



The Methodist Church

Bishopston, Easter Compton, Horfield, Shirehampton Methodist Churches and St Peter' Pilning.

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We are part of the Bristol and South Gloucestershire Circuit (www.bsgc.org.uk),
a family of over forty churches serving communities across the local area.

These notices are also posted on <http://www.horfieldmethodist.org.uk>

“This too will pass” (Anon).

“All will be well, and all manner of things will be well” (Julian of Norwich).

SUNDAY, 7th June, 2020.



*'Earthrise', as seen from Apollo 8 spacecraft while orbiting the Moon in December, 1968.
(Image courtesy of NASA)*

Over the past couple of weeks I have enjoyed listening to '13 minutes to the moon,' a series of podcasts telling the stories of two space missions in the 1960s and '70s. The first, Apollo 11 in 1969, led to the first human steps on the moon; the second, the ill-fated Apollo 13 a year later, when an explosion on board the spacecraft meant that plans to return to the moon had to be aborted before a challenging recovery operation. What I've really appreciated is hearing different aspects of each mission, told by a variety of voices. The series also included some experiences from earlier Apollo missions, including Apollo 8 when the first 'Earthrise' picture was captured, following which one astronaut read the opening verses of the story of creation from Genesis chapter 1. Half a century later, that image is still iconic, and I've felt drawn to a deeper understanding of how our human story is intertwined with God's, both fully part of the other, whilst I have been listening.

It is three months since the COVID19 pandemic started to have a significant impact on our lives individually and collectively; for many people, the story of the pandemic will be dominated by the boundaries of their homes, for others, handling the challenges of health or social care, equally other essential work. Those who have suffered directly with the virus will have different understandings, as will those who have been bereaved, along with the stories of those who have sadly died despite the best efforts of medical teams. All these, and more, contribute to the story of COVID19 which, like significant diseases beforehand, will be remembered in history. In all this, our story is intertwined with God's, so as we tell our own story of this time, we will be telling something of God's too.

During the month ahead, our written Sunday devotions will focus on the book of Ruth, a story about finding home and hope. Often read as a romantic comedy which begins, more or less, 'once upon a time' and ends, more or less, 'and they lived happily ever after,' those who spend time with it come to see how it resists interpretation. Unsettling and transformative, the story of Ruth offers new models of relationship, and provokes fresh insights into what it means to live out faith in God's story of life and love. I hope that you will take time each week to read the four chapters, alongside the material which will be offered for you (our weekly Bible Study will be looking at this in tandem). And then reflect on where you feel your story intertwines with that of God's - in the past, for now, and looking ahead.

Continuing to pray for and with you. *Rev Patrick.*

SERVICES, DEVOTIONS, ETC.

Sunday Worship. BBC1 at 10.45am. The Revd Canon Leigh Richardson leads worship from St David's Cathedral.

Sunday Morning Stories - Hope. BBC1 at 11.15am. Revd Kate Bottley introduces uplifting stories.

Songs of Praise. BBC1 at 1.15pm. Aled Jones looks at spiritual inspiration in the great outdoors.

Video reflections. A video reflection for this weekend is available on church websites.

BSGC Corona Virus Worship resources.

Worship resources and other resources for reflection are available on the Circuit website. There is also a daily prayer, based around the Methodist Prayer Handbook, for people to use at 12.00noon.

Dial-a-Prayer. A FREE phone service to hear prayers and news from the Methodist Church has been launched, updated each Thursday evening. Listen to a prayer: 0808 281 2514 Listen to news: 0808 281 2478.

New Room – Friday Reflection. See website.

Bible Study. We are holding a Bible Study online on **Thursday** next week (11th June) at 7.45 to 9.15pm. Please join online via zoom.us
Meeting ID: 930 7213 6069. Password: 040618.

Afterzoom tea. Sundays at 3.30pm to share news informally and see friends. Please join online via zoom.us **Meeting ID: 962 4920 4497 Password: 004692**

If you would like to join either the Bible Study or Afterzoom Tea, but do not have internet access, you can use your phone: please dial **0330 088 5830** then enter the Meeting number then the Password details for the particular event. We look forward to hearing you join in.

All Age devotions. Alongside our own devotions included in this news sheet, there are free materials for younger members of our congregations accessible via www.rootsontheweb.com (and other material for the young at heart too).

Big Church Sing. Please join the next event organised by All We can, this Sunday, 7th June at 4.00pm via www.youtube.com/user/MethodistChurchinGB/

Thank you to all those who contributed to an online version of the Lord's Prayer for Churches

Together. If you would like to watch and listen: <https://youtu.be/Wm860abPRts>

CHURCH NOTICES.

All churches.

Rev Patrick recently spent an afternoon walking over 10km (6 miles) round the manse garden, then cycling the same distance round the block to support the life-giving work of All We Can and the current 'In her shoes' initiative. This is helping young people in Uganda get to school quickly and safely. Patrick would appreciate your sponsorship in response, via <http://justgiving.com/fundraising/patrick-stonehewer2> . If you would like to give via other means, please contact Patrick directly.

There was an overwhelming response to the recent request for welfare donations for Night Shelter guests who are currently in hotels: "The hugest, hugest, hugest thank you to everyone that donated, sorted, collected these incredible donations. There are so many brilliant things, we are really excited to distribute them tomorrow. We will send over photos if we take any, and let you know how things are received"; and "Thanks to everyone who played their part in this. I am thrilled that we have been able to contribute to supporting the guests with books, puzzles, games and things to do at this lonely time."

It has come to our attention recently from the Community Development team that a number of residents in Lockleaze had been struggling with food and not getting referred to a foodbank or food club. If you know of anyone in this position, please refer people to a church steward or to Rev Patrick to issue a voucher for the North Bristol Foodbank. There is a home delivery system in place. The Foodbank is well placed to support both families and individuals.

Discussions have started about how and when we might be able to re-gather in our church buildings. More information to follow, but please pray for wisdom and discernment for church stewards and leadership teams.

Christian Aid. We are praying for all those affected by this new virus, both in Britain and overseas, for all those working on the frontline and for wisdom for our leaders. Christian Aid and our partners already have experience of limiting the spread of infection during the Ebola crisis, and we will build on this experience to continue to stand together with communities living in poverty during this period. If infection rates start to develop as they are in

Europe, then people in poorer countries will be hit even harder. Many are already living with reduced health resilience because of extreme poverty, or in overcrowded humanitarian camps and in countries which do not have the healthcare infrastructures needed to combat widespread disease.

In the middle of this pandemic people in India and Bangladesh have been hit by Super Cyclone Amphan. People are being moved to shelters, but fears surrounding coronavirus are high.

On Wednesday 20th May, raging winds battered thousands of homes made with mud, tin and thatched roofs. Millions are in urgent need of safe water, hygiene supplies, masks and sanitisers to prevent the spread of Coronavirus.

We will be working on the ground to help prepare communities to limit the impact of Covid-19.

Please pray for us in this vital work, and support us where you can by making an online donation.

You can make an online donation here -

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/give-money/make-donation> or you can call **020**

7523 2269 to make a telephone donation. Postal donations are discouraged at present.

Horfield.

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:- Bertha Lakey, Lisa and Ray Leamon, Winnie Leaning, and Julie Leeming.

WEEKLY NOTICES, ETC.

Please submit all items to John Hopper by each Tuesday (p.hopper1@btinternet.com or 0117 951 4529). To be added to, or deleted from, the electronic circulation, please email John Hopper.

This weeks Lectionary readings are:

Genesis 1, 1 to 2,4a; Psalm 8; 2 Corinthians 13, 11 – 13; and Matthew 28, 16 – 20.

Devotions by Patrick Stonehewer.

Our printed devotions during June will all focus on the book of Ruth, chosen for Bible Month this year. The aim is to encourage us, personally and corporately, to engage more deeply with this biblical text and discover more of God's message for us.

By way of introduction (from *'Bible Month: 30 days with Ruth'* available at www.preachweb.org/biblemonth).

Ruth is a story about finding home and hope. Often read as a romantic comedy which begins, more or less, 'once upon a time' and ends, more or less, 'and they lived happily ever after', those who spend time with it come to see how it resists interpretation. Unsettling and transformative, Ruth offers new models of relationship, and provokes fresh insights into what it means to live out faith in the God whose generosity generates yet more life and love.

Ruth is one of several novellas to be found in the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament (others include the Joseph story, Jonah and Esther), written to explore questions of life and faith. Ruth explores the human need for bread and for belonging. It makes visible the lengths to which individuals will go to ensure the survival of themselves and their loved ones. And it suggests that, through loving kindness, God is present.

As with Jonah, Ruth's four chapters work in pairs. The seemingly unstoppable progression of Naomi's loss set out in Chapter 1 is balanced to an extent by the events of Chapter 4, the end of which sees Naomi blessed by the townswomen. The middle two chapters focus on Ruth's actions, her alliance with first Naomi, and then Boaz.

Reading the text for ourselves.

I really encourage you to read this short book from beginning to end over the coming weeks, and engage with it personally. There are many ways that you might do that, but for this week, I would like to take you through an exercise in 'Lectio Divina', a form of biblical reading and study which dates from the 4th century.

It is a way of developing a closer relationship with God by reflecting prayerfully by reading the chosen text four times in total, giving an opportunity to think deeply about it and respond thoughtfully. The aim is to imagine that we're actually involved in the events of Scripture. In the case of Ruth, which in one sense is just a good story, we could imagine ourselves being one of the persons in the story, or hearing them telling us what happened in a personal conversation over a coffee.

One description of Lectio Divina is to think of four compass points around a circle, the Holy Spirit moving effortlessly between them. So I hope and pray that the Holy Spirit will inspire you as you read and reflect,

beginning with a prayer of preparation to allow you to open your mind to God's voice.

Let us pray. "Almighty God, in these strange times where we are experiencing uncertainty and we know the reality of an ever present threat, we are grateful for the networks of family and friends that we have, and for all that keeps us connected especially when we are physically distant. Help us to engage with the story of Ruth, to hear you in our reading, listening, watching and wondering, and to enjoy conversation with others whether they are beside us in person or across the virtual world. We offer you ourselves – our time, our presence and our open hearts. Amen." [words from the Methodist Church in Scotland]

Stage 1 – Read ('Lectio'). Read through Ruth Chapter 1, listening carefully for any words or phrases that seem to jump out. Do not force things, but wait patiently for God to give guidance.

Stage 2 – Reflect ('Meditatio'). Read the chapter again, keeping in mind the words or phrase that leapt out, and see how a second reading of the same passage develops those points. *How do they resonate in the whole chapter? What do you think you are hearing from God as you stop for a moment? What is the focus?*

Stage 3 – Respond ('Oratio'). Read the chapter for a third time. Having listened twice, it is time to respond. You could do this by – *calling a friend to talk to them about the passage, re-writing the story in your own words, writing down a few thoughts about the chapter, drawing something, praying in conversation with God, ...*

Stage 4 – Rest ('Contemplatio'). This final stage is to allow God to work in and around you once more, with the scripture in mind and heart. Read the chapter for a fourth time, then *spend (say) 10 minutes in silent contemplation – or do one of those things that helps you think things through, for example, going for a walk, washing up, some craft, a household task ...* Whatever you choose to do, be grounded in it so that the message you have heard becomes grounded in you and the place you are.

Now close in prayer. "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace."

Those words of blessing, from Numbers 6: 24- 26, are being sung all over the world at the moment, pointing to both diversity and solidarity in our situation at this time. They offer a shared voice of compassion, care and love for each one of us as we all need resilience at this time and to know the blessing of God in our many different contexts.

Use them as a basis to pray for your family and friends, your neighbours, your church, your community and country, our world (for example, by inserting their name or the situation in place of 'you') and hear the world blessing you through this.

Amen



'Ruth declares her loyalty to Naomi' by Pieter Lastman, 1614.
Niedersächsisches Landesmuseum, Hannover.