

# UNBOUNDED LOVE



This resource pack will help you plan worship services tied in with **Unbounded Love**, the Methodist Church's Lent campaign for 2024.

The title is taken from Charles Wesley's well-loved hymn, 'Love divine' (*Singing the Faith* 503). Through Lent we will be reflecting together on the transforming power of God's pure and unbounded love. These materials offer an opportunity as a community of faith, nationally and locally, to prepare ourselves for gathered worship throughout Lent, and over the whole of Lent to prepare for Easter.

These materials build on the Unbounded Love 'daily deliveries' that individuals who have signed up to receive them will be sent electronically each day during Lent. Each week the reflections will focus on a different phrase from the hymn and the lectionary Gospel passage for the following Sunday.

The daily reflections will follow a weekly pattern:

- **Monday** introducing the week's theme
- **Tuesday** video instructions for a craft activity, that can be done alone or as part of worship (hands-on activity)
- **Wednesday** Bible study on the Gospel passage
- **Thursday** a reflection on justice
- **Friday** a secular song
- **Saturday** a magazine-style roundup of the week.

This year Ash Wednesday falls on Valentine's Day, when there will be a light-touch campaign launch aimed at people who are not Methodists.

This pack also contains some thoughts for Holy Week, which draws the theme to a conclusion and points towards Easter, the new season.

**Methodist Women in Britain** have created an Easter Offering service with the theme 'Let Justice Roll.' Find resources for this at: [methodist.org.uk/EasterOffering](https://methodist.org.uk/EasterOffering)

Each service in this pack contains lots of ideas as a menu to pick from to help you craft your own service that suits your context, whether that is in a chapel, a school assembly, chaplaincy hubs, a care home, or wherever you meet with others and God.



- **Theme** – a phrase from ‘Love divine’.
- **Scripture passages** – taken from the lectionary. Scripture quotations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition.
- **An opening liturgy** – a Lenten cross liturgy, with a symbolic object to place by a cross.
- **Songs and hymns** – drawn from the *Singing the Faith* hymn book, as well as from the *Singing the Faith Plus* website.
- **Background notes** – short contextual information for each specific service and an indication of which Methodist Way of Life commitment is most relevant to the theme.
- **Questions** – these can be worked up into a sermon or used in a discussion; it’s good to give people in the congregation a chance to discuss their faith. These questions will also work in a small group.
- **Hands-on activities** – fun, intergenerational activities to help make your services pop. Look out for the videos that will be released each Tuesday for a how-to guide.



	DATE	WEEKLY THEME	OLD TESTAMENT	NEW TESTAMENT
LENT 1	18/2/24	Unbounded love	Genesis 9:8-17	Mark 1:9-15
LENT 2	25/2/24	Visit us with thy salvation	Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16	Mark 8:31-38
LENT 3	3/3/24	Pure and spotless let us be	Exodus 20:1-17	John 2:13-22
LENT 4	10/3/24	Finish then thy new creation	Numbers 21:4-9	John 3:14-21
LENT 5	17/3/24	Changed from glory into glory	Jeremiah 31:31-34	John 12:20-33
LENT 6	24/3/24	Till we cast our crowns before thee	Psalms 118:1-2, 19-29	Mark 11:1-11
HOLY WEEK		Lost in wonder, love and praise!		

# LENT 1

SUNDAY 18 FEBRUARY 2024

## UNBOUNDED LOVE

### Bible passages

#### Genesis 9:8-17

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, "As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh, and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth."

#### Mark 1:9-15

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tested by Satan, and he was with the wild beasts, and the angels waited on him.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the good news of God and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

### Opening liturgy

*Object: a piece of fabric with a hole torn in the middle.*

**Reader 1:** Unbounded God, we thank you that you love us as we are, with all of our flaws and imperfections. Nowhere is off-limits for you.

**Reader 2:** Lord Jesus, we place this torn fabric by the cross to remind us that at your baptism the heavens were torn apart, and divine love burst into this world in a new way.

**Reader 1:** Holy God,

**All:** pure unbounded love thou art.

## Songs and hymns

*StF 503* Love divine, all loves excelling

*StF 41* Blessed be your name

*StF 45* Earth's creator, everyday God

*StF 61* Our God is a great big God

*StF 182* On Jordan's bank the  
Baptist's cry

*StF 183* Praise to the God who  
clears the way

*StF 208* Let earth and heaven combine  
(omit verse 2)

*StF 376* Crashing waters at creation

*StF 405* Have you heard the good news?

*StF 486* Who would true valour see?

## Background notes

We might expect God's domain to be limited to 'heaven', whatever that means for us. But in both passages we meet a divine love that will not bound by that constraint. In Genesis, this appears as a rainbow in the sky. In Mark, the heavens are 'torn apart,' ripped irrevocably. God emerges, downwards, like a dove. A second episode of boundary crossing happens immediately as Jesus enters the wilderness. This was understood as the home of evil spirits, and indeed Jesus encounters Satan. God's love is unbounded.



**A Methodist Way of Life:** the **Pray** commitment reminds us that God is with us at all times, close-by, ready to listen and talk.

## Questions for discussion

1. Do you think God is here with you, or in some heavenly other place?
2. What's the contemporary equivalent of the wilderness, places we might expect to be 'god-forsaken'?
3. If you have witnessed a baptism, or you remember your own, did you get a sense of God's presence? What did that feel like?

## Hands-on activity

Make a dove by cutting up a paper plate and sticking the pieces together. The feathers can be coloured to look like a rainbow.

## The good news to get across

"Pure unbounded love thou art": God's love is unbounded; nowhere is off-limits. That includes you, and those inner-parts of yourself you don't like or are ashamed of.

# LENT 2 SUNDAY 25 FEBRUARY 2024

## VISIT US WITH THY SALVATION

### Bible passages

#### Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you and will make you exceedingly numerous." Then Abram fell on his face, and God said to him, "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

#### Mark 8:31-38

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes and be killed and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

He called the crowd with his disciples and said to them, "If any wish to come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

### Opening liturgy

*Object: sweet wrappers.*

**Reader 1:** Unbounded God, we praise you for your gift of new life, your salvation.

**Reader 2:** Lord Jesus, we place these sweet wrappers by the cross to symbolise all the things that we can leave behind, the things we no longer need as your beloved children.

**Reader 1:** Holy God,

**All: visit us with thy salvation.**

## Songs and hymns

*StF 503* Love divine, all loves excelling

*StF 345* And can it be?

*StF 397* The Spirit lives to set us free

*StF 440* Amazing grace

*StF 447* Jesus, be the centre

*StF 449* Lord of creation, to you be all praise!

*StF 454* Where shall my wondering heart begin?

*StF 495* Dear Lord and Father of mankind

*StF 559* Lord you have my heart

## Background notes

We all have defence mechanisms. We attempt to place boundaries between ourselves and God's love; we have ideas, attitudes, and practices that distract us and insulate us from God's ever-presence. Peter was trapped in defensive thinking – or as Jesus phrased it, 'setting his mind on human things'. When we let go of all the things that get in the way, we are astounded by God's abundant and unbounded love.



**A Methodist Way of Life:** the **Live** commitment encourages us to live in a way that draws others to Jesus. Being authentic, and losing our wrappers (see Hands-on activity), are ways towards this somewhat intimidating aspiration.

## Questions for discussion

1. What does it feel like to ditch a bad habit?
2. What are your go-to methods to distract yourself from God (eg shopping, social media, watching TV)?
3. Why do Christians sometimes feel the need to be insulated from God's presence?

## Hands-on activity

Make a collage picture from sweet wrappers, maybe framed with a cardboard heart-shaped mount. A sweet wrapper can represent the parts of us that we need to lose in order that our true self can be revealed. The point of a sweet is the sweet itself, not the wrapper.

## The good news to get across

“Visit us with thy salvation”: we are all loved by God and deeply wonderful. We don't need our wrappers.

# LENT 3

SUNDAY 3 MARCH 2024

## PURE AND SPOTLESS LET US BE

### Bible passages

#### Exodus 20:1-17

Then God spoke all these words,

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me.

"You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above or that is on the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

"You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

"Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work – you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and consecrated it.

"Honour your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

"You shall not murder.

"You shall not commit adultery.

"You shall not steal.

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

"You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, male or female slave, ox, donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour."

#### John 2:13-22

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple [*hieron*] he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves and the money changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, with the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money



changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "This temple [*naos*] has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

## Opening liturgy

*Object: a small model table (from a doll's house, for example).*

**Reader 1:** Unbounded God, we thank you that you deeply love all people, and that you call us to help you turn the tables of injustice and poverty.

**Reader 2:** Lord Jesus, we place this table at the cross to remind us that you were angry when your holy place was spoiled by selfishness, greed and exclusion.

**Reader 1:** Holy God,

**All: pure and spotless let us be.**

## Songs and hymns

StF 503 Love divine, all loves excelling

StF 247 Lord of the dance

StF 253 Love inspired the anger

StF 409 Let us build a house

StF 696 For the healing of the nations

StF 697 Oh freedom, oh freedom, oh freedom

StF 701 Heaven shall not wait

StF 702 I will speak out for those who have no voices

StF 713 Show me how to stand for justice

StF 715 There are no strangers to God's love

## Background notes

The setting for John's account of Jesus' righteous anger happens in the outer court of the Temple, the '*hieron*'. The main part of the Temple was given a different name in Greek, used later in the passage, the '*naos*'. The outer court was the only place where Gentiles were allowed. Perhaps the systematic injustice of having the commercial activity happen in a place that only affected these marginalised groups was part of the reason why Jesus was angry. In any case, it is clear that Jesus felt that the commercial activity was preventing the Temple from fulfilling its true purpose: allowing people to connect with God. The selling of animals and money changing formed a boundary to God's love, and God will not tolerate this



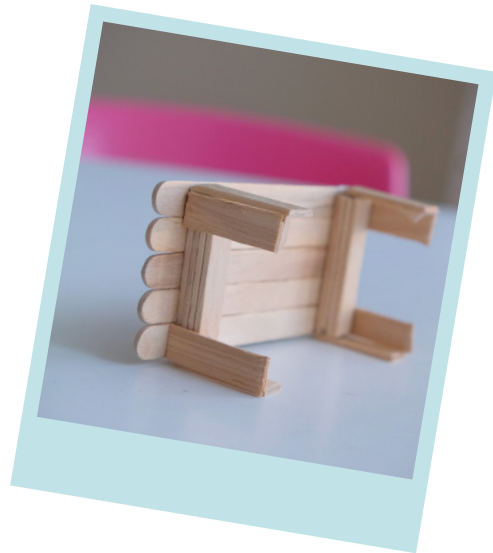
**A Methodist Way of Life:** the **Challenge** commitment reminds us that God is a liberator, always taking the side of people experiencing injustice, and that we are called to do the same.

## Questions for discussion

1. How do you feel when you hear about Jesus' dramatic display of anger?
2. If you are a part of a church community, reflect on which types of people will feel most at home. Which groups of people might feel excluded?
3. What have you done recently to make someone feel fully included?

## Hands-on activity

Make small model tables from lollipop sticks. People can flip them together as a protest prayer about systematic injustices that we encounter today.



## The good news to get across

“Pure and spotless let us be”: God cares passionately about righting injustices. We are transformed by God's saving grace and one sign of this is that we respond the call to partner with God in this work of liberation.

# LENT 4

SUNDAY 10 MARCH 2024

## FINISH THEN THY NEW CREATION

### Bible passages

#### Numbers 21:4-9

From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom, but the people became discouraged on the way. The people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food." Then the Lord sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned by speaking against the Lord and against you; pray to the Lord to take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said to Moses, "Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live." So Moses made a serpent of bronze and put it upon a pole, and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

#### John 3:14-21

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned, but those who do not believe are condemned already because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God."

### Opening liturgy

*Object: a globe.*

**Reader 1:** Unbounded God, we thank you for this wonderful world and breathtaking universe that is our home.

**Reader 2:** Lord Jesus, we place this globe at the cross to remind us that you love the world and will save the world.

**Reader 1:** Holy God,

**All: finish then thy new creation.**

## Songs and hymns

*StF 503* Love divine, all loves excelling

*StF 99* All creatures of our God and King

*StF 102* For the beauty of the earth

*StF 111* Lord of the boundless curves  
of space

*StF 116* Sing for God's glory that colours  
the dawn of creation

*StF 136* Morning has broken

*StF 363* My Jesus my saviour

*StF 536* He's got the whole world in  
his hand

## Background notes

The word John uses for the world is 'kosmon,' from which we get the English word 'cosmos'. In our understanding, and in other parts of the New Testament, it encompasses the whole of creation rather than just our human society, or even just our planet. The word literally means 'ordered system', where everything is in its right place. God sent Jesus so that the cosmos might be saved, brought back into order once more. God's love is not bounded to the small-scale things we notice; it has a cosmic scope.



**A Methodist Way of Life:** the **Flourish** commitment reminds us that the universe is an expression of God's loving, creative nature, and that God is involved in an ongoing process of re-creation.

## Questions for discussion

1. Can you think of a time when you have felt awe in nature, a time when you have felt very small in comparison with your surroundings?
2. Do you think our planet is God's favourite?
3. What signs have you seen recently of God bringing order, putting things back as they should be?

## Hands-on activity

Make galaxy pictures, using black paper, pink and purple chalk, and white paint splattered from old toothbrushes.

## The good news to get across

"Finish then thy new creation, perfectly restored in thee": we know that we and this messy but beautiful universe are loved by God and we look forward to the time when everything that is broken will be fixed.

# LENT 5

SUNDAY 17 MARCH 2024

## CHANGED FROM GLORY INTO GLORY

### Bible passages

#### Jeremiah 31:31-34

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt – a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another or say to each other, “Know the Lord,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more.

#### John 12:20-33

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” Philip went and told Andrew, then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain, but if it dies it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour.”

Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say: ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

### Opening liturgy

*Object: a packet of seeds.*

**Reader 1:** Unbounded God, you triumphed over death and rose to new life.

**Reader 2:** Lord Jesus, we place this packet of seeds to remind us that just as these

seeds may die and then grow into wonderful plants, we too will have eternal life that is beyond our comprehension.

**Reader 1:** Holy God,

**All:** change us from glory to glory.

## Songs and hymns

*StF 503* Love divine, all loves excelling

*StF 130* We plough the fields,  
and scatter

*StF 148* Come let us with our Lord arise

*StF 306* Now the green blade rises

*StF 563* O Jesus I have promised

*StF 734* Going home, moving on

*StF 746* For all the saints who showed  
your love

## Background notes

John's parable of the seed is superficially similar to several seed parables in the other Gospels, but it introduces a unique angle: the need for a seed to die in order for life to flourish. It is a theological statement about the death and resurrection of Jesus. A similar thought appears in 1 Corinthians 15:35ff. Death is not the end of the story for Jesus, or us, or our loved ones. This is what we are preparing to celebrate at Easter.

**A Methodist Way of Life:** not a single commitment this week, but the whole of it! It is a multifaceted expression of what it means to follow Jesus today.

## Questions for discussion

1. Please be sensitive to the people with you; some may be grieving and these questions may be too much for them at the moment.
2. What worries you about death?
3. Do you have a sense that the relationship carries on in some way after death?
4. How do you understand the purpose of Jesus' death?

## Hands-on activity

Use a variety of seeds to make a picture of a flower. Maybe print an outline of a flower on card, and glue seeds onto it using PVA glue. Different seeds can be used to make the central circle, petals, stalk and leaves. The pictures will show both the before (seed) and the after (flower) in one image.

## The good news to get across

"Changed from glory into glory": death is no boundary to God's love. Death is not the end of anyone's story.

# LENT 6

# Palm Sunday

**SUNDAY 24 MARCH 2024**

## **TILL WE CAST OUR CROWNS BEFORE THEE**

### **Bible passages**

#### **Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29**

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;  
his steadfast love endures forever!  
Let Israel say,  
"His steadfast love endures forever."

Open to me the gates of righteousness,  
that I may enter through them  
and give thanks to the Lord.  
This is the gate of the Lord;  
the righteous shall enter through it.  
I thank you that you have answered me  
and have become my salvation.  
The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the chief cornerstone.  
This is the Lord's doing;  
it is marvellous in our eyes.  
This is the day that the Lord has made;  
let us rejoice and be glad in it.  
Save us, we beseech you, O Lord!  
O Lord, we beseech you, give us success!  
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.  
We bless you from the house of the Lord.  
The Lord is God,  
and he has given us light.  
Bind the festal procession with branches,  
up to the horns of the altar.  
You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;  
you are my God; I will extol you.  
O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,  
for his steadfast love endures forever.

## Mark 11:1-11

When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' just say this: 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.'" They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" They told them what Jesus had said, and they allowed them to take it. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,

"Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple, and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

## Opening liturgy

*Object: a coat.*

**Reader 1:** Unbounded God, we thank you that you rode humbly into Jerusalem that day, knowing what pain and misery lay before you. You received short-lived praise from a crowd who spread their cloaks before you, but would soon reject you, and condemn you to death.

**Reader 2:** Lord Jesus, we place this coat at the cross to remind us that we need to let go of the things that bring us status in this world. Help us to stay true to you, knowing that you are the source of all life.

**Reader 1:** Holy God,

**All: we cast our crowns before thee.**

## Songs and hymns

StF 503 Love divine, all loves excelling

StF 263 Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest

StF 264 Make way, make way, for Christ the King

StF 265 Ride on, ride on in majesty!

StF 545 Be thou my vision

StF 432 O the bitter shame and sorrow

StF 452 Show me the way of the cross once again

StF 455 All my hope on God is founded

StF 748 Glorious things of thee are spoken



## Background notes

The crowds outside Jerusalem were profoundly moved by seeing Jesus for the first time. He was riding a donkey, a low-status animal. They responded by taking off their cloaks and laying them on the ground or spreading out leafy branches from the field. Cloaks were status symbols; they communicated identity and authority. The line of the hymn, “cast our crowns before thee”, speaks of a similar idea. Today we use status symbols to let people know that we are valuable and worth their attention. But when it comes to God they are redundant, because God knows our true selves and God’s love is not bounded by our human measures of worth.



**A Methodist Way of Life:** the **Open** commitment challenges us to be generous and hospitable, to make new connections with people. God calls us to love one another in the same way as God loves us: seeing beyond status and serving one another with generosity.

## Questions for discussion

1. What does it feel like when someone notices you and gives you their attention?  
Can you think of a time when you’ve dropped in status?
2. What secular status symbols do you use to communicate your value to people (home, car, bike, branded clothing, jewellery, phone)?
3. Why might it be good for us to ‘cast our crowns’ and lose our status symbols?

## Hands-on activity

Make origami paper palm leaves.

## The good news to get across

“Till we cast our crowns before thee”: we have no need for status symbols. Each of us has inherent value and worth in God’s economy.

# HOLY WEEK

## LOST IN WONDER, LOVE AND PRAISE

### Background notes

Throughout Lent we have been reflecting on how God's love is unbounded:  
Not bound by inappropriate places: nowhere is 'God-forsaken'.  
Not bound by our protective wrappers.  
Not bound by societal injustice.  
Not bound by death.  
Not bound by status and power.

But in Holy Week, Jesus *is* bound. The powers lash out unjustly as they abuse their positions of authority, failing to recognise the divine in front of them. For the first time, Jesus experiences God-forsakenness and death. It seems that everything has been lost.

What will happen next; will God's love remain bound?

### Questions for discussion

1. Where in the Passion narrative do we find abuse of power and status?
2. Does Jesus really experience God-forsakenness on the cross?
3. How is God's love unbounded through Holy Week?

### Hands-on activity

Make a paper-chain mural with a heart in the middle. The paper chains represent the powers that try to bind Jesus in Holy Week. The heart in the middle reminds us that God's love and power is on a different dimension. Not simply breaking the chains apart, but transforming the whole picture.



### The good news to get across

"Lost in wonder, love and praise!": in the bleakest time, when all feels lost, God is still working. There will again be a time when we wonder at God's goodness, when we feel God's love breaking through, and when we can praise God for all God has done.

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