

# EASTER HOPE

*Richard Iball*

## WHAT A THEME – THE GREATEST THEME!

Over twelve months ago The King's Cross Church, Hexthorpe, Doncaster, a lively, all age, multi-ethnic and growing evangelical church in a deprived and often despised area of town, decided to celebrate Easter 2018 with a special season of outreach. It was to build on all of our normal work within our community which seeks to love and cater for all and bring the wonderful message of the Good News of Jesus.

The Revd Paul Wilson was the speaker at the main events and the programme was developed with a clear focus of getting as many people as possible to hear about Jesus dying for their sins and rising again to bring new life with the assurance of heaven for all who will believe. Very Methodist! At that time, we had no minister willing to come here. Later, God provided the Revd Jon Bellfield for us; he suggested we should add a Holiday Club to the programme and this proved a word from God.

Running for seven weeks before Easter Hope, were weekly sessions of 'Life Explored,' a contemporary visual and Biblical approach encouraging people into faith. Holy Week began with Holiday Clubs for about fifty Primary School children. Some parents stayed



for the sessions as they do in our monthly Engine Room (Messy Church +). They loved the theme song so much that when one volunteer, Lynn Petersen, walked home on Easter Sunday evening a group of children gathered round her to sing it in their street! During that week there were hour-long sessions ('Time for Jesus') at The Junction in the afternoon, which were mostly attended by Roma children.

The main programme began on Good Friday with a service that Paul addressed. All able-bodied attendees then formed a stream to march to four places in Hexthorpe where, with the aid of a loudspeaker system, we introduced ourselves, read a few Bible verses, sang and briefly explained about Good Friday. Two hundred palm crosses, decorated with the words, 'It's Good Friday but Easter Sunday is coming,' were taken by passers-by. Many had heard the Good News; undoubtedly, some for the very first time.

Friday evening was the celebration (with food of course!) at The Junction. Sadly, only a few came to share and hear Paul. We went home and prayed... Saturday morning was the brunch for men and a very good number attended, a third of whom were not yet Christians. By the challenge of a strong message, during which Paul shared deeply and personally about his life experiences, the Good News was made known. Great food!

Saturday afternoon brought the final Holiday Club event to which parents were invited. They joined in the games and songs and listened to the direct message about what Easter brings to us - Hope Through Jesus. Having been invited to come later to the evening buffet and meeting, we waited patiently..... and prayed...

We set the room for 60+ places. We were about to begin when a number of whole families, most of whose children had attended Holiday Club, poured in and extra tables were set. We felt God move. The food was enjoyed and Paul began to speak - God led him directly and he went off his prepared text - people listened with rapt attention and the challenge to respond was given. Children were separately looked after in our newly renovated building, The Crossing. Good conversations and prayer for people followed. We felt things building up... The church was almost full on Sunday morning - about one hundred adults as well as some children - they were eager to hear more and learn more.

## WHAT LESSONS THEN?

First ask God in prayer to change the local spiritual atmosphere and show himself to people. Ask him to preserve church unity and protect the work from the attacks of satan. Plan carefully what matches locally. Make sure a full Biblical message is declared in ways suitable to the hearers; no watering it down as that is useless, for people will listen to the real thing. Expect God to work. Use food. Get a team ready to speak and pray with those who want it. Finally, outreach like this is not an end; it brings even greater needs for new home groups, courses and commitment to new relationships of loving, Bible teaching and discipling. It costs much more than money...

Sometimes I hear people say, 'They don't want to listen these days, they are not interested.' This is just not true.

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