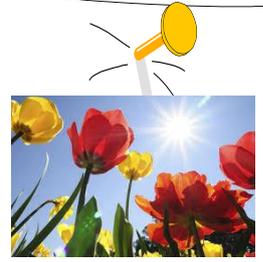


APRIL 2018



SPRING

SOUTHDOWN



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Newsletter

Please provide copy by
E-mail by 10th of previous month

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Weekday Activities

Pre-school Jo Trussler 07973601354	
Weekdays (except Wednesday) 9.10am – 12.10pm in halls	
Study Group Vivienne Kendall 01582 629930	
Alternate Wednesdays lounge 8pm	
Brownies and Guides	
Tuesday	
17 th Rainbows	5pm
14 th Brownies	6.15pm
Wednesday	
9 th Brownies	6.15pm
3 rd Guides	7.30pm
Thursday	
17 th Brownies	6.15pm
17 th Guides	7.30pm
Hall Bookings	
01582 769871	



*Your intercessions are asked this month for weekday activities
On p.5 of the church directory.*

Mission Statement

The aim of Southdown Newsletter is to help develop the Christian faith through reporting about worship, people and activities of Southdown Methodist Church.

Unacknowledged items are written by the editor

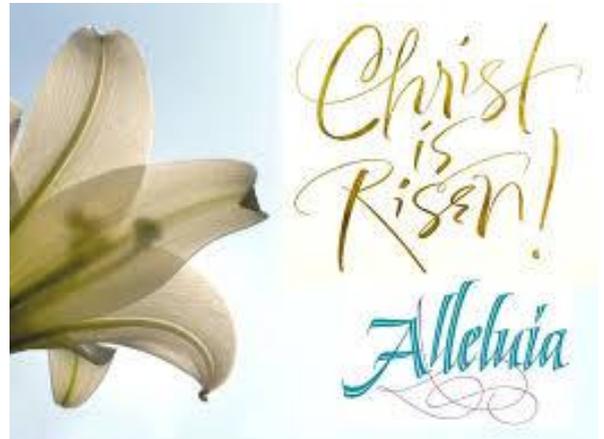
Easter – the Season when Hope Springs forth

Dear Friends,

The Christian Church throughout the world begins this new month of April this year, with the celebration of Easter Sunday - the day Christ rose from the dead and was seen alive.

*Alleluia, Alleluia,
give thanks to the risen Lord,
Alleluia, Alleluia,
give praise to his name.*

(Donald Fishel, b. 1950)



In Luke 24 we read the story of Christ's resurrection, where first he was seen by the women who went early in the morning to the tomb carrying spices to embalm his body. They were worried about the huge rock that covered the mouth of the tomb in which Jesus was laid. To their surprise when they got there, the stone had been rolled away and the body of Jesus was not there. Mary rushes to the man she mistakenly thinks is a gardener and asks that he tell her what they had done with Jesus' body. It was when Jesus called her by name, that Mary recognised the risen Lord and Saviour. Secondly, Jesus appears to his disciples and shows his wounds that they may believe (Luke 24:36-40).

This speaks to so many of us who, unless we are addressed or invited by name to be part of something, fail to see glory and presence of God with us. Mary, like so many of us was wrapped in her grief that she failed to see and recognise a face she had looked at for so long as she sat learning with the other women around Jesus. Often our personal crises prevent us from hearing the words of hope that proclaim Jesus' victory over sin and death.

Many of us worry and have no hope when we see the disasters, aches and ills that ravage our communities and world. In the face of climate change and global warming I worry for the future generations. In the face of church decline and apathy of faith, I worry for the salvation of the world.

At this Easter season I urge you to hear the voice of the risen Christ call you by name, saying “*Look, see, it is I.*” I urge you to recognise his wounds which he suffered that you and I may not have to endure the same.

Though we go through hardships, we have the faith and belief that these are not eternal. Easter ushers us into a new life for all who believe. I, however, hold on to the hope of Christ’s return and the promise of heaven. Of those I am assured, it is the here and now I struggle with.

Just as spring ushers new life after the stripping winter brings in nature; Jesus’ resurrection springs forth new life where life had been stripped by sin. Springs brings forth new hope as expressed by Julian of Norwich, “all will be well, all shall be well and all manner of things will be well.”

As the words of the hymn by Crum beautifully summarises:

“Now the green blade rise the from the buried grain, wheat that in dark earth many days has lain; Love lives again, that with the dead has been: Love is come again, like wheat that springs up green.”

Happy Easter Season

Mmasape



We take time to remember those of our friends who are unable to worship with us, especially **Sandra Ford** and **Geoff Bullimore**. We hold them in our prayers.

In February Jenny was overwhelmed to receive so many donations towards the British Humanitarian Aid appeal. Members of Tuesday@3 and other friends at Southdown brought clothes, blankets and toiletries – so many bags of items that the vestry and the back room at church were filled! Southdown may be small in number but we are big in giving! Jenny sends her thanks to all who supported the appeal.

God's Easter Garden

As I write my garden is buried under a cover of snow. With the late snow this year many bulbs had already started to show their heads, crocuses and snowdrops had already been blooming and the daffodils were in bud and nearly flowering. I know that when the snow has melted they will still be there, waiting.



At Easter time and in the days and months after Easter we become those 'Easter People', flowering after the winter and the sorrow and trauma of Holy Week and Good Friday. We join Christ in his resurrection and live in his risen light and power.

The Easter story moves from the Garden of Gethsemane with all its anguish and struggle to Golgotha, the place of the crucifixion and then to the garden of the tomb where the risen Jesus meets Mary and the coldness and darkness of that morning is transformed as she recognizes her Lord and later shares that experience with the disciples.

At the heart of the Easter story is the message of New Life, that even the smallest child begins to understand - bunnies and eggs can actually help small children to understand the meaning of Easter.



Hopefully the butterfly will again be visiting our gardens later as we move through spring into summer. The butterfly is an ancient symbol of hope and resurrection. The transformation, from caterpillar, through the stage of chrysalis, to the beautiful butterfly symbolizes the change from death to resurrection that is at the heart of the gospel and at the heart of spring.

So as our gardens burst into life with the coming Spring let's look for those signs of resurrection in our own lives and in the life of the world. Where we can, let us bring that hope and peace into the lives of others. Let us celebrate that new life that the risen Christ gives to us. Our gardens can also be a symbol of healing and well-being and a place of peace and restoration after the long winter.

I do hope you will all find time not just to tend and to sit and relax in your own gardens but also to visit some of the wonderful gardens that are open in this and in neighbouring counties.

I love the poem 'God's Garden' by Dorothy Frances Gurney. I can remember my Nan teaching it to me.

**'The kiss of the sun for pardon,
the song of the birds for mirth-
One is nearer God's heart in a garden
than anywhere else on earth.'**

May God's blessings fill your lives and hearts and may we all live as Easter people.



Jenny

Annual Church Meeting

Southdown will hold the ACM on
29 April

at the morning breakfast service.

This meeting is open to all members and friends at Southdown and will conclude at 11.30am as usual.



Seeing is believing

It certainly was for 'Doubting Thomas' as recorded in the Gospel of John chapter 20:1-18. He missed out on Jesus' appearance to the other disciples. Even Mary had previously seen Jesus in the garden. No wonder Thomas wanted the same experience.

It's not as if Thomas was any less faithful than the other disciples, he just wanted to be included in their experiences. Suffering from a deep grief, he hastily said, 'Unless I see the marks of the nails, and put my hands in the scars on his side, I will not believe.' You can't blame him; we would have wanted the same thing.



So Jesus appears to Thomas just as he had to Mary and the rest of the disciples. Then he utters the challenging phrase, '*Happy are those who do not see but believe.*' Following this, Jesus then appears several times to various people. So he wanted to be seen!

Christians today believe that Christ is risen, but not remote. Christ has ascended to heaven, but, as the good shepherd, he still cares for every last one of his sheep. We know that Jesus has not left us.

Today we don't look for Jesus in the same way as those first disciples did - as a physical presence. We may not long to put our hands in Jesus' side, but we do long to see God's work in the world.

The whole point of the empty cross is to say, God is with us, and never leaves us. God will go even to the point of death, for us. As we live our lives seeking to see Christ where at first we would not expect, we can know we are not alone, for God sends the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, to comfort, accompany, and help us discern.

Pray that as we wait to celebrate Pentecost, the Holy Spirit will open our eyes to see anew, and in seeing, believe.

So look around. Where do we see Jesus?

Spring – wake up to a time of renewal

At last -after the big March freeze, Spring has sprung! Other than Allergy-sufferers, surely there is not anyone who dislikes this season. It is a time of renewal and beauty. Everything feels fresh and new. It is a time to revive our senses, to wake up and begin again.

In the springtimes of our lives, we feel the sense of hopefulness and possibility. We may feel even more ready for Spring if it has been an especially tough winter when we have shovelled snow. Or if the winter has been more internal in our lives maybe we feel we have shed enough tears and it is time for things to start looking up.

Hopefully, we have new energy to do what Spring asks of us: break up fallow ground, shed layers, get out and do something, take hold of opportunities that come our way rather than burrowing under the blanket.

In Spring, we often clean the house and declutter (Well, some of us do!) and make way for the warmer air to blow through our spaces. We can do the same internally. We can let go of things that may be weighing us down or holding us back whether they be worries, grudges, or physical stuff. Spring is a time ripe for growth outside and in.

Spring also has much to teach us about God. The story of Noah's ark reminds us, that after the terrifying destruction of the flood, the rain does stop, the sun does come out and there is even a dazzling rainbow.

In the midst of this, God promises *'While the earth remains, seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.'* God promises seasons. This means that life will go on.

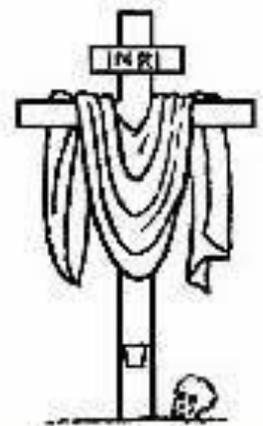




In Isaiah, God speaks through the prophet saying:
‘For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.’

When Spring bursts forth, it is easier for us to remember that everything has a place and a purpose. As human beings, we tend to want to create order in our environments and we often tend to gravitate towards people like us. But in creation, God seems to love variety and diversity.

Also, Spring is a time when many different faiths celebrate resurrection. Christians remember the passion, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. In ancient Egypt, they celebrated the resurrection of god Osiris and the great Sphinx still standing in Egypt is a symbol of resurrection. The temple of Angkor Wat in Cambodia aligns to the Spring equinox and depicts the scene of ‘the churning of the milky ocean’, which for them is the struggle between light and darkness, between death and life.



And what better time than Spring to meditate upon these things; upon life that seems to spring from nothing. It takes faith to believe that such a thing is possible.

We may have to experience hard things in our lives and our faiths, but the promise of every season, every stage of our lives is God’s promise:

‘Behold, I make all things new.’

For the Beauty of the Earth

Folliot S. Pierpoint (1835-1917).

Pierpoint was 29 at the time he wrote this hymn; he was mesmerised by the beauty of the countryside that surrounded him. It first appeared in 1864 and was written as a Eucharistic hymn - hence the title 'The Sacrifice of Praise', which is sung in the refrain '*Christ, our God, to Thee we raise, This, our sacrifice of praise*'. (The text was radically modified by the publishers of 'Hymns Ancient and Modern' for the 1916 Hymnbook, so that it could serve as a general hymn).



However ... I wonder what Pierpoint would think of our earth today? We have seen distressing pictures of our polluted ocean system showing tonnes of plastic waste piling up on once-beautiful beaches around the world. As one commentator said, there is only ONE ocean, and whatever we discard washes up on someone else's part of that same ocean.

Apart from the obvious pollutants, there are many items which we might not think are culprits. Rubber tyres contain 60% plastic; outdoor clothing like leggings and fleeces made from polyester and spandex shed 700,000 microfibrils with each wash; tennis balls made from ptfе become plastic dust when used; children's glitter, wet wipes and tea bags do not break down and are hard to dispose of.

Encouragingly, you may have heard about the Danish supermarket with a 'plastic-free aisle'. Packaging can be made to be biodegradable. Let's pray that industry will seriously research the future of these materials, then, like Pierpoint, we may truthfully sing:

*'For the beauty of the earth,
for the beauty of the skies'*

and perhaps add '**For the beauty of the ocean**'.



Just a thought

I am writing this during one of the coldest days for 27 years, and the first days of the meteorological spring! My immediate thought is ‘Brrr, when will the thaw arrive?’

This is also a question. Recently I heard a speaker say, ‘If Jesus is the answer, what is the question?’ – and this got me thinking, and Googling!

For many people, Christianity, and therefore Jesus, does provide answers. Thinking of answers, many Christians tend to emphasize the intellectual content of the faith, read the Bible for directions, not just inspiration.

Scripture says that we should ‘*Love God with all our heart and mind and soul*’, but how can we love God with our minds if we aren’t asking questions and looking for answers? In the Gospel stories, we do find Jesus answering questions—not that those who asked the question always agreed with the answers. Certainly the rich young ruler didn’t - and often we don’t!

However, if we agree that Jesus is the answer then we must ask the right questions. It’s no good asking ‘Why me?’ ‘What if ...?’ ‘Why does God allow ...?’ These are the questions many people ask today and then wonder why they don’t get an answer.

Jesus never said he was the answer. What he did say is recorded in John’s Gospel – **I am the way, the truth and the life.**

So the questions for us as Christians to answer should, perhaps, be ‘How are we following him?’ ‘How are we experiencing his presence as we follow him?’ ‘How am I helping others to find Jesus?’ Then we can begin to understand the answers Jesus provides.

In this way we can see that Jesus offers not just answers, he shows us a way of understanding the world, a way of living in the world, of coping, acting, prioritizing.

(Web search)

April		
1	Linda Black	10.00am
8	Susie King	10.30am
15	Holy Communion Rev Mmasape Zihle	1030am
22	Jenny Harris	10.30am
29	Breakfast Service	10.00am
Messy Church Jenny Cope 768087		
April No meeting 3.30pm – 5.30pm halls		
Tuesday at Three Jenny Cope		
Meeting in the church 3 – 4pm		
Diary for April		
3 & 10	No meeting	
17		
24		

Spring Trivia!



1. Where did the term ‘spring’ originate?

From Latin Greek
 Old English French

2. Before Spring, Spring time and Springing time, what was the season known as based on an old English word?

Lent Advent
 Epiphany Pentecost

3. Which film features ‘Younger than Springtime’?

South Pacific My Fair Lady
 Carousel Salad Days

4. Who sang "April Love?"

Nat King Cole Buddy Holly Tony Bennett Pat Boone

5. Which following vegetable is considered in season in Spring?

Artichoke Capsicum Celery Eggplant

6. According to folklore, what can we balance on the ground on the first day of Spring?

A stone An egg A broom A football

7. Who painted ‘Primavera’ (The Allegory of Spring)?

Titian Botticelli Tintoretto Raphael

Answers

1. Latin 2. Lent 3. South Pacific 4. Pat Boone 5 Artichoke
 6. An egg 7. Botticelli