

MOTTINGHAM METHODIST CHURCH MESSENGER

July 2021

We wait in hope for the LORD;
He is our help and our shield.
In Him our hearts rejoice,
For we trust in His holy name.
May your unfailing love be with us, LORD,
even as we put our hope in You.

Psalms 33 verses 20-22



THE CHURCH
IN THE MIDDLE OF
THE VILLAGE!



WAITING IN HOPE FOR THE LORD

The Mottingham Methodist Church was Built in 1883 on the site of an early mission hall and affiliated to the Chislehurst Circuit from its formation in 1892. The church began with a membership of just four and grew very slowly. So, as we meet on the 7th July to consider the future of a church which has been an active part of Mottingham's life for 138 years we remember the work of those who served God faithfully in this church and seek our Father's wisdom in our considerations.



OUR PRAYER:

Faithful Father,

When we feel shaken by the events of the past; when we don't know quite how to go forward; when our confidence in what we thought we could control is undermined; remind us that one thing is needed - to sit at your feet and listen to You..

You are our security. You will never fail those who belong to You through faith in Your Son, Jesus.

As we take time to listen to You, Lord, and to meditate on Your Holy Spirit-inspired Word, may we know Your peace - and Your good plans for us In Jesus' name, Amen.



There will be a meeting of the church to discuss the issues which Deacon Maureen Spinks has gleaned from the discussions she has had with those who attend the church. It will include options in deciding the future of the church. The meeting will be at 7.30pm either on Zoom or in the church hall.

Information will be sent out in time for the meeting.



WEAK YET STRONG

Paul says - 'Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.' (2 Corinthians 12 verses 9-10)

Natural thinking values strength and despises weakness. Normally we do everything we can to build up our strength and to hide our weakness. We want to be physically strong, to be strong-minded and strong-willed, strong enough to take care of ourselves and to stand on our own two feet. Often we pray with this in mind, 'Lord make me strong...'

It may surprise you to know that God does not want to make you stronger, so that you can manage without Him, but to help you realise just how weak you are, in order that you will depend on Him. You see we were not created for self-sufficiency, but for God-dependency. This is the true, spiritual way to live. Much of God's working in our lives is to bring us to a realization of the truth that Jesus spoke of in John 15:5 - that 'apart from me you can do nothing.'

God has many ways of bringing us to the place of dependency upon Himself, and some of His tools are mentioned here - weakness, insults, hardships, persecutions, and difficulties, to name but a few. Do you see them at work in your own life? If so, don't always expect God to remove them from you. Instead, come to Him in your weakness and ask that His overshadowing power - the power of Christ - might rest on you day by day. He may not take you out of your circumstances, but He will bring you *through* them.

Tony Horsfall



REFLECTED FAITH: THE SPACES BETWEEN

Most of us have been in situations where we are not in control, and we don't know how to feel or how to react to it. We need help.

The most valuable gift you can have at those times - is time itself. Time to be 'listened to'.

Really listened to. But it is not easy to find someone who will 'actively listen' to you.

Think of the last time you were in the reverse position with a friend or a colleague, and they were talking to you. How easily do you recall what they actually said? Most of us are so busy getting our replies ready for when the person has finished speaking, that we don't clearly hear their punch line.

With God it is different. We can take everything to Him; all our worries and cares and failures and faults. And He listens.

He doesn't necessarily jump in with an instant, easy solution, but rather He promises to always guide us, if we ask Him, through life's challenges, and He promises to never leave us. He often speaks to us through his written word, the Bible.

This last year, when many of us have been communicating with others by phone or Zoom, we get nervous if it all goes quiet. We feel the need to 'nudge' the other person, to make sure they are still there. Silence is not a natural state for many of us - and yet it is in the quiet we can hear ourselves and God most clearly.

So, when we talk with God, our conversation should not be rushed and one-sided. We need to give space to our silence before Him, to wait and listen for Him to speak to us.

Next time you worship in church, listen to the silences: the spaces between the words, the music and the actions. Listen to all the prayers that are spoken.

Look at your surroundings and reflect that they have absorbed thousands of prayers - and holy silence - down the centuries of their existence.

Look out the window and see the vastness of the sky above you - and let your prayers join with those that have gone before you. May the knowledge that you are not alone encourage and strengthen you.

Jo White



THE BEREAVEMENT HELP POINT

The bereavement Help point is a place where you can come and find out more about

bereavement services in your area. We also offer advice, guidance and a listening ear to those who are finding life difficult at this time.

Locality: Petts Wood Methodist Church Queensway.

Day and time: Every Tuesday afternoon between 2.00 and 4.00pm

Everyone is welcome



Churches Together in Mottingham is on Facebook;

<https://www.facebook.com/Churches-Together-in-Mottingham-104482874785693>



Exploring the Big Questions with *Ruth M Bancewicz*

1 Scientists and theologians share their views

It's important to have debates about science and Christian faith and to dig into the hot topics, but we can't exist solely on a diet of controversy. I find it helpful, at times, to simply enjoy the wonders revealed by science and the big questions they raise about meaning and purpose. What's the universe for? What do you do with your feelings of awe and wonder? Where do we get our sense of the value of the living world from? I had the privilege of meeting a group of Christian scientists and theologians who shared thoughts about these big questions, and will share some of their thoughts here.

The Oxford-based theologian Alister McGrath shared that "science is wonderful at asking questions. Some of those questions can be answered, but very often when you do answer them, they simply open up yet more questions. But of course, there are some more fundamental questions I think science simply cannot answer...questions like, 'Why am I here?'"

Rhoda Hawkins, a physicist at Sheffield University, has had a similar experience. "I never cease to be amazed at quite how impressive the world is, and how impressive the mechanisms are for how things work. It really is beautiful in many ways, and it leads me to think about God. I'm not saying that I have any proof, but I'm saying that by looking at the world around me it tells me more about God and it leads me to worship Him."

Another scientist who appreciates beauty is Jeff Hardin, who explained that "studying the wonders of the living world is an exercise in art appreciation. For me, God is the creator of everything, so the joy of discovery is also the joy of appreciating the world that God has made...and leads me to thank God for the amazing world that we have to enjoy and to explore."

I will close with some words from Jeff Schloss, who - like the others quoted above - finds that Christian faith makes science more satisfying for him. "Once I became a Christian...I had the sense that I was studying the marvels of the natural world, which are marvellous in their own right but become more profoundly engaging and enticing when one thinks that you're studying the works of God." Perhaps if we can spend more time listening to people like this, our discussions about science and faith will also be richer and deeper.



Exploring the Big Questions with *Ruth M Bancewicz*

2. Finding Expression - and God's Response - in Lament

The question of suffering comes up regularly in discussions about science and faith. I once visited a school to speak to some of the older teenagers. One of the pupils had sadly passed away from cancer and his classmates asked, "How God could let this happen?" Of course, these young people's questions about where God was in this situation were important. But the chaplain also gently reminded the class that their friend's family were Christians, and that they were finding that their experience of loss had brought them even closer to God.

One way that grief can bring us near to God is when we share it with Him, telling Him exactly how we feel. The biblical writers had no scruples about expressing themselves to God, giving vent to emotions we often hold back in a church context. As my colleague Roger Abbott has written in his book on 'Unanswered' Prayer, "Let us not confuse reverence with spiritual prudishness. Perhaps honesty is precisely what God is waiting to hear from us."

About one third of the Psalms express some form of grief. The book of Job is a series of responses to one man's suffering as he loses his children, property and health in quick succession. Lamentations is also one long outpouring of sadness at

(Finding Expression cont) what happened to Israel under the Babylonians. Some of the prophets, especially Jeremiah, also express their pain at these sorts of events - which reflect something of God's own feelings at the suffering of His people.

Most of these biblical authors would have had access to Scriptures that encouraged them to turn to God whatever the circumstances. Emboldened by their knowledge of His character and promises, these divinely inspired writers even express their anger to God about the things He lets happen, or complain that He seems to act unfairly or ignore them in their plight. Not only do these people let out all their feelings without fear of reprisal, but they also clearly expect a helpful answer. Some record a resolution to their troubles - often simply because God speaks to and comforts them, enabling them to keep going.

The biblical writers demonstrated that God can handle pretty much anything - anger, blame, bitterness - if we are actively looking to Him for help. As Pete Greig of the 24-7 prayer movement has written, "pain that is not expressed can never be transformed".



Queen's Platinum Jubilee - a celebration of faith & service - save the date!

A four-day Bank Holiday from 2-5 June 2022 will mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee next year. "It is so appropriate that the nation and Commonwealth should be celebrating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee on the same weekend as Pentecost, the day when the church celebrates the gift of God's Holy Spirit."

The anointing of God's Holy Spirit was central to the Coronation. The Queen prayed: 'Come, Holy Spirit, and daily increase in all of us, and in me, thy humble servant, thy manifold gifts of grace; the spirit of wisdom and understanding; the spirit of counsel and strength; the spirit of knowledge and true godliness, and fill us, O Lord, with the Spirit of thy holy fear, now and forever. Amen.'



OLYMPIC GOLD

This month should see the start of the Tokyo Olympics, having been postponed from last year due to the Coronavirus pandemic. A number of New Testament letters refer to Olympic sport including Hebrews: 'Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith' (Hebrews 12 verses 1-2).

The Christian life is compared to a long-distance race, but despite the struggles and obstacles, there is a great crowd of witnesses cheering us on. We have a heavenly Father who loves us and a Saviour who has run the race before us. If we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, He will enable us to finish the race.

During the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, the British athlete Derek Redmond was running in the semi-finals of the 400 metres. About 250 metres from the finish his hamstring tore. He fell to the ground in pain and stretcher bearers came over to him. However, Redmond was determined to finish the race and so he started hopping toward the finishing line. Suddenly Jim Redmond, Derek's father, ran out of the stands towards him. "You don't have to do this," he told his son. "Yes, I do," said Derek, to which his father said, "We're going to finish this together." They completed the lap with Derek leaning on his father's shoulder. As they crossed the finish line, the spectators rose to give Derek a standing ovation. Although he didn't win an Olympic medal, Derek Redmond finished the race with his father at his side. Let's not forget the encouragement we have to finish the race!



ST THOMAS THE APOSTLE

Confused and doubting

Thomas, one of Jesus' 12 apostles, was an impulsive, confused, honest sceptic. Jesus could understand and work with such a man. Thomas' impulsiveness was evident when Jesus prepared to visit Lazarus in Bethany. It was a dangerous trip to make, because of the Jews, but Thomas urged his fellow disciples: "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." (John 11:16) Instead, Jesus brought Lazarus back to life.

Thomas' confusion is shown in later talks with Jesus. He was not really sure where Jesus was going long-term (John 14:5). But Jesus accepted this confused commitment, and began to untangle it, patiently explaining: "I am going to my Father", and "No one comes unto the Father but by me."

Finally, Thomas' honest scepticism is revealed after the Resurrection, which he flatly refused to believe - unless he could touch the wounds of the risen Jesus. Sure enough, Jesus appears - but instead of scolding him, shows him the wounds. Thomas responds: "My Lord and my God" (John 20 verse 26ff).

Thus, Doubting Thomas' honest doubts, turned to honest faith, have become a reassurance for thousands of men and women across the centuries who also want to follow Jesus, but who require some proof of this amazing event - the Resurrection. In Doubting Thomas' complete affirmation of faith, after meeting the risen, crucified Christ, they can find support for their own faith.

Ancient legends tell how Thomas went on to India as a missionary. There are rumours that Thomas even built a palace for a king's daughter in India, and thus he is the patron saint of architects. It is believed that he was martyred by a spear on 3rd July, 72AD in Mylapore, near Madras. 46 ancient churches in England were dedicated to him.



PRAY FOR THE CHRISTIANS IN TIGRAY

Conflict growing in Ethiopia

"It is more than words and it is even unspeakable!" a Christian from Ethiopia's Tigray region has told Barnabas Fund.

He was struggling to express the horrors that Christians have suffered in seven months of conflict: deaths of pastors, of other Christians in ministry and of ordinary believers; rape of Christian women including Christian workers; destruction and looting of churches and monasteries; deliberate violation of church services. Some Ethiopian church leaders are calling it a genocide.

The conflict in Ethiopia is creating suffering at a level not seen for decades. An international roundtable meeting last week warned urgently of "human rights atrocities and the full-blown humanitarian crisis" in Tigray.

"We are seeing wide-scale human suffering that is entirely preventable," said the roundtable statement. "Systematic violence is being inflicted upon civilians, including widespread sexual violence, and extra-judicial and ethnically motivated killings. The population's essential livelihood assets and health services are being destroyed." Huge numbers of Tigrayan people are now displaced. Some have fled over the border to Sudan, but there is no humanitarian assistance for them there. Others have taken shelter in church compounds, but how can they be fed?



According to Christian Aid extreme weather and rising temperatures could lead to inferior tea in the future. As one tea farmer in Kenya' explained:

"We cannot predict seasons anymore.

Temperatures are rising and rainfall is erratic. If this continues, it will make growing tea much harder."



PRAYING FOR OUR CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

We may not be open, but all the people who are part of our church, churches and community families are still out there. They will have various needs and problems and need our prayers. Below is guidance for our prayers based on our normal activities and links.

Sunday: Worship and Messy Church - pray for ourselves our members and visitors.

Monday: Pray for our ministers - Duncan, Terry and Maureen.

Tuesday: Pray for the Good Companions and All Sorts Craft Group

Wednesday: Pray for those who normally go to the Community Lunch

Thursday: Pray for Churches Together in Mottingham - St Andrews, St Albans, St Edwards and Our Lady Help of Christians

Friday: Pray for the shop owners, library, Councilors and neighbours.

Saturday: Pray for those who normally go to The Youth Club



LIBRARY INFORMATION

Opening times are now as follows:

Monday 9:30am - 1pm & 2 - 7pm;

Wednesday 9:30am - 1pm & 2 - 5pm

Friday 9:30am - 1pm & 2 - 5:30pm

Saturday 9:30am - 1pm & 2 - 5pm.

You can continue to explore all that Bromley Libraries offer on:

<https://www.facebook.com/BromleyLibraries> Tel: 020 8857 5406