR HOMELESS MEN AND
WOMEN**

(Charity Reg. no.: 1015474).

MERROW METHODIST CHURCH

**JOIN US FOR COFFEE & CAKE
(and a garden plant stall)**

**Thursday 11th April 2019
10.30 – 12.30**



IN AID OF GUILDFORD NUMBER 5 PROJECT

**Financial donations and gifts including cans, packet food,
and cleaning materials for the Project will be welcome.**