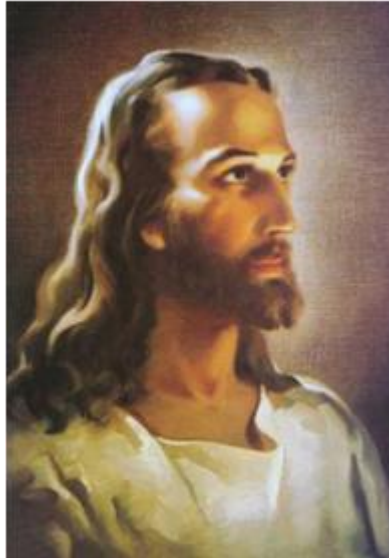


Friends in the Wey Valley Circuit,

At one of my previous churches, in Willow Branch, Indiana, we had a picture of Jesus at the front of the church. It's called "The Head of Christ" by American artist Warner Sallman, painted in 1940. In American Christianity, it's nearly ubiquitous. Nearly every small church I've ever been in has a copy of this painting somewhere on the walls. It's so prevalent, we take it for granted.



Despite the fact that it's a ludicrously inaccurate painting of Jesus, (with light hair, skin, and eyes), after World War II, it became THE depiction of Jesus for Christians in America. By the end of the 20th century, it had been reprinted (officially) over half a BILLION times. It's said to have been the basis for the visualisation of Jesus for hundreds of millions of people.

So, that's a long set-up for a very short story, but my point is that this painting was an integral part of the church. I walked past that painting about a dozen times each week. It was just a part of the background. Until the Sunday morning when it wasn't there....

I walked in just like every Sunday morning, about 90 minutes before the service started. I turned on the lights, made sure the heating was working, then liked to spend a little time in a quiet church, going over my sermon one more time. I walked past the painting, stopped...and seriously did one of those slow takes like you see in the movies. Because....Jesus was missing.

I immediately took a picture and texted it to my church leadership. I posted to Facebook offering a reward for any information leading to Jesus' safe return.

Jesus was missing for about a week. I walked back in one weekday and there He was, looking a bit mysterious and cheeky, like He knew something I didn't.

We did have a bit of fun speculating during that week, and afterwards. Was the missing painting a sign? If so, of what? That Jesus had abandoned our church? Or that we needed to free ourselves

of the idolatry of that particular white, European depiction of Jesus? Or had Jesus just gotten tired of us and gone down to the local shop for a Coke? What brought Him back to us a week later? Had we appeased God and made up for whatever sin we had committed?

To this day, I have no idea where that painting went. No one ever ‘fessed up’ or offered an explanation. He just went (and came back) in His mysterious way. It did, however, give me an appreciation for what the women must have felt when they first went to the tomb on Easter morning. They would have had the same certainty that Jesus was just where they left him....not on the wall of the church, but in a cold, dark tomb.

Where had he gone? Was it grave robbers? The women would have known there was nothing to steal, but perhaps the robbers became angry and desecrated the body when they didn’t find any valuables? Was it the religious leaders? Did they want to make sure that Jesus’ tomb didn’t become a kind of shrine for his followers? Was it the Romans? Did they too want to keep Jesus’ tomb from becoming a rallying point for resistance?

All they knew for sure was that Jesus was missing and they had to tell someone.

They ran and told the disciples, who looked around, basically shrugged, and left again, leaving Mary Magdalene standing alone outside the tomb. She hears something behind her and turns to see a figure. She can’t tell who it is. Maybe through divine powers...maybe just because she’s weeping so hard she can’t see clearly. But when she hears him say her name, she knows an astounding truth....Jesus isn’t missing. He’s back! He’s here! And in some way, he’s never leaving again!

There are times in life when, I promise you, it will feel like Jesus is missing. Like he has walked away and abandoned you. When you just can’t feel his presence anymore. And I promise that not only will you find that he comes back, but that he never left at all. And unlike my painting many years ago, we know where Jesus went and what he was doing. Christian tradition tells us that it was during that “missing time” that he conquered death, that he set the prisoners free, that he prepared a place for us in His Father’s house.

Jesus is not missing! He is not dead! He is Risen! He is risen indeed!

Adam

### **Resources/Good News**

#### **Autism Acceptance Week**

[World Autism Acceptance Week](#) takes place from 2 to 8 April 2024. The Revd Verity Phillips shares this blog about her diagnosis as an adult with autism.

[Autism Acceptance Week - Methodist Church](#)

## Japanese Garden, Blossom Open Day

The anniversary of the restoration of the Japanese garden at Gatton Park, Reigate will be celebrated at a Blossom Open Day on 7 April.

Read all about it here: [Blossom Open Day](#)



# Neighbourhood Party



**Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2024**  
**4:00 – 6:00pm**

**TRINITY METHODIST CHURCH, BREWERY ROAD, WOKING**

You are warmly invited to our **Neighbourhood Tea Party**.

Transport can be arranged.

**There will be a high tea, entertainment, and a fun quiz.**



**Please join us for a jolly good time, meeting friends old and new.**

Contact us via phone, post or email to be added to our official invite list.

Please invite anyone who would enjoy a sociable afternoon out.

 **PHONE** 07749 094064 (Marian)  
07729 301713 (Pauline)

 **POST** Trinity Methodist Church,  
Brewery Road, Woking, GU214LH

 **EMAIL** [trinitywoking@btinternet.com](mailto:trinitywoking@btinternet.com)



The Methodist Church



**THE FOUNDRY**

# Songs of Praise



**Saturday April 20th**  
**Horsley**  
**Methodist Church**

(next to W.H. Village Hall)

**7.00p.m.** Come and sing a selection of  
favourite hymns. Phone 01483 282474 for  
more details or to make requests.