

# MOTTINGHAM METHODIST CHURCH MESSENGER June 2020

# June

Consider how the lilies grow  
They do not spin and they do not weave  
But I tell you now not even Solomon  
In all of his splendor was arrayed  
Like any one of these



THE CHURCH  
IN THE MIDDLE OF  
THE VILLAGE!



## THINKING ABOUT THE PSALMS

*'Most of Scripture speaks to us; the Psalms speak FOR us.'* (St Athanasius).

### **Psalm 13: How long Lord - a lament**

As we struggle with the effects of the global coronavirus pandemic, we might echo the words of Psalm 13: 'How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever?' It is one of a number of lament psalms, where the psalmist cries out in pain, because he feels abandoned by God. In our current circumstances, these psalms enable us talk to God about our fears and frustrations, while renewing our confidence in Him. What does Psalm 13 say?

***Bring your complaint to God:*** The psalmist brings his pain and questions to God: 'How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart?' (2). He is open with God about his complaints, despite the anger he feels.

***Ask boldly for His help:*** He goes on to ask for God's help: 'Look on me and answer, Lord my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death, and my enemy will say, 'I have overcome him...' (3-4). While avoiding despair ('there's no hope') or denial ('everything's fine'), the psalmist is confident in God's power to deliver.

***Choose to trust Him:*** 'But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the Lord's praise, for He has been good to me.' (5-6). The lament is a journey to the point of renewing our trust in God in the brokenness of our life.

The psalms of lament (eg. Psalms 10, 22 and 77) give us a prayer language for dark times. They enable us to be honest with God about what is happening to us and remind us that God has not abandoned us. He is a God who is both sovereign and good.

'Laments turn toward God when sorrow tempts you to run from Him.'

*Paul Hardingham*



## THE RUMOUR

In ancient Greece (469 - 399 BC), Socrates was widely lauded for his wisdom. One day the great philosopher came upon an acquaintance, who ran up to him excitedly and said, "Socrates, do you know what I just heard about one of your students?" "Wait a moment," Socrates replied. "Before you tell me, I'd like you to pass a little test. It's called the Test of Three. Before you talk to me about my student let's take a moment to test what you're going to say.

The first test is Truth. Have you made absolutely sure that what you are about to tell me is true?" "No," the man replied, "actually I just heard about it." "All right," said Socrates. "So you don't really know if it's true or not.

Now let's try the second test, the test of goodness. Is what you are about to tell me about my student something good?" "No, on the contrary," was the reply. "So", Socrates continued, "you want to tell me something bad about him even though you're not certain it's true?" The man shrugged, a little embarrassed.

Socrates continued, "You may still pass though because there is a third test - the filter of usefulness. Is what you want to tell me about my student going to be useful to me?" The man hesitated and said, "No, not really..."

"Well," concluded Socrates, "if what you want to tell me is neither True nor Good, nor even Useful, why tell it to me at all?" The man was defeated and ashamed and said no more.

Paul in Philippians 4: verse 8 goes further. He says "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report ... think on these things." There is no place for rumour in this verse.



## MISSIONARY AVIATION FELLOWSHIP: STILL FLYING AFTER 75 YEARS

MAF is a non-profit organisation, set up after the World War II by veteran war pilots from the USA, England and Australia. They wanted to put their flying skills to use in doing something for peace.

As MAF explains: "with 75 years of pioneering mission to the remotest places on earth, we know so well how isolation can threaten human development, physical health and spiritual freedom. It is strange to think that many of us in the UK will be experiencing the isolation over 200 MAF pilots have been flying to overcome across the developing world for decades."

Internationally, MAF has been badly hit by Covid-19, with many countries allowing only restricted access now. It is still doing what it can to maintain flight operations to reach isolated people in need. Some recent examples include:

**Papua, Indonesia:** MAF Pilot, Kees Janse, has been helping distribute flyers, to educate villagers about preventing the spread of coronavirus.

**Arusha, Tanzania:** MAF Pilot, Kirstein Combrink, is still able to fly medics out to remote areas, taking all the necessary precautions.

**Sundarbans, Bangladesh:** MAF Pilot, Chad Tilley, joined forces with the Swiss Embassy to rescue a teacher and charity worker stranded in a remote area. He flew them to the capital, Dhaka, just 90 minutes before their embassy flight departed for Europe.

**Wau, South Sudan:** the WHO and South Sudan's Ministry of Health requested MAF to transport test kits to the north western city of Wau - a two-hour flight from Juba.

**Luau, Angola:** MAF Angola Pilot, Marijn Goud, rescued two Canadian missionaries from the remote village of Luau and flew them to Angola's capital, Luanda, so they could be repatriated.



## REPORT ON CHURCHES TOGETHER IN MOTTINGHAM CHRISTIAN AID INITIATIVES

Christian Aid Week was a very different experience from previous years. No Big Brekkie, no house-to-house Street Collections, no Circle the City sponsored Walk.

In mid-April Christian Aid spoke to Diane Hudson, who coordinates Christian Aid Week between the Churches Together In Mottingham (CTIM). She was informed that Christian Aid week wasn't cancelled but we all needed to "move to a new online experience". Christian Aid suggested that CTIM set up a JustGiving team page as it is important to be able to let Mottingham know what has been raised. Diane Hudson asked Mick Wood if he would run a 'virtual' quiz through zoom and this took place on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2020. About 38 'screens' participated with over 60 people joining in the quiz. It was a great success and the winner was a Glenda Cooper from Bexleyheath.

The Reverend Ian Welch decided to run a 6 hour Read-in and Sing-along on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> May and again it was well supported by over 32 participants. Dawn Watts read 'Through a Cat's Eyes' by Toulia Antonakos. Other contributions were 'The Five People you Meet in Heaven' by Mitch Albom, read by Iris Miller, 'The Velveteen Rabbit' read by Julian Agnew (from the Sevenoaks Shakespeare Society) and Sarah Welch - not a dry eye after that lovely childrens' story. Reverend Ian Welch read "William Leads a Better Life" by Richmal Crompton. The singers were Beverley and Geoff Howard, Margaret Cameron (BBC Singer) and Imogen Roose who ended the singing with "We'll Meet again". It was a most enjoyable afternoon. The total amount raised for Christian Aid is around £3300, including Gift Aid, which was fantastic. Dianne's objective was £1000! Thank you Dianne for all you did to make Mottingham's Christian Aid so successful.



## MESSY CHURCH AT HOME: THE RAINBOW

Messy Church at home went well! The rainbow is the sign of promise and thanks. The bible says it is the sign given by God of a covenant between him and man that He will never destroy all the people on earth again as he did at the time of Noah and the flood - only saving Noah and his family in the ark. The rainbow used for the Coronavirus is a sign of thanks to everyone who provides care and support for those who have the Covid 19.





## LET'S TRY MESSY CHURCH AT HOME AGAIN

Luke 12:27-28 say "Consider how the ... flowers grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon (the King) in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you.

### The task:

1. Dry some flowers and long grass - Cut sturdy flowers while they are at their peak on a warm dry day leaving plenty of stem. Tie them together in bunches, and hang them upside down in a warm, dry, shady place for about a week. The flowers can take up to a week to dry..
2. Make a poster decorated with the dry flowers and write the verse above in the middle.
3. Send photos of your work and the poster to [ruhens@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:ruhens@tiscali.co.uk).



## A MONTH TO REMEMBER

June 1940 – 80 years ago – was a dramatic month in the Second World War, and one which saw two of the most memorable speeches in English.

As the evacuation of Allied Forces from Dunkirk was completed, Winston Churchill told the House of Commons on 4<sup>th</sup> June: "We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender."

Surprisingly he did not broadcast it to the nation. When he spoke, the French had not surrendered, and the idea that "in God's good time" the USA might conceivably have to ride to the aid of a 'subjugated' England actually depressed as many people as it invigorated.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> June, with the battle in France lost, Churchill did address the country directly with a rallying call in what must indeed have seemed a very dark hour. "The Battle of Britain," he said, "is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilisation." He concluded by saying that if Britain were to last a thousand years, people would still say, "This was their finest hour."



## CHRISTIANS AND THE BUBONIC PLAGUE OF LONDON

The Reverend Richard Peirson was one of the exceptions. Most of the other clergy in the City of London had fled the Great Plague in 1665, but Peirson stayed behind to look after the parishioners of St Bride's Church, Fleet Street, where he was Rector. The parish was densely populated and the pandemic was catastrophic. The church's register records 636 burials that year in the month of September alone, with 43 interred in one day.

Houses of infected people were marked with a red cross on the door, with occupants kept inside for 40 days. Handcarts were pulled along the city streets to cart away the bodies; the drivers' cries of "Bring out your dead", became etched in the memories of subsequent generations. Relatives were banned from attending funerals.

The official count numbered 68,596 deaths in London alone, but other estimates suggested two or three times that number. Bubonic plague - for that is what it was - was incurable. Poor people were fatalistic about it but complained that even their 'spiritual physicians' had abandoned them. Clergy of the Church of England were often supplanted by non-conformist preachers.

It wasn't just the St Bride's Rector who put his life in jeopardy by staying at his post. While most wealthy people, along with King Charles II and his court, escaped the plague-ridden city, Churchwarden Henry Clarke also chose to remain at the church. When he succumbed to the illness, his brother William took over. William survived for a fortnight.

Plague cases continued to occur sporadically at a modest rate until mid-1666. That year the Great Fire of London destroyed St Bride's Church and much of the City of London. It was rebuilt to a design by Christopher Wren, but almost obliterated once more in 1940 during World War II before being restored yet again.



Today's Rector, Canon Alison Joyce, says that compared with her predecessor Richard Peirson, she has it easy. Like everyone else, she is confined by the lockdown rules to her Rectory next to the church. But her pastoral work continues, and she collates sermons and archive music to create a Sunday webcast service. Alison writes, "these days it is a ministry of telephone calls, emails and Facetime. I offer such practical help and support to the vulnerable as I can . . . I keep a candle burning before our main altar and continue a ministry of prayer."

Alison says she is surprised when people regard the faith as a kind of celestial insurance policy against bad things happening to them. The first followers of Jesus knew that in dedicating their lives to following the crucified and risen Christ, their discipleship would take them into the very heart of darkness, not away from it. She adds, "Hope is no hope at all unless it can engage with utter despair and meaninglessness."

John Barton



## PRAY FOR THE PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS IN NIGERIA

### Slaughter continues during time of lockdown

Fulani militants have continued to carry out attacks against Christians in Plateau State Nigeria, despite the coronavirus lockdown. In the latest attack, at a village near the capital of Jos, extremists murdered two five-year-old children and a three-year-old infant.

Release International, which supports persecuted Christians around the world, has again been calling on the Nigerian government to take urgent steps to protect its vulnerable Christian communities from attack - even as they face the new threat of the coronavirus.



## REFUGEE WEEK

15<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> June

Christian relief agencies and campaign groups warn that coronavirus could have a catastrophic impact on refugees. An unprecedented **70.8 million** people around the world have been forced from home. **25.9 million are refugees**, - half **under the age of 18**.

Refugees are especially vulnerable, as their usual homes of makeshift tents or flimsy shelters are over-crowded and without clean water or sanitation, making social distancing and isolation impossible. Many refugees are already suffering under-lying health conditions and mental health issues.

Head of the Humanitarian Division at Christian Aid, Nick Guttman, points out: "Refugees are some of the most vulnerable people in the world. Access to medical facilities is limited and the destabilisation of the global economy is likely to have an impact on their livelihoods and the flow of humanitarian aid." He warns that it is only a "matter of time" before it reaches the countries with a high number of refugees: Bangladesh, Syria, Lebanon, Nigeria, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Tearfund has highlighted the problem of warning the one million Rohingya people, crowded in camps in Bangladesh. "There is no internet provision in the camps and the mobile network is currently suspended, so getting the message out about the dangers of the virus relies on word of mouth."

Open Doors is concerned for the plight of the Pygmy people in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Many fled their rainforest after persecution by Islamist rebels, and are now living in camps, where they are extremely vulnerable to the virus.

Leprosy Mission has warned that India "faces a human timebomb, waiting to explode." Communities affected by leprosy, malnutrition, overcrowded living conditions and poor sanitation, make "ideal breeding ground for the spread of coronavirus."

**PRAY FOR REFUGEES**



## IAN SPINKS: 27 JUNE 1953 – 8 MAY 2020

Ian who had suffered with Multiple Sclerosis for many years had been a preacher for 23 years over 7 different circuits. He came to Christ when he was 18 with no Christian Background. On 8<sup>th</sup> May, Ian, the husband of our Deacon, Maureen, and father of one of our preachers, Deborah, died. The church in Mottingham has been saddened at the loss of Ian to Maureen and her family and has also regretted that we were unable to support the family at his funeral on 28 May at 1.00pm, However, Maureen had indicated she would appreciate it if those who wanted and could would light a candle at 1.00pm on the 28<sup>th</sup> as the service started:



Other members of the church lit candles but were unable to send photos and others who did not offered their sympathies to Maureen and the family. All the messages are being forwarded to Maureen.



## PRAYING FOR OUR CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

The doors of our church might be closed 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 possible guidance for our prayers based on our normal activities and links.

**Sunday:** Worship and Messy Church - pray for ourselves our members and visitors. Pray for our allocated preachers this month: 7 June: Messy Church. 14 June: David Ball. 21 June: Songs of Praise. 28 June: Chris Price.

**Monday:** Pray for our ministers - Duncan on sabbatical, 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



## LET US PRAY TOGETHER AS A CHURCH FAMILY

Keep us, Lord, under the shadow of your mercy in this time of uncertainty and distress.

Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,

Lift up all who are brought low; that we may rejoice in your comfort knowing that nothing can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord.