

THIS MONTH: APRIL 2009

RIDGEWAY METHODIST CHURCH



Dear Friends

We have a gospel to proclaim!

Many of you will recognise those words as the first line of one of our newer hymns. Gospel literally means 'good news'. While the sense of the first line is correct, it is not that we simply have 'good news' to proclaim, even though any sort of good news is in scarce supply, but 'the good news'. Each verse of the hymn sets out reasons for that 'good news' - the birth, death, resurrection, ascension of Jesus Christ and his kingship, now and in eternity.

The Christian message of Easter really comes in two parts. The hymn-writer captures the essence of these well.

Tell of his death at Calvary
Hated by those he came to save,
In lonely suffering on the cross,
For all he loved his life he gave.

On the Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, Christians across the world will remember the Last Supper, the consequences of the betrayal, denial and rejection of Jesus, his death and crucifixion. While there have been many tragic and heroic deaths in history, right up to the present day, Christians believe that the death of Jesus has special significance. It not only shows the love and grace of God active in the world but also secures forgiveness for those who will trust that when Jesus died upon the cross he did so for our sins. While 'sin' is not a fashionable word, sinning has not gone out of fashion and, though we often limit sin to what other people do and say, the reality is that each of us has sinned and has fallen short of the glory of God. There is no other way to be forgiven and made right with God other than, by faith, to come to the foot of the cross, to acknowledge our personal need of forgiveness and to put our trust in Jesus Christ and that when he died he did so not simply for the sins of the whole world but personally - for me.

The story does not end with the death of Jesus but continues with his resurrection.

Tell of that glorious Easter morn:
Empty the tomb, for he was free.
He broke the power of death and hell
That we might share his victory.

By our standards the first disciples of Jesus were not educated men - we know that some of them were fishermen from Galilee. All those educated in the *School of Hard Knocks* and *the University of Life* recognise that just because a person's formal education might have been limited does not mean that they are either stupid or gullible. From what we can tell from the biblical record, the first disciples were neither stupid nor gullible. The same can be said of the women who were in the wider circle of the followers of Jesus. What is clear is that, on the first day of the new week (what we call Sunday), the disciples and women followers of Jesus believed that they saw him risen and that these 'resurrection appearances' continued for a further 40 days. It was as important for them

as for us to know that they were not hallucinating or dreaming - that it was all more than just wishful thinking. The Bible record takes great care to say that they saw Jesus, they talked with him, they touched him, they ate with him and that they became convinced that he is alive. It is because Christians believe that Jesus conquered death and hell that Christians have hope in a new quality of life, 'eternal life' not just in time but in eternity. Every Sunday is Easter Day in miniature but on Easter Day, more than any other day, Christians celebrate that Jesus is alive and because he is alive that, by faith, he is knowable.

When any of us thinks of the resurrection of Jesus, the words 'incredible' and 'unbelievable' must come to mind. Unique occasions are often both incredible and unbelievable and yet we often use those words in a context that means though something is incredible or unbelievable that we really do believe it. When you think about it, there is nothing incredible about the death of Jesus, unless you come to the conclusion that it is not some accident of history but part of the eternal plan of God to save a people for himself - if you can have degrees of incredibility that's even harder to believe than the resurrection! Yet, together, these form the very essence of the Christian message.

Something I really like about the hymn is that every verse includes the word 'tell'. If you believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for you to secure your forgiveness and right standing before God, you will want to tell others. If you believe that Jesus Christ rose again and that his people can know that new quality of life in him, in time and in eternity, you will want to tell others. Telling others the good news is a vital dimension of the celebration of Easter.

Office news

On Wednesday 25 March, Mrs Monica Thompson started work with us as our office and minister's secretary. For the time being the office hours will be from 11.00 am to 2.00 pm (Tuesday to Friday) but these will revert to the usual times in due course. It is a particularly busy time of year for a new secretary to start so it will take a while for Monica to become familiar with all that her work entails. While it is good that Monica comes from within our own church community and will be with us on Sundays, I am sure people will want to respect that and to understand that it is not appropriate to trouble Monica about office matters on Sundays when she will want to be part of our congregation with her family.

General church meeting (Sunday 26 April, 2.30 pm)

This meeting elects stewards and representatives to our church council. Our church council agreed that we should appoint six stewards and three assistant stewards. Our church stewards also request the opportunity to invite those who have served before to be reserve stewards and to invite one young person from our church community to be a junior steward. The general church meeting also elects representatives to the church council. The meeting is open to all but only church members can vote. If you would like to know more about becoming a member of the Methodist Church, please speak to me about it.

Yours sincerely

John Haley

Tony Anthony: 8-10 May

Arrangements for Tony Anthony's visit to Plymouth are now being finalised. On the Friday morning he will visit Dartmoor Prison before going on to speak to Year 7-9 children at Estover Community College. On the Friday evening Tony will be sharing a joint event with *Faith in*

Football. Saturday will be a very special day for us as Tony is coming to our own church for a full day of 'Release' outreach training. It is necessary to book in advance and information will be available on separate leaflets. On the Saturday evening, Tony will be speaking to young people at *The Net* which is hosted by Plymouth Methodist Central Hall at Drake Circus. The main event of the weekend will be an evangelistic service at Plymouth Guildhall on Sunday 10 May at 7.00 pm. There is no service at Ridgeway that evening - everyone is being encouraged to go to the Guildhall and to take family and friends. Everyone is invited to support the weekend and to pray specifically -

That the prisons and schools will be open and welcoming to the testimony that is shared

That the ground will be prepared for young and old on the fringes of our church to come along to these events and meet the living Jesus

That the Lord will speak through Tony and give him the right words for each of the events

That the Release training will provide an opportunity for many people to think about how the Lord is calling us to proclaim the gospel

That the Lord will touch many lives through the things that are to take place.

Tony Anthony was three times World Kung Fu Champion before becoming an elite bodyguard, protecting some of the world's most powerful people. However, personal tragedy altered Tony's sense of extreme discipline and he began to use his skills for illegal ends, becoming embroiled in a world of violence, destruction and death. Eventually he was put in prison in Nicosia, Cyprus, and hit rock bottom; however, a stranger began to visit Tony, and eventually led him to Christ.

Simon Rogers

April Diary

Wednesday 1:

10.00-12.30 Coffee followed by lunches

Thursday 2:

2.45 pm Women's Fellowship: Members' afternoon

Saturday 4:

8.30 am Monthly Prayer Meeting
10.00-12.00 Oasis Coffee Bar: Outreach (Christine & Lydia)

Sunday 5:

10.30 am Revd John Haley
7.00 pm Mr John Birkett

Tuesday 7:

10.00-12.00 Patchwork Group

Thursday 9 (Maundy Thursday):

2.45 pm Women's Fellowship: Revd John Haley
All are welcome to this service of Holy Communion
4.00pm - 9.00pm Easter labyrinth

Friday 10 (Good Friday):

10.00 am Revd John Haley
1.30 pm Treasure Hunt to Buckfast Abbey

Saturday 11:	10.00- 12.00	Oasis Coffee Bar: Youth outreach (Miriam, Kim & Steve)
Sunday 12 (Easter Day):	9.30am	Breakfast
	10.30 am	Revd John Haley (Holy Communion)
	7.00 pm	Revd John Haley with Major Pamela Smith
Tuesday 14:	10.00 - 12.00	Patchwork Group
	7.30 pm	Men's Fellowship: Ken Snelling (Interesting Churches)
Thursday 16:	2.45 pm	Women's Fellowship: Songs of Praise
Saturday 18:	10.00-12.00	Oasis Coffee Bar: Church Funds (Avril)
Sunday 19:	10.30 am	Mr Earle Rendle
	7.00 pm	Miss Catherine Stead
Monday 20:	7.30 pm	Minister's Bible study (new course, lounge, all welcome)
Tuesday 21:	10.00 - 12.00	Patchwork Group
	2.15 pm	Service at Pocklington Rise (all welcome)
	7.45 pm	Ladies' Group: Summer Beetles!
Wednesday 22:	10.00 - 12.30	Coffee followed by lunches
Thursday 23:	2.45 pm	Women's Fellowship: Miss Joan Lean
Saturday 25:	10.00-12.00	Oasis Coffee Bar: Youth Outreach (Miriam, Kim and Steve)
Sunday 26:	10.30 am	Revd Stephen Caddick
	7.00 pm	Revd John Haley
Monday 27:	7.30 pm	Minister's Bible study (week 2)
Tuesday 28:	10.00 - 12.00	Patchwork Group
	7.45 pm	Ladies' Group: Mrs Janet Haley (Compassion)
Wednesday 29:	10.00 - 12.30	Coffee followed by lunches
Thursday 30:	2.45 pm	Women's Fellowship: Deacon Val Facey

Church office hours: Tuesday-Friday 11.00 am - 2.00 pm
Church telephones: 348178 (office only); 331186 (pre-school and hall)

Church Office: admin@ridgewaymethodist.org.uk
Minister: The Revd John M Haley: min@ridgewaymethodist.org.uk

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Information for April's *This Month* to the office by 21 April please.