



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, 19th July, 2020.

Thanks to long-established technology (the 'phone) and the more recently acquired on-line conferencing, some particular blessings for me over the past few months have been those moments when I have been praying with people, including many of you. There is nothing unusual in that, but the practice of praying has changed because I have not been physically with those I am praying alongside. But I cannot quite find all the words to describe why it has been so poignant.

What I do know is that the presence and influence of the Holy Spirit in those moments has been a palpable reminder that we are all connected in God's name, technology or not. Even when we pray in solitude, we do not pray alone, because each of us is part of the Body of Christ. It is through prayer that God listens to us all, allows us to learn from one another, see and experience the compassion of each other, and celebrate God's gifts with one another. When we pray it is the Holy Spirit which articulates all our deepest needs, whether or not we can find the right words.

“Meanwhile, the moment we get tired in the waiting, God’s Spirit is right alongside helping us along. If we do not know how or what to pray, it does not matter. He does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans. He knows us far better than we know ourselves, knows our pregnant condition, and keeps us present before God. That is why we can be so sure that every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good.” (Romans 8: 26-28, The Message translation.)

Rev Patrick

SERVICES, DEVOTIONS, ETC.

Sunday Morning Live. BBC1 at 10.45am. Sean Fletcher and Sally Phillips take a look at the ethical and religious issues of the day.

Songs of Praise. BBC1 at 1.15pm. Revd Kate Botley tells the story of the vicars of Eyam, the Derbyshire village that went into self-imposed lock-down 355 years ago to protect northern England from bubonic plague.

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.

The New Room chapel is now open for prayer, Tuesday to Saturday, 11.00am to 3.00pm. The cafe is open for take-aways and has limited seating.

The New Room – Friday Reflection. See website.

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.

Bible Study. A new Bible Study series will begin shortly, probably looking at the book of Esther. Details to follow.

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

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 followed by the Password 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. There is a new link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjETodcfHY>

CHURCH NOTICES.

All churches.

Horfield would normally be holding a Junior Church Anniversary service about now, to celebrate the contribution which all our young people make to our church, whether as part of Sunday morning Junior Church, Messy Church or 4:12 our church youth group. This year we are having an online celebration during this Sunday (19th July) morning's session of Junior Church from 10.30am. You are all invited to join us online: if you would like to do so please e-mail Helen at treasurer@horfieldmethodist.org.uk for the details about how to join in.

Thank you to all those who have sent cheques to church treasurers or set up standing orders instead of storing up your cash or envelopes for your regular offerings. If you have not done this, please do consider doing so as it will help church finances and also reduce the amount of loose cash which we will have to handle as and when we start to meet again. Please contact your church treasurer for more details: Elaine (Bishopston, 0117 951 4529), Ian (E Compton, 01454 632 255), Helen (Horfield, 0117 962 4257), Debbie (Pilning, 01454 632 200) or Gill Shire, 0117 950 3400). Thank you.

Thank you also to those across all our churches who have been keeping in touch with our young people over the past few months. To give you an idea of some of the things which have been continuing in different forms: material for Messy Church 'at home' has been produced routinely, shared with those who would normally meet at Horfield and Pilning, but also online via the Circuit website to extend it's reach; members of KiGLe have been sharing in the WhatsApp group for the whole church at Shirehampton; and we've recently started online sessions for young people at Horfield. The church membership lists across our five churches total about 200, but we have routine contact with over 300 people in various ways, with a quarter under the age of 18. Those connected with Horfield will be receiving a book or similar during the coming week, a way of marking their contribution to the church's life, but also to encourage their journey with Jesus. Please offer prayers of thanks and encouragement for them all.

Horfield.

Junior Church. We are running online Junior Church sessions every Sunday on-line at 10:30am. For details of these sessions please email the Junior Church Leaders (Helen-treasurer@horfieldmethodist.org.uk).

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:- Neighbourhood and Mission Group, Indira and Richard Norton, the Novel Group, and George Otoo.

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 week's Lectionary readings are:

Genesis 28: 10-19a; Psalm 139: 1-12 & 23-24 and Psalm 86: 11-17 (alternative);
Romans 8: 12-25; and Matthew 13: 24-30 & 36-43

A reflection on the Book of Psalms by Michael Gibson (Horfield).



The Luttrell Psalter (see below).

Two of today's Lectionary readings are from the Book of Psalms. Psalm 139 recognises that God is all-knowing and omnipresent. He knows everything about us, even our thoughts. Psalm 86 sees God as our guide and protector, always there to reassure and defend us.

If I were to ask a random sample of Methodist worshippers what their favourite Old Testament Book is, I would guess that a good number would choose Psalms and I would be in that number. I love the psalms. Hugely popular since they were written (mostly during and after the Babylonian Exile some 2500 years ago) they had become an indispensable part of Jewish worship by the time of Jesus. They were affectionately embraced by the early Christian Church and included in the new Bible of the Old and New Testaments. What is the secret of their popularity? I think it is because the psalms are timeless. Their themes are universal. They speak to us across the centuries as they will to generations yet unborn. They are relevant whether on a personal, existential level or in trying to make sense of some great social catastrophe. They can speak to our feelings, emotions and self-doubts as surely as they did to their authors in a very different age.

The psalms were composed in a pastoral society so different from our own, yet we can rejoice with the psalmist in the beauty of God's Creation. Many of the psalms of thanksgiving have inspired modern hymns, such as psalm 103: *"Bless the Lord, O my soul; my innermost heart, bless his holy name."*

Psalm 8 meditates on the awesome nature of the cosmos and the wonder that God should find a place for insignificant mortals within it. The brevity and precarious nature of human existence is a common theme in many psalms as in Psalm 103, verses 14-15: *"Man's days are like the grass; he blossoms like the flowers of the field: a wind passes over them and they cease to be."*

The range of the 150 psalms is quite astonishing. As a celebration of the majesty of the natural world Psalm 104 is unsurpassable while Psalm 137 perfectly captures the pain and grief of the Jewish exile in Babylon: *"By the rivers of Babylon we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion. There on the willow trees we hung our harps, for those who carried us off demanded music and singing, and our captors called on us to be merry"*.

The single most loved psalm is probably the exquisite 23rd with its beautiful pastoral imagery and its message of reassurance that God is always there for us when we seek his help: *"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever"*.

The psalms can also surprise. Psalm 87 calls for peace and friendship among all nations, even the traditional enemies of Israel, while Psalm 51 condemns the custom of animal sacrifices and calls for a new way of offering sacrifices to God: *"My sacrifice, O God is a broken spirit, a wounded heart."* Both psalms question prevailing attitudes and customs of Judaism and anticipate the revolutionary teachings of Jesus.

Psalms may be seen as prayers or poems or songs, or a mixture of all three. The musical connection is significant: psalms would have been sung rather than recited – in synagogues, homes and in the Temple in Jerusalem. Music was an essential feature of Jewish culture as recognised by the Babylonians who expected the exiles to entertain them with their musical prowess – a precursor of the ghastly practice of the Nazis in using Jewish musicians in the death camps to play for their fellow prisoners as they were herded into the gas chambers.

Psalms have been used in different ways throughout the ages. In the medieval times, when Christian piety was at its height, it was usual – and fashionable – for the wealthy and educated members of the upper classes to carry around with them a psalter. This was a small, neat book containing the psalms in Latin.

Psalms were especially popular with literate gentlewomen who could read them as prayers in a private moment. They were often beautifully illustrated as we find in the famous Luttrell Psalter, commissioned by a Lincolnshire Lord of the Manor of Irnham, Sir Geoffrey Luttrell, for his wife in the 1330s.

Today the Book of Psalms can still speak to us, especially in times of trouble. The day that Leicester was locked down I happened to be listening to Classic FM when a distraught listener made a request for the only piece of music, she claimed, could provide her with the comfort and solace she needed in the light of the shock news that her city would have to endure a prolonged period of severe restrictions just when the rest of the country was anticipating a return to a more normal life. Her chosen music was Allegri's *Miserere*. This wonderful choral work for nine voices, lasting about fifteen minutes, was inspired by and written for the words of Psalm 51: *"Have mercy on me, O God, after thy great goodness. According to the multitude of thy mercies do away mine offences. Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness and cleanse me from my sin."*

So, there we have it: a psalm written 2500 years ago, set to sublime choral music by a seventeenth century Italian composer at the Papal court, requested by a woman in distress during a twenty-first century pandemic. Such is the enduring reach of the psalms throughout the centuries.

Singing a new song.

A litany by Past President the Revd Michaela Youngson.

We thought we knew how the world was meant to be,
day followed night, every week had a Sunday
and that was the day for church.

How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?

We thought we knew how the world was meant to be,
we made out plans, held our meetings,
kept the roof on the church and the show on the road.

How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?

We thought we know how the world was meant to be,
we would see colleagues, friends and loved ones again,
and we would embrace, laugh and share stories as we always have.

How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?

And now, we know something new,
we know that the world is not ours to control,
and that our plans are confounded by the smallest microbe.

God is teaching us a new song, for a new land.

And now, we know something new,
we know that the church is not committees, agendas, and buildings,
it is us, in homes, streets, hospitals throughout the world.

God is teaching us a new song, for a new land.

And now, we know something new,
we only have today with those we love, today is the day
to say "I love you", to mend an argument, to hold on tight.

God is teaching us a new song, for a new land.