

TRINITY METHODIST CHURCH WOKING
Weekly Newsletter
Sunday 2nd August 2020

Message from Rev Jackie Case

Dear Friends,

In my spare time recently I've been enjoying a structured course in embroidery. It's a very mindful activity and I can lose myself in it for hours if I'm not careful. However last Saturday I was forced to spend a lot of the time I'd set aside searching for an embroidery needle that I'd dropped. I shook out my clothes; scrutinized the upholstery of the chair and neighbouring sofa; I got down on hands and knees and felt across the carpet and under the chair.

When all this yielded no result, I vacuumed and finally ran a magnet over the whole area. But despite all my efforts the needle is still missing and

I am concerned that either I or the dogs may eventually come upon it with painful results. So, I shall continue to scrutinise the area hoping that one day I will spot it, and how delighted I will be if and when I do find it!

Whilst I was searching, I was reminded of the parable of Jesus about the woman who swept out her whole house searching for a lost coin (probably from her dowry headdress), and how she invited her neighbours to celebrate with her when she had found it. This is one of the few passages in the Bible where the imagery used to represent God is female. It is one of Luke's collection of three parables which are themed around God's seeking and finding the lost. (The other two are The Lost Sheep and the Lost Son). The message of these parables is consistent: that God yearns for the restoration of the lost, actively and diligently searching them out. God's purpose is not to judge or punish, but to forgive and to restore them to their proper place in God's love. When that restoration is achieved

God is truly delighted, as all who love God are invited to be.

At the core of God's nature is an enduring love and generosity which Old Testament Hebrew writers called *hesed* (steadfast love), and later Christians called grace. We human beings are the undeserving objects of God's generous love, for like the straying sheep and the lost son, our separation from God is our own doing, not God's. In Luke's parables of the lost, the straying sheep and the lost coin are sought, found and brought back with rejoicing entirely by the initiative of the one to whom they rightfully belong. They are the passive recipients of their saviour's efforts. But, in the other parable, whilst his father yearns for his lost son and searches the horizon for sight of him, the young man makes his own decision to return, seeks to make amends, and is surprised and grateful for his father's forgiveness and generosity. This should be the model for our response to God's faithful love for us.

Every Blessing

Jackie

Message from the leadership team

Sitting down to write this note, my mind is full. There is a lot going on. Much of this involves adapting to and managing change, pondering how to cope with new situations. I am concluding that my engineering brain, fiercely logical and trained to think in terms of risk, is not well equipped for the current circumstances. Take the 14 day isolation requirement for anyone returning from Spain. I get the logic for northern Spain, but the Canary Islands? Then there are the masks. Why now and not 4 months ago? If this is the scientific advice (as claimed) then let's have chapter and verse on the science so that complex people like me can understand!

Self-preservation is forcing me to be philosophical about the big UK picture - it is what it is, I can't change it so just go with the flow! Instead I am trying to concentrate on the local picture, the things we can influence. So, a couple of items from my past week.

First there was Foundry Worship - back in the church! Thank you to all those involved, especially the stewards ensuring we were Covid safe. It was lovely to be back with our church

friends again. Certain aspects were a bit experimental. My main learning was how almost impossible it is to sing with no volume (hum instead) and that at the end of the service it is very challenging to follow the rules – i.e., maintain distance and go where we should! We have a little way to go before we more naturally behave in the correct manner, but it was so good to be back together.

Second was a meeting I had with the leaders of the mutual aid groups. I've previously mentioned these wonderful people who within the space of a few weeks set up large groups of volunteers that undertook people's shopping and prescription collections. There is a new need now – COVID phone befriending. Whilst most people are starting to get something of their normal lives back, this is not true for all. Many hundreds had their life revolving around the community day centres. These have not re-opened – and may not do so for some time. For people dependent on these services, life is very little different to how it was in full lockdown. The council has the names – we are looking for a small army of volunteers to phone these people and bring some diversity and outside life into their lives. The mutual aid groups will ask their volunteer network, but we can all help. If interested, let me know. And if you're Facebook savvy with a bit of spare time, you may be able to help me. Please contact me.

It remains to apologise for being a bit dour at the beginning. In contrast now I am sitting in my study looking out of the window at bright green trees, a blue sky with the sound of birdsong coming through the open window. For all the challenges, the world is still a wonderful place to be, and for that we have God to thank.

Hugh Bowerman

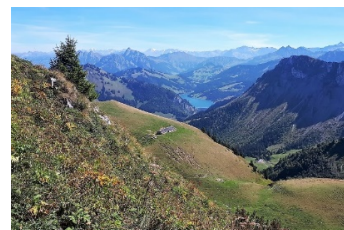
A Word in Season 19 – Be still, and know that I am God! (Psalm 46:10a)

'God said to Elijah, "Go and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by." Now there was a great wind, so strong, that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake, and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after

the fire a sound of sheer silence. Then there came a voice to him ...' (1 Kings 19:11-12, 13b NRSVA)

It is amazing as I look back over my life that some of the most important issues to affect my faith, or other times where I have met God, have been in the silence. Many do not believe that beneath the surface I am often extremely nervous and shy. In fact, at eight, after a week's holiday on my own with my Aunt and Uncle, Aunt Lil told my mum that I was a shy and nervous little boy. I was bullied at my first Primary School and at other times as I was growing up. I had a stammer and found making friends difficult. I spent a lot of my time in negative silence. When we moved to Dorset I found the peace and quiet very reassuring.

It was in quiet moments when sitting in the little chapel next to the organ waiting to 'pump it' for the next hymn, I thought about faith and life. Now, like most of us, I have hurtled along through life and found little time for much silence to listen for God's voice. Like Elijah I had too much going on, even during lockdown. But as I say, in the past I have met God in the silence. Christine, Dan, her godmother, and I were on holiday in the French Alps and we went up to the top of a mountain by cable car. I suffer from vertigo and could just about cope going up but the thought of coming down was too much. I explained that I would walk down, they understood, and we agreed to meet at the bottom for coffee. It took me some time, but I didn't notice it. God was so close, I found myself singing, 'How Great Thou Art', especially the second verse, *"When through the woods and forest glades I wander and hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees, when I look down from lofty mountain grandeur, and hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze: Then sings my soul my Saviour God, to thee; How great thou art"*.



Looking down from Rochers de Neye, across Lac de Hongrin, to the high snow mountains in the distance, Vaud, Switzerland (Photo my own)

I remember too the twenty minutes I spent quietly sitting in the churchyard outside the parish church in Clapham Park before my interview at King's Avenue Primary School, and God spoke to me words of strength and encouragement. I spent fifteen very hardworking, sometimes stressful, but incredibly happy years there. God gave me the opportunity to share his love, with compassion and understanding, to so many children in need of recognition, as themselves, and lots of love.

Not all those moments of silence have been easy. When I received a phone call from Dan about 15 years ago from Canada where she and Christine were on holiday, telling me Christine had suffered a massive grand mal seizure and we didn't know whether she would recover I spent a week of very restless nights talking to my God. I did a lot of talking and little listening, but I was very conscious of his presence. Likewise, after Christine's recovery from what turned out to be a bleed on the brain caused by a bang on the head a few weeks before she travelled, I found God so near. Later it became obvious to me that it was part of God's plan that Dan worked at that time at the UCL Institute of Neurology, and the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery, and on her return to the UK Christine received the best care our wonderful NHS could offer from Dan's friends and colleagues.

The most significant recent time I have heard God in the silence, was shortly after Christine died. One of the coping strategies for my grief was to complete a lifelong desire to visit every cathedral in England, by train, where possible. I planned a weekend to visit Blackburn Cathedral, - Blackpool to ride the trams, - Liverpool to visit Southport where my parents had met and courted during the war and finally, Chester Cathedral. Part of my pilgrimages are, if possible, to attend a service, ideally choral evensong, and light a candle in memory of Christine.

My visit to Blackburn was amazing, it is a beautiful Parish Church, recently made a Cathedral, with some lovely works of art. I attended Evening Prayer and only the Priest and I were present, we shared the words of the Gospel reading alternate verses. The reading was the Beatitudes, (*Matthew 5:1-11*). When we came to

verse 4 it was my turn to read and God spoke to me as I read, ***Blessed are those that mourn, for they will be comforted.*** How great is our God, for he knows our real needs!



Exterior of Blackburn Cathedral, photo my own.

In the last two weeks God has spoken to me and others during the Private Prayer time in the Church on a Wednesday from 10.30 to 12.00. Socially distanced and in silence. All those who have attended have spoken of the peace and closeness to God. Some have brought devotional books, some a Bible or Hymn Book, others just sat in silence.

During the first session I was on the door when two strangers, using the carpark as a footpath said to each other – “The church is open today!” As they passed, I wished them God's blessing, and knew we were doing the right thing in opening the Church as a witness to God's presence in the town.

Last week similar things happened, one of those who came exclaimed at the end of their prayer time that it had been a time of real blessing for them to sit and think upon their Lord.

Again I was on the door and an elderly lady, in her electric wheel chair, was using the car park entrance to avoid bumping up and down the pavements, and said to me, “I love to come through here and look at the flowers and plants, they are so colourful and well laid out. Please thank them for the joy they bring”.

I thanked God for the witness to God's creation and love that Jill Willis and the gardening team make to those who pass by. Even in lockdown, we as a church, are witnesses to the love of God.

Jesus often took time to be alone, in the silence, with God, to bare his soul and seek his Father's will. If you get the opportunity to come on a Wednesday morning, please do. You will find a socially distanced welcome, and in the quiet be able to communicate with our God.

Sweet hour of prayer, that calls me from a world of care, and bids me at my Father's throne make all my wants and wishes known. In seasons of distress and grief my soul has often found relief. Sweet hour of prayer. (W. W. Walford)

Today I leave you with a Celtic Blessing:

'Deep peace of the running wave to you, deep peace of the flowing air to you, deep peace of the quiet earth to you, deep peace of the shining stars to you, deep peace of the shades of night, moon and stars giving light to you. Deep peace of Christ, the Son of Peace, to you'.

Amen, Graham

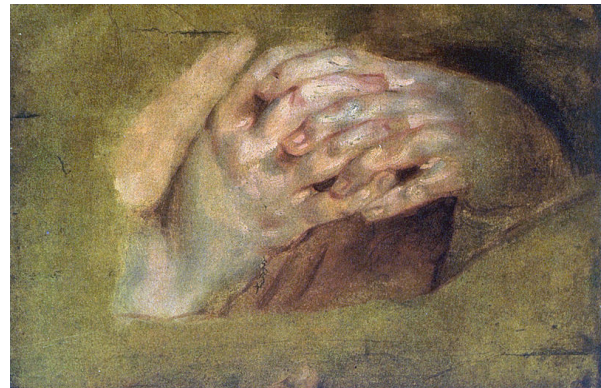
Last week's Quiz Answers are:

- Derwent
- The Brain
- Cape Town
- Romania
- Casablanca
- Cuttle Fish
- Hastings, Dover, Sandwich, Romney & Hythe
- Study of shockwaves caused by earthquakes
- Real
- Pablo Picasso
- Richard Rogers
- William Booth
- De Forest
- Custer
- Kenneth Graeme

This week's questions are:

- Asian country of which Ulaanbaatar is the capital?
- 'Some Enchanted Evening' is from which Rogers and Hammerstein musical?
- Who wrote the plays 'The Cherry Orchard' and 'The Three Sisters'?
- White metallic element with symbol Ag?
- Which Canadian prime minister lived from 1919-2000?
- What was Josiah Wedgewood famous for?
- What is the national sport of Ireland?
- Who is the goddess of rainbows in Greek Mythology?
- Harrisburgh is the capital of which state of NE USA?
- Name of the ruler of Russia, first adopted by Ivan the Terrible?
- Nickname of the English landscape gardener Lancelot Brown?
- What is a bromeliad?

- Who built Hampton Court Palace?
- Common name for the viral infection Varicella Zoster?
- What was the profession of American John Sousa?



I used the image above to publicise Private Prayer on Facebook last week. It's by Rubens, and was downloaded from WikiCommons. I think it's a beautiful picture. Do feel free to join us for private prayer, and/or Foundry worship going forward. Private prayer will take place every Wednesday, Foundry Worship will next be held on 9 August 2020.

Dan