

Lindford Methodist

Chase Road
Lindford

www.lindfordchurch.co.uk

Midhurst Methodist

65 North Street Midhurst

St Teresa of Avala, Chiddingfold

Woodside Road
Chiddingfold

<https://www.catholichaslemere.com/>

St Stephens, Shottermill

Church Road
Haslemere

<http://www.shottermillparish.org.uk/>

Parish of Haslemere

St Christopher and St Bartholomew's Churches

www.haslemereparish.org

All Saints, Grayswood

Grayswood Road

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25 Kings Road Fleet

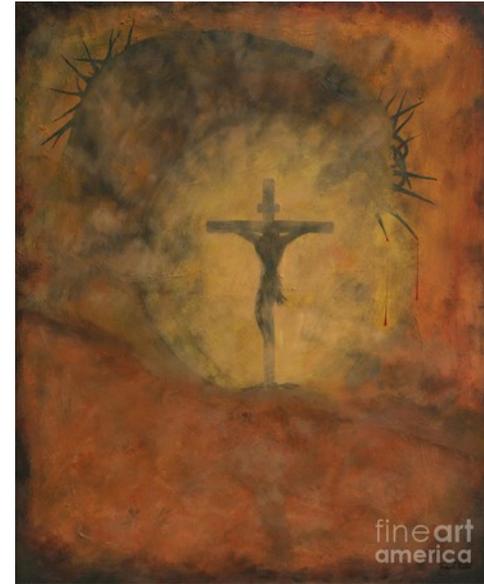
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Reading Road South

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No Greater Love



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Daily Lent Devotions 2019

Contributions from

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*Hindhead, Bordon, Haslemere, Liphook, Fleet,
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Easter day

John 20, 1-9

One cannot become a believer, if the Resurrection wasn't a personal experience. And this in turn requires death - in order to be resurrected, one must first die.

There can be different "deaths" in our lives. It can be literal death, but it can also be some other loss, which for us is like a "death". Therefore, we should not be afraid of death in any form, as long as we immerse ourselves in the death of Christ.

Whoever immerses himself in the death of Christ (will receive baptism in earnest) will also be resurrected with him.

Those who will experience the Resurrection, will only find out what it really means to live.

Father Ireneusz (Irek) Stadler
Catholic Church of Haslemere, Hindhead
and Chiddingfold

Introduction

As modern day disciples, we are hesitant to take a journey into the unknown. The world we live in can seem chaotic, and we feel pulled and drawn in different directions, but Christ walks with us, just as he walked with the people on the Emmaus Road.

As Christians we approach Lent and Easter with a mixture of emotions, and questions. All are answered in the stark cross and the empty tomb, for in both we see 'No Greater Love' that God has for us, as seen in the crucified Jesus and the Risen Christ .

We are Easter people bathing in the light of dazzling Love that Christ shows to all, yet before the feast and celebrations, there is a period we call Lent and Holy Week, a time for reflection, contemplation and inner spiritual journeying.

God calls people from all walks of life, to follow the man Jesus, who is ultimately divine and human.

God does not say it will be easy, but our calling is to follow.

This is the fourth year of the Ecumenical Devotional Booklet, and I am humbled by the variety of ways God speaks through individuals to show this great love God gives to all people.

I am indebted all the contributors in this booklet, and may God always bless you dear reader, in your discipleship and love for Christ ... for there is no greater love than this.

There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends.
John 15:13

Revd Ruth Dillon
Beacon Hill and Fleet United Reformed Church

March 6th

Matthew 6:1-6 & 16-21

Matthew could not have been more specific, when he draws our attention to Jesus's teachings on false pride and greed. In 1-6, he advises care on how we talk about ourselves, our good works, our prayer-life, indeed, our Church life.

Do we advertise our goodness, our piety and giving, in ways to draw attention to ourselves?

Can we live quietly with God? It would mean giving attention to the inner life and getting to really know God in the secret places of our hearts, laying bare our longing for better things.

In 16-21, he reminds us that acquiring material goods, property and even status and power, will not ultimately enrich us, as the real treasure is a life lived richly in the Spirit. How is my life reflecting this wise counsel? Am I caught up in MeFirst culture?

Matthew's Gospel writings are timely and offer much to help us to discern what we truly need in this time of division and confusion; in the quietness of today, can I take time to quietly take stock, pray and give thanks for what I have received?

**Win Browne
St Anselm's Roman Catholic Church, Beacon**

Hill

Holy Saturday

Psalm 31:1-4,15-16

Desolation comes in with the dawn,
the realisation that he is gone.
Our journey together cut short
no-one there to lead and guide.

I scour my mind to find words of comfort,
of things he said that will make sense.
To explain why he has been taken from us
in such a cruel and violent manner.

The image of him on the cross,
wracked with pain and anguish.
The nails driven through the bone
with anger, force and determination.

And all I could do was watch,
hoping he would sense me near.
Willing him to see my face,
to know he wasn't abandoned.

But today there is nothing, a void.
The terror of the night
dissipating in the light of day
which leaves me empty and broken.

**Revd Fi Gwynn
All Saints Church, Grayswood**

Good Friday

John 19:1-19, 42

So here all the forces of hell are on parade in human form: the cowardice, arrogance, vacillation and vanity of Pilate; the brutality, contempt and humiliating abuse of the soldiers; the defiance, hysteria and hypocrisy of the religious; the blood lust of the mob. Against these dark forces stands one wasted, pitiable figure. And somewhere...here were also.

The all-powerful God stands as helpless in a Roman seat of power.

The 'King of kings' is dressed-up, for the hell of it, in cruel crown and mocking robes.

The Prince of Peace and Love is bowing to torture and hatred.

The Eternal Word of God is silent before his accusers.

The Judge of us all is now accused and found guilty, condemned by fools.

The Lord of Life and all of Nature is dying on the wood he created.

As we pause today before that cross of shame, we remember that, in some unfathomable way, He went through this for us. He suffered and died there for us. He took our sin upon himself and opened for us a 'new and living way' that we might forever be with him.

Should we not therefore bow before Him today and say truly this is Good Friday!

*Love is that liquor sweet and most divine,
Which my God feels as blood; but I, as wine.*

George Herbert 1593 – 1633, from The Agony

**Revd Derek Holbrid
St Albans Hindhead**

March 7th

Exodus 5: 10-23

Hard labour in the hot sun,
building monuments for Pharaoh.
And now no straw to be supplied
but the same number of bricks to be made!

Send out the women, send out the children,
send out the old people to find straw for us
So that we are not flogged again.

Ah, Moses and Aaron,
It is your fault we suffer so,
You have made Pharaoh hate us even more;
May God punish you for this!

O Lord, cried poor Moses,
I have done what you asked,
But there is only more suffering!
Why do you treat us like this?

But the Lord said, Moses, I am the Lord GOD;
I have heard the cries and groans of my people,
And, Moses, do not doubt, in my love for them,
I have promised: I will set them free.

*Dear Lord, thank you that your wondrous promise of love and
salvation is still open to us!*

**Kathy Le Fanu,
St Anselm's Roman catholic Church, Beacon Hill**

March 8th

Acts 7. 35-42

Here we see Stephen acting heroically in the face of death. He is not an apostle. His job is to help look after the money and the material wellbeing of the apostles but he feels inspired to proclaim to his accusers the good news brought by Jesus.

Just like Moses before him, Jesus is rejected by the authorities who cannot give up the comfort and security provided by their own customs and interpretation of the law. Their ancestors turned to a false idol and even to their old home of slavery in Egypt. How easy it is, once we lose touch with Jesus, to seek satisfaction in false hopes and false memories.

The result is loss of direction and a spiritual wasteland.

Lord Jesus, hold me always close to you. Give me the courage to speak for you when the occasion arises. May I seek you always in all things. Amen.

Leo Cash
Our Lady of Lourdes Roman Catholic Church, Haslemere

Maundy Thursday

John 13: 1-17. 31-35

The passage about '*Love one another*', comes at the end of allocated reading. Nevertheless, a section of John's Gospel has not been included in this text today, and to my mind, it is the most important. It is the revelation from Jesus, that one of the disciples seated around the table, will betray.

After Judas had left the gathering, Jesus talks about loving one another. This would have been very difficult to hear, for Jesus is really saying, '*Love Judas, even though he will betray me, love and forgive him*'. Can you imagine the up roar, and the disbelief? For this reason, it is a challenging phrase in the whole of Gospel.

Sometimes we want to jump straight into this passage at v 31, but we miss the verses beforehand, where betrayal and deceit fill the room, before we are called to love.

Jesus calls to love those people who have wronged us, who have spoken harshly towards us as well as those we love. That is why this is a challenging read, and it should be. Emotionally you may feel anger and hurt, but there is no greater expression of love, than loving your enemy, loving the person that has wronged you. This is what Jesus asks of us daily

*Lord,
When I feel anger towards another person,
Help me to remember Jesus,
who hung between two hated men and loved them.
There is no greater love than this. Amen*

Revd Ruth Dillon
Beacon Hill URC Hindhead

April 17th

John 13:21-32

'After he said this ...'

You'll have to wait 'til tomorrow for what he had said but it was to do with acceptance of Jesus and the one who sends him.

Naturally it prompts Jesus to talk about betrayal.

Judas' action is betrayal rather than being an informant because he comes from those close to Jesus who have followed him and learnt from him. Judas betrays Jesus rather than simply informs the authorities where Jesus is to be found because he was one who shared his bread with Jesus and was entrusted with responsibilities among Jesus' disciples. When Judas went, John tells us, 'it was night'. The small details are significant in John's account.

This continues his play on the concepts of light and darkness.

'The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it' (Jn 1:5)

The true light that gives light to everyone was coming in to the world' (Jn 1:9)

And yet it is at the time of darkness, when Satan enters the betrayer, that John can say that the Son of Man is glorified.

Shine your light in our darkness, O Lord, that you may be glorified in your people today.

**Revd David Muskett
Haslemere, Lindford, Midhurst, and Liphook Methodist
Churches**

March 9th

Psalm 91:1-2,9-16

Psalm 91 brings us such hope and comfort in our daily lives.

How many times do we throw ourselves on God's mercy, crying out loud, "Lord Help Me, Give Me Strength".

Through this Psalm we are confident that God hears us, and having looked into our inner soul, knows we love him, and therefore he will protect and guide us. He comforts us not because of our actions, which often fail him, but because we try to do his work with his help. Through living a faithful life completely immersed in God's love, Psalm 91 also provides hope and comfort for us and our loved ones at the time of our death.

As shown in the Song of Farewell by Ernest Sands, this is our final proclamation of our belief in God's Love and Protection, not only in this world, but the next:

*"The Lord Is My Light and my Help
It is He who Protects Me from Harm
The Lord is The Strength of my Days
Before Whom Shall I Tremble With Fear?"*

Chorus

May the Choirs of Angels Come to Greet You

May they Speed You to Paradise

May the Lord Enfold You in His Mercy

May you Find Eternal Life".

**Rachel O'Mara-Miller
Our Lady of Lourdes, Roman Catholic Church Haslemere**

March 10th

Romans 10: 8 -13

‘ Salvation is for all’ is the heading in my bible to these verses:
‘Because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved”

This passage places on us all the responsibility to go out and give this message of the good news of Jesus Christ.

Later in the same passage St Paul writes:

‘.....there is no distinction between Jew or Greek. The same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on Him’.....
.....And how are they to believe in one of whom they have not heard?

These words made me deeply aware that every person belongs to God, and of God’s love for us all and of our responsibility to tell everyone.

*How shall they hear the Word of God
unless his truth is told?
How shall the Gospel be proclaimed
If heralds are not sent?
So send us Lord for we rejoice
to speak of Christ with life and voice.*

**Faith Reynolds,
St Teresa’s RC Church , Chiddingfold**

April 16th

John 12:20-36

Do you like Crème Eggs?

As always, they have been on sale since January 1st, but it is only this weekend that the time has come to celebrate their true purpose and meaning.

In John 12, Jesus tells people that his hour has finally come. At the wedding in Cana he said his hour had not yet come (John 2:4) and he said the same later (John 7:30). But now it is time. This is what it’s all been leading up to. He now looks towards his death and resurrection, when a grain of wheat will fall to the ground, to enable new growth.

How did Jesus feel at this point?

How did his listeners react?

How do we respond?

There are many riches in this passage, but one simple encouragement is that God had a plan and that everything would happen at the right time, when things were ready. This plan and these timings may be different to what was and is expected. And God’s plan is to bring more than chocolate which appeals to some and not to others, but to bring eternal life to all who will receive him.

Dear God, thank you that your plans and your timing are always perfect. Amen.

**Revd Richard Bodle
St. Alban’s Church**

April 15th

Isaiah 42:1-9

This is a prophecy in three parts. In the first, Isaiah is writing of the nation of Israel. Verses 1-4 offer the presentation of Israel in the eyes of God : 'Here is my servant'. The passage ends with the commission to the nation to keep God's covenant and take it as a light to the nations.

In Christ we find our second part.

Of course Isaiah would know of the future coming of the Messiah and this reading foretells our great saviour. It is in the form of Jesus that the word becomes flesh and it is His commission that brings light and justice across the Earth. Yet it is in the light of Christian discipleship that we find our third part.

As followers of Christ, what is it we are called to be? God's servant, His chosen nation, full of His spirit. It is through these hands that the fulfilment of the prophecy can be realised. It is in the moment of our baptism that we become the light of the world, a light to the nations, a light to open the eyes that are blind. In Isaiah we are called to live as God's chosen servants. A covenant we keep at the end of worship each week:

'Go in peace, to love and serve the Lord.'

**Rob Thain,
St Mark's Shared Church, Bordon**

March 11th

Psalm 17

The Psalm reminds us that we can carry our deepest burdens and worries to God with confidence. We CAN ask God to protect us from those things that might harm us.

It reminds us that our relationship with God is intended to be mutual and substantial, not individual and trite. It is a relationship best expressed when we view God as a part of a mutual and familiar bond; when we claim Him as our own and walk in His ways, whether we find ourselves in the best of, or even the worst of, situations.

In real terms, we have no choice but to participate in this relationship confidently. We voice our pleas and petitions to God, confident He will answer, and will show steadfast love, as He has done, is doing, and will continue to do for all those who seek refuge in His arms.

We are encouraged, through the Psalm to believe that, no matter what, God will guide us, comfort us and support us until we are in His Presence.

*Lord, I call on You, I know and trust You will answer me.
Show me the wonders of Your great and steadfast love.
You have saved me, and I find refuge in You. Keep me as
the apple of Your eye. Hide me in the shadow of Your
wings... Amen.*

[Candace Crabtree]

**Mike Danson
St Teresa of Avila RC Church, Chiddingfold**

March 12th

2 Peter 2:4-21

Donald Tusk wondered about the 'special place in hell reserved for those who promoted Brexit without a sketch of a plan how to carry it out safely'. Others have wondered about Donald Tusk's theology. Do the sins referred to by Peter compare with those referred to by Mr Tusk?

Noah's contemporaries, the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, those who carouse in broad daylight with eyes full of adultery, experts in greed and those who mouth empty boastful words appealing to lustful human desires to lure people into depravity while promising freedom. Peter is clear that they are promised punishment. But there's more to it than that.

Peter mentions false teachers in verses 1-3 and verses 20-22 refer to those who know and turn their backs on the ways of righteousness.

It is about leading others astray, deceit and promising something that either can't or you have no intention of delivering.

It is about putting other behaviour, objects, sensations or people in the place of God.

Perhaps, when his sentence is read in full, Donald Tusk's theology is not so far wide of the mark.

Lord, give us wisdom to see your ways of truth and to hold to them against all other enticing possibilities.

**Revd David Muskett
Haslemere Methodist Church**

April 14th Palm Sunday

Luke 23:1-49

"Jesus, remember me."

That plea from the thief on the cross beside Jesus echoes a cry that arises from deep within us all.

There is life in being remembered. When we are remembered we are made whole. Despite the scattered pieces of our lives, things done and left undone, in the moment of being remembered we are seen, recognized, and known by name.

This remembering is more than recalling a past event or not forgetting to buy some milk. It's re-remembering; joining the fractured pieces together as one.

The thief on the cross wants to be re-remembered, healed, and like him we want to have the pieces re-remembered. Pieces that have been scattered and lost, through the circumstances of life: loss and grief, shattered dreams, disappointment. "Today you will be with me in paradise," Jesus promises him.

Paradise is the state of being re-remembered. It is what Jesus offers us as he dies. In His eyes we are forever remembered, re-remembered, and restored.

Does anyone recall the 1978 pop song by Hot Chocolate? It includes the lyrics:

*"I'll lead you out of the darkness and then
I'll put you together again."*

*Jesus, re-member me, when you come into your Kingdom.
Amen.*

**Revd Deborah Scott-Bromley,
St Mark's Shared Church, Bordon**

April 13th

Luke 22 : 1-13

I relate to Judas, who tries to figure things out rather than accept them unquestioningly. Committed to a cause – and facing total meltdown when hopes seem dashed. In despair, he “loses it” out of control, pressing self-destruct! Momentarily not caring who he “takes down” – in this case, Jesus, who had promised so much but been his biggest let down. Reality check, Judas! Welcome to my sad world!

“Satan entered him”. But even without this influence, aren't we prone to “flipping” as Judas does here? Don't we also struggle to maintain balanced outlook, and actions sometimes?

But the greatest thing about Judas for me is Jesus! Jesus, the all-knowing then accepts Judas, the REAL Judas, to the most special meal ever.

Betrayer and friend both graciously welcomed!
“Amazing” is too small a word to describe God's Grace!

When they went to prepare the Passover we're told simply: “they found things just as Jesus said”. Ever wondered how the Passion would have panned out had Judas waited and, found that Jesus WAS the Way after all? Me too!

Would you join me today in pondering prayer, thanking God for total acceptance despite all our flaws?

**Revd Ray Stanyon
Training and Development officer
Wessex Synod United Reformed Church**

March 13th

Job 1:1-22

Wisdom literature like the Book of Job is to explore some of the hard questions of life; it shows God's ways to live whatever circumstances currently prevail.

The problem being explored in Job is the ‘problem of underserved suffering’. Put in terms of a question it is ‘why do bad things happen to good people?’

In simple terms, the answer is ‘because bad things happen to people.’

In this first chapter we are introduced to the character of Satan. Satan is the accuser. It is Satan's job to accuse people before God as a kind of Counsel for the prosecution. He suggests that Job is only good and faithful because he is successful, prosperous and healthy.

God has more faith in Job than that and Job shows himself to be faithful; Job did not curse God; Job did not sin in what he said.

How far can we join in with Job?

‘The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away;
May the name of the Lord be praised.’

Lord give us wisdom to live faithfully whatever circumstances we are in and praise you for all that you are.

**Revd David Muskett
Haslemere Methodist Church**

March 14th

Philippians 3:2-12

Lent is traditionally a time for discipline. Some people give things up; others do something extra. It's not too late to start(!) but the best disciplines go beyond the practical details. It might mean giving to charity what we would have spent on ... (fill in what you give up!) It might mean fitting in an extra period of prayer, voluntary work or time spent with a lonely neighbour.

Disciplines are by their nature practical, physical, material. But they can help train the inner person. If we discipline our body and mind in the right ways it can help to train our souls. But it is not the discipline that counts. It is not what we do that makes the difference but the doing of it whatever it is (within reason).

In Philippians Paul is keen to point out that the outward aspects of life that might seem to give him an advantage really count for nothing.

The key to life (now and eternally) is to participate in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ – now and eternally.

Lord give me the discipline to press forward to take hold of the resurrection of your Son through participation in his life and suffering.

**Revd David Muskett
Lindford Methodist Church**

April 12th

Isaiah 54:9-10

Whilst insurance companies still refer to “acts of God” as a get out clause, we usually see floods and earthquakes in scientific terms. We may not be able to control, but we understand the phenomena. It's difficult to put ourselves in the position of people who attributed such events to God's anger.

In that context, Isaiah reassures the Hebrew people of God's love and care. On one hand, God is not going to cause another flood, as in Noah's time. On the other, earthquakes may occur, but God is alongside despite the uproar.

Two Hebrew words, with no direct equivalents in English, characterise God's dealings with the people. '**Hesed**', often translated as 'steadfast love', has overtones of loyalty, of love as self-giving action, not just feelings. '**Shalom**' is more familiar, expressing wholeness, not just peace. Those two words characterise God's dealings with us.

Flood and earthquake are possible but not likely for us, but if all goes according to plan today will be a fortnight since Brexit which is a different sort of earth moving experience. Whatever has, or hasn't happened on that front, knowing that our God is a god of hesed and shalom should comfort and inspire.

**Revd Clare Downing
Moderator of Wessex Synod
United Reformed Church**

April 11th

Hebrews: 2:1-9

Next time you go out notice how many people are wearing headphones, walking around and listening to what - podcasts, music, telephone conversations? The list is endless. How many times do we listen and not hear – like those early years of children’s “Why?” questions that we never really heard! How many times have we sat in a meeting, or in Church, and listened but not really taken in what’s being said?

This passage encourages us to listen and hear more carefully so that we don’t drift from the truth that Jesus is our hope and salvation. But to ‘drift away’ comes so naturally sometimes. Our minds wander - shopping lists, birthdays, did we let the cat out? Did we let the cat in!? It isn’t easy to stop, and yet an easy life is not what we are promised, but something much better.

So how can we live a life with ears truly open to Jesus’ words? How can we live a life to his glory with focussed hearts? Perhaps taking 15 minutes a day to sit, listen and be with Jesus is a beginning. And perhaps spending time with the scriptures, as he did, is a good start too.

**Jane White
All Saints Church, Grayswood**

March 15th

Genesis 14:17-24

The various alliances between different kings in Abram’s time make modern day politics look simple and straightforward. The key thing is that Abram has pulled off an unlikely victory on behalf of his allies, especially the king of Sodom.

The king of Sodom wants to reward Abram by giving him the goods he has recovered that had been taken from Sodom. Abram refused any reward. It sounds very magnanimous and gracious of him. It looks as though he recognises that this is property that has been taken from Sodom and it is no more right for him to benefit from their misfortune than for those who took it in the first place.

But there is a curious incident in the middle of Abram’s encounter with the king of Sodom.

Melchizedek, as priest of God Most High draws attention to God’s action in blessing Abram and enabling his victory.

Magnanimity, grace or a concern for just property rights would have been good reason to refuse the property. Abram praised God for his deliverance and gave a tenth to God through Melchizedek and insisted that others be given their share because he recognised that his successes were attributed to God’s blessing.

**Revd David Muskett
Lindford Methodist Church**

March 16th

Matthew 23: 37-39

Suddenly the tone of Matthew's narrative changes. Previously, anger or accusations; now, just grief, sadness, and lament.

This seems more in character with the Jesus Matthew has told us about throughout the rest of his gospel and it may help explain some of the preceding anger. Anger is a defensive reaction to fear, hurt, pain, grief, and more. And so perhaps Jesus' anger reflects pain and hurt and grief over rejection by those he loves.

This helps us understand how when we are under duress we are not always at our best and we need to give voice to, and deal with, our underlying emotions, lest they get the better of us.

In this passage we see and hear and feel God's tremendous love for His people, as the God to whom Jesus witnesses wants in this moment nothing more than to draw a wayward city and people into a motherly embrace of love, like a hen gathering her brood. It is worth reflecting on this image of God's love.

Dear God, remind us always of your great love for us, especially when we are hurt or afraid, so we avoid responding in anger. Amen.

**Alison Griffiths
Midhurst Methodist Church**

April 10th

Luke 18: 31 – 34

How well we think we understand everything now and how astonishing it is that the disciples then seemed so slow to grasp what was being explained to them. Or is it? "But they understood nothing ... in fact, what he said was hidden from them."

A strange phrase.

Why were these things hidden from them?

There is a paradoxical truth at the heart of most Christian believers' experience that living with uncertainty is essential to spiritual growth. Easily said though. Many of us battle with fearful uncertainty and long for some kind of assurance from God that all will be well, but still we find ourselves standing in a hard place full of foreboding.

But the church too easily peddles the wrong kind of certainty and fails to teach that uncertainty is often the place that God does the deepest surgery.

It is not that our heavenly Father is playing some kind of perverse game with us, quite the opposite – it is because the divine embrace is often most powerfully experienced in the darkest moments of doubt.

Loving God, help me today to live courageously with the unanswered questions and to trust in your faithful hand in the dark of uncertainty.

**Richard Everett
All Saints Church, Grayswood**

April 9th

1 John 2: 18-28

Have you ever felt like you didn't belong somewhere? Like being invited to a wedding or a party not knowing anyone but the host; feeling obliged to be there and counting down until you could discretely leave. Or times you have felt like you just didn't fit into a group, felt outside the cliques / social invitations.

Our challenge today is to remember that **belonging** means that we are a key part of God's family. So much of what John writes is directed to us as children – to remind us that we are children of our heavenly Father; that we are brothers and sisters in Christ and belong entirely within His family.

Nothing else matters if we remain in the Son, and live as Jesus did. In a world full of fake news (antichrists), we are called to let the Word of God live in us, to remain in Him, and remember His truth so that we know and do what is right.

*Heavenly Father – help us to live in you; to know that we are your dearly cherished children. Help us hold on to your truth, learn what is not of you, and ever more live as Christ did.
Amen.*

**James Hanson
St. Stephens Church, Shottermill**

March 17th

Luke 13: 31-35

Imagine Christ standing on the road towards Jerusalem. Are the Pharisees warning him about the danger he is moving towards for their own sakes, or because of King Herod, who was issuing threats and had recently beheaded John the Baptist?

Jesus won't be halted by threats from the governing powers that have been acted upon in the past. He emphasizes his words by assuring us the work he is doing will be done today, tomorrow, and the day after that—the one who determines the time and the hour is God and not Herod. He is perhaps alluding to his crucifixion and resurrection. He then repeats himself, and adds “because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside Jerusalem.” He knew he would die in Jerusalem.

Christ knew that hearts, minds, and destructive systems are not changed overnight. He understood our impatience, that the wrongs of the world be righted.

We see him walking towards forces of violence and oppression in the city.

As we journey with him, take time to examine our own hearts; reflect on the way we seek justice.

May His love inspire our courage to overcome fear and to seek justice. Amen.

**Alison Griffiths
Midhurst Methodist Church**

March 18th

Romans 4:1-12

Paul in this letter to the Jews in Rome uses Abraham as an example of a man who had worth and standing. He had something to boast about but not before God. It was when he believed God that it was credited to him as righteousness in the sight of God. He set out on a march without a map and he trusted God to lead him.

Good works give us something to boast about but only before other people. This doesn't impress God who sees the heart. It is when we believe God and trust Him that righteousness is granted and the slate is wiped clean. No "do-gooding" can achieve this.

Abraham was not a circumcised Jew when he first obeyed God's will for him. We are justified – made righteous, accepted in God's sight- not by circumcision, baptism or any other ritual or ceremony but by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The name Abraham reminds me of the song, "Rock my soul in the bosom of Abraham" which contains a gem of a verse in the middle. "My soul is glad, My sins are free, I'm going home to liberty." Not because we have earned it or deserve it but because Jesus offers it as a free gift.

So let your soul rock!

Lord, just as I am, I come to you. Amen

**Christine Salter
Liphook Methodist Church**

April 8th

Exodus 40 v 1 – 15

Have you ever gone camping, possibly with a new tent? You take out of the bag each tent piece, poles, tent pegs, ropes and canvas. The instructions show how each piece has its own role and place, all coming together to make a place that you will call home.

The Tabernacle was 'God's tent', a place that he would be and that His people could come in worship and meet with Him. A place that was anointed and consecrated as holy and sacred. The Ark of the Covenant, seen as a symbol of God's presence, was put in place, with a curtain to shield the Israelites from His awesome majesty and splendour. Every item and bit of design of the tabernacle there to enable God's people to worship, offer sacrifices and draw closer to Him.

As we continue through Lent and draw closer to celebrating Easter we continue to do so in worship and reverence. Ensuring that we set aside that place to meet with God and for God to make his presence known to us.

A place and time that is sacred and holy for God.

**Simon McEvansoneya
St Stephen's Church, Shottermill**

April 7th

John 12: 1-8

Jerusalem is crowded. Passover approaches. Jesus, hunted by the chief priests and Pharisees, comes to Bethany. As dinner is served, Mary anoints Jesus's feet, wiping them with her hair.

"The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume."

The use of pure, costly nard celebrates Jesus's kingly nature, and prefigures the servant king of John 13, washing the disciples' feet (12-15). It's an intimate, generous, humble gesture: Mary bends her head and hands, caring for our Lord. How deep in grace this moment is.

Though the precious oil recalls other gifts - gold, frankincense, myrrh - it has undertones of the latter, which are made explicit: "She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial." Embalming with spices and perfumes has been anticipated (Luke 23: 55-56, John 19: 39-40).

Judas, who sees only the price of the gift outpoured, disrupts the moment. He twists Jesus's solicitude for the poor: "Why was this perfume not sold..." but receives an austere response: "Leave her alone."

Lord Jesus, may we follow You faithfully, so that Your name is perfume poured out for all. Amen

**Zoe Clarke
Parish of Haslemere**

March 19th

Psalm 105:1 – 15,42

"Remember the wonders he has done...you his chosen ones, the children of Jacob"

Remembering is something Christians do collectively especially when we share bread and wine. Moreover, if we are to "Look to the Lord and his strength" (ie to have confidence in God to see us through that important meeting, that hospital appointment, that big decision we are facing) then it is crucial that we can recall God's faithfulness to us in the past. But how?

Some keep a journal where they record answers to prayer – helpful to re-read when things are tough. It's also important to share our stories with others as this can be a great encouragement. The psalmist here recounts God's faithfulness to Jacob, Joseph and Moses and reminds the people of the Exodus – that defining moment in Jewish history. That is also our history – all those who belong to the Messiah are now God's people and heirs of Jacob. If that all feels a bit remote for the issues you are facing right now, who do you know who has walked this road before you?

Let us not be afraid of telling each other of God's activity in our lives - this will indeed give us strength and encouragement and even more reason to sing this Eastertide.

**Marian Muskett
Haslemere Methodist Church**

March 20th

Luke 13:22-31

I stayed for a week with the Iona Community. Responsibilities were allocated each day - housekeeping, kitchen duties and assisting with worship.

On the last day we were told there was a special evening celebration in Iona Abbey - "Heaven on Earth". We were advised to get there early for the 6pm service.

Alas my chore that evening was supper wash-up, which meant I would perhaps just make it on time. I ran down to the Abbey quite flustered and squeezed into other folk crowded in the entrance. Couldn't see a thing. And then a voice came from the front "Those people who have just come in - come forward - there are seats here". We were ushered through - to be seated at a refectory table laden with food and drink. The heavenly banqueting table. And John Bell declared "The Last shall be First!"

God delights in the great reversal, the topsy turvy, the unexpected.

*Lord, for now we live in a world where money and power reign, but Your Kingdom favours the lowly, the insignificant, the unworthy. Thank you that we are saved only by your Grace, and may we be invited to take our reserved complimentary seat at your heavenly banqueting table.
Amen.*

**Linda Daruvala
St. Alban's Church**

April 6th

John 11.45-57

The main concern of the Jewish Council was to avoid destruction of the temple in Jerusalem by the Romans. This had already happened by the late 1st Century when John wrote his Gospel. While Caiaphas' prophesy is true on this occasion, we now know that God's children are dispersed across all nations, not just Jews in exile.

Elsewhere, John agrees that Jesus's death is a propitiating sacrifice but only in obedience to his father as a sign of love for all mankind.

Why do we think that Jesus died for each one of us today?

*Dear Lord, most people today fear death. This Easter, let us leave ourselves in no doubt on this issue, since we cannot spend eternity hanging by a thread. Jesus went to the cross, and made his way through death to something wonderful beyond Earthly life. Let him take your hand, tired, weak and worn as we are, and his journey will be ours too.
Amen*

**Peter Sellars
St Bartholomew's, Haslemere**

April 5th

Isaiah 43:8-15

In this time of turmoil and uncertainty in the politics of our country, Europe and the world, it is good to focus on the certainty of our Lord. He is in control, the Creator who loves us.

God's people had so often gone astray and yet here they are restored and once more redeemed and secure in his love, as their saviour.

Elements of a courtroom scene with witnesses point to the verdict – 'I am God, and henceforth I am He. There is no one who can deliver from my hand' – or as a modern version puts it: 'No one can snatch you from me'.

Prayer: - The Shema, the oldest daily prayer in Judaism:
Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and soul, and mind.
(Deut 6; v.4,5)

*Lord may we rest in the assurance of your protection this day,
and that when we pass through the waters, you will be with us.
(Isaiah 43: 2)*

**Dorothea Natrass
Parish of Haslemere**

March 21st

Revelation 2:8-11

In this section of Revelation we see the inspired word of God for 7 churches in Asia Minor. Each had its own characteristics, and, as with everything in the Bible, each message is relevant and resonates down all the ages to us today.

Smyrna was a proud, prosperous city that proudly proclaimed loyalty to Rome. It also had a well-established and influential religious community who was hostile to the Christians and did all it could to pile 'afflictions' 'poverty' and 'persecution' upon them. No wonder Jesus, through John, chose it as one of 7 churches to send Word to.

It seems to me that the wealthier and more influential a community, city or country becomes, the greater the risk of it believing in its own power, might, righteousness, and invincibility, which can lead to Hubris. I see frightening examples of Hubristic behaviour all around these days.

Eternal Father, you know everything about me. You know my afflictions and my poverty and how susceptible I am to human weaknesses. I come to you again, trusting in your grace and love. Help me to tune all my decisions and actions today to your purposes and your eternal promise for me. Amen

**Richard Maybury
St Alban's Hindhead**

March 22nd

Daniel 12: 1-4

These verses, offering hope amidst persecution, are one of the only clear statements in the Old Testament that there is life after death.

Jesus was born into a Jewish community, less than 200 years after the writings of the book of Daniel were accepted as part of Judaic Scripture. His contemporaries would be familiar with this prophecy of a day of judgment followed by an eternity of glory for those Jews who had been faithful to God's teaching and "everlasting grief" for the rest.

However did they, like me when I read this passage, wonder if they could "lead many people to righteousness" or be "wise" enough to be allowed to "shine... for ever and ever"?

Then I attended a funeral today and was reminded of those reassuring words from that same Jesus: "... my Father's will is that everyone (all mankind) who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." [John 6:40].

*Father God. I believe in your Son, who died and rose again.
May I live according to His teachings, bearing witness to many
people of your love and glory, and come into your eternal king-
dom.*

**Jennifer Charters.
St. Alban's**

April 4th

Philippians 2: 19 – 24

In the context of 'No Greater Love', Paul was writing this letter under house-arrest, probably in Rome, awaiting trial with a possible death sentence as the outcome.

His alleged crime was that of breaking Jewish law by telling Christianised Jews that they might follow Jesus' law of love, rather than the law of Moses and defiling the Temple by allowing Gentiles into the building.

These few verses exemplify his love for those to whom he is writing but also his awareness of what Timothy means to him. Timothy is to be the bearer of Paul's love to Philippi but also to return cheer to Paul with news from the infant church there. Letters took a long time in those days, so to be without Timothy who meant so much, was a loving sacrifice.

Personal relationships matter. We need to love and to be loved and we need to express it, not necessarily in words but in our lifestyle and actions.

*Heavenly Father,
Help us to go deeper into your love for us,
that we may love more deeply
however costly it may seem. Amen.*

**Margaret Tracey,
Fleet United Reformed Church.**

April 3rd

Luke 9: 10-17

It's been a long hard day, but finally the sun starts to set and the disciples think finally they can relax and enjoy a meagre but well earned dinner. But Jesus asks them to give what little they had to the hungry masses with them. They understandably hesitate yet somehow, with Jesus' blessing, food for 13 became food for thousands with plenty left over.

Did Jesus produce food from nowhere, or was it simply that the selfless act inspired others to share what they had? Perhaps either way we are shown that great things can come even from the smallest acts of kindness.

We may not have the power to make food appear from nowhere or feed thousands single-handed. But together our seemingly paltry food offerings have supplied foodbanks to do just that. And I think the same applies more generally.

When we take the trouble to help someone, even in those seemingly small everyday ways, we remind them that they are important and loved to and by God. And that can inspire a chain of loving acts, far reaching.

I hope you are as lucky as me to have people inspiring you in your places of worship.

**Matthew Dumbleton
Fleet United Reformed Church**

March 23rd

Luke 6: 43-45

There is a saying "Actions speak louder than words". This may be true, but in today's passage we are asked to consider not only our actions and words, but also the way we conduct ourselves. The way we act, speak and handle situations reveal what is really going on in our hearts.

The "fruit" we produce will affect how other people see us. What we speak, say, and do unveil the attitudes that flow from our hearts. Good fruits, such as love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, and self-control can only come from a good heart, a heart that has been changed by God.

We are encouraged to reflect on the fruits we bring to the different aspects of our lives. We need to continually ask ourselves whether we reflect the fullness and joy of our hearts, and how we use our good fruits to demonstrate a little of God's goodness to others.

:
Holy God, fill our hearts with your love by the power of your Holy Spirit. Let the love we receive reflect the words we say, and the actions we take, so that a little of your understanding and compassion shine through in our lives. Amen.

**Peter Jones
St Alban's Church, Hindhead**

March 24th

1 Corinthians 10:1–13

I don't mean to boast but I am really blessed. I have an amazing husband, two beautiful daughters, a nice house and garden, and a great job. However, this morning voices were raised between my daughters and I, which quickly led to unkind things being said. Thankfully, once we had all calmed down, we were able to see each other's point of view and apologise.

The Israelites had experienced God's blessings too. They had been rescued from slavery in Egypt, safely passed through the Red Sea, and given plenty to eat and drink in the desert. So, did the Israelites gratefully and faithfully obey God's laws? No, they began to 'indulge in pagan revelry', 'commit sexual immorality', become 'idolaters', – and grumble!

All of us are prone to temptation of some sort but it is how we respond to it that is important. For me, it is to fly off the handle when my girls don't help around the house. For you, it might be something else. But whatever it is, God has promised to be with us in those times of temptation, not to give us more that we can bear, and to provide us with a way to cope.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for the many times you have blessed me. In times of temptation, please be with me and give me the quiet strength to resist. Amen.

**Andrea Bodle
St Alban's Church**

April 2nd

Psalm 53

How do you feel when you read this Psalm? Despite previous experience of struggling with the subject of sin during "*Christianity Explored*", my immediate reaction was horrified denial.

Once again, I had to grapple with the idea that I am a sinner and to remind myself what it is that makes me a sinner, despite my conversion, my worship, my charity and service to others.

Jesus stated clearly what is expected of us. We are to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength; we are to love one another as he has loved us; we are to follow him, even in the way of the cross. Do any of us manage that - all the time, in every circumstance? Of course not!

The psalm ends with a prayer for deliverance. That prayer was answered in the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus. Grace has interposed and, providing we do our best to follow as Jesus asked, our sins will be forgiven and we shall see God and be glad.

*Loving Father, I confess to you my faults and failings,
And I commit to you my devotion and discipleship,
In the name of Jesus, Amen.*

**Beverley Carpenter
Fleet Methodist Church**

April 1st

Revelation 19:1-8

The Book of Revelation is a great and present comfort to all who struggle in this world against the forces of evil and suffering, and looks forward to the perfecting of all God's people in the new life to come.

The aim of this book is to show us that things are not what they *seem*.

The praise that John records is the heartfelt joy which all the redeemed (including us) offer to God around the throne for His great and complete victory over evil, death and hell. The powers of evil have been destroyed never to rise again; the smoke from Babylon (the great harlot of avarice, materialism and greed with whom the great of the earth have consorted) goes up for ever and ever; a fire never to be quenched.

The Great Wedding Feast of the Lamb has come; the redeemed are dressed in finest linen, as a Bride ready for the Lamb, in stark contrast to corrupted Babylon.

On Good Friday, the powers of evil *seem* to have destroyed Jesus, King of Peace. But Christ's Resurrection on Easter Sunday overcoming the powers of evil, death and hell, is a foretaste of the greater victory which shall be.

**Robert Mitchell
Beacon Hill United Reformed Church**

March 25th

Psalms 39

This psalm is an appeal for God's mercy, because life is so brief. David resolved to keep his tongue from sin. He decided not to complain to other people about God's perceived treatment of him. David certainly had reason to complain. When he could not keep still any longer, he took his complaints directly to God.

We all have complaints about our jobs, money, our unpleasant situations, ill health, but complaining to others may make them think that God cannot take care of us when trials oppress us. It may also look as if we blame God for our troubles.

Life is short, no matter how long we live. If there is something important we want to do, we must not procrastinate and put it off for another day. The brevity of life is a theme throughout the Psalms, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. David realised that amassing earthly riches and busily accomplishing worldly tasks, makes no difference to eternity. Jesus also talks about the dangers of this in Luke 12:20 and urges us to concentrate on storing up treasures in heaven.

Lord, heed the voice of my supplication! Sanctify me through your truth, your word is truth. Amen.

**Mel Goldhawk-Smith,
St Mark's Shared Church, Bordon**

March 26th

Ezekiel 17: 1-10

To what does this eloquent parable refer?
What is the great eagle?
Why Lebanon?

It refers to the cataclysmic events of the sixth century BC. The land of Judah and the city of Jerusalem, with the Temple, the 'home' of Yahweh, were invaded, conquered by the Babylonians. The great eagle is the king of Babylon, who entered Israel from Lebanon, down a route to Jerusalem lined with majestic cedars. The eagle took off the top of the cedar and carried it away. In other words, the king abducted the Jewish king and the leaders of Judah, the topmost shoot, and took them to a 40-year exile in Babylon. (The second eagle is thought to represent Egypt, but that's another story!)

Ezekiel says that God, the Holy One at the heart of the cosmos, is a power far greater than that of Babylon. There will be a time when the cedars of Israel will produce fruit and every kind of bird will nest in the shade of its branches. In this context 'the birds of the air', hints at a time of unity, when all peoples and nations will be as one in the kingdom of God.

At such a time as this, when concord between nations is so fragile, let's encourage those birds to alight in our branches.

**Revd Deborah Scott-Bromley,
St Mark's Shared Church, Bordon**

March 31st

2 Corinthians 5: 16 – 21

Have you ever been reading a Bible passage and you suddenly have to pause, go back and re-read the words that have caught your attention, stopping in awe at the message just sitting there?
This was such a one for me.

The apostle Paul tells us we are ambassadors for Christ. We are His representatives, challenged to speak out about our faith, not to limit ourselves to Sunday only church or only speaking of our faith in the company and security of those we know share it, but to show anyone and everyone what the new life in Christ looks like.

We are told to be brave enough to actively share the good news. Taking the opportunity to speak and live as God's messengers whenever we can is likely to stretch us, deepening and growing our relationship with God.

We are His messengers who are meant to tell others what we know.

We are ambassadors for Christ, making His appeal to all we meet so they come to know our reconciling God.

We are envoys for Christ, for this work of reconciliation.

What message will others receive from you?

Inspiring God, give us the courage and strength to be Christ's ambassadors. May we remember, in all we say and do, we are His messengers speaking His Word of mercy and grace. Amen

**Karen Smith
Beacon Hill United Reformed Church**

March 30th

Luke 15: 1-10

We should all feel cherished by God when reading this parable of the Lost Sheep.

Jesus tells this parable when surrounded by Tax collectors and Pharisees criticising him for and eating with “sinners.”

In this parable I often wonder why the shepherd left the 99 sheep, to look for the missing one, but no doubt he made sure the 99 were safe in a fold before leaving them! He knew it was worthwhile looking for the lost sheep, as sheep are valuable. Just as we are in God’s sight.

And this is how God cares for us, He searches for us when we stray into dangerous areas, wander from the path and most importantly, fail to hear His word. But, like the shepherd, He never gives up until He finds us.

Just as with the woman who lost one of her precious silver coins given to her at her wedding, God grieves over every precious loss, but rejoices when we are found and brought back to the fold.

As in one Bible commentary:

“If you feel far from God, don’t despair. He is searching for you”.

Dear Lord, thank you that we are worth looking for even though we are all sinners. Amen

**Bridget Mitchell
Beacon Hill United Reformed Church**

March 27th

Luke 13: 18-21

Do you like growing flowers and vegetables?

I know I do and when first planted I water and feed regularly and am excited when they first show their shoots and look forward to having something beautiful to look at or tasty to eat.

Yeast is amazing too, a very small amount will allow the dough to expand many times to make many loaves, or make real Ginger Beer!

It matters not how big or small the seed or tuber is to begin with, or the amount of yeast, and that is like us with God.

It matters not when I started my walk with God, be it yesterday or many years ago, but my daily walk needs feeding and watering.

We grow as Christians from very small beginnings and as we nurture our faith through prayer, study and fellowship with other Christians we grow into what God intended us to be.

Like the plants, if we fail to water and feed regularly, they wither and die and we do not reap their potential so it is with us, we may need repotting and nurturing to reach our full potential.

**Mavis Pritchard
St Mark’s Shared Church Bordon**

March 28th

2 Corinthians 4:16

How often have you had occasion to 'lose heart'? We are challenged, we challenge ourselves, we think we are not doing well, that things have gone wrong and that we are failing or not recovering. We may have a long term health problem, a disability, a difficult relationship, problems at work, financial worries and inside we may feel that we are being consumed, eaten up, whether physically or mentally.

We may even appear to be wasting away – coping is difficult. But Christ within us is there always, to give us strength, to renew our flagging spirits, to give us hope. By faith, and absorbing and applying the lessons we learn in church and in our reading of the Bible, we are made strong again for this life, enabling us to deal with the present and to prepare ourselves for the glories and wholeness of eternity.

Lord God, give me courage and strength to face the difficulties I have at present. Let me not 'lose heart'. Help me in my prayer life. Refresh and renew my faith in you and restore my spirit daily. Help me to love and forgive others and to acknowledge that despite my flaws and failures I will be forgiven myself and, in due course, raised in glory to eternal life. I ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, the Great Redeemer, who gives us the victory. Amen.

**Jennifer Radford
Beacon Hill United Reformed Church, Hindhead**

March 29th

Joshua 4:14-24

This is the point in history when God's promise to Abraham is at last about to be fulfilled. The children of Israel have reached the promised Land, the Canaanites territories which they must conquer and occupy.

After the long wearisome years of slavery in Egypt and wanderings in the desert regions, the foundations of the nation state of Israel are being laid at Gilgal, the site of the first encampment of God's chosen people in their new homeland.

Twelve local stones taken from the bed of the River Jordan, one for each of the tribes of Israel, have been set up in a stone circle to commemorate their safe arrival under the power and providence of their mighty God.

The turbulent history of Israel is marked by apostasy and true belief (conformity), captivity and release, exile and return and above all, territorial disputes concerning the ownership and occupation of the Holy land.

*Lord, land is so precious
Let us always remember that land is your gift to us ,
to care and tend the land,
to walk gently on the land,
to appreciate the fruits and harvest from the seasons;
these and many more are your bountiful blessings to us
and we are forever humbled and grateful
Amen*

**Rosemary Northway
Beacon Hull United Reformed Church**