

The Methodist Church

Bishopston, Easter Compton, Horfield, Shirehampton Methodist Churches and St Peter's Pilning.
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We are part of the Bristol and South Gloucestershire Circuit (www.bsgc.org.uk),
a family of over forty churches serving communities across the local area.
These notices are also posted on <http://www.horfieldmethodist.org.uk>

"The best of all - God is with us." (John Wesley).



Who could imagine this time last year when we were approaching Easter, that a year on we would still be living under Covid-19 restrictions. Someone recently commented that this must have been the longest "lent" in history. I understood what they meant, during the past year as individuals, as communities, as global village we have given up so much, and yet the hope of Easter has also been both obvious and real:

And the people stayed home, and read books and listened, and rested and exercised and made art, and played games, and learned new ways of being, and were still and listened more deeply.

Some meditated, some prayed, some danced. Some met their shadows.

And the people began to think differently. And the people healed. And, in the absence of people living in ignorant, dangerous, mindless, and heartless ways the earth began to heal.

And when the danger passed and the people joined together again, they grieved their losses, and made new choices, and dreamed new images, and created new ways to live and heal the earth fully as they had healed.

(Kathleen O Meara, written in 1869 as a response to the Irish Famine)

More recently the poet, priest, Malcolm Guite penned:

And where is Jesus, this strange Easter day? Not lost in our locked churches, anymore

Than he was sealed in that dark sepulchre. The locks are loosed; the stone is rolled away,

And he is up and risen, long before, Alive, at large, and making his strong way

Into the world he gave his life to save, No need to seek him in his empty grave.

He might have been a wafer in the hands Of priests this day, or music from the lips

Of red-robed choristers, instead he slips Away from church, shakes off our linen bands

To don his apron with a nurse: he grips, And lifts a stretcher, soothes with gentle hands

The frail flesh of the dying, gives them hope, Breathes with the breathless, lends them strength to cope.

On Thursdays we applauded, for he came, And served us in a thousand names and faces

Mopping our sickroom floors and catching traces Of that virus which was death to him:

Good Friday happened in a thousand places, Where Jesus held the helpless, died with them

That they might share his Easter in their need, Now they are risen with him, risen indeed.

Guite's poem reminds us that during the past year whether we felt it or not, amidst all the pain, hurt, sorrows and anxieties, we have not been alone, God has been with us, and as we look to the future, the God of yesterday, and today journeys with us - *Behold I am making all things new.* (Revelations 21: 5) We rejoice that some churches around the Circuit have been able to reopen for worship, others will continue online for a while longer. I urge caution as people start to go out over the coming months, please follow the rules as the pandemic is far from being over.

From a letter written by Rev David Alderman (Superintendent) for the Circuit Newsletter.

FORTHCOMING SERVICES

Bishopston, Easter Compton, Horfield and Shirehampton. During the current period of lockdown our services will be held on Zoom only. Please see the last page of these notices for details of Zoom, including how to dial in. If you would like support with accessing these services online or via the phone, please make contact with a Church Steward or Rev Patrick.

Joint Service on 11 April at 10.00 led by Rev Dr David Bolton

Joint Service on 18 April at 10.00 led by Rev Patrick Stonehewer

St Peter's, Pilning on 11 April at 10.00 Service held at the Church and led by Christine Jones

St Peter's, Pilning on 18 April at 10.00 Service held at the Church.

Junior Church sessions continue online every Sunday at 10.00 after Easter Sunday. Email Helen before Saturday midday (treasurer@horfieldmethodist.org.uk) for the Zoom access details.

Bible Study - 14 April at 7.45pm-9.15pm. You are all invited to join with colleagues across the circuit to study the book of Acts, looking at the whole book with companion passages from Luke's Gospel. This will journey into deeper discipleship through engaging with the Methodist Way of Life and alongside the contemporary mission and ministry of the Church today, with contributions from people across our Circuit. Please do consider joining this - for more details contact David Bainbridge or Rev Patrick.

Video reflections. Our online worship videos will continue to be available via church websites. Thank you to those who have contributed to these.

All Age devotions. Free materials for everyone available via www.rootsontheweb.com.

OTHER WORSHIP DETAILS

Sunday Worship - BBC Radio 4, on 11 April at 08.10 - at Holy Trinity Scottish Episcopal Church, Melrose- "The Story of the Road to Emmaus".

Daily Service - Each weekday on BBC Radio 4 LW at 09.45. - The Resurrected Jesus

Songs of Praise - BBC1 on 11 April at 13.15- Aled Jones at Newshead Abbey in Nottinghamshire

Open Church Cafe, 12 April, 10.00 onwards hosted by St Peter's Pilning. Please contact churchwardenpilning@gmail.com for the joining details.

Evening Prayer 12 April 4pm hosted by St Peter's Pilning, using the Church of England "Join us in Daily Prayer" resources <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer>

To help keep the Easter message alive, the recorded BIG SING is available via <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dv5ambintOk> as is the Circuit Easter Service <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3NYVAX0XB08>

Circuit. Join our Touching the Earth Lightly Facebook group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/275195130693427> A resource pack, containing all these resources, is available through the Circuit website and by e-mail.

Circuit Coronavirus Worship resources and resources for reflection are available on the Circuit website, including a daily prayer, using the Methodist Prayer Handbook, for use at 12.00 noon.

Dial-a-prayer. A free phone service to hear prayers and news from the Methodist Church. This is updated each Thursday evening. Dial a prayer: 0808 281 2514, listen to news: 0808 281 2478.

Methodist Church prayer meeting. 12.45 to 1.00 each Tuesday. Available via; www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/year-of-prayer/

WEEKLY NOTICES - please send items to Eurfron Parry by Tuesday, eurfron@blueyonder.co.uk or 0117 969 1908.

GENERAL NOTICES

All We Can's partners in the Rohingya camps have confirmed that the fire which engulfed part of the Kutupalong mega camp, is estimated to have displaced more than 45,000 people and left 429 people unaccounted for. Those wishing to support the work of All We Can's partners in addressing the aftermath of the Rohingya fire, are invited to donate to All We Can's Emergency Relief Fund. www.allwecan.org.uk/rohingya-camp-fire-live-update/

'How can we work for peace in an angry world?' A Zoom webinar taking place on April 19th at 7.30pm (lasts approx. 1 hour, including Q&A time) Tickets £5 - book online through Eventbrite - <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/wes-talks-online-how-can-we-work-for-peace-in-an-angry-world-tickets-146420865751> We live in a world which seems to be permanently angry, from full on conflicts between countries to aggressive trolling on social media. Is it possible to live and work for peace? Methodist minister and theologian Rev Inderjit Bhogal will be in conversation with John Cooper from the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

The Noise - run by churches across the city to support local outreach projects - will soon be looking for volunteers to support small outdoor activities over the May Bank Holiday weekend. We are hoping to join an outdoor community trail event at Horfield - if you would like to help with this please contact Jenny Cornell or Rev Patrick. Volunteer registration is now available via bristolnoise.org.uk

Working in partnership with **Christian Aid**, the Circuit is launching a campaign where you can donate as an expression of thanks for your vaccination. The money will be used by Christian Aid to fund clean water, hygiene kits and PPE facilities in communities to enable COVID vaccinations to be distributed safely. For more details and a fundraising link please visit giving.tapsimple.org/online/christian-aid/giving-thanks-for-our-vaccines-across-bristol-south-gloucestershire-methodist-circuit We are hoping to raise £2,000 across the Circuit.

Horfield. Marilyn, Alison and Carolyn thank everyone who joined us at the World Day of Prayer service for their support. It was lovely to see so many friendly faces. Any money donated will be used to help women around the world as well as in Vanuatu and more information about this can be found on the WDP website. Next year's service is being prepared by women from England, Wales and Northern Ireland and should be interesting. We very much hope to celebrate this next year in church followed by our usual coffee and cakes!

Horfield. An important part of our discipleship is to pray for our community and each other. This week you are asked to pray for the following people and their families; Dan & Rachel Smith, Stewards, Andy Stevenson Jasmin Stonehewer.

Horfield. There will be a meeting for "Stewards Plus" on 15 April at 7.30 at the Church.

DEVOTIONS FOR THIS WEEK

Reflection on the Lectionary Sunday 11 April Psalm 133; Acts 4 : 32 - 35; 1 John 1 : 1 - 2 : 2; John 20 : 19 - 31
This week's reflection is provided by Local Preacher Stephen Holliday (Horfield).

In recent years we have been introduced to the idea of 'fake news.' It's a description used for stories people don't like or disagree with or which sometimes can actually be fake. Many of these stories originate on social media which has become a great way of spreading ideas and conspiracy theories with little regulatory control; others appear in the newspapers. Some of these ideas, however fake or crazy, become 'true' for those who choose to believe them.

Fortunately, we live in a country with a free press and, within limits, free speech. That means, although we have plenty of news, real and fake, we have some chance of discerning the 'truth' in any particular story. We've all

learned to question what we hear on the news or see on social media and to balance different accounts until we feel we have a good idea of what the truth might be.

The search for truth is an important human need. We instinctively don't like uncertainty and feel troubled when we find ourselves doubting what we thought was true. Reflecting this, our modern society increasingly seems to view 'truth' as a personal choice, a matter of our individual identity – in other words: if I believe it to be true, then it is true for me and other people have no right to question my certainty. This moral individualism, 'my truth', might seem enlightened and liberal to many but it can also lead to intolerance and ignorance, especially if we stop asking questions, deny platforms to people whose views might challenge our own, and, crucially, lose the idea that there might be any sort of 'absolute truth' beyond, let alone contrary to, our own chosen certainty. Absolute truth is, of course, at the heart of our faith. Christians might agree on some 'absolutes,' such as the loving nature of God, the divinity of Christ or the forgiveness of sins but they can still disagree strongly on many beliefs and practices. The difficulty for Christians is that we cannot fully understand all there is to know about God and his purposes for us and the world, hence there will inevitably be differences of opinion. That doesn't deny the existence of absolute truth or mean there aren't moral absolutes – it just means we have to work hard to find them. In other words, we have to be open to the possibility of learning more and even changing our thinking as we continue our Christian journey.

What I'm getting round to saying is: it is OK to question what we believe, to entertain doubts and to work through them. Indeed, it is natural, healthy and good to seek to understand all we can about the God we worship and to challenge ideas and practices that we find tricky or uncomfortable. After all, we live by faith, not certainty. That said, there are some Christians, who are so sure they have the 'truth' that they never seem to doubt anything; others argue that it is dangerous to question what we believe – a bit like pulling a loose thread which, if you pull too much, will unravel the whole jumper. I think neither of those positions is honest or intellectually satisfying. In reality, most of us wrestle with uncertainties in our faith, have periods when we have more questions than answers or even entertain fundamental doubts about what we believe. To ignore our questions or to deny our doubts is to miss the opportunity to deepen our relationship with God, even if we feel vulnerable while working through our uncertainties. That's why I find it easy to identify with 'doubting Thomas,' whose story we read about in our Gospel for today. Understandably, he was reluctant to rely on the testimony of others. He had to be sure for himself.

How can we deal with our doubts and questions? It is worth noting that Thomas' doubts arose because he had gone off on his own and wasn't with the others, to whom Jesus had appeared. Being with other believers: in church, in a Bible study, on-line, sharing our faith, listening to their experiences, is an important way to deepen our own understanding and to find answers to some of our questions. Similarly, just as Thomas wanted personal experience to verify what others told him, we too can draw on our personal experience when doubts and questions arise. To remember those times when God seemed close, when our faith made sense, when prayers were answered, can be a deep source of encouragement in times when doubts and questions challenge our faith. Sharing our doubts and questions openly and honestly in prayer is important too. After all, God knows everything about us, so there is no point in pretending all is fine! If we are willing to work through our questions and deal with our doubts, God can lead our thinking, perhaps when we read the Bible, sometimes through other people or maybe through a helpful book or podcast.

Even so, there are times, no matter how much we search for truth, when things still don't make sense. At such times it is helpful to consider some words of Paul. He reminds us that whilst it is natural to ask questions we might not find all the answers:

'When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.' (1 Corinthians 13 v 11-12)

Going back to our Gospel reading, Jesus said to Thomas: *'Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'* (John 20 v 29). We may not have all the answers, new questions will keep coming to mind, doubts will challenge us from time to time but we can remember that, if we believe in Jesus, we are blessed by Him and we can pray like the man mentioned in Mark 9 v 24, who said to Jesus: *'I do believe, help me overcome my unbelief'*. Prayer – *Loving and gracious God, I do believe. Thank you for the faith I have; thank you also for my doubts and questions. Please help my unbelief and lead me from darkness to light, safe in the knowledge that whatever happens you will always be there for me, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Our thanks to Stephen for these devotions