



**The Methodist Church**  
**Horfield Methodist Church**

Churchways Avenue, Horfield, Bristol, BS7 8SN

[www.horfieldmethodist.org.uk](http://www.horfieldmethodist.org.uk)

part of the Bristol and South Gloucestershire Circuit ([www.bsgc.org.uk](http://www.bsgc.org.uk))

a family of churches serving communities across the local area.

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**Dear friends** In line with the Government's guidelines issued at the start of this week, the Methodist Church has suspended all acts of worship and other church-led groups until further notice. This announcement is made with regret, but the wellbeing of all those involved in our church life the wider community in which we all live, must be our highest priority. Please refer to our church website or [www.methodist.org.uk/coronavirus/](http://www.methodist.org.uk/coronavirus/) for more information.

In light of this, we are going to provide this weekly newsletter until we are able to meet for worship together once more. It will also include some devotional material (overleaf) which I hope you will use to reflect on God's presence in this challenging time, and to hold others in your prayers. We will also be making arrangements to ensure that everyone is contacted regularly by their pastoral visitor. If you, or someone you know, would benefit from additional support in some way, then please make contact with your pastoral visitor or me. **Greetings to you and those you love in the name of Jesus, our friend --- Rev Patrick.**

If you would prefer not to receive this newsletter in the coming weeks, please inform John Hopper at [p.hopper1@btinternet.com](mailto:p.hopper1@btinternet.com), or on 0117 951 4529 as soon as possible.

**Cancellations:** as noted above, our church activities have been suspended until further notice. This includes Sunday services, all weekday activities, the remaining Lent Lunches, Lent Groups, the General Church Meeting (29<sup>th</sup> March) and our Gift Day (4<sup>th</sup> April). We will republish a full calendar of dates when things resume.

**National Day of Prayer and Action this Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March:** when many are fearful and there is great uncertainty, we are reminded of our dependence on our loving and gracious God who holds us all. At 7.00pm this Sunday, you are invited to light a candle in the windows of your home as a symbol of the light of life, Jesus Christ, our source of hope in prayer.

**General Church Meeting Reports:** the booklet of reports for the General Church Meeting will be available to download from the church website; copies will be available as needed when the meeting is re-arranged.

**This could be YOU.** We are currently looking to recruit three church members to our team of stewards. This key role at the heart of our church community involves working closely alongside others and with our Minister, playing a leading role in pastoral matters and giving leadership and help for the full scope of our church's life and activities. Please consider this prayerfully over the coming weeks, as it is an essential role in the life of the

church. If you are interested or want to know more, please contact Rev Patrick or one of the current team of stewards.

**Action:** This is a time for us and others to show a spirit of generosity and kindness. There are significant numbers of people who are at risk of becoming isolated and increasingly vulnerable. Feeding Bristol, FareShare, our Foodbanks, Bristol Noise, Christian Action Bristol and others are working closely with the Council to secure supplies of food to ensure they are able to support the vulnerable. Can you help with this great city-wide effort, by:-

- **praying** that all agencies involved would have resilience and wisdom as plans are shaped;
- **being generous** in donating food and money to the work of foodbanks and FareShare – [www.christianactionbristol.org.uk/food-poverty](http://www.christianactionbristol.org.uk/food-poverty), or [www.feedingbristol.org/donate/](http://www.feedingbristol.org/donate/);
- **volunteering time** via [www.thenoise.org.uk/bristolchurchresponse](http://www.thenoise.org.uk/bristolchurchresponse);
- **looking out** for isolated and vulnerable people in your local community and in the street where you live, to support them where possible. This is a time when we need to come together as a city, to help build Bristol as a City of Hope, and the Christian community has a vital role to play in all of this.

**Fundraising quiz sheet:** keep your brain active with our fun quiz. Just £1 to enter, available from Helen Wallbridge at [treasurer@horfieldmethodist.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@horfieldmethodist.org.uk)

**Photographic competition:** why not try this out? Details are attached.

***Jesu, Jesu, fill us with Your love, show us how to serve the neighbours we have from you.***

On our journey through Lent, we remind ourselves about the road Jesus took, one of pain and suffering, yet self giving love. The suffering challenges to respond, and we hold in our mind the crown of thorns and purple robe, reminders of the rejection and mockery Jesus went through in the last hours of his life. We remember all who are outcasts today, thinking of those who face rejection through no fault of their own.

We pray: Lord Jesus, as you suffered, so many in our world still suffer today. Challenge us to make a difference through our actions and our prayers. Amen

**This weeks Lectionary readings are:**

1 Samuel 16, 1 -13; Psalm 23; Ephesians 5, 8 – 14; and John 9, 1 – 41.

We live in a world of stories. Some are true. Others are fiction. Stories are everywhere. In books and magazines. TV. The movies. Social media. Every story involves people. Stories are about people. Who they were. What they did. Who they loved. Their birth. Their death.

*I am not one for reading fiction. When I read, it is usually history. Military and social history, Methodist history, local history, the history of science and industry. But even such histories cannot be told without people. Who did what, who invented this or that. Stories centre on people. Some are in peoples own words. Some are told in later years by others. Without people, there are no stories.*

The Bible, as the old hymn reminds us, is a 'book full of stories'. There are many forms and types of story in the bible. Love, hatred, betrayal, power, murder, sin, repentance, and forgiveness. It is sometimes said that all human life is there. Some of stories are about people's direct experience of God. Some are miracle stories, such as the one in today's Gospel reading, where Jesus heals the man who is blind from birth. Some are stories of testimony. Testimony is when someone relates what has happened to them. It is their personal story. There are, broadly speaking, two types of testimony. We testify, when we tell our story in a court of law. We also testify when we tell the story of own experience(s) of God and Jesus. How our lives have been changed.

*For Paul it was a dramatic experience on the road to Damascus. In John Wesley's case, it more an awareness when he felt his heart 'strangely warmed'. Charles Spurgeon, the great Baptist preacher of Victorian times encountered God in a sermon being preached by an unknown Methodist preacher one winter's night in Colchester.*

Martin Luther King tells how he "experienced the presence of the Divine as I had never experienced Him before. It seemed as though I could hear the quiet experience of an inner voice..."

Winston Churchill in 1940, on being asked to form a government, felt as though he had been walking with destiny and that his whole life had been a preparation for the task which he now faced in leading the British people in fighting Nazi Germany. That in its own way could still be called a spiritual experience.

*We may not have stories like that to tell, but we all have a story – OUR story. Our life. Our experiences...*

*God comes to us not in the earthquake, wind and fire, but, often as not, in that 'still, small voice of calm' that Isaiah heard. He comes to us quietly, patiently, bit by bit. It is a drip feed, rather than a tsunami.*

*The chapter we should have been exploring in "So What's the Story" this week is entitled 'Living Stories: story as testimony'. We all have a story to tell. This week, I was going to tell my story, but will have to wait. What is YOUR story. Perhaps we could share our stories at some time in the future. It is, after all The Year of Testimony.*

Finally, a relevant, true story. It happened in 1665-6 when the inhabitants of Eyam in Derbyshire made perhaps the most heroic undertaking in history. Instead of fleeing the Great Plague, they all decided to stay in the town in order to prevent the infection from spreading further. On 7<sup>th</sup> September, 1665, the village was hit by an epidemic of bubonic plague, caused by a batch of flea-infested clothes from London brought to the town by a local tailor. In order to avoid spreading the plague to the neighbouring towns, the inhabitants of Eyam followed the advice of their local priest, William Mompesson, voluntarily placed themselves under quarantine. The villagers paid for food left on the edge of the village by placing the money in bowls disinfected with vinegar. The emergency ceased in November 1666 and, of Eyam's 350 inhabitants, between 250-260 died. But, the neighbouring towns were spared from the plague.

John Hopper.

**Prayer Support.**

An important part of our discipleship is to pray for our community and each other.

This week you are asked to pray for the following people and their families:-

Sandy Bowcock, Josie Box, Daphne Brennan/Wright, and Monique Brocklesby.