

WITHINGTON METHODIST CHURCH NEWSLETTER

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Reflection from Krystyna

'And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.' Genesis 12,2

Dear Friends,

My favourite philosopher Soren Kierkegaard wrote this thought-provoking parable:

Suppose there were two artists, and the one said, "I have traveled much and seen much in the world, but I have searched in vain to find a man worth painting. I have found no face with such perfection of beauty that I could make up my mind to paint it. In every face I have seen one or another little fault. Therefore I seek in vain."

Would this indicate that this artist was a great artist?

On the other hand, the second one said: "Well, I do not pretend to be a real artist; neither have I traveled in foreign lands. But remaining in the little circle of men who are closest to me, I have not found a face so insignificant or so full of faults that I still could not discover in it a more beautiful side and something glorious. Therefore I am happy in the art I practice. It satisfies me without my making any claim to being an artist."

Which of the two artists feels truly blessed? Which of them is a blessing to the world and others?

The word 'blessed' is a wonderful word. As Christians we use the words 'blessed' and 'blessing' a lot and most of the time we mean it. Blessing is a biblical word, a spiritual word, but unfortunately it has been hijacked by our culture. It often seems to be used to brag about expensive vacations or impressive accomplishments under the guise of humility.

But what do we mean when we, as Christians, say that we are blessed? Is it an expression of gratitude for the things we have - the health we enjoy, the people we love? What about the difficult times in our lives, can we feel blessed in the midst of a pandemic or a personal crisis?

I think we can learn a lot from our orthodox Jewish brothers and sisters who use short prayers of blessing to thank God for daily events. Their list of blessings includes those regarding waking up in the morning, washing one's hands, seeing a rainbow, eating various foods, as well as those said when they receive bad news or lose a loved one. The philosophy behind this is that everything depends on our attitude. God is almighty, His will is perfect and if we want joy in this life we need to focus on the good. There is a chassidic saying: 'Who is a blessed person? One who is happy with his lot.'

This fits in well the original meaning of the words 'blessing' and 'benediction'. Did you know that in Old English to 'bless' someone meant to simply 'speak well' of a person? One way of being a blessing to the world is to discover in everyone we know 'a more beautiful side, something glorious', like the second artist in Kierkegaard's parable, so that we can tell others about it, tell God about it in prayer.

Wishing you every BLESSING,

Krystyna



Reflection from Caroline Wickens

Our psalm this week reflects a world where each nation had its own god, and worshipping that god was as much part of national identity as obeying the king. This naturally led to some competition between the different deities. If a nation was successful, it meant their god was powerful. A failing nation belonged to a failing god, and some nations responded by swapping deities in the expectation that this would improve their chances in life.

Israel was the exception to all this. Even when they were defeated and demoralised, they never lost hope in their God. For them, the most important characteristic of their God was steadfast love. Other nations might have war gods or weather gods, but the God of Israel is 'good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love' (v.5).

So when life became a real struggle, there was no question of turning away from this God in the hope of finding a different god who might do a better job. The psalmist trusts absolutely in the God of Israel:

Hear me, Lord, and answer me,
for I am poor and needy.
²Guard my life, for I am faithful to you;
save your servant who trusts in you.
You are my God; ³have mercy on me, Lord,
for I call to you all day long.
⁴Bring joy to your servant, Lord,
for I put my trust in you.

For this worshipper, the one and only God is there to protect and save, whatever life brings.

As we begin to move on from lockdown, where do we put our trust? We no longer suppose that the world is guided by a whole crowd of gods of greater or lesser significance. But we do try to depend on trusted patterns of behaviour, in ways that are perhaps not so different. In the early days, we stockpiled loo roll, because any disaster feels better if you know you have enough Andrex in the house. Now, we hope for a vaccine soon (maybe not quite September...) because we want to believe that our own cleverness can save us from every difficulty.

There is nothing wrong in hoping for a vaccine, nothing wrong in making sure we are prepared for an uncertain future (provided this doesn't leave others with nothing). But if this becomes our main support, then we are going wrong, for we are making little gods for ourselves and trusting them to see us through. Our God is much bigger than that. God hears what we really need to say, and answers us in ways that are just right for us. God guards us, has mercy on us, brings us joy. This is a God who is able to engage with us in all life's twists and turns, and if we are faithful, then God will be faithful to us.

Zoom Worship and Social

Caroline Wickens invites you to worship with the circuit this Sunday evening.

As usual, the site will open at 6pm. and worship will start at 6.30. Here are the details-

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81277482579?pwd=a2ZHOcs3QmJZSzJWVi8zY3g4Z0xTdz09>

Meeting ID: 812 7748 2579

Password: 1901

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

+442030512874,

81277482579#, 0#, 1901#



Prayer Concerns

This week we remember in our prayers-
God to comfort those who are grieving the loss of loved ones

That our church can be the hands and feet of Jesus during this pandemic

Charities and aid organisations to be able get food, financial aid and emotional support to people whose already fragile circumstances have become desperate because of the pandemic.

Ben.

Jonathan.

Beatrice.

Donna .

Those who are struggling with physical or mental disabilities,

Those who are dying,

Those who are disproportionately suffering because of societal structures and unjust policies.

Georgine

Lectionary Reading

Matthew 10:24-39

²⁴ “The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his master. ²⁵ It is enough for students to be like their teachers, and servants like their masters. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household!

²⁶ “So do not be afraid of them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. ²⁷ What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. ²⁸ Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care. ³⁰ And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

³² “Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. ³³ But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.

³⁴ “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to turn

“a man against his father,
a daughter against her mother,
a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—

³⁶ a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’

³⁷ “Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸ Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

An Open Letter to the British Methodist Church

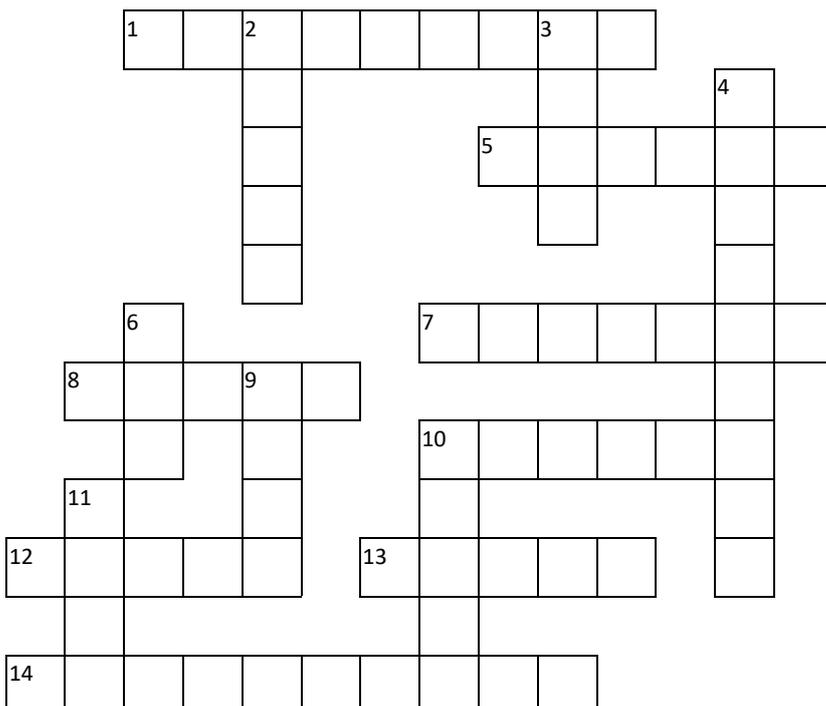
A collection of Methodists have put together a call to action of sorts in the form of an open letter to the British Methodist Church, encouraging us to take on some of the challenges and learnings from the current climate and address them throughout our continuous ministry.

For a long time, many in the Methodist Church have been crying out for a radical transformation of our mission and ministry, a crystallisation of our identity, and the articulation of a longer term vision that goes beyond increasing our membership, getting more young people through our doors and encouraging more people into ordained ministry.

This message puts some flesh on the bones of that vision, asking the same question that is being asked in wider society at this time; can we seize this opportunity – this liminal space between the pre and post Covid-19 world – to take on board all that we have seen and learned, to commit to not simply returning to the way things were before, but rather embracing a new and more hopeful future? We believe we must.

To read the full letter please visit <https://methodistopenletter.wordpress.com/>

A bit of fun – Blessings and Woes Crossword



ACROSS

1 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be ___

5 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be ___

7 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the ___ of heaven

8 Woe to you who laugh now, for you will ___ and weep

10 Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go ___

12 Blessed are you who weep now for you will ___

13 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the ___

14 Blessed are those who are ___ because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven

DOWN

2 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown ___

3 Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of ___ against you because of me

4 Woe to you when all men speak ___ ___, For so did their fathers to the false prophets.

6 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of ___

9 But woe to you who are ___, for you have already received your comfort.

10 Blessed are the pure in ___, for they will see God

11 Blessed are you when men ___ you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man

ANSWERS—1—Comforted, 2—Mercy, 3—Evil, 4—Well of you, 5—Filled, 6—
God, 7—Kingdom, 8—Mourn, 9—Rich, 10—Hungry, 11—Hate, 12—Laugh, 13—Earth, 14—Persecuted