

WITHINGTON METHODIST CHURCH

NEWSLETTER

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Reflection from Krystyna

*'The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter;
he utters his voice, the earth melts.
The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.'*

(Psalm 46:6-7 NRSV)

Dear Friends,

In 1529 Martin Luther, the famous reformer, wrote a hymn that has proven popular through the centuries as it celebrates the power of this wonderful name of God: 'The Lord of hosts, the God of Jacob'. Known to the world as "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," the second verse of the hymn goes like this:

*Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing;
Were not the right man on our side, the man of God's own choosing.
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is he;
Lord Sabaoth his name, from age to age the same,
And he must win the battle.*

Luther, with countless battles of his own to fight, was celebrating the fact that Yahweh Tsebaoth, the Lord of Hosts, would triumph over whatever obstacles might face us in this world. The words of his memorable hymn are based to some extent on Psalm 46.

G. Campbell Morgan, minister of Westminster Chapel in London, during the early part of the twentieth century, points out something rather remarkable about verse 7 of this psalm. The Lord of Hosts - the God of sun and moon, people and angels, the great and terrible God whose army is comprised of the entire created world - is in the same breath called 'the God of Jacob' - the God of a single, solitary human being whose life was anything but perfect.

Here is how Campbell Morgan puts it:

'I know only one man who is meaner than Jacob and that is Laban. The only comfort I ever got out of Jacob is that he was one too many for Laban. Of all men for astute, hard driving meanness recommend me to Jacob. But God is "the God of Jacob." . . . Oh, my soul, here find your comfort! I do not know whether it helps you, but it helps me. He is the God of Jacob, mean as Jacob was. 'The Lord of hosts', yes, but also 'the God of Jacob!'. But was that man such a man as I? The longer I live the more astonished I am that God ever loved me at all. The longer I live the more astonished I am at that infinite grace which found me and loves me and keeps me. The meanness that lurks within, the possibilities of evil that I have discovered make me ask: 'Will God look at me?' He is 'the God of Jacob.'

Later, Campbell Morgan adds this: 'It is not only in immensity but in littleness that God is great.' God shows himself great not only in shaping the universe to his design but in reshaping our small hearts to accomplish his large purposes.

The Lord of Hosts, the God of Jacob, He is our God too! May He walk alongside you this week.

Wishing you every blessing,

Rev. Krystyna

Reflection from Caroline Wickens

I am not a fan of hats. To be more precise: I don't like wearing a hat, other than a woolly beanie when heading up a mountain. When I was at school, we had to wear hats, and it put me off for life. The other local schools had abandoned this practice years earlier, and they laughed at us. The hats looked silly, and they marked us out as different – they created an 'us and them' divide which didn't make our lives any easier, and as teenagers we were sensitive to these matters.

This week's psalm reflects something of the same 'us and them' approach. We're invited to read verses from Psalm 105:

- ¹ O give thanks to the Lord, call on his name,
make known his deeds among the peoples.
- ² Sing to him, sing praises to him;
tell of all his wonderful works.
- ³ Glory in his holy name;
let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.
- ⁴ Seek the Lord and his strength;
seek his presence continually.
- ⁵ Remember the wonderful works he has done,
his miracles, and the judgements he has uttered,
- ⁶ O offspring of his servant Abraham,
children of Jacob, his chosen ones.

It's a beautiful hymn of praise to God, the source of strength and wisdom, who acts in power to protect the children of Abraham. And it's an invitation to share the stories of this wonderful God with 'the peoples', the other nations who shared Israel's space, sometimes peacefully, sometimes less so. God's children are asked to be evangelists, telling the good news of God's love to others, who are not the people of God.

We don't have to look back very far to find the same sense of 'us and them' in our Christian heritage. I remember singing – with Methodist gusto – H. Ernest Nichol's missionary hymn of 1896: 'We've a story to tell to the nations' – maybe that rings bells for you too. It's a hymn that celebrates the light and peace and love of Christ's coming kingdom, and it has a rousing tune. And like many other hymns of its period, it expresses the same contrast as the psalm, between 'us' and 'them', the nations who need to hear our story.

As Methodists, we are invited to share the story of God's love for us with other people – that's what 'evangelism' means, and it's one aspect of our calling. But my experience has always been that sharing my experience of God is very much more productive if at the same time I'm ready to listen to other people's stories. Not everyone recognises God's presence in their lives, but the tales they tell nevertheless reveal God's guidance and love. Even where those stories are, sadly, of lives gone wrong, marred by sin, there is still the flicker of God's presence, calling into new ways of living.

God is not a God of 'us and them', not a God who divides people into groups. God is for all people, with all people and in all people, and if we tell our stories to 'the peoples', then we need to be ready to listen to their stories too. That way we all learn more about how our God is at work in the special, unique life of every man, woman and child who has ever lived.

Zoom Worship

Caroline Wickens would like to invite you to the weekly Sunday evening worship on Zoom. To join at the usual time from 6pm to start at 6:30pm please use the following details-

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84344057526?pwd=Z3d0ZW90TUlnZHdITktrZmtjZ3grUT09>

Meeting ID: 843 4405 7526

Password: 1901

Or dial in on your mobile with the following number and codes-

+442039017895,

84344057526 #, 0#, 1901#

Phone Worship

Dial-in live worship every Sunday at 2:00 pm - all you need to join is a traditional telephone!

Our conference call services are held on Sunday afternoons from 2:00 until 2:30 pm, but feel free to join us from 1:45 pm for an informal chat before worship where you can also share your prayer concerns. Each service includes: prayers, Bible readings, a short sermon and 1 hymn.

Calls are charged at local rate and are included in network bundle deals.

JOINING DETAILS ARE THE SAME EVERY WEEK:

To join the service please dial: 0333 0164 757

Room number: 79317515 #

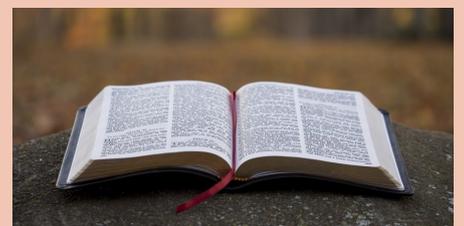
PIN: 8347 #

In Person Worship

It was nice to see a few more of you tune in to the live stream of our worship lead by Nick last week. Apologies for the projection screen being a bit flickery and unclear, it was a gloriously sunny day and we couldn't get the room any darker!

Our service this week will be lead by Krystyna and will again be live streamed at 10:45 through the following YouTube link-

https://youtu.be/Uy_sLaLCjal



Prayer List

This week we remember in our prayers-

Those suffering financial hardships.

Those who face an uncertain future.

Those who are lonely

Those facing redundancy

Those who have lost a family member to COVID-19

Christians in Pakistan

Care home residents,

Teachers and children returning to school

Barbara,

Methodist ministers and evangelists in Kenya,

People with no recourse to public funds,

Asylum seekers facing deportation

Closer Despite Covid– With Elizabeth Adu

This week we're talking to Elizabeth Adu to find out a bit more about her life with us -

Where did you worship when you were growing up?

Sekondi Wesley Methodist in Ghana

How long have you been coming to Withington?

Since 2011.

How did you discover WMC?

I moved from Ardwick and had my membership transferred from Central Hall to Withington

Why is WMC important to you?

It's important because it's very close to where I live.

Tell us one of your favourite hymns

'Now thank we all our God' It explains the whole concept of our understanding of God and His love for us.

One thing about yourself.....

I love cooking!



A bit of fun!- Super Difficult Bible Quiz

Have a go at answering the questions below. Share your scores on the facebook page (I'll be impressed if anyone gets full marks!)

1. In which book of the bible do we read about Haman?
2. What happened first? Preacher Paul on the Areopagus or the execution of Jacob?
3. What were the names of Abraham's brothers?
4. What was the name of a female judge and her companion?
5. What was the goddess in Ephesus called who was worshipped the most?
6. What was Priscilla's husband called; which job did he have?
7. Who was Bernice?
8. Where in the bible are apples mentioned for the first time?
9. Who said: "See, I have not heard the half of it. You have more knowledge and goodness than me, this is rumour I have heard"?
10. How old did Enoch become?

ANSWERS-1. Esther, 2. Execution of Jacob, 3. Nahor & Haran, 4. Deborah & Barak, 5. Diana, 6. Aquila, tent maker, 7. The wife of king Agrippa, 8. Proverbs 25,11, 9. The queen of Saba to Solomon, 10. 365 years

Lectionary Reading

Philippians 1:21-30

²¹ For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. ²² If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! ²³ I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; ²⁴ but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. ²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶ so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.

Life Worthy of the Gospel

²⁷ Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel ²⁸ without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God. ²⁹ For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, ³⁰ since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

Is it time to come back to church?

The team at Withington Methodist Church are currently considering when Sunday morning services will reopen, There will be changes in place to make sure there is as little risk as possible of catching COVID-19. We would like to know what you think about the new safety measures below.

You need to stay at home if you have any of these symptoms:



- a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal.

If you have been shielding:



Though the government guidance around shielding has changed, it is still advised that these groups of people stay at home as much as possible.

If you have been shielding, talk to your GP about whether returning to church is the right decision. You can also find more information at www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/

Our promise to you

When we decide to reopen, the following rules will be in place:

Seats will be 2 metres apart

No moving around will happen during the service. This also means no hugs or hand shakes.



Places will be limited

There will be a booking service for everyone to use so we can ensure only a set amount of people attend.

No singing or refreshments

To prevent the spread of infection as much as we possibly can, we have been advised not to have any singing or refreshments during the service.

Although we'd love to be able to catch up, after the service is finished, we will be asking everyone to leave straight away.

Meet us downstairs

Services will be held in the ground floor hall.

Access to the building will be from the back door (through the car park) only, so please walk your way around.

Please wear your mask

It is a legal requirement for you to put on a mask or face covering before you enter church, and keep it on for the duration of your stay. Some people may not need to wear a mask if they have a valid reason – for more information, please visit www.bit.ly/facemaskchurch

You will have to sign in

The church will be running a 'track and trace' system. This means if anyone at a service has COVID-19 up to 48 hours after the service, we will contact everyone else who attended to self-isolate.

We will only keep these details for 21 days.



We will be keeping the space clean

The worship space will be regularly cleaned, and will be well ventilated – this might mean it is colder than usual in the church, so you might want to bring a jacket or jumper.

We will also be asking everyone to use the hand sanitiser provided as they enter.



Toilets will be available

Toilets and hand washing facilities will be available, along with hand sanitiser. Please ask a steward for more information on your arrival.

- Before we reopen, we need to know what you think:
- **With these precautions in place, how happy would you be to return to church?**
 - **What else can we do to make you feel safe?**

Please let us know by calling and leaving a message on 0161 445 0804 or by emailing office@withingtonmethodistchurch.org

What do you think?

How can I book my place for worship?



We will be reopening Withington Methodist Church for Sunday morning worship at the usual time of 10:45am, however due to social distancing measures we will be limiting attendees which means you will have to reserve your place in advance.

How many spaces are there?

There will be a maximum of 15 people each week, with some space for couples and small family groups living in the same household. If the service is fully booked you will be able to book a space for the following week.

How do I book?

To book your spot, either ring the church office on 445 0804 to leave a voicemail or email office@withingtonmethodistchurch.org. Please mention the names of those attending, your contact details and whether you are happy for the church to hold these for 3 weeks for track and trace records. Richard from the office will then return your phone call or email back to confirm your booking.

When should I book?

Booking will close at 4:00pm on Friday for that Sunday or earlier if the seats are all booked up. However in this case you will have the option to book early for the following week.

An important note.

Before booking your place to attend Sunday worship at Withington, please familiarise yourself with the new safety measures outlined in the leaflet above. We do not want to encourage anyone to attend 'in person' worship who doesn't feel completely comfortable doing so. Please rest assured that we will continue to produce alternative worship resources for you to access at home including a live stream of the Sunday morning worship on YouTube.

If you have any further questions or concerns please let Richard know on the phone.