

WITHINGTON METHODIST CHURCH NEWSLETTER

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Reflection from Krystyna

Dear Friends,

Sometimes, when a new way of doing things isn't working, it may be best to go back and try an old way. One of my church members, a long time ago, reminded me of this when he pointed out that the book of Psalms is filled with a type of prayer we don't use much these days. Some of us who are feeling powerless in prayer might want to know about the Psalms of Lament. Roughly one-third of the Bible's Psalms are Psalms of Lament. Laments are prayers prayed in times of affliction and need. Most follow a pattern:

The pray-er starts with a cry for help to the Lord. In Psalm 5, David begins:

*"Listen to my words, Lord; consider my sighing.
Pay attention to the sound of my cry,
my King and my God, for I pray to you."*

This is followed by the need, a confession of sin, or the reason God should help.

"For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil cannot dwell with you. (v. 4)

Usually, after pouring out their problem and meditating on how good and faithful God is, the Psalmist concludes with words of assurance or praise.

*"But let all who take refuge in you rejoice;
let them shout for joy forever.
May you shelter them,
and may those who love your name boast about you.
For you, Lord, bless the righteous one;
you surround him with favour like a shield." (vs. 11-12)*

If you feel that your current prayers are not working, maybe it's time to compose, not a new prayer, but an old prayer following this pattern:

1. A cry for help.
2. Express how you are feeling, and what you need.
3. Describe God's trustworthiness in the past.
4. Include a few words about how you trust Him.

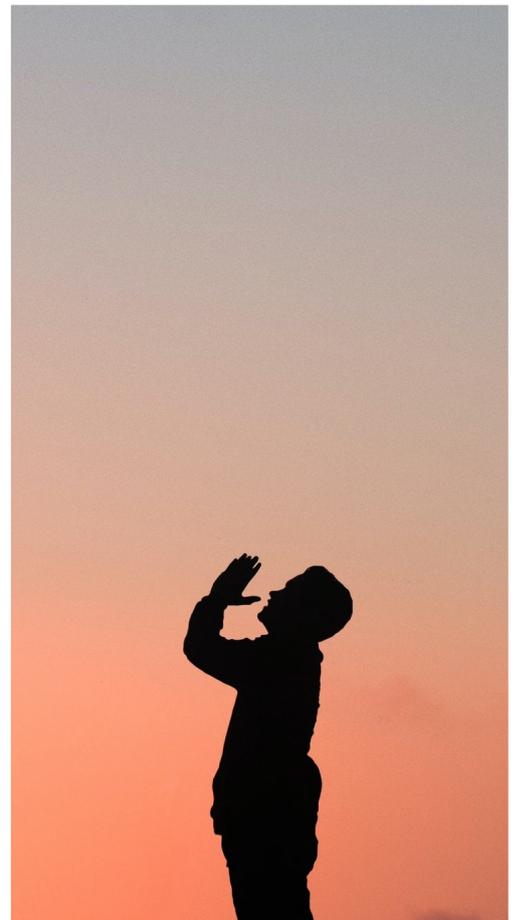
The book of Psalms was preserved for us to use in our times of need. Instead of composing your own, maybe praying one of these psalms is what you need today: 3, 5, 7, 17, 22, 25-28, 35, 39, 41-43, 51, 54-57, 59, 61, 63, 64, 71, 86, 88, 126, 102, 109, 130, 140, 141, 143? For instance, Psalm 126 (a National Psalm of Lament) is a Psalm we all need in the current situation, especially verses 5-6.

*Those who sow in tears will reap with shouts of joy.
Though one goes along weeping, carrying the bag of seed,
he will surely come back with shouts of joy,
carrying his sheaves.*

This may be a time to "sow in tears," but because of God's great love, very soon, we "will reap with shouts of joy." Whatever God is sowing in us right now, we will come back carrying sheaves of it in due time.

Wishing you every blessing,

Rev. Krystyna



Lectionary Reading

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

The Day of the Lord

5 Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, ²for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

⁴But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. ⁵You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. ⁶So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. ⁷For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. ⁸But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. ⁹For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁰He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. ¹¹Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

Reflection from Caroline Wickens

When I looked at the psalm we are invited to read this week, I'm sorry to say that my first reaction was 'Shall I find a different one?' This is how it starts:

¹To you I lift up my eyes,
O you who are enthroned in the heavens!

²As the eyes of servants
look to the hand of their master,
as the eyes of a maid
to the hand of her mistress,
so our eyes look to the Lord our God,
until he has mercy upon us.

What I find difficult is the picture of the relationship between a servant who is dependent on their master for handouts, and an unpredictable overlord who gives out mercy (a bit like smarties) when it suits him. Are we really supposed to understand our relationship with God in this way?

As I pondered on this, I began to see things in a more complex way. I'm reading the psalm against the background of lots of examples from everyday life about despotic, erratic bosses who take every opportunity to bully their subordinates. Maybe you've been there yourself, or known others who have – it's a tough place to be.

But the Bible provides us with examples of God acting differently. There is no doubt that God is indeed Lord of all, and the image of that throne, high above the heavens, makes that very clear. But how does God use this power? Does God throw his weight around and behave like a megalomaniac tyrant and/or a spoiled child?

As I think about the stories of the Bible, I realise that the answer is 'no'. God is not like that. God is not a God of power-plays and tantrums, but of imaginative, loving foresight which responds to our needs before we've even recognised them. I've always been moved by the story of how Adam and Eve rebelled against God and ate the apple. God did not allow them to live any longer in the Garden of Eden, because they were no longer in perfect harmony with God. Yet as they left, God recognised their embarrassment at their newly-discovered nakedness, and, without waiting to be asked, made them clothes of animal skins. God, in wisdom and generosity, gave them something new and unexpected, and made it possible for them to cope, despite everything.

Against this background, we come back to the psalm and its description of the servant-master relationship. What if the servant is waiting in excitement to see what God is going to do next from those infinite reserves of creativity? An apprentice watching a master-craftsman at work, or a novice baker watching Mary Berry at work, waiting for a wow moment when they see something they have never seen before.

How do we look towards God? What does it mean to be God's servant? Is it about flattering and fawning until some crumbs are thrown in our direction? Or is it an expectant, eager attention that can't wait to see what God is going to do next?

²As the eyes of servants
look to the hand of their master,
as the eyes of a maid
to the hand of her mistress,
so our eyes look to the Lord our God,
until he has mercy upon us.

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 #

Streamed Worship

Unfortunately, due to the new lock down, 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.

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

<https://youtu.be/2djLTTwWkYc>

Closer Despite Covid– With Vivien Wilkinson

Where did you worship when you were growing up?

I grew up in Blackburn and worshipped with my parents and elder brother at Witton Methodist Church near to our home. This is where John and I were married, although we met at Hinde Street Church, in London, when we were students.

How long have you been coming to Withington?

I have attended various circuit events at WMC since we first moved to South Manchester nearly forty-seven years ago. At first we lived in Burnage and were actively involved with Ladybarn Church, but I have been coming to WMC regularly for worship for the last twelve years.

How did you discover WMC?

We came to coffee mornings, concerts and youth activities here as a family, and enjoyed the friendly atmosphere. We moved to live in Withington in 1986 and when Ladybarn congregation united with Withington we didn't have to discover WMC; we already felt at home amongst friends.

Why is WMC important to you?

I have been impressed by the care and concern for the community, and the people who come from all over the world to worship together and find a warm welcome. Belonging and believing; learning and sharing in fellowship, all help me to grow in faith, as I listen to God's word, and come to a deeper understanding, and respond to the call of Christ.

During 'lockdown' I have appreciated the services on the 'phone and those 'live-streamed' from Withington Church. Also I have appreciated calls from various church members with offers of help, or just for a chat.

Tell us one of your favourite hymns.

My favourite hymn is 'Jesus is Lord', a lively hymn with chorus and alleluias and a clear gospel message.

One thing about yourself...

After our wedding in 1968 we spent our honeymoon sailing across the Atlantic from Liverpool to Montreal on the 'Empress of Canada'. We stayed in Canada for three years while John worked at The Ontario Cancer Institute and I worked at an assessment centre for children with learning difficulties until just before our son, Martin, was born. We enjoyed travelling from Toronto to Vancouver on the Canadian Pacific Railway and have climbed to the top of a Rocky Mountain!



A bit of fun!- What God Made Word Puzzle

Fill in the missing words in the puzzle below using the Bible verses listed at the side

Isaiah
45:7

Amos
5:8

Psalms
95:5

Job
9:9

Psalms
104:26



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,

Thandi

Cliff,

Cliff's Mum and Dad,

Phil,

Simon,

Robbie's family,

Barbara,

Lizzie and her family,

Muriel,

Pat and Jim,

Sylvain and family