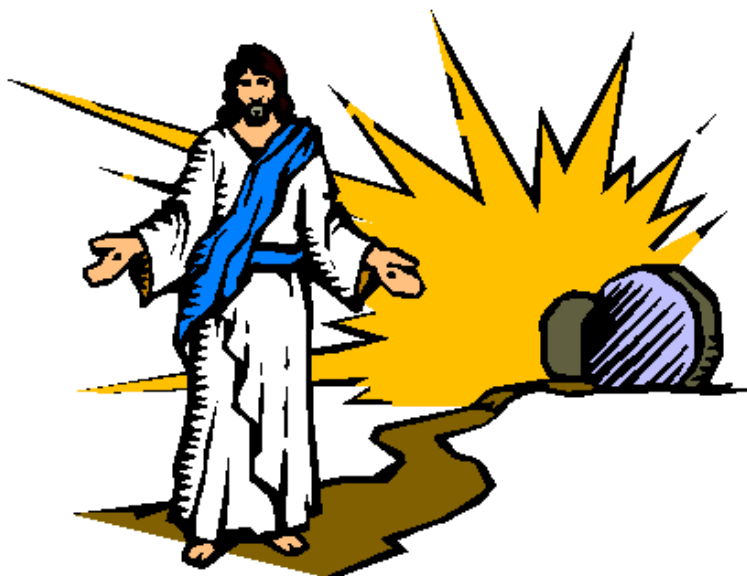


Experience Easter in a time of lockdown

A series of reflective workshops for use at home



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Welcome to Experience Easter for 2020, which is a little different because it is designed to do at home. Some of you will remember Experience Easter last year at Stoke Rochford church, well we have changed some of the activities so that you can try them at home with your family.

We recommend that you sit down with your children and use this leaflet to help them through the exercises and the reflections. It might be good if you take the lead and read the stories to your family.

The exercises are designed with primary school aged children in mind, but might not suit all children, so please feel free to adapt them to suit your children and your situation.

In a series of situations, you will walk through many of the events of Holy Week, starting with Palm Sunday and finishing with Easter Sunday.

You will need

- Pieces of paper
- Pens and pencils
- a bowl of water and a towel
- string (about 15 cm long) one piece per person
- 13 plates, a bread roll and some Ribena or juice
- Post it notes or small pieces of paper

The Easter Story

We are going on a journey to a place far away and long ago and to prepare for your journey I'd like you shut your eyes...

Imagine you are travelling far away, leaving all these outside noises behind...

Now listen to all the noises inside you - your breathing, your heart beating... Quietly take a deep breath...and let it out slowly.

As you let it out, imagine you're travelling on, leaving everything behind. You've arrived. You can hear people talking in a strange language – everything is new and exciting. Now quietly open your eyes.

Jerusalem was busy with people, who had come for the Passover festival. Jesus and his friends were going there, too. When they reached the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his followers on ahead, to find a donkey for him to ride. They put some of their clothes on the donkey to make a saddle, and Jesus got on. The people in the crowd gave him a royal welcome. Crowds ran ahead and crowds followed, all of them shouting "Hosanna to King David's heir!" "Blessed is he who comes in God's name!"

All this fuss made the Jewish leaders angry. Jesus was far too popular for their liking and his wise words made Jesus a threat to their authority. So, they hatched a plot to have Jesus killed. One mealtime, Jesus got up from the table before he and his friends started eating and began to wash their feet, drying them with his apron. "I have given you an example" he said. "Live as God wants".

This Passover meal together was very special "You've no idea how much I have looked forward to eating this with you", Jesus said, "before I enter my time of suffering." "It's the last meal I'll eat until we all eat together in Heaven." Then, taking the cup, he said a prayer over it. "Take this and pass it around." Then Jesus picked up the bread,

thanked God, broke it up, and gave it to his friends, saying, "This is my body, given for you. Do this in my memory."

After Supper, Jesus and his friends walked to the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus told his disciples, "Stay here while I go over there and pray." Whilst he prayed his friends were fast asleep. As he was waking them up, Judas arrived with a group of Roman soldiers, all fully armed.

Jesus was taken to the Jewish leaders for questioning, then to the Roman Governor because the Jews wanted Jesus to be executed, for claiming he was God's Son. So, Jesus was whipped and led out of the city, to the hill where people were executed. There, they executed him. The soldiers came up and poked fun at him. They hung a sign over his head: this is the king of the Jews. It seemed to his friends that the whole world had gone dark.

Jesus's friends asked the Romans if they could take his body away for burial. They wrapped it up in sheets and left it in a tomb dug out of the rocks and rolled a huge stone over the entrance, so nothing could disturb the body.

The next day was the Festival, but none of Jesus' friends felt like celebrating. They waited until sunrise early on Sunday morning, when some of them ran to the tomb. They found the stone rolled back but couldn't find Jesus' body. Then, suddenly two men appeared from nowhere, with light all around them. The men said, "Why are you looking for the Living One in a place for the dead? He is not here. Don't you remember when you were still in Galilee, Jesus told you that he had to be killed, and in three days live again?" Then they remembered – yes, Jesus had said that.

Now I'd like you to sit quietly and think about what you've heard.

Which part do you think was happiest? Which part is the saddest? Which part do you think is most important?

Palm Sunday – hopes and dreams

For this activity you will need two pieces of A4 paper. On one you draw a cross and on the other you draw a wavy roadway, disappearing into the distance.

Prop the cross upright and place the roadway on the floor leading towards it.

Gathering:

As we look at the road and the cross we will be thinking about our hopes and dreams.

When Jesus was alive, the country where he lived was occupied by Roman soldiers. The people were hoping for a king to come and free them from their enemies. This is the story of the welcome they gave Jesus.

Jesus' friends led a donkey out, put some of their clothes on it to make a saddle, and Jesus got on. The people in the crowd gave him a royal welcome. Some threw their clothes down on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and threw them down as a welcome mat. Crowds ran ahead and crowds followed, all of them shouting "Hosanna to King David's heir!" "Blessed is he who comes in God's name!" "Hosanna in highest heaven!"

Think about...

Did the people get the sort of king they were expecting?

Our hopes don't always come true. Sometimes we have dreams that don't work out. It can feel awful at the time, but things often work out OK in the end.

Try and think of something you'd like to happen – something really important for you, your family, or the world. Draw or write something on your post it or piece of paper that symbolises your hope.

Why not place your hopes and dreams near the cross.

Servant King – helping each other and Jesus

introduction:

Sit with your mum or dad and brothers and sisters, if you have them. Sit on the floor in a circle. You will need a bowl of water and a towel.

Jesus lived in a hot, dry country, where people walked from place to place in open sandals, or even with bare feet. When guests came to your house, you made them welcome by washing their feet. If you were someone important, your servant did it for you. Listen to the story and see if you can work out why Jesus' friends were so surprised at what He did.

It was suppertime. Jesus got up from the table, set aside his coat, and put a towel round his waste, he poured water into a bowl and began to wash the feet of the disciples, drying them with the towel.

After he had finished washing their feet, he took his coat, put it back on, and went back to his place at the table. Then he said, "Do you understand what I have done? You call me 'Teacher' and 'Master,' and that is what I am. I've given you an example. If I, the Master and Teacher, washed your feet, you must now wash each other's feet. No-one is better than anyone else. If you understand what I'm telling you, act like it—and live as God wants.

Think about...

What do you think Jesus was telling his followers?

Pour some water into the bowl. Someone goes first and dips their hands into the water and then the person next to them dry's them for them. The bowl then moves on until everyone's hands have been washed and dried.

We do this to show that we want to help other people. As you do so try to think of ways you can help others.

Sometimes when we pray, we give God a long list of things we want God to do, instead of trying to do things ourselves. We're going to end by listening to a short poem which was written over 400 years ago, to remind us that God has work for us to do.

Christ has no body now but yours.

Yours are the only hands with which he can do his work

Yours are the only feet with which he can go about the world.

The Last Supper – remembering Jesus

Introduction:

Set up an area where you can sit together, maybe on the floor on cushions, maybe around a low table or imagined table. Have plates for 13 people even if there aren't that many of you. Have a bread roll and a jug of Ribena.

To start, I'd like you to imagine you're at a special celebration meal, like Christmas dinner or a birthday tea.

Every Springtime, and even today, Jewish people remember how God helped them escape slavery at a festival they call The Passover. As part of the festival, they eat a special meal. All the food reminds them of how good it was to escape from slavery. Jesus met with his friends for this meal just before he was arrested.

Jesus sat down with all his friends and said, "You've no idea how much I have looked forward to eating this Passover meal with you, before I enter my time of suffering. It's the last meal I'll eat until we all eat together in Heaven."

Take the bread and break it into two pieces as you speak.

Taking the cup, Jesus said a prayer over it, then said, "Take this and pass it around. I will not drink wine again until the kingdom of God arrives."

Then Jesus picked up the bread, thanked God, broke it up, and gave it to his friends, saying, "This is my body, given for you. Do this in my memory." Christians remember Jesus in a special service, where we share bread and wine. We call it Holy Communion.

Pass the bread round and as I do eat it and think of something you remember about Jesus and remember how special Jesus is.

Gethsemane – being afraid

Introduction:

Try to imagine that you are in a really nice garden and now sit down with some space between you.

We all feel afraid sometimes – maybe when you know something's going to happen that you're not looking forward to. This part of the story tells us that Jesus sometimes felt like that too:

After supper, Jesus and his friends walked up the hill called The Mount of Olives. When they reached the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus told his disciples,

“Stay here and pray. I’m going just over there - I really need to talk with God.”

He walked on a little bit, knelt down, and prayed like this; “Father God, if there is any way, please get me out of this. But it’s not what I want that counts. I’m ready to do whatever you want.”

He felt a bit better after that and went back to his friends. He found them all fast asleep. They simply couldn't keep their eyes open.”

Think about...

Take a piece of paper, screw it up as if you were going to throw it away.

Flatten it out. Now draw a lovely picture of a beautiful animal you might find in your garden, maybe a butterfly or a bird or an insect.

Like our piece of screwed up paper life can feel difficult at times – and when it does, we sometimes get all sorts of feelings including; fear, anger, jealousy.

As you unscrewed the piece of paper it got easier to use and more like it should be.

Sometimes we have to work our way through difficult times.
Sometimes problems are easier to manage than we thought.

Jesus said, "Remember all the things I have told you. Don't be upset or afraid. My parting gift is a feeling of peace deep inside you."

Good Friday – suffering

Introduction:

Draw a large cross on a piece of paper and stand it up, maybe draw a red cloth draped round the cross piece, put some dice on the floor near the bottom of the cross. Sit in a semi-circle round the cross.

What are your thoughts as you look at this scene? Maybe discuss them.

One of the most dreaded punishments that the Roman generals thought up was crucifixion, where people were hung up on a big wooden cross and left to die. That's how they dealt with Jesus. Listen carefully to the story.

When they got to the place called Skull Hill, they crucified him, along with two criminals, one on his right, and the other on his left. Jesus prayed for those who crucified him, saying, "Father, forgive them – they don't realise what they're doing."

As Jesus was dying, the soldiers threw dice. The soldier with the highest score got to own Jesus' clothes. The people stood there staring at Jesus, and the ringleaders pulled faces, and laughed at him. They said, "He saved others. Let's see him save himself!"

They placed a sign above his head which said, "This is the king of the Jews."

The soldiers also came up and poked fun at him. "So you're King of the Jews! Save yourself!" One of the criminals hanging alongside cursed him: "Some Messiah you are! Save yourself! Save us!" But the other one made him shut up: "Have you no fear of God? We're getting the same punishment as him but we deserve it. He did nothing to deserve this."

Think about...

I'd like you to think of anyone in your family who is suffering. They may be ill, or lonely, perhaps they are being bullied. Tie a knot in a piece of string and as you tie the knot imagine giving them a hug.

Now think of someone outside your family who you know who has a problem. tie another knot and imagine giving them a hug.

Finally, think of someone far away, perhaps people you've seen in the news, maybe someone working in the NHS or in the armed forces or helping people overseas. Tie another knot and imagine giving this person a hug.

Keep this piece of string safe and look at it every now and then and remember the people and give them another imaginary hug and maybe say this prayer.

Loving Jesus, you know what suffering is like. Help us not to forget the needs of other people. Show us how to help them and let them know they are loved.

Amen.

Easter Day – new life

Introduction:

Drape some cloth across a chair or table to create a “cave”, put some white cloth on the “cave floor”

Sit in front of the tomb.

Does everyone know what a tomb is? It's is somewhere a person is put after they have died.

Maybe if you've had a pet or a relative die you can begin to imagine how very sad Jesus' friends felt, after he had been killed on the cross. Then things changed.

Early on Sunday morning, as soon as the sun started rising into the sky, the women came to the tomb. They found the entrance stone rolled back, so they walked in. But once inside, they couldn't find the body of Jesus. They were puzzled, wondering what to make of this. Then, suddenly it seemed like two men appeared from nowhere, with light all around them. The women were frightened and looked away. The men said, "Why are you looking for the Living Person where you find dead people? He is not here.

Remember how, when you were still back in Galilee, he told you that he had to be handed over to be killed on a cross, and in three days live again?" Then they remembered Jesus' words. They left the tomb and broke the news of all this to Jesus' friends."

Think about...

How did Jesus' friends feel? Write your ideas on a post it or on a piece of paper, and put it on or near the outside of the tomb.

The Easter story isn't just about death, it's also about new life. Christians believe that death isn't the end of everything. Christians believe that Jesus is still alive and with them every day. If you remember someone after they have died, they live on in your heart.

Conclusion:

Gather together.

Suggest words to describe the story you've heard

Do you think the story you have heard is sad or happy?

Maybe you could remember it as a happy story, because although it was sad in the middle it ended happily...

I think that is how God wants us to remember the story!

We very much hope that you and your family have enjoyed this look at the time known as Holy Week. If you wish to ask a question or to explore any of the issues raised please speak to Revd. Neil.