

# WITHINGTON METHODIST CHURCH NEWSLETTER

Issue 25 | Date: November 8, 2020

## Reflection from Krystyna

Dear Friends,

We are now officially back in lockdown and once again all of us will experience isolation... together, for the next few weeks. The Bible reminds us that we are not the first Christians to involuntarily self-isolate, it is something Apostle Paul experienced on multiple occasions. His final lockdown/lockup experience took place in the Mamertine Prison in Rome, the Carcere Mamertino in Italian, you can Google it and you will find a picture. Being a seasoned self-isolator, Paul did two things to make the most of his situation. He describes them in the following passage - 2 Timothy 4,9-13:

Make every effort to come to me soon, because Demas has deserted me, since he loved this present world, and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Bring Mark with you, for he is useful to me in the ministry. I have sent Tychicus to Ephesus. When you come, bring the cloak I left in Troas with Carpus, as well as the scrolls, especially the parchments.

How do you think Paul felt as he wrote the words, "Only Luke is with me"? Lonely? Discouraged? Abandoned? Maybe a little fearful? We are not the only Christians who have struggled with such feelings.

What were the two things Paul did to make the best of his isolation situation? You will find them both in verse 13. Here's the first one: "When you come, bring my cloak..." Paul couldn't leave his surroundings, so he decided to make his surroundings as comfortable as possible. We might not have a Timothy to fetch things for us, but we do have Amazon and Tesco, Sainsbury's and Argos - and more importantly, our church friends who can help us buy all the things we need to stay safe, warm and comfortable.

The second thing Paul said was, "And when you come, bring my scrolls and parchments." If I calculate correctly, the Apostle was in his mid-sixties when he wrote that. How did he want to spend his time? Reading texts that would help him grow and deepen his relationship with God. Over the past months, we have spent a lot of time getting used to the new situation and living in survival mode - now maybe it's finally time to do some growing?

Are there any books you have always wanted to read that you think could help you grow and strengthen your relationship with God? Are there any topics you are interested in?

Paul did one more thing we should take note of during his period of isolation - He trusted God. Read verse 18 out loud: The Lord will rescue me from every evil work and will bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever! Amen.

Look at those first five words again. The Lord will rescue us, you too. To him be the glory forever and ever.

Wishing you every blessing,

Rev. Krystyna



## Reflection from Caroline Wickens

For Remembrance Sunday, we are invited to read Psalm 46:

God is our refuge and strength,  
a very present help in trouble.  
<sup>2</sup> Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,  
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea.

The psalmist imagines the most terrible upheaval anyone could think of, an earthquake which changes the face of the land and sends the sea crashing inland, words that recall, for us, the tsunami of 2004. Even in this chaos and terror, we do not need to be afraid, for God is with us as a refuge, a high place where we are lifted above the danger into safety.

In these strange times, it's good to return to this image of God as a place of safety. There is turmoil all around. Maybe by the time you read this we shall know the outcome of the American presidential elections, but as I write, America is balanced between two competing visions of the future. Maybe the current lockdown will succeed in reducing infection rates to the point where we can begin to live a more normal life again, but at the moment we are back under many of the restrictions of spring. There is little we can do about any of this, but that doesn't stop us worrying about it. And often our worries get out of hand and start to dominate our thoughts in the daytime and our dreams at night.

When I'm caught up in the midst of chaos that I can do little about, I find it helpful to draw on images of safe places, safe times, from my memories. Our last home had an enormous garden. In reality, it was a huge task to stop it turning into a jungle! But when I'm feeling stressed, it helps to remember the daffodils I planted, blooming in the grass in April, or the goldfish in the pond I dug with my son one summer.

I think the psalmist does the same sort of thing:

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,  
the holy habitation of the Most High.  
<sup>5</sup> God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved;  
God will help it when the morning dawns.

He is painting himself a picture in his head, a picture of the city of God, the pillars of the Temple glimmering in the light of dawn, with a river flowing through the city to bring life. In the face of chaos, he is choosing to remember the calm beauty of the city of God – and it brings peace.

But he doesn't stop there. What sort of God is it who is to be found in this city?

Come, behold the works of the Lord;  
see what desolations he has brought on the earth.  
<sup>9</sup> He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;  
he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear;  
he burns the shields with fire.

The words are violent: God breaks, and shatters, and burns. The psalmist sings of a God who is in control and who brings peace by tearing up the implements of war and bringing to an end all the damage they cause. Is this also just a dream, just the psalmist's vivid imagination? Only when we forget that God works through human hands. We are capable of melting down swords and turning them into ploughshares, spears into pruning hooks (Micah 4:3). We are capable of making the psalmist's dream come true – if we listen to God's call to peace and commit to follow it.

## Zoom Worship

Caroline Wickens would like to invite you to the weekly Sunday evening worship on Zoom. The details are the same as usual and can be found below-

<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

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.

All you need is a phone, calls are charged at local rate and are included in network bundle deals.

To join the service please dial:  
0333 0164 757

Room number: 79317515 #

PIN: 8347 #

## Lectionary Reading

### 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

#### The Coming of the Lord

<sup>13</sup> But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. <sup>14</sup> For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. <sup>15</sup> For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. <sup>16</sup> For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. <sup>18</sup> Therefore encourage one another with these words.

## Streamed Worship

Unfortunately, due to the new lockdown, we will not be allowing anyone to attend our Sunday morning services at Withington Methodist in person until Sunday 6th December.

We will still be broadcasting services live on YouTube as the guidance allows this. We appreciate how much of a blow this will be to many people that were just starting to get used to attending again but ultimately our priority is keeping our family safe.

Our remembrance service this week will be led by Caroline Wickens and will be live streamed at 10:45 through the following YouTube link-

<https://youtu.be/uyzIDmPP5Tc>



## Prayer List

This week we remember in our prayers-

Those suffering financial hardships.

Those who are lonely

Those who have lost a family member to COVID-19

Those feeling anxiety around the American election

**Promilla**, Noel, Urima, Aima, Hannan,

Cliff,

Cliff's Mum and Dad,

Phil,

Simon,

Robbie's family,

Barbara,

Thandiwe and Peter,

Lizzie and her family,

Muriel,

Pat and Jim,

Georgine,

Sylvain and family

## Closer Despite Covid– With David Phoenixstone

***This week we have David Phoenixstone answering out Closer Despite Covid questions. -***

***Where did you worship when you were growing up?***

I was brought up in Bradwell Methodist Church, a primitive methodist church in the little village of Bradwell, just outside Great Yarmouth in Norfolk. My mum and dad moved there after they got married in the early 50s. My dad still worships there at 93, and I still go there if I have been to see dad over a weekend. My brother is a local preacher in the Bristol area, and should have been taking dad's Remembrance Day service, prior to this lockdown. I was involved in church life, anniversaries, sunday school, youth club, singing. The Sunday school still has a shield on the wall I won for Bible reading in 1969. "Let not your hearts be troubled. Ye believe in God, believe also in me..." I often think about those who had a hand in my Christian education, and I honour them. At the time, I thought a lot of them were boring.

***How long have you been coming to Withington?***

I think I first came to WMC in 1986 so 34 years. It was such a big, busy church, with so much going on. Someone eventually spoke to me, on the third visit, I think. I got involved in the church. Someone nominated me for church council but I was not a member. I took the plunge and went through membership. David Redrobe made me a member.

***Why is WMC important to you?***

Church is important to me because God is important to me. I find God there. I find God in other places also, particularly Manchester Gospel Choir. I think I experience God in music, in hymns and songs, more than words, and I can express my God the same way. I also like the quiet way methodists enact and enable their faith. But in church I make time for God, I put aside time to be with God's people, to give and take with them, to act in concert with them to express our faith for the good and benefit of others. I believe you can be a christian on your own, but you can be a better one, achieve more, in concert with others who feel and believe the same. In particular, this lockdown has made me appreciate what I am missing.

***Tell us one of your favourite hymns***

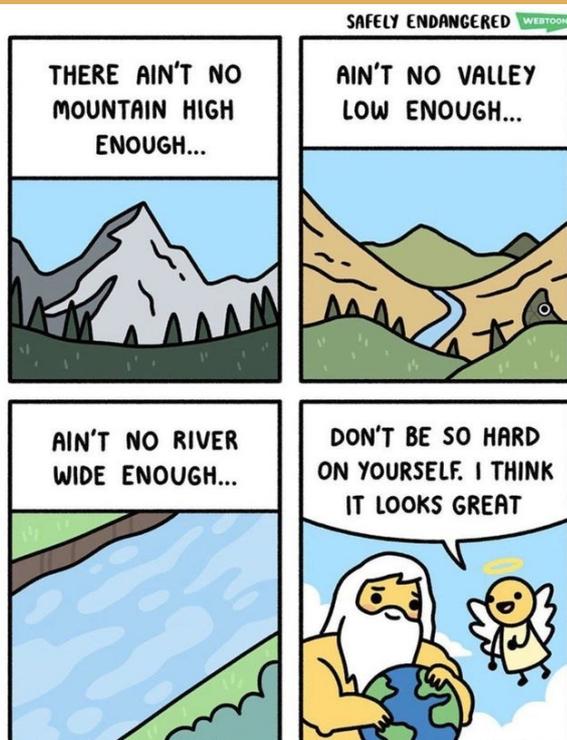
Whatever else I sing, I am first and foremost, a choral singer, and my favourite hymn is: O sacred head, sore wounded, with grief and pain weighed down.

I don't know whether it is in Singing the Faith. It is 176 in Hymns and Psalms. It is my favourite because it is beautiful to sing, a lovely bass line, and beautiful to listen to. The words, perhaps a bit archaic these days, speak to our deepest feelings as Christians.

***One thing about yourself.....***

I like Fleetwood Mac as well

## A bit of fun!- Jokes



A young boy was celebrating his birthday on crutches, so he couldn't carry the cupcakes into school without help. His Mother asked his older brother to help him carry them in. "I could," he said, "but I'd prefer not to." Spotting a teaching moment his mother asked, "What would Jesus do?" The brother answered, "Jesus would heal him so he could carry his own cupcakes."

Two preachers are standing by the side of a road holding up a sign that reads "The end is near! Turn around now before it's too late!" A passing driver yells, "You guys are nuts!" and speeds past them. From around the curve, they hear screeching tires—then a big splash. One preacher turns to the other and says, "Do you think we should just put up a sign that says 'Bridge Out' instead?"