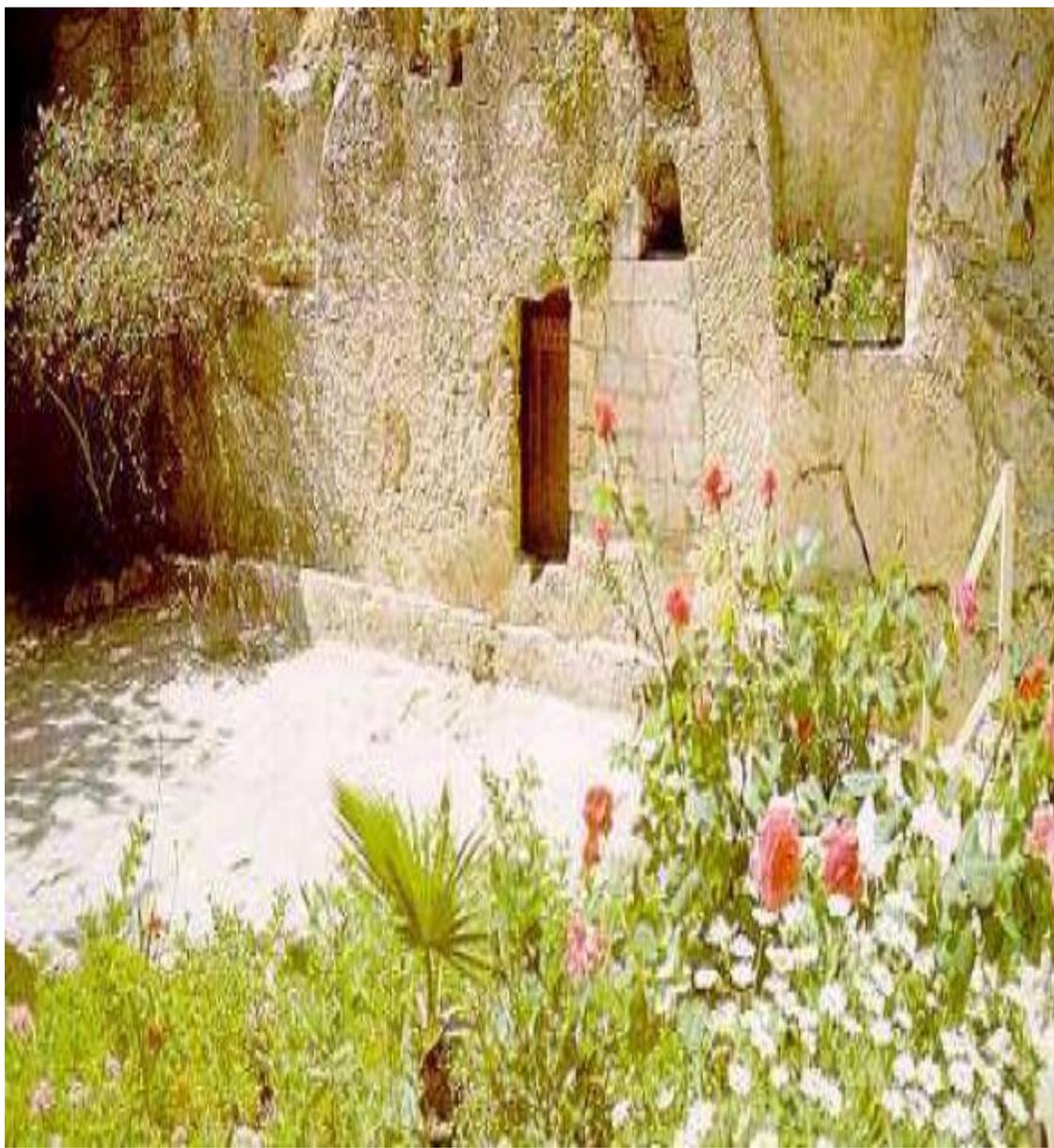


EASTER 2021



He is Risen!

Dear Members and Friends of Hope,

I must admit, with honesty, that I start with a sigh(!) only because we are still in lockdown and there is no denying the hardship. The, albeit necessary, restrictions impose a test of our patience and positivity; they are taking their toll.

I am more conscious than ever that many of you have been housebound for many months and have missed family worship - desperately. You are being prayed for and missed. Your underlying medical problems (not itemised in Family News) are not forgotten hence comes the frustration, keenly felt that we are not able to visit.

At this point Pam and I would like to send you our personal Easter greetings thanking you for your support each month. May you all know the special love and peace that comes to us at Eastertime.

Bearing all this in mind and the fact that Easter is on the cusp of the month I have written an Easter magazine which tells a story. "The Story"- Jesus' Story, which is now your story and my story too.

I ask that you read it through at your ease, slowly. There is no rush to read it through all in one go! It's Truth is [unchanging](#), life changing and therefore will be with you at all times.

I simply ask that as you sit at home with bread on your table and water with your meal that you remember us, your brothers and sisters in the Lord, worshipping together under the one banner of faith - loving our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. We are ever in worship as His family.

Hospitality was everything to our Lord. Hospitality is at the very heart of who God is. God is both host and guest. As host He welcomes us to His table, - as guest He comes dependent upon the welcome we extend to Him. Food first and teaching afterwards. Trace the many incidents in the Gospels. The Last Supper is where we will pick up on "The Story".

Nowhere is it more evident than at the Last Supper in the Upper Room in Jerusalem. We will look at it in greater depth on Maundy Thursday - please come prepared with bread and wine or water – details to follow.



The Passover was celebrated in an Upper Room in Jerusalem. It was a happy feast, especially the 'Supper of the First Nights' when the 'freedom from slavery' story was told. A servant girl looks on..

"Despite all the pre-planning the mood in the Upper Room wasn't a very happy one. From the start Jesus' 12 disciples sensed a feeling of urgency – worse, an increased sense of foreboding. They were a very assorted lot of men. The only thing they really had in common was a Galilean accent. Except for one, a dark rather tense looking man called Judas, from Kerioth – he didn't smile at all. He just scowled and looked angry. They all looked embarrassed at one point for Jesus took the towel filled the basin with water and washed their feet. The Master was washing His disciples' feet with great tenderness – He had strong hands. Such a gesture was unheard of – but Jesus insisted. A lesson learned by each in turn. As the meal progressed Jesus stood and followed the tradition of old but then He spoke. "One of you is going to betray me". Judas left in a panic! Jesus took bread, "Eat", he said. "In memory of me." He took wine and said, "Drink, in memory of my blood which will be shed for you". I heard that ...He said much, much more which I didn't understand – I doubt if the disciples understood all of it. After they had finished they all left - they hadn't eaten all the food... The Passover meal will never be the same for me or for any of His followers. Here was a New Covenant.

He still washes His disciples' feet. He still offers bread and wine but the hands are different. The story unfolds....I can still enjoy the feasting and laughter. Jesus did. He loved life and would have us do the same. Merriment and holidays are ok".



HOLIDAYS.

Remember them? Here are three you can prepare for – the choice is yours...

1. You can travel back in time as Dylan Thomas reports ...

In those always radiant, rainless, lazily rowdy and sky blue summers departed, I remember August Monday from the rising of the sun over the stained and royal town to the hushing of the roundabout music. From bubble and squeak to the last of the sandy sandwiches.

There was no need, that holiday morning, for the sluggardly boys to be shouted down to breakfast; out of their jumbled beds they tumbled, and scrambled into their rumpled clothes; quickly at the bathroom basin they cat licked their hands and faces, but never forgot to run the water loud and long as though they washed like colliers. In front of the cracked looking-glass, bordered with cigarette cards, in their treasure-trove bedrooms, they whisked a gap-tooth comb through their surly hair; and with shining cheeks and noses and tide marked necks, they took the stairs three at a time.

But for all their scramble and scamper, clamour on the landing, cat lick and toothbrush flick, hair-whisk and stair-jump, their sisters were always there before them. Up with the lady lark, they had prinked and frizzed and hot-ironed; and smug in their blossoming dresses, ribboned for the sun, in gym-shoes white as the blanco'd snow, neat and silly with doilies and tomatoes they helped in the higgledy kitchen. They were calm; they were virtuous; they had washed their necks; they did not romp or fidget; and only the smallest sister put out her tongue at the noisy boys.

And the woman who lived next door came into the kitchen and said that her mother, an ancient uncertain body who wore a hat with cherries, was having "one of her days" and had insisted, that very holiday morning, in carrying, all the way to the tram-stop, a photograph album and the cut-glass fruit bowl from the front room.

Father, mending one hole in the thermos flask, made three. The sun declared war on the butter and the butter ran.."Uncle Owen says he can't find the bottle opener". "Has he looked under the hall stand?" "Willy's bleeding over the cheese..." Dylan Thomas captures the preparatory chaos perfectly. Read about the whole day. "Holiday Memory" - brilliant!



2 **Holiday Destinations of choice.**
2021
Please do your homework!



“I told you we had wandered too far from the hotel.
This looks nothing like Walkiki Beach”

Mum’s list

Dad’s list

- Passport Insurance N/A wife has it.
- ESTA Application. Never seen one.
- I-Pad / mobile. Don’t use them.
- Charger..... What’s that?
- Swim suit / rainwear Don’t swim / rain is ok.
- First aid kit..... Not going to the jungle.
- Buy books on Amazon I said – see above.
- Pack of cards/ Puzzles I’ll be sleeping.
- Put all clothes on spare bed and make sure they fit. (See caption **opposite**. “I found a good job for the summer. I’m a grief counselor in a swimsuit store”)
- Shoes. Flip flops; sandals and evening heels.
- “Dad, where are your shoes – can’t see them?”
- “On my feet. Thought we were travelling light.”
- Have a relaxing time, mum!”



3 Future Planning.

Holidays to the moon will be possible in a decade.
 Tickets will cost £8000. The company will be called Moon Express!
 Plans are afoot to enable men to travel to the moon. It will take a week.
 The mission will not involve a lunar landing.
 No personal packing involved. Good news!
 But a long training programme – about three years will be necessary.
 All on board will have to know how to get home!!
 Better start saving!



post Covid-19 era. Guaranteed there will be smiles and a few tears too for we have been denied the blessings of church family life for far too long. However, I have to add the inevitable phrase, 'Government legislation allowing'.

When we are able to return we will be able to offer the Right Hand of Fellowship to Mr. Walter Holder who has been accepted into membership via Letters of Transfer with us here at Hope. Covid has stopped us taking it to completion but it hasn't lessened the thrill we all feel having Walter a part of our family. You are a true servant of your Lord and a delight to us all.

Helen writes

Dear everyone,

Thank you so much for all the flowers, chocolates and cards that you have all so very kindly sent to me.

I am now delighted to be back in the Manse. I realise that people can't come and support me during this difficult time of grieving but I know that you are all supporting me in your prayers as I've seen so many prayers answered in recent months. You will never know what an encouragement it has been to me to have had that support and how grateful I am to you. Oakdale is now finally on the market and hopefully will sell soon so that I can start the next chapter of my life.

I was so pleased to know that the food bank is open and I'm looking forward to supporting this work which was so close to Robbie's heart.

My family are all well. You will be happy to know that Ben and Rachel's youngest baby, Joshua; who you prayed for last year is thriving.

Jamie, Elicia & Naomi have at long last been able to return to New Zealand. They have moved into a house in Auckland and are delighted to announce that they are expecting their second child at the end of September. A new contract at Auckland airport has been accepted by Jamie.

Tom is now reunited with his wife Cari in Seattle and hoping to embark on a new career in management in civvy street.

I am so looking forward to the day that we will all be together again in Church worshipping our Lord and Saviour Jesus although I know that it's not going to be easy for any of us.

Until then, stay safe & thank you again for your prayers.

Love in His service, Helen

We all pray for Mr John Biggin who is in hospital. No details as yet.

The restrictions this month have made it so difficult to keep in touch. It is too cold to sit outside. Please continue to use your telephones. I hope and pray that it won't be too long now before we can visit each other once again in each other's homes. Along with countless others we are self medicating on the smaller health issues. Visiting the surgery for our jabs and hurrying back home. Please take care and keep safe.

THE FOOD BANK

Phase One



These are pictures of the Food Bank - we know that they gladden Robbie's heart. The work of the Food Bank within our walls is a part of his treasured legacy to us.

After many months of sheer hard work it is up and running.

The above photographs show the meticulous storage of the food and the office. The team have worked so hard. Due to the restrictions of Covid the bags are handed out from the door (on Derwen Road) I am sure that the need will increase once there is a lifting of restrictions and the footfall around town increases.

Phase Two will be our contribution.

Our premises have been enhanced by The Food Bank via the redecorating of our area where tea and coffee can be served and a welcoming smile offered to all - alongside a listening ear to those who wish to have a general chat. This is now a work in progress but well into the advanced stage. Hopefully we will be able to see more photographs next month.

Is this the opportunity that Robbie dreamed of? It certainly is!

To have people come in and find a kindly greeting, even an opportunity to share many of life's experiences is our commission.

Our Easter Services 2021

March 28th Palm Sunday

Our Palm Sunday sermon will be preached by Rev Ian Howells.
(This will go out via YouTube) at **10.30 am**.

April 1st Maundy Thursday. “The Last Supper“ (including Communion)
(Hopefully this will go out on YouTube) at **7pm**.

April 2nd Good Friday.

Our Good Friday sermon will be preached by Pastor David Dando.
(This will go out via YouTube) at **10.30 am**. Communion will be served.

April 4th Easter Day.

Our Easter Service of Celebration will be arranged by Rev Dai Davies, who will preach the sermon.

(We are preparing to open our church but realize that any decision will be subject to Government regulations. All will be informed of the decision taken by the deacons nearer the time. Alternatively, this service will go out via YouTube)

I want to thank sincerely Rev Dai Davies for taking us through the Lenten Studies during the month of March. Four weeks of sharing and understanding anew the challenges of grief and loss; but we have been raised up by faith and the grace of our Risen Lord.

Members and friends of ‘Hope’ assist in all of our services. We are grateful to each one. Our gratitude is heartfelt to Mr. Philip Chamberlain who has long since captured the reverence of worship by his resolve to follow the theme of each service. thus making it one coherent whole to the Glory of God. Technology has been harnessed for the good of us all!

I would invite you - urge you - to join us not only in the above services but in all our services (post Covid-19). You will be welcomed into the life of our church as we enjoy the blessings of faith, friendship and fellowship.



***“Oh, to see the dawn,
Of the darkest day:
Christ on the road to Calvary.
Tried by sinful men,
Torn and beaten, then
Nailed to a cross of wood.
This is the pow'r of the cross:
Christ became sin for us;
Took the blame, bore the wrath-
We stand forgiven at the cross”.***

On Friday, the Sanhedrin carefully manipulated the charges from blasphemy to Messiah, to a political charge of leading a revolt against the Roman Empire.

“Are you the King of the Jews?” asks Pilate.

“It is as you say” Jesus replied, “My kingdom is not of this world..”

“You are a King then!” said Pilate.

“You are right in saying that I am a King. In fact for this reason I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth”.

“What is Truth?” Pilate asks in despair.

Pilate, a broken man, is about to make the fatal choice between political expediency and genuine justice.

“Crucify him”, they shouted.

**Oh you Jewish Priests and Pharisees - you see no conquering
Messiah in this Galilean carpenter.**

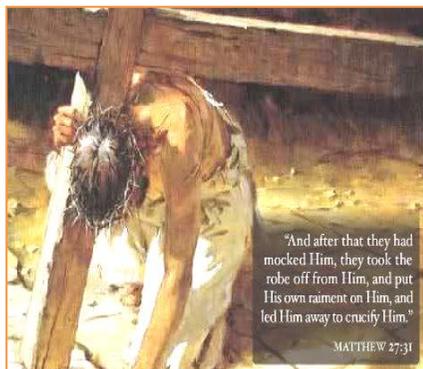
You Romans, you did not see God in Jesus.

You did not expect to see God in mortal man.

Then Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified.

“After they had mocked Him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on Him. Then they led Him away to crucify Him”. Matthew 27 v 2

***Oh, to see the dawn,
Of the darkest day:
Christ on the road to Calvary.
Tried by sinful men,
Torn and beaten, nailed to a cross ...
Christ became sin for us,
Took the blame, bore the wrath
We stand forgiven at the cross.***





***Now the daylight flees;
Now the ground beneath
Quakes as its Maker bows His head.
Curtain torn in two,
Dead are raised to life;
"Finished!" the vict'ry cry.
Oh, to see my name
Written in the wounds,
For through Your suffering I am free.
Death is crushed to death;
Life is mine to live,
Won through Your selfless love..***

Words and Music by Keith Getty & Stuart Townend

It is finished.
From the depths to the heights.
From the spitting and the stripping,
The beating and the bleeding,
The torture and the torment
– all suffered to the bitter end – to full completion.
“It is finished” - as Jesus cries God’s tears and cries out, -

“Into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.”

The question remains even to this day.

Do **you** see God on Golgotha’s Hill?

“Over and over again, God, the Father cries out – through earthquake, wind and the darkness of this day.

“This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”– at His Baptism.

“This is My Beloved Son..... HEAR YE HIM” On Mount of Transfiguration.

“Father, glorify your name”.

“I have both glorified it,
and will glorify it again”.

It was over!

Jesus had been silenced.



Can you recollect the number of times in your life when you have been totally in awe of a place or even a person - that feeling of speechlessness. It has taken your breath away, words cannot describe it; but your very being acknowledges the moment, you are transfixed!

It is a fact that 'awe' keeps your ego in check. It brings with it an awareness that there is something greater than oneself, someone taking on the responsibilities of this world. Nature depends on her Creator. She cannot produce life independently of Him, hence she assures us daily that there is balance, control and meaning despite the atrocities we are seeing every day.

Therefore, we are not alone. Loneliness cannot breathe the same air, nor can the feeling of rejection torment us, when 'awe' overtakes us and points us in another direction ... there is more to life. Look...!

Studies suggest that experiencing awe can dampen feelings of materialism. It seems that things are put back in the right perspective. We have more awesome moments than we can handle. Why do we insist on competing with God for bigger and better?

This feeling of awe can embrace the large and seemingly small moments of our lives. We do well to find them: just stop and savour them. See them for what they are. We must open our eyes and clear our heads to fully appreciate what they have to offer us.

Oh dear I used the word 'stop' - that is something we are not too good at. Lockdown which has truly stopped us in our tracks proves that truth. But it is something we must learn to do. "But I am too busy". Busyness is the arch enemy of 'Awe'.

Threading its way through the Easter story is the preoccupation of busyness; the preconceived ideas, the seeming urgency of life.. all of which were enemies in themselves.

Look! Jesus of Nazareth is saving this world. The moment passed - for all who had an agenda of their own for the rest of that day - for all - save those who truly stopped and knelt before his cross.

I wonder if we are amongst those who can miss the awesomeness of the moment? Are we so preoccupied that we miss the Glory of the Son of God pleading our case and offering us forgiveness and eternal life.

Thankfully, we will have an opportunity this Easter to savour 'awe' in its purest and finest form. A simple walk along the road will be enough. The trees are budding, flowers are heralding Spring and Summer.

Once we have allowed awe to envelop us we will find it everywhere, in everything and in everybody - for God will be seen and known.

“How do I do that – stuck indoors?” You might well ask. It’s a fair question. Music can bring the same feeling, it can inspire. In time we will be able to travel, go to the theatre. Meantime we can be filled with awe as we see the sacrifices people make, the bravery and courage of so many as they battle on. See the view, second hand perhaps, through the eyes of another via television. See it for what is, with no envy.

Marvel at the potter mastering the clay, see the skill of the weaver, the craft of the carpenter and the master baker bringing the bread out of the oven. Glory in your senses as you feel the sense of awe welling up inside you. Jesus did every day. For 3 years He taught us by word and deed how to live. ... it’s all there in the Gospels - His story can be ours too.

Can we start with the wonder of dawn? Experience that unique feeling that only sunrise can evoke. That gentle tug of anticipation as our little corner of this earth makes its final shift towards the sun.

The heavens have opened themselves up to us. We gaze in wonder. We acknowledge God, our Provider and Sustainer. There’s a list by the bed (or in my head) an agenda for the day. Mr Hurry and Mr Worry wrote it. It has been tugging at my sleeve. It can wait. It must wait. I have to sit with tea /coffee and listen to the sounds of a new day, birdsong and breeze.

My home has warmth and comfort. God has provided my daily bread. He is here by my side. Awesome!! We cannot contain the joy within.

Rhonwen



Three little Trees.

Once upon a mountain top, three little trees stood and dreamed of what they wanted to become when they grew up.

The first little tree looked up at the stars and said: "I want to hold treasure. I want to be covered with gold and filled with precious stones. I'll be the most beautiful treasure chest in the world!"

The second little tree looked out at the small stream trickling by on its way to the ocean. "I want to be traveling mighty waters and carrying powerful kings. I'll be the strongest ship in the world!"

The third little tree looked down into the valley below where busy men and women worked in a busy town. "I don't want to leave the mountain top at all. I want to grow so tall that when people stop to look at me, they'll raise their eyes to heaven and think of God. I will be the tallest tree in the world".

Years passed. The rain came, the sun shone, and the little trees grew tall. One day three woodcutters climbed the mountain.

The first woodcutter looked at the first tree and said, "This tree is beautiful. It is perfect for me". With a swoop of his shining axe, the first tree fell. "Now I shall be made into a beautiful chest. I shall hold wonderful treasure!" the first tree said.

The second woodcutter looked at the second tree and said, "This tree is strong. It is perfect for me." With a swoop of his shining axe, the second tree fell. "Now I shall sail mighty waters!" thought the second tree. "I shall be a strong ship for mighty kings!"

The third tree felt her heart sink when the last woodcutter looked her way. She stood straight and tall and pointed bravely to heaven. But the woodcutter never even looked up. "Any kind of tree will do for me," he muttered. With a swoop of his shining axe, the third tree fell.

The first tree rejoiced when the woodcutter brought her to a carpenter's shop. But the carpenter fashioned the tree into a feedbox for animals. The once beautiful tree was not covered with gold, nor with treasure. She was coated with sawdust and filled with hay for hungry farm animals.

The second tree smiled when the woodcutter took her to a shipyard, but no mighty sailing ship was made that day. Instead, the once strong tree was hammered and sawed into a simple fishing boat. She was too small and too weak to sail on an ocean, or even a river; instead, she was taken to a little lake.

The third tree was confused when the woodcutter cut her into strong beams and left her in a lumberyard. "What happened?" the once tall tree wondered. "All I ever wanted was to stay on the mountain top and point to God..."

Many, many days and night passed. The three trees nearly forgot their dreams.

But one night, golden starlight poured over the first tree as a young woman placed her newborn baby in the feedbox. "I wish I could make a cradle for him", her husband whispered. The mother squeezed his hand and smiled as the starlight shone on the smooth and the sturdy wood. "This manger is beautiful", she said. And suddenly the first tree knew he was holding the greatest treasure in the world.

One evening a tired traveller and his friends crowded into the old fishing boat. The traveller fell asleep as the second tree quietly sailed out into the lake. Soon a thundering and thrashing storm arose. The little tree shuddered. She knew she did not have the strength to carry so many passengers safely through with the wind and the rain.

The tired man awakened. He stood up, stretched out his hand, and said, "Peace." The storm stopped as quickly as it had begun. And suddenly the second tree knew he was carrying the king of heaven and earth.

One Friday morning, the third tree was startled when her beams were yanked from the forgotten woodpile. She flinched as she was carried through an angry jeering crowd. She shuddered when soldiers nailed a man's hands to her. She felt ugly and harsh and cruel.

But on Sunday morning, when the sun rose and the earth trembled with joy beneath her, the third tree knew that God's love had changed everything. It had made the third tree strong. And every time people thought of the third tree, they would think of God.

That was better than being the tallest tree in the world.

The next time you feel down because you didn't get what you want, sit tight and be happy because God is thinking of something better to give you.

Source unknown



Coffee morning humour.

Using the availability of zoom to its utmost, we have been holding a coffee morning every Wednesday at 10.30 am. It has become an event with laughter galore.

Hardly a serious confessional (well not for police to be involved!) we have learnt so much about each other. Each week we have a theme. i.e. What is your favourite film? with Phil providing a quiz -15 film posters, no music - we had to guess the film titles.

Paul prepared 'Name that tune'. We had to go into a play off - How many No1 hits did Tom Jones have?

Childhood memories recalling perfect behaviour - I think not! Naturally I am not going to name anybody but who do you think was the mischievous boy who worked out that if you rattled the chewing gum machine outside the sweet shop long and hard enough, the gum would pop obligingly out through the back.

Another tale was told of two young lads and their sister caught stealing apples. The vicar had a high wall –the local copper a low wall! Beware!!



All the apples tasted delicious. If caught, the sister always had the blame.

(I feel like naming this contributor- see if you can guess who could it be?)
Sitting across the church aisle from this young lady of 6-7 years old, was a poor boy whose father was a dentist! Feeling so sorry 'because he probably couldn't have sweets' this little girl, on her way to church, would spend a penny of her collection money on 8 fruit salads or 8 black jacks. She would pass them to 'son of dentist' in church via the collection plate. Not realising they were for him he left them there. Our kind heroine had to crawl under the pews, right to the front, pretending that she had forgotten to put her collection on the plate. Success - she grabbed the sweets and returned to her seat, a picture of innocence – leaving the vicar to work out what was going on!!

Never argue with a fool, people might not know the difference.

A short cut is the longest distance between two points.

Anything good in life is illegal, immoral or fattening.

The light at the end of the tunnel is the headlamp of an oncoming train.

More words of wisdom from Eva. Many thanks.

Whilst painting and DIY has taken a back seat I am positive that our obsession with food during lockdown never will. Our old recipe books, loved and favoured when we had time to cook, have suddenly inspired us. Here is one of my favourites - my mother used to make it. It is suitable for vegans (not that we knew what a 'vegan' was in those days)

Lord Woolton Pie.

Ingredients.

A mixture of vegetables in season. (white heart of cabbage, a few pieces of cauliflower, celery, leek, onion potato, carrot, and parsnip)

Cooking fat.

Salt and pepper.

1 dessertspoon flour.

Half a stock cube.

Pastry crust to cover the top of the dish you are using.

Method.

1. Wash and prepare the vegetables and cut them up roughly.

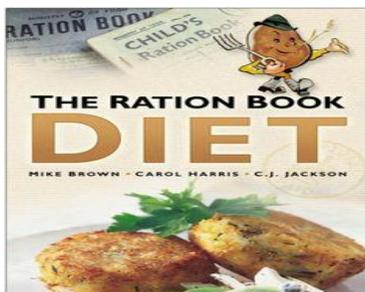
2. Heat a little fat in a saucepan, add the vegetables, season with salt and pepper. and cook, turning them over occasionally for about 5 minutes.

3. Add a dessertspoon of flour and stir for a few minutes until the flour is cooked. Transfer into a pie dish

4 Add a little water in which you have dissolved half or the whole stock cube (depending on the size of the pie.) Add the pastry crust.

Cooking time in the oven on gas mark 4 about 45 minutes minimum but again it depends on the size.

Cheap, adaptable nourishing, a weight watchers dream!



Friday evening was quiet - the disciples fled, the angels lowered their heads.

On Saturday the disciples wept and the angels kept vigil. All Mary could do was sit and ask God from deep within herself the one torturous question, “ABBA!” (Jesus had told her to call God, “Father”) “What have you done to your son - my son? He has been crucified?”

On Sunday, Mary, clutching the myrrh, His birth gift, made her way with the others to the tomb.

It was the third day on which, pre-dawn the heart of Jesus began to beat. Jesus was alive! He folded the grave clothes”... the cloth that had been around Jesus’ head was folded up and laid in a different place from the strips of linen” John 20v7-8. Jesus, the ever meticulous son of a carpenter, seeing the stone being rolled away... walked out of the tomb. When Mary arrives a fire is smouldering, a guard has hurriedly left his cloak - and the tomb invites her in. There was an angel - was it ‘her’ angel? “He is not here. He is Risen”

To be near an angel is to be near Eternity. For such moments when eternity and the earth come together in one place - well you need angels for that; our frail humanity needs them.

Angels hover, they come to us today in all manner of guises - be aware of each one. They have something to say to us – intensely personal too.

Later, Mary would ask John when did he believe.

“Right there, in the tomb, when I saw the cloth folded. It was just what Jesus would do! Jesus showed Himself to us many times - we needed that but I already believed”. John uses that word 88 times just to make sure we understand.

Dear members and friends -
There is nothing left for us to do
but to believe - Jesus Is alive!
May this Easter fill you with joy!
Jesus is here with you.

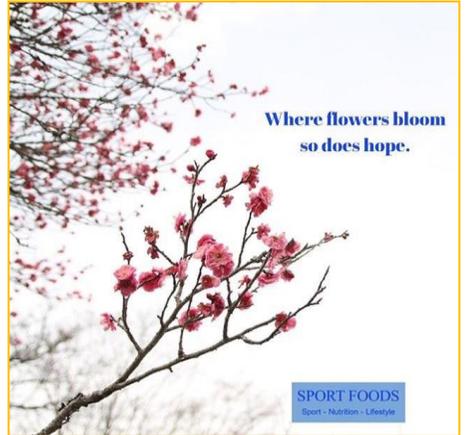
Rhonwen.



Because He is risen.

Because He is risen
Spring is possible
In all the cold hard places
Gripped by winter
And freedom jumps the queue
To take fear's place
as our focus
Because He is risen.

Because He is risen
My future is an epic novel
Where once it was a mere short story
My contract on life is renewed in
perpetuity
My options are open-ended
My travel plans are cosmic
Because He is risen.



Because He is risen
Hunger will go begging in the streets
For want of a home
And selfishness will have a shortened shelf-life
And we will throng to the funeral of famine
And dance on the callous grave of war
And poverty will be history in our history
Because He is risen



And because He is risen
A fire burns in my bones
And my eyes see possibilities
And my heart hears hope
Like a whisper on the wind
And the song that rises in me
Will not be silenced As life disrupts
This shadowed place of death
Like a butterfly under the skin
And death itself
Runs terrified to hide

Because He is risen
~By Gerard Kelly~

Lockdown!

Given we are familiar with the term “lockdown”, I thought that could be the theme of my item for our Easter Magazine. I can already imagine your minds clicking into gear: “Easter”? “Lockdown”? “Mike must be referring to the tomb in which our Lord’s body was placed.” Well, yes. I am – at least in part.

Lockdown – 1

Jesus was crucified, and following his death, his body was placed in the unused tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea. A large stone was rolled across the entrance, Matthew 27:57-60.

The next morning, the leading priests and Pharisees asked Pilate to seal the tomb, to deter Jesus’ disciples from stealing the body, and then claiming Jesus had risen from the dead. Pilate told them to see to it themselves. So they sealed the tomb, and posted guards to protect it. Matthew 27:62-66.

Lockdown. No means of rescue or escape. Yet on the third day the tomb was empty, with the stone rolled away and an angel on duty. The guards had fled and reported what had happened. I can’t believe the hypocrisy of the priests and Pharisees who heavily bribed the guards to say that they (the guards) had fallen asleep on duty, and the disciples had stolen the body. Matthew 28:11-15.

Neither death, nor a heavy stone across the tomb entrance, nor guards posted to keep watch could keep our glorious Lord in lockdown. “Death cannot keep its prey, Jesus my Saviour. He tore the bars away, Jesus my Lord.” So this Easter we celebrate the resurrection from the dead of our Lord.

Lockdown - 2a

Later that same day, the day we call Easter Sunday, a group of followers of Jesus were gathered together in an upper room. The Bible reports that “the door was locked for fear of the Jewish leaders”. John 20:19. Lockdown 2a. The disciples and others meeting behind closed and bolted doors. In addition to being afraid of the authorities, they were also confused. There had been reports that Jesus had been seen, alive and well! Unbelievable. Then we read v20, “suddenly Jesus was standing among them”. To calm their fears, he showed them the wounds in his hands and feet. Lockdown? Not for our Lord.

How many Christians are meeting behind closed doors around the world, for fear of the authorities? Thankfully such locked doors cannot keep out the Lord. We pray that our persecuted brothers and sisters will know his presence.

Lockdown - 2b

A week later the disciples were again in the upper room, and again the doors were locked John 20:26. This time Thomas was present. He wasn’t there before, and refused to believe the disciples. This time when Jesus appeared among them, he singled out Thomas. “Look at my wounds, Thomas,” he said. “Don’t be faithless any longer. Believe,”

Another lockdown, and our Lord reached out to a troubled individual, who for some reason had missed out on the previous visit. Maybe someone reading this feels a bit left out. Others in the fellowship seem to have had a blessing from the

Lord, but not you. Maybe there seems to be no way the Lord can come to you. Take heart from this story. Jesus cares for the individual, and will find a way to bless you and increase your faith.

Lockdown – 3

Some weeks later the disciples and other believers are again in the upper room. We are not specifically told the doors were locked. But I think it is fair to say that the followers of Jesus were keeping themselves to themselves. To all intents and purposes they were locked in.

Then the Holy Spirit came, just as Jesus had promised. There was the sound of a rushing mighty wind; something like tongues of fire settled on each one present; and they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them the ability so to do.

On hearing the “commotion” a crowd gathered outside. What did the believers do? Huddle down inside the room, and keep quiet, hoping the crowd would go away? By no means. Peter metaphorically threw open the doors. He and the disciples marched out, and in the power of the Holy Spirit he preached a powerful sermon. Some 3000 people believed and were baptised.

What happened next! Did the disciples and original believers go back into the upper room and keep themselves to themselves? No, by no means. The church “came out” so to speak. They certainly met together for prayer and Bible study; but they also worshipped together at the Temple each day, and met in homes for the Lord’s Supper. No more lockdown for the early church.

Lockdown – 4

Move forward 30 years or so. In the Book of Revelation ch 2 & 3, the Holy Spirit sends letters or messages to seven churches. The seventh letter describes the Church at Laodicea as “neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm”, the church is said to be arrogant, self-satisfied, and blind.

And where is the Head of the Church? He is standing outside the church.

Our Lord locked out of the church. Rev 3:20 pictures the scene. “Behold I stand at the door and knock,” says the Lord. Previously, a sealed tomb and locked doors have been no barriers to our Lord. But not this time. And this is a church.

But note, Jesus is inviting individuals to respond. “If you (singular) hear my voice, I will come in, and we will share a meal together”, Rev 3:20. This verse is often used to encourage unbelievers to “let Jesus into their hearts”. But here it is addressed to individuals in a church setting. Just as our Lord made a beeline for Thomas, so he looks for individuals at Laodicea.

This is typical of our Lord. The individual matters to him, whether in a dead church situation, or a live church situation. You matter to our Lord. As with Thomas he may come to reassure you in a time of doubt and fear; or as with the folk at Laodicea he may come and invite you to take a step of faith, and invite him into your life. He will come!

Rev. Mike Weldon

Every day is Resurrection Day.

Every table with bread and water or wine waits Christ's Presence..

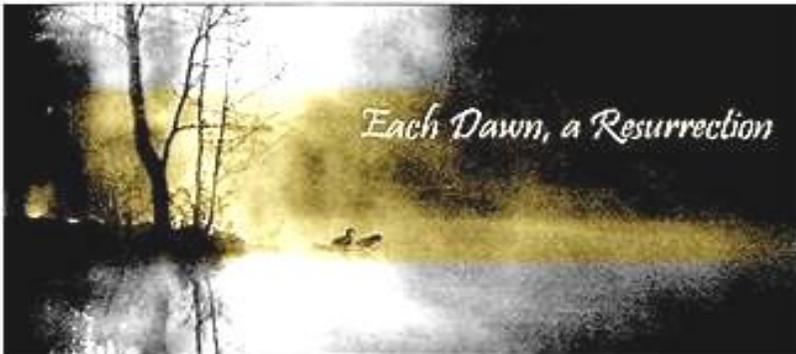
**Set out! You were born for the road,
Set out! You have a meeting to keep.
Where? With whom?
Perhaps with yourself.**

**Set out! Your steps will be your words –
The road your song,
The weariness your prayers.
And at the end
Your silence will speak to you.**

**Alone or with others –But get out of yourself!
You have created rivals – You will find companions,
You envisaged enemies – You will find brothers and sisters.**

**Set out! You were born for the road – the pilgrim's road.
Someone is coming to meet you – is seeking you,
at the end of the road
there in the depths of your heart.**

**He is your peace,
He is your joy!
Go! God already walks with you.**



Hope Baptist Church
OUR WEEK AT A GLANCE

March/April 2021

For more information on any of our activities, please get in touch with the contact shown.

TUESDAY:

Tuesday Prayer Group 9.30am Mrs R Rowe (01656) 654881
Tuesday@Hope 11.00am Mrs M Johnson (01656) 656346

WEDNESDAY:

“Busy Fingers’ Group 2 – 4pm Mrs. Helen Hall (01656) 224015

THURSDAY:

Baby & Toddler Group 9.30am Dr. D. Ware (01656) 662948
Prayer Meeting 7.30pm

SUNDAY:

Sunday’sCool 10.00am
Morning Service 10.30am
Evening Service 6.00pm

WHO TO CONTACT AT HOPE

CHURCH CONTACT: hopebaptist@hotmail.co.uk 07866 746851
SECRETARY: Rhonwen Miles (01656) 654169
TREASURER: Paul Evans (01656) 661986
CARETAKER: Seung Ho & Yun Hee Kang (01656) 646911
USE OF PREMISES & SAFEGUARDING Sally George (01656) 668791
NEWSDESK: mag4hope@yahoo.com Rhonwen Miles/
Pam Jones

HOPE

BAPTIST CHURCH

OUR STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

(Church Meeting 010503)

We will EVANGELISE our community & beyond.

We will encourage people to become more Christ-like through
DISCIPLESHIP.

We are committed to meeting the needs of those inside & outside
our walls through MINISTRY.

We will value FELLOWSHIP, recognising that it is a divine gift to the
church.

We will come before the Lord in obedience to WORSHIP Him.

Hope Baptist Church operates a safeguarding children and
adults at risk policy

www.hopebridgend.co.uk

www.facebook.com/HOPE-BAPTIST-CHURCH-BRIDGEND

[1699576150319699](tel:1699576150319699)

Hope English Baptist Church Bridgend

Affiliated to the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB) & South Wales
Baptist Association

Registered Charity: No. 1133067

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