

Dear Friends,

Easter Greetings! This last week through Holy Week and approaching Easter I've felt like a rogue bit of driftwood pulled round and round by a vortex and eventually pulled down into a plug hole to be spat out in the spring somewhere surrounded by chocolate wrappers and fading daffodils!

What I mean by that is that the story of Jesus in Holy Week is such an emotional roller coaster, and it pulls us into it and along with it. What starts as gossip and unrest turns into outright conflict and argument, this leads to power struggles and rudeness, bullying and a tragic, sad, unnecessary death. But this all happens to Jesus who we know and believe is in that story on God's behalf, standing with all who are suffering bullying, abuse, torment and oppression. This is what Jesus' ministry of love was about.

So, when Jesus prays with his disciples all night after eating a freedom meal with them, we are invited to the meal table and we notice the looks across the table and the atmospheres in the room. When we fall asleep with exhaustion in the moonlight, we awake to the guilt of feeling failures. When Judas betrays him, we know we would never have done such a thing, but when Peter denies him, we know actually, we could have done too. We either stand at the cross and watch him die, or run away because of fear, and we know the empty numb feeling of that first Saturday, waking up (if we've slept) to the realisation that it's all over.

The Saturday after Good Friday has always intrigued me, we pass over it all too quickly, we need to pause and feel that Jesus is dead, and feel the sense of dashed hopes and failed promises. It is on that day and with those feelings, that we may for the first time in the story ask the most important question 'Where is God in all this?'

It is the question that connects our world to the story of Jesus. Ongoing war in Ukraine, hostages in Palestine, Israel isolated by a call for a ceasefire, renewed political power in Russia, climate emergency, reduced powers of free speech while there's increased social media frenzy; hungry, tired, disengaged people fed up of politics - sometimes we really do live through the Saturday in which God was silent because he was dead.

Charles Wesley's famous words 'For all, for all my saviour died' begin to grapple with the question of where God is, and what he is up to. He was in hell smashing up the gates and letting people out! is part of the christian answer.

So where is God now? In our church, in our lives, in our communities of wealth as well as want, in hospital wards and mortuaries, care homes and war zones?

We can only begin to answer that question with our faith because on the first Easter day he burst the gates of hell! Those early christians stood up to the Romans, feared the Jewish Authorities of their day, but met in defiance anyway, and sang and prayed in prison cells because they found in their experience that Jesus was alive! They told again the stories of those frightened women first going to the tomb to anoint his body and finding 'He's not here, He is Risen'. They gradually came to find that God was walking along the road with them in a mysteriously familiar but unknown way, and they continued to do what Jesus had shown them before his death.

The Resurrection of Jesus is an explosion of life, meaning, purpose, defiance against opposition, and hope, that the answer to the question 'Where is God in all this' will never be 'He is not here'. He is here! I find Brian Wren's hymn (in Singing the Faith no 297) to be most relevant and powerful every year, I try and choose it to sing as long as I can throughout the Easter season!

Christ is alive! Let Christians sing.  
The cross stands empty to the sky.  
Let streets and homes with praises ring.  
Love, drowned in death, shall never die.

Christ is alive! No longer bound  
to distant years in Palestine,  
but saving, healing, here and now,  
and touching every place and time.

In every insult, rift and war,  
where colour, scorn or wealth divide,  
Christ suffers still, yet loves the more,  
and lives, where even hope has died.

Women and men, in age and youth,  
can feel the Spirit, hear the call,  
and find the way, the life, the truth,  
revealed in Jesus, freed for all.

Christ is alive, and comes to bring  
good news to this and every age,

till earth and sky and ocean ring  
with joy, with justice, love and praise.

Your Superintendent Minister  
Rev Rob Hilton.

Congratulations to Janice Martin Jackson on gaining the acceptance and approval of the Local Preachers, and the Circuit Meeting, to move to full Local Preacher Status. Janet's service of recognition will be in a Circuit Service at St Stephens in Crewe on Sunday 2nd June at 3pm. We will also at that service celebrate the ministries of Preachers who have been given Long Service Awards, as well as other ministries of service and mission around the circuit.

God is alive and well, there is some good news to celebrate, mission work around the circuit is growing as our God who raised Jesus from the dead is still in the business of life and living!

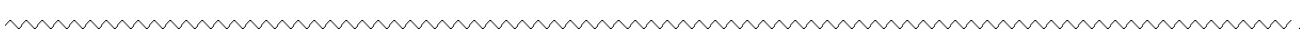


**Rev'd Sarah Butcher- Graduation**

As part of training to be a minister within the Methodist Church, I have been doing formal study. On Thursday 4th January, I graduated with a Master of the Arts (MA) in Theology, Ministry and Mission with distinction. This included a 15,000-word dissertation around childlessness and Mothering Sunday worship (ask me if you want to know more). I studied at the Queen's Foundation in Birmingham, but the course was accredited by Durham University. My graduation was in the beautiful surroundings of Durham Cathedral.

Best wishes,  
Sarah

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## **Congratulations Audlem!**



Northwest in Bloom is the regional organisation that administers the Royal Horticultural Society's Britain in Bloom competition. It is one of the most effective and longest running environmental competitions in the UK and each year it grows in size and importance. As Part of Audlem's Britain in Bloom bid, Audlem Methodist Church was put forward for an "It's Your Neighbourhood" award. Local or community groups can join IYN, with the aim of making community improvements. The groups are assessed, with marks being awarded for Community participation, Environmental Responsibility, and Gardening Achievement. There are 5 levels of award: Establishing, Improving, Developing, Thriving and Outstanding, and groups can be supported to move up through the levels. However, Audlem Methodist Church achieved a level 5 Outstanding on their first entry! The judge commented that it was unusual to achieve this level on the first attempt, he was particularly impressed with the garden at AMC for retaining condemned trees and using them for carved features and benches- keeping all the wood on site. He was pleased that this was a safe place for children and could be easily accessed by the community. He complimented all the members of the church for their efforts in achieving such a unique garden. Please join us in congratulating the AMC team for all their hard work, dedication and for achieving this prestigious award. Well done!

**St JOHNS -WHITCHURCH ZOOM SERVICE**

The next 2 monthly Zoom Services will be led by Avril Bradfield on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> of April and Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> May. Start time 4pm (for approx. 45 mins)

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84634305736?pwd=MUdkUndUR2R0dkdnY0Fzd2poa0FyUT09>

If you would like to join us- please contact [1108steward4@gmail.com](mailto:1108steward4@gmail.com) to confirm the date and for the passcode to be sent via email.

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The poster features a background image of people in kayaks on a lake. At the top, the title 'Easter Taster Sessions' is written in a white, handwritten-style font. Below the title, a paragraph of text describes the sessions. In the bottom left, the price '£10' is prominently displayed. In the bottom right, a white box contains the dates, times, and location. At the very bottom, a grey box provides the contact email.

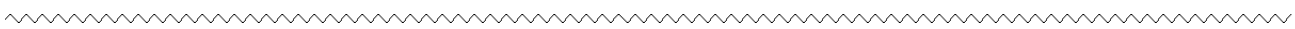
**Easter Taster Sessions**

Are you wanting to do something different over the Easter holidays? The Oakhanger Project is running two taster sessions which includes water sports and team building activities. Family fun for all ages, please use the booking below.

**£10**  
Per person  
Per session

Wednesdays April 3rd & April 10th  
1:00-3:30pm  
Brereton Heath Nature Reserve, Congleton  
(Additional family members price deductions are available)

E-mail [op.admin@oakhanger.org](mailto:op.admin@oakhanger.org) for more details or to book





**ST. JOHN'S METHODIST CHURCH**

present

**Whitchurch Brass Band**

in Concert



**On Saturday,  
13<sup>th</sup> April at 6.00pm**

Tickets *(including*  
£10.00. *refreshments)*

**Available from 'Barlows' on High Street  
or you can pay on the door**



**NORTH WALES PILGRIM- CREWE BY FARNDON- MARIE LUMB-CHARITY WALK**

**A message from Marie...**

We are following in the path of the ancient Celtic Saints and journeying together taking part in a Pilgrimage with our young children. We will do this in stages -with the hope that as our children grow, we reach nearer our destination of Bardsey Island!

If you would like to learn more about the North Wales Pilgrim's Way, please look at <https://pilgrims-way-north-wales.org>

Also watch out for 'Pilgrimage' on BBC this Good Friday, as they are walking on this trail!

As a Chapel we are inspired by the power of togetherness, collectively making a difference. A member of our Chapel has nominated Maggie's Centre as our fundraiser because they have been so supportive whilst she has been undergoing cancer treatment.

We welcome other families to join us on our first Stage - 8.9 miles, journeying together in Faith and Hope on Sunday 7th April 2024.

Please contact Lay Worker Marie Lumb on [1108lw8@gmail.com](mailto:1108lw8@gmail.com) for more information.

Please visit the JustGiving page on the link below:

[https://www.justgiving.com/page/marie-lumb-1711448838897?utm\\_medium=fundraising&utm\\_content=page%2Fmarie-lumb-1711448838897&utm\\_source=email&utm\\_campaign=pfp-email](https://www.justgiving.com/page/marie-lumb-1711448838897?utm_medium=fundraising&utm_content=page%2Fmarie-lumb-1711448838897&utm_source=email&utm_campaign=pfp-email)



[www.maggiescentres.org](http://www.maggiescentres.org)

We offer free support to people with cancer and their loved ones.



## Lightworks



### Men's Woodcraft

Join us in the design and making of wooden crafts. We make anything from planters to toys. Learn new skills or share with us your own. Help to prepare articles for children and school workshops, find ways to reuse and recycle. All are welcome for a good brew and a chat whilst we make!

**Thursdays 1pm – 3pm**

Lightwood Green Methodist Church  
Whitchurch Road  
Lightwood Green  
CW3 0EP

Email Andy for booking details and more information on [1108lw5@gmail.com](mailto:1108lw5@gmail.com)

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*Please send your good news stories for the next (Summer) Circuit Newsletter to Dot Milner, Circuit Administrator on [1108info.cheshiresouth@gmail.com](mailto:1108info.cheshiresouth@gmail.com)*