



St. John's Mar Thoma Church  
St. Paul's Hall,  
Cambridge Road,  
Hounslow,  
UK TW4 7 BP

# The Midlands Prayer Group

## News & Views

April 2007  
Volume 3, Issue 4



### Inside this Issue

- 1 Message from Rev Gigy Thomas - President
- 2 Good Friday
- 3 Right questions
- 4 Holy Saturday
- 5 Easter
- 6 Editorial Desk
- 7 Announcements
- 8 Useful Contacts

#### Next Service:

12<sup>th</sup> May 2007 (Malayalam)

26<sup>th</sup> May 2007 (English)

\* **Good Friday service on 6<sup>th</sup> April 07 at 8am.**

St. James Hill Church  
Mere Green Road  
Four Oaks, West Midlands  
B75 5DD

The Midlands Mar Thoma Prayer Group

#### *From the Achen's Desk*

Dearly beloved in Christ,

#### *Warm Greetings!*

Lent is a time when we prepare ourselves to celebrate the resurrection. The scene of the transfiguration seems to be a high point on the way, but is it really?

The context of St. Luke's passage is the same as the one we find in St. Matthew and St. Mark. According to Paul, those who are considered as "acknowledged pillars" of the church (Gal. 2:9) accompany Jesus: Peter, John, and James (Luke 9:28). Matthew and Mark do not specify the content of the conversation of Jesus with Moses and Elijah. Luke on the other hand wrote of speaking of the "departure" of Jesus, of his death which was about to take place in Jerusalem. Significantly, Luke uses the term "Exodus" to refer to Jesus departure. The word is filled with meaning; it is a departure which allows coming to life, to the resurrection. This exodus is the Passover, the passage to the Promised Land a sign of the Kingdom. Calling death an exodus means that death is not the end of Jesus' plan. This is the conviction which has to sustain the hope of his disciples and of us.

As Jesus followers, we must proclaim a kingdom of life which encompasses every aspect of human existence. But it also implies an exodus for us, a

departure from every thing which prevents us from living in full communion with God and with others. This exodus is going to involve painful and unavoidable aspects from which, in his fascination for the moment he is living, Peter wants to escape (Luke 9:33)

Peter is mistaken. We can not stop on the way as we follow Jesus. We must not seek refuge in a tent. The text from Exodus also deals with an exodus. God is asking Abraham to leave the safe world he knows. The faith rooted in Abraham's heart makes him accept the adventure. He leaves in order to enter. God promises him he will be the father of countless descendants who will live in the land which God will give them.

"Our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil.3:20) means that we have to know the ultimate criterion of our daily behaviour on earth. St. Paul reproaches his friendship of Philippi precisely because they are not living as he has instructed them in accordance with the testimony of Jesus and of Paul himself. Thus he is asking them to be "standing firm in the Lord"

The episode of the transfiguration reminds us that our being Christians has to be lived in the midst of the ups and downs and the difficulties of history. We welcome the gift of the kingdom in history and we become citizens of heaven, of the kingdom which is coming to us now.

May the Lord purify our hearts to see your ways clearly and walk in newness of life!

Yours in His service  
Gigy Achen



Let me start the holy way....



In 2007, Good Friday is on April 6<sup>th</sup>.



### When is Good Friday?

**Good Friday is the Friday before Easter Sunday.** On this day, Christians remember the day when Jesus was crucified on a cross.

The date of Good Friday changes every year.

The date of the first Good Friday will never be known, but many scholars believe that the event took place on April 7th, A.D. 30. If they are right the calendar is wrong, by three years.

The Anglo-Saxon name for Good Friday was **Long Friday**, due to the long fast imposed upon this day.

### Why is it called Good Friday?

The name may be derived from 'God's Friday' in the same way that good-bye is derived from 'God be with ye'.

It is 'good' because the barrier of sin was broken.

### What happened on Good Friday?

Jesus was arrested and was tried, in a mock trial. He was handed over to the Roman soldiers to be beaten and flogged with whips. A crown of long, sharp thorns was thrust upon his head.

Jesus was forced to carry his own cross outside the city to Skull Hill. He was so weak after the beating that a man named Simon, who was from Cyrene, was pulled from the crowd and forced to carry Jesus' cross the rest of the way.

Jesus was nailed to the cross. Two other criminals were crucified with him; their crosses were on either side of him. A sign above Jesus read "The King of the Jews."

### According to the Bible:

- The third hour of the day - Jesus was nailed to the cross. (9:00 am )
- The Sixth Hour of the day - darkness covered the land (12:00 noon).
- The ninth hour of the day - the darkness left, and the Lord died (3:00 pm).

The hours in the bible are calculated from the first hour of the day, being 6 in the morning.

Christians believe that Jesus stood in our place. His death paid the penalty not for his own wrong doings but for ours.

### What happens on Good Friday today?

Since the early nineteenth century, before the introduction of bank holidays, Good Friday and Christmas Day were the only two days of leisure which were almost universally granted to working people. Good Friday today is still a public holiday in much of the UK. This means that many businesses are closed.

Some Christians **fast** (go without food) on Good Friday. This helps

them remember the sacrifice Jesus made for them on the day of crucifixion. Many churches hold a special service. This may be a **communion service** in the evening or a time of prayer during the day, especially around 3 o'clock as that is about the time of day when Jesus died.

Many Churches hold services lasting three hours. They may celebrate the Stations of the Cross, or take part in Passion plays and dramatic readings.

Some Christians take part in a procession of witness, carrying a cross through the streets and then into church.

Churches are not decorated on Good Friday. In some churches, pictures and statues are covered over. It is seen as a time of mourning.

**It is traditional to eat warm 'hot cross buns' on Good Friday.** Hot Cross Buns with their combination of spicy, sweet and fruity flavours have long been an Easter tradition.

### Why do we eat Hot Cross Buns ?

The pastry cross on top of the buns symbolises and reminds Christians of the cross that Jesus was killed on.



The buns were traditionally eaten at breakfast time, hot from the oven. They were once sold by street vendors who sang a little song about them.

**"Hot cross buns, Hot cross buns, One a penny, two a penny, Hot cross buns."**

### Hot Cross Bun Ceremony

At the London Pub, The Widow's Son, a Hot Cross Bun Ceremony takes place each Good Friday. In the early 19th century, a widow who lived on the site was expecting her sailor son back home for Easter, and placed a hot cross bun ready for him on Good Friday. The son never

returned, but undaunted the widow left the bun waiting for him and added a new bun each year. Successive landlords have kept the tradition going after the pub was opened.

**There are a number of superstitions relating to Good Friday:**

A child born on Good Friday and baptised on Easter Sunday has the gift of healing.

Many fishermen will not set out for catch on Good Friday.

Bread or cakes baked on this day will not go mouldy.

Eggs laid on Good Friday will never go bad.

The planting of crops is not advised on this day, as an old belief says that no iron should enter the ground (i.e. spade, fork etc.).

Hot cross buns baked on Good Friday were supposed to have magical powers. It is said that you could keep a hot cross bun which had been made on Good Friday for at least a year and it wouldn't go mouldy.

Hardened old hot cross buns are supposed to protect the house from fire

Sailors took hot cross buns to sea with them to prevent shipwreck.

A bun baked on Good Friday and left to get hard could be grated up and put in some warm milk to stop an upset tummy.

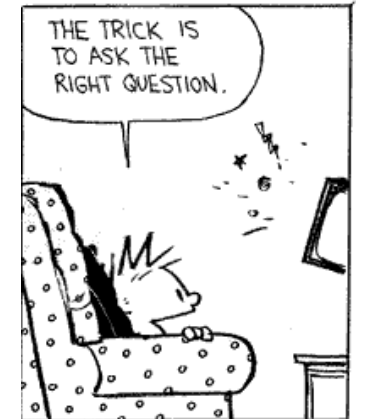
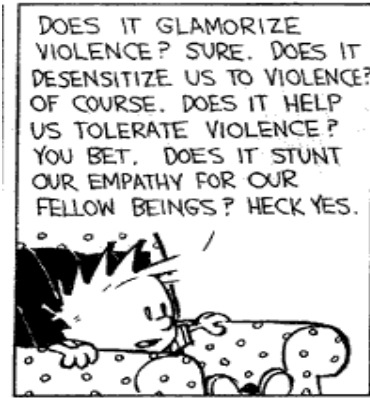
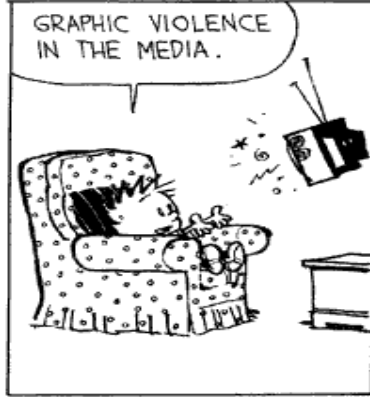
Having a hair cut on Good Friday will prevent toothaches the rest of the year.

**Other Good Friday Traditions:**

It is traditional to **eat fish** on Good Friday instead of meat.

Traditionally Good Friday was the day when everything was cleaned and whitewashed in preparation for Easter Sunday.

Life is all about asking the right question. Here is an example...



**Holy Saturday**

Holy Saturday is also known as Easter Even and the Great Sabbath. The term "Easter Even" was used by the 1549 Prayer Book. The 1979 BCP uses the title "Holy Saturday" for the Saturday before Easter (p. 283)

**When is Holy Saturday?**

It is the Saturday before Easter, the last day of Lent and is the day when Christ's body lay in His Tomb. In the early church Holy Saturday was a day of fasting and preparation for the Easter Vigil.

**What happened on the day before Easter Sunday?**

This day was the Sabbath and the day which Jesus rested in the grave.

**Easter Vigil**

Easter Vigil, dating back to at least the Roman times, takes place on Holy Saturday. The Easter Vigil is a service held in many Christian churches as the official celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The service includes the first use of the word alleluia since the beginning of Lent as well as the first Eucharist of Easter.

The Easter Vigil is celebrated by the use of a wax candle which is inscribed with a cross. The letters alpha and omega are inscribed at the top and bottom and the four numbers representing the current year are inscribed above and below the cross arms. Five grains representing the wounds of Christ are sometimes pushed into the soft wax.

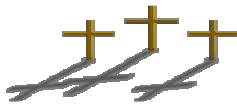
**Traditional Holy Saturday Event**

The Bacup Nutters Dance traditionally takes place on this day in the small Pennine town of Bacup. Each year a team of folk-dancers with blackened faces dance through the town from boundary to boundary. A form of morris dancing, the blackened faces may either reflect a need for the dancers to disguise their faces from evil spirits, or have a mining connection. The tradition of this dance is thought to date back to 1857.

### Easter Saturday

Holy Saturday is also often incorrectly called *Easter Saturday*, a term that correctly refers to the following Saturday after Easter.

### What is Easter?



**Easter is the time for holidays, festivals and a time for giving chocolate Easter eggs.** But Easter means much more....

**Easter is the oldest and the most important Christian Festival**, the celebration of the death and coming to life again of Jesus Christ. For Christians, the dawn of Easter Sunday with its message of new life is the high point of the year.

Easter is the time when Christians remember the last week of Jesus' life.

It is a sad story because Jesus was killed. But the story has a very happy ending, because Jesus came back to life and visited his friends and followers once more. He did not die at all, but went back up to Heaven to be with God, his father.

### When is Easter?

Easter usually comes in the month of April. It is what is called a 'moveable feast' because the date of it is fixed according to the moon.

Easter is the first Sunday after the Full Moon that occurs on or after the Vernal (Spring) Equinox (March 21) - the Paschal Full Moon . If the Full Moon falls on a Sunday then Easter is the next Sunday.

This means that Easter can fall as early as March 22 or as late as April 25.

### Origins of Easter

Like most Christian festivals, Easter has its origins in pre-Christian times. Our ancestors believed that the sun died in winter and was born anew in spring. The arrival of spring was celebrated all over the world long before the religious meaning became

associated with Easter. Today, Easter celebrates the rebirth of Christ.

Different Gods were thanked for bringing the Earth back to life. The word Easter is thought to have derived from the goddess Eostre, an Anglo-Saxon Goddess.

Even though Easter is associated with Spring here in England, it is not so in countries in the southern hemisphere. In these countries Easter falls near the end of autumn. However, throughout the world Easter is felt to be a time of new life and new beginnings because of Jesus' rebirth.

### Passover

For many centuries before Jesus' birth, the Jewish people had their own special spring festival, called Passover.

Passover commemorates the time when God rescued the people of Israel from slavery and Moses led them out of Egypt.

Jesus was crucified during Passover time.

### The different names for Easter

In many European languages the name Easter comes from the word Passover.

Pascha in Greek and Latin, Pasqua in Italian, Pacques in French, Pascua in Spanish

### Traditional food at Easter

Easter day, like Christmas day, is also associated with special food.

**Boiled eggs** are traditionally served at breakfast, then Easter cards and gifts may be exchanged.

**Roast lamb**, which is the main dish at Jewish Passover, is the traditional meat for the main meal on Easter Day.

**Simnel cake** is baked for tea.



### Letter from the editorial desk

Dear friends in Christ,

Happy Easter to all.

Hope you all enjoy the newsletter. Please let me know of any improvements you would like to see and any particular article of interest.

My email id is [nellikala@aol.com](mailto:nellikala@aol.com) should you wish to send in your articles, or comment on any related matters

Regards  
Sajini



### Birthdays & Anniversaries this month

Birthday wishes to all who are celebrating their birthdays in April.



Congratulations to all who celebrated their wedding anniversary in March.

### Announcements

#### The next Services:

April 6<sup>th</sup> GOOD FRIDAY service at 8.30 am

April 14<sup>th</sup> Golden Jubilee

#### Others:

**Please return Membership form and debit order immediately**

#### Some useful telephone numbers

Rev: Gigy Thomas: 0161 223 2199

Dr Sunny Thomas: 07798820433

Mr V V Abraham: 07737216172

Dr Simon Idiculla : 01902380363

**Editorial Desk: 0121 308 1200**





.....

