

WITHINGTON METHODIST CHURCH

NEWSLETTER

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Reflection from Krystyna

"As surely as the Lord your God lives," she replied, "I don't have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die." Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small loaf of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord sends rain on the land.' 1 Kings 17, 12-14

Dear Friends,

One of the most famous bridges in the United States, and in fact the entire world, is the Brooklyn Bridge, which connects Brooklyn and Manhattan in New York City - I'm sure you have seen it many times in films. It was the world's first steel-wire suspension bridge and it's still capable of carrying heavy volumes of traffic every day.

We would assume that such a beautiful and impressive bridge was built under the supervision of an equally impressive engineer - and we would be right:

The bridge was designed by engineer John Roebling. Bridge-building experts throughout the world told him he should forget about it, it couldn't be done, but Roebling wouldn't give up - it was his dream and he even managed to convince his son Washington, who was a young up-and-coming engineer, that the bridge could be built. The two men developed a plan, hired their crew and began to build their dream bridge.

The project was only a few months under construction when a tragic accident took the life of John Roebling and severely injured his son, Washington. Washington was left with permanent brain damage and was unable to talk or walk. Everyone felt that the project would be scrapped, but even though Washington couldn't speak or walk, his mind was as sharp as ever and he still had a burning desire to complete the bridge. An idea hit him in his hospital bed and he developed a code for communication. All he could move was one finger, so he touched the arm of his wife with that finger, tapping out a code to communicate to her what to tell the engineers who were building the bridge. For 13 years, Washington tapped out his instruction with his finger until the spectacular Brooklyn Bridge was finally completed. When journalists came to interview him Washington, who was a man of faith, tapped out in Morse code: 'I was only trying to fulfill God's calling for my life. My life and my father's.'

Washington having no resources other than his faith, his mind, and one movable finger, was able to overcome incredible odds and achieve something amazing. In the same way, even when we are extremely limited in what we have and can do God can still help us to achieve worthwhile things in His Name.

There are many different kinds of bridges in this world. Some are wooden, some are stone, and others are made of steel. Some are small, some are massive, but they all function basically the same way. They span a chasm. They make it possible for someone to pass from point 'A' on one side of the chasm to point 'B' on the other side."

Just like the poor widow of Sarepta, we are all bridge builders, people who like to help others, nourish others and see others flourish, but we are limited in what we can give and how much we can do. Every day many of us try to bridge the gap between the needs, expectations of our loved ones and the energy and patience we have, some of us are trying to bridge the gap between the kind of life we would like to have and what our bodies allow us to do, we all try to bridge the gap between heaven and the suffering of our friends by praying for them.

And sometimes, actually quite often, we realise that we are not enough and we don't have enough, not nearly enough patience, empathy or energy or time to fulfill the needs of others or even to simply carry on.

But this doesn't stop God from blessing and multiplying the little that we have. He can take something very limited and make it unlimited. He can take scarcity and turn it into abundance. He can take not nearly enough and make it more than enough. And if this is what He can do with a jar of flour and oil, imagine what he could do with your life. That's the secret of the Kingdom of God. We don't have to have enough or be enough. We only have to be His.

Amen

Reflection from Caroline Wickens

As if there weren't enough problems in the world, this week has brought the tragic news of the explosion in Lebanon which has cost so many lives and wounded so many more. Large parts of Beirut are uninhabitable and the very future of the city is in doubt. At the same time, Coronavirus continues to gallop across many parts of the world, and here in Manchester we are once again living with restrictions to keep it in check.

In light of all this, it's hard to engage with the sunny optimism that seems to begin Psalm 105, which we are invited to read this week:

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.

The people of Israel long ago may also have asked the same questions when their psalms encouraged them to praise God. They faced famine and war, illness and death, over and over again. And indeed the psalms do often cry out: God, where are you in the midst of all this?

Psalm 105 is more complex in its response to suffering than it appears at first sight, however. The psalm goes on to recall the story of Joseph in Egypt, contending with seven years of famine:

When he summoned famine against the land,
and broke every staff of bread,
17 he had sent a man ahead of them,
Joseph, who was sold as a slave.
18 His feet were hurt with fetters,
his neck was put in a collar of iron;
19 until what he had said came to pass,
the word of the Lord kept testing him.
20 The king sent and released him;
the ruler of the peoples set him free.

The people were suffering collectively from famine; Joseph was suffering personally as a slave, sold by his brothers when they could no longer endure his high-flying stories. Where was God for Joseph? Where was God for the hungry people?

Yet as it turned out, Joseph was the right man in the right place. His strategic approach ensured that even when the famine was at its worst, there continued to be food in Egypt – and in a moment of intense irony, his brothers fell at his feet asking for help, without even recognising him in this powerful Egyptian prince.

The right person in the right place: this is how God expresses care and concern for people. Catastrophes happen, often, sadly, of human origin. In Lebanon, hundreds of people have opened their homes to provide accommodation for the homeless. In this country, volunteers have made sure that their neighbours have had regular supplies of food and medication. In a crisis, God sends the right person in the right place – and this will include you and me!

Lectionary Reading

Joseph's Dreams

37 Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan.

²This is the account of Jacob's family line.

Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them.

³ Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made an ornate robe for him. ⁴ When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.

Joseph Sold by His Brothers

¹² Now his brothers had gone to graze their father's flocks near Shechem, ¹³ and Israel said to Joseph, "As you know, your brothers are grazing the flocks near Shechem. Come, I am going to send you to them."

"Very well," he replied.

¹⁴ So he said to him, "Go and see if all is well with your brothers and with the flocks, and bring word back to me." Then he sent him off from the Valley of Hebron.

When Joseph arrived at Shechem, ¹⁵ a man found him wandering around in the fields and asked him, "What are you looking for?"

¹⁶ He replied, "I'm looking for my brothers. Can you tell me where they are grazing their flocks?"

¹⁷ "They have moved on from here," the man answered. "I heard them say, 'Let's go to Dothan.'"

So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan. ¹⁸ But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him.

¹⁹ "Here comes that dreamer!" they said to each other. ²⁰ "Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams."

²¹ When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue him from their hands. "Let's not take his life," he said. ²² "Don't shed any blood. Throw him into this cistern here in the wilderness, but don't lay a hand on him." Reuben said this to rescue him from them and take him back to his father.

²³ So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the ornate robe he was wearing—²⁴ and they took him and threw him into the cistern. The cistern was empty; there was no water in it.

²⁵ As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt.

²⁶ Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood?" ²⁷ Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood." His brothers agreed.

²⁸ So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.

Closer Despite Covid– With Heather Steward

Continuing with our weekly Q&As with our church family, this week we hear more about Heather Steward. It would be wonderful to hear from as many different people as possible, spanning our wonderfully diverse community. If you would like to take part, please send your answers through to withingtonmethodistnews@gmail.com along with a photo of yourself.

Where did you worship when you were growing up

Wesley Church, Bishop Auckland, a market town in Co Durham with the church halfway along the Roman Road and the 4 clocks on its tower clearly visible along the road.

How long have you been coming to Withington

Exactly 35years

How did you discover WMC

My husband and I were house hunting as I was expecting our first baby and we wanted to move out of our one bedroomed flat in Rusholme. We had no car so had been exploring Manchester suburbs by train. We decided not to join the commuting fraternity, got on our bikes and arrived in Withington. We found a cinema, a post office, a well organised hardware shop, a supermarket, swimming baths.. ..and a Methodist Church with a notice board outside.

Why is WMC important to you?

Firstly it's the love, care and friendship I find within the worshipping community. Before I had even been to a service the then wonderful organist Marion Harrison, had put a pile of church magazines through the letterbox of our new home as she had been tipped off by our vendors that a Methodist family were arriving. Then in our first Sunday we were greeted by Margaret Clarson who said - " well we haven't a creche at the moment but we'll start one!" and she and Jean Whittney looked after my increasing number of babies for the next 5 years. And Doreen Newton also provided a really warm welcome.

Secondly it's given me opportunities to grow in my faith and stretched me in doing jobs I didn't know I could, from being asked to be DSR secretary within 4 months of arriving and when Oliver was only 3 months old, to Pastoral Secretary (Betty Lambert was very persuasive!), to leading Junior Church, Stewarding, and a chance to keep up with my music through playing for evening worship (almost 25 years to date...)

But of equal importance for me is our community beyond the walls. and I so value all we can offer to those - through our children's' activities, the support groups who use our premises and also our links with other church communities in the area.

Tell us one of your favourite hymns

Take my life and let it be

One thing about yourself.....

I'm no thespian but in 1977 I participated in a grossly overlong Restoration play in the Cambridge Festival, selected on account of my being able to play the violin and perform cartwheels.



Zoom Worship and Social

Caroline Wickens would like to invite you to join in worship this Sunday. As usual, the site will open at 6pm. and worship will start at 6.30. Here are the 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#

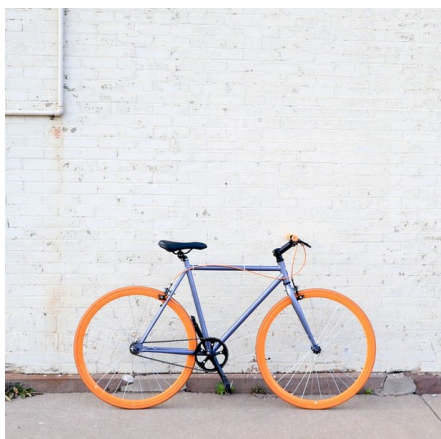


Community Help

Heather Steward has had her bike stolen along with her coat and all her keys.

If anyone has a small bike they no longer use and would consider selling it to Heather or if anyone sees 2 bunches of keys with or without an accompanying light blue raincoat thrown down somewhere in Withington could they let Heather know.

Heather 07773 015 882



Prayer Concerns

This week we remember in our prayers-

Those suffering financial hardships.

Those who face an uncertain future.

Those who mourn and those who comfort them

Families that are separated

Those who are lonely

Those facing redundancy

Those who have lost a family member to COVID-19

Hospital chaplains

Kezia and Papa

Thandiwe and Peter

Cliff

Cliff's Mum and Dad

Georgine

Christians in Pakistan

Mercy

A bit of fun – Bible Brainstorming

Put on your thinking cap as you try to complete this Bible word game.

There are many right answers, but it may be a challenge to think of them all!

Write a word under each column that begins with the letter on the left.

Do not use any word twice in this game.

Set a 10 minute timer and give yourself 1 point for every box you can fill.

	Book of the Bible	Female Bible Character	Male Bible Character	Place in the Bible
H				
E				<i>Example: Eden</i>
A				
R				
T				

Example answers (Yours may be different): Habakkuk, Hezekiah, Hannah, Hebron, Exodus, Elijah, Esther, Eden, Acts, Adam, Abigail, Ammon, Romans, Ruth, Reuben, Rome, Titus, Timothy, Tamar, Thessalonica