

Hope and Suffering

In Holy Week at Central Hall we are looking at the "Seven Last Sayings of Jesus From The Cross". Jesus has experienced betrayal by a close friend, being deserted by his associates, a colleague's denials, false accusations before a corrupt court, abuse at the hands of those who held him in custody and is brought to the place of execution. The Gospel writers provide us with His words from the cross, words that speak into some of our deepest needs.

When Jesus says "*Father, forgive them*" in Luke 23:34 He knows that FORGIVENESS is a huge issue for us.

He promises the thief that hangs on a cross next to Him "*You will be with Me in Paradise*" which speaks of the PURPOSE He wants to bring to us (Luke 23:43).

He talks to His mother, Mary and the disciple, John "*Woman, this is your son*" showing the CARE He has for us (John 19:26-27).

Jesus shouts "*My God, My God, Why have You forsaken me?*" so has experienced Himself feelings of ABANDONMENT and can minister to our feelings deeply (Matthew 27:46 quoting Psalm 22).

As He cries "*I thirst*" He indicates that He profoundly understands how it feels to undergo SUFFERING (John 19:28).

The amazing "*It is finished*" is not a cry of defeat but of triumph as He has won SALVATION for us (John 19:30).

As Jesus utters His final words "*Father into Your hands I commit My Spirit*" He teaches us the importance of SUBMISSION to God (Luke 23:46).

My prayer is that within all the work and witness of Greater Manchester Community Chaplaincy and in our own Christian walk as individuals we are truly **Easter People**, ministering the hope of the living Christ in the midst of a suffering world.

"Alleluia! Christ is risen!"

Rev. Ian Rutherford

City Centre Minister at Methodist Central Hall,
Manchester



Contact us at: GMCC Methodist Central Buildings Oldham Street M1 1JQ

Telephone: 0161 236 2462 Email: chaplain@gmconline.org

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for more photos and info.



During the season of Lent this year we have hosted a photographic exhibition in the Chapel at Methodist Central Hall, Manchester.

"I Witness" has been produced by Christian Aid and shows images taken during a visit by three women supporters to the island of Haiti. They travelled to witness the difference that Christian Aid is making in Haiti which is the poorest country in the western hemisphere, characterised by environmental damage and high levels of corruption.

I particularly love this image in the exhibition

The artist says "this image represents hope, helping us replant so that we can stay rooted. New hope and new light coming in to help us"

Lent prepares us for Holy Week and Easter as we journey with Jesus through His passion, death and resurrection. We are invited in this period to reflect on suffering but also on hope.

In Cafe Central we display a permanent symbol of hope. It is the stained-glass roundel of the Cross of Christ that was formerly located in the Chapel at Strangeways, HM Prison Manchester.



The Gospel that we proclaim declares that this place of suffering and shame can bring us hope and because Jesus was raised from death this is a living hope.

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1. **D** is worried about his mum who is being harassed on the outside and is frustrated as there is little he can do to help. He needs to see what God can do. Pray that he will have some good news soon that will calm his fears.
2. **T** has recently come into custody and is very vulnerable. Pray for safety and that he will engage with all the help and support that he is offered.
3. **G** whose dad is dying is anxious to visit him for one last time. Pray that despite how difficult this can be to arrange it will be made possible.
4. **M**'s partner has died at the age of 25 and he is very distressed. Pray for comfort and support as he grieves and hope for the future.
5. **S** aged 21 whose bad behaviour has led to him having problems across the prison does not seem to understand his own responsibility. Pray that he will change and those seeking to help him will have wisdom and patience.
6. **D** self harms regularly and seriously and says he wants to stop but does not know how. Pray for safety and that the underlying issues will be resolved.
7. **P** is questioning his faith due to a number of recent bereavements and feels that God has let him down. Pray for a new understanding of God's goodness.
8. **R** is facing trial for 3 very serious offences and is very nervous. Pray that he will be calm and prepare well and that justice with mercy will result. **R** and **D** are also both in court soon. Pray that they will know God's presence and his help no matter what the outcome might be.
9. **J** can see no reason to carry on living. Pray that his eyes will be opened to the grace and truth that came through Jesus and he will find hope.
10. **S** is frustrated due to a lack of contact with his son. Pray for change in this situation as those involved find the will and a way to resolve the difficulties.
11. **C** has been behaving much better recently and wants to keep this up. Pray for this to continue as he sees the beneficial results.
12. **H** whose mum is dying is due for release in May and he is desperate to be out before she dies. Pray that he will be able to see and comfort her in time.
13. **R** whose life has been devastated by his conviction needs prayer for healing, restoration and future usefulness.
14. **J** and **B** are both struggling with addiction to drugs. Pray that they will engage with the help that is available and find a way out of this trap.
15. **P** has decided he wants to enter a Christian rehab programme on release. Pray that this good resolve will stay firm and the way will open up for him.

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16. **S** and **N** have been helping others to mature in Christ. Pray that they will continue and be kept safe from the attacks and deception of the enemy.
17. **A**'s mother is seriously ill. Pray for healing and strength for him at this difficult time. **B**'s mum is in hospital and very poorly. Pray for them both.
18. **I**, **S** and **R** have all suffered bereavements. Pray for comfort, peace and the support they will need as they deal with the emotional strain this will cause.
19. **N** needs a knee replacement. Pray that he will get the treatment required and that in the meantime he will be mobile and have the needed pain relief.
20. **T** has experienced self harm and is feeling very low. Pray that he will be kept safe and that he will learn new ways of dealing with his issues. **C** is also struggling to cope. Pray he will know God's peace like never before.
21. **R** has an interest in spiritual things and needs revelation about salvation. Pray for a work of the Holy Spirit that will result in faith and assurance.
22. **G** has asked to see an Iranian Christian. Pray that he and the other man in his cell will both come to faith.
23. **S** needs to know he is not forgotten. Pray that God will continue to work in his life and that he will take every opportunity he is offered to seek salvation.
24. **D**'s girlfriend is in hospital after their baby died in her womb. Pray for them both and for physical and emotional healing.
25. **G** is on fire for God and wants to serve him in the community when released. **D** is a powerful witness for Christ on his unit. Pray for perseverance.
26. **T**'s son is struggling on the out. Pray that he will find the help he needs to avoid further trouble and begin to live a blessed and productive life.
27. **A** and **B** lead worship in the chapel and write new songs. Pray that they will continue to know God's blessing both now and when released.
28. **A** has lost his grandmother who was a faithful servant of God. Pray for comfort for him and that the example will have a powerful influence on him.
29. **J** has been released. Pray that he will continue to serve God and stay on the straight and narrow path. **G** and **T** have parole hearings soon. Pray they will know God is in control and will trust him as they receive the results.
30. **K** has recently found a good job. Give thanks for this and pray that he will continue to be blessed and grow in faith. **A** is rejoicing in faith and loves to sing and praise God. Pray that he will continue to be a witness for the Lord as he serves others by cutting hair.