

WITHINGTON METHODIST CHURCH NEWSLETTER

Issue 17 | Date: August 23, 2020

Reflection from Krystyna

Hagar gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: "You are the God who sees me," for she said, "I have now seen the One who sees me." That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi the "well of the Living One who sees me" Genesis 16,13-14

Dear Friends,

An Egyptian slave named Hagar encountered God in the desert and addressed Him as 'El Roi', 'the God who sees me.' Interestingly, this is the only passage in the Bible where God is referred to as 'El Roi'.

I'm sure you all know there are products on the market that can keep track of dogs, keys, elderly parents, and even potential kidnapping victims. One of my favourites is "Wherify," a wristwatch that can verify a person's exact location in less than sixty seconds. Useful as these locator devices are, they would have done Hagar little good as no one seemed to care about her and her unborn child enough to monitor her journey in the desert - no one but El Roi, 'the God who sees.'

Even the most watchful parent has to sleep. But the Bible makes it clear that our God never slumbers, never looks one way while we head off in another, never misses a millisecond of what is happening on earth. It also assures us that God is always on the lookout for men and women who are totally committed to him. He takes pleasure in watching over us.

Alone, impoverished, pregnant - there is almost no worse nightmare for a woman. And yet Hagar discovered she wasn't alone. God had seen her situation with perfect clarity. He knew about the abuse she had experienced in the past and He pinpointed her exact position in the present. He saw what the future held for her - a son named Ishmael, whose descendants would be too numerous to count. Hagar and her child would live and not die, they had a bright future ahead of them.

El Roi, a God so watchful that He notices when even the smallest sparrow falls to the ground - this is the God who watches over us today, whether or not we recognise His presence. He is aware that we may sometimes find ourselves in dark, desolate places, but He is always near, within the reach of our prayers. He is already helping us find a path through troubles, working out his plans for your future.

Wishing you every blessing,

Rev. Krystyna



Reflection from Caroline Wickens

At some future point, the new James Bond film will be released. If it's anything like all the others, there will be plenty of cliff-hanger excitement, as Bond is menaced with a horrible end by whatever villain is threatening world extinction this time. How on earth, we wonder, will he get out of this combination of killer sharks and high-speed motorboats? Yet somehow, with a little help from Q's inventive gadgets, Bond lives to fight another day.

There is something of this incredulous feel about the psalm we are invited to read this week. Psalm 124 begins with these words:

- ¹ If it had not been the Lord who was on our side
—let Israel now say—
² if it had not been the Lord who was on our side,
when our enemies attacked us,
³ then they would have swallowed us up alive,
when their anger was kindled against us;
⁴ then the flood would have swept us away,
the torrent would have gone over us;
⁵ then over us would have gone
the raging waters.

Israel knew that they were a small nation, compared with the empires round about. What hope did they have against Assyria, Babylon or Egypt? The big powers had swallowed up many other nations, killed their kings, stolen their wealth, enslaved their people and done their best to wipe their name from the face of the earth. Yet somehow Israel kept on going, unlikely survivors in a world where the winner takes all. They were not swallowed up or swept away; they lived to fight another day.

This psalm sets out to answer the question of why they were so improbably resilient. What made them different from the Hittites or the Moabites, whose names are barely remembered today? The answer was, of course, God: the Lord is on our side. The psalm ends by explaining who God is:

- ⁸ Our help is in the name of the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.

Israel's enemies imagine themselves to be powerful, but their power is an illusion in comparison with the God who is the source of everything that exists.

You might think that this confidence could lead to complacency; but not in this psalm. The psalmist has the humility to say a heart-felt thank you to God:

- ⁶ Blessed be the Lord,
who has not given us as prey to their teeth.
⁷ We have escaped like a bird
from the snare of the fowlers;
the snare is broken, and we have escaped.

We may also feel that we have escaped the dangers that have threatened us, maybe a bit bedraggled like a bird that has been ensnared, but, for the moment, kept safe through trouble. If so, we also need to centre our thinking round the praise and thanksgiving that enable us too to say, Blessed be God!

Lectionary Reading

Romans 12:1-8

A Living Sacrifice

¹² Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Humble Service in the Body of Christ

³ For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. ⁴ For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; ⁷ if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸ if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

Matthew 16:13-20

Peter Declares That Jesus Is the Messiah

¹³ When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

¹⁴ They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

¹⁵ "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

¹⁷ Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." ²⁰ Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

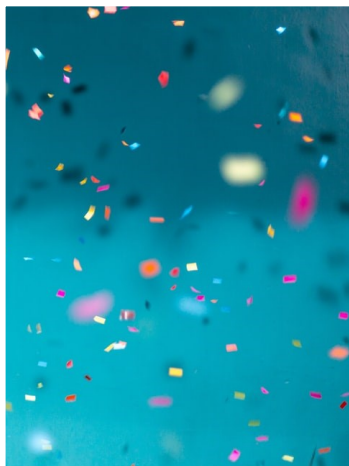
Family News

Congratulations to Papa Andoh-Dweku and Kezia Njoroge on their wedding on Wednesday 19th August. We wish them the best of luck for their future together.

Congratulations to Adelia Oceandy on her excellent GCSE results.

We remember all young people who have been involved in the mayhem of exam results these last weeks. We pray that all the anxiety and confusion will soon be erased and that they can move on with confidence into their futures.

PS if you know of young people connected to us at Withington who we have not congratulated, please let us know, so that we can contact them and congratulate them.



Closer Despite Covid- With John Shuttleworth

Continuing with our weekly Q&As with our church family, this week we hear more about John Shuttleworth. 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?

It was at Park Street Methodist Church in Bolton (now sadly demolished as the area has undergone significant changes) that was my Methodist Alma Mater. This was a huge church - much bigger than Withington - with a large Sunday School building attached (this had over twenty rooms and was more like a day school with assembly hall, meeting rooms and classrooms) together with a caretaker's house and an on site manse (now a Funeral Director's premises). There were cricket teams, bowling teams, concerts, dances and lots of social activities during the week. Quite nostalgic to look back on it now from the 2020 perspective!

How long have you been coming to Withington?

I've been coming to Withington for over twenty years - it may be even more! It was a former minister, David Redrobe, who persuaded me to come, as it was a much livelier church than the one I was currently attending and I shall always be grateful to him for suggesting the move! Those of you who can pinpoint the dates when David was our minister will be able to work out when I first came to Withington.

How did you discover WMC?

I enjoy the varied worshipping community at Withington and feel that I have made some real friends here. I like the outreach that WMC has within the local community and trust that it will be able to continue this valuable work once the pandemic is over.

Why is WMC important to you?

I have always felt 'at home' at WMC, and have made many friends there over the years. My girls were always made to feel welcome, part of the family, and encouraged to take part in church life. I first joined the Drama Group, and joined a House Group, which was an important part of my journey in the Christian faith. I then soon found myself persuaded to take on various roles in the Church, from door steward, to secretary of the (now defunct) Ministries Committee, admin for Junior Church, followed by teaching in Junior Church, and currently Church Steward. I believe WMC has a commitment to its congregation and the wider community, and always seeks opportunities to benefit and support the community.

Tell us one of your favourite hymns

My favourite hymn is George Herbert's "Teach me, my God and King, In all things Thee to see" and my favourite verse from it is v. 4 : (have a look to see what it is!) I have always liked the 17th Century Metaphysical Poets and George Herbert is one of the best. His life as a country parson is inspiring, especially given the aristocratic and privileged background from which he came.

One thing about yourself.....

I am an avid Bolton Wanderers fan and have supported them through thin and thinner!



Zoom Worship and Social

Caroline Wickens would like to invite you to join in worship this Sunday when Rev. Ken Stokes will lead our worship. Here are the details-

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84344057526?pwd=Z3d0ZW90TUlnZkd1TktrZmtjZ3grUT09>

Meeting ID: 843 4405 7526

Password: 1901

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

+442039017895,

84344057526 #, 0#, 1901#



Moving Forward

Members of the church management committee have been working over the past few months to see how we might be able to hold safe and controlled worship back in person at Withington.

Plans are still being developed to ensure that we aren't putting anyone at unnecessary risk so we don't have a date confirmed at the moment.

At the back of this week's newsletter is some more information about what the new arrangements will look like. We would love to hear from you if you have any feedback or questions that might help us to develop a solution that works for as many people as possible.

We really appreciate your patience and know some of you will be itching to get back to church but I'm sure everyone understands the importance of getting this right.

Prayer Concerns

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

Hospital chaplains

Kezia and Papa

Thandiwe and Peter

Cliff

Cliff's Mum and Dad

Georgine

Christians in Pakistan

Mercy

A bit of fun – Parable Match Game

Using your Bible, look up each passage below and match it to the correct picture of the parables of Jesus.

1. Mark 4:1-20

2. Mathew 13:31-32

3. Luke 20:9-18

4. Luke 12: 35-48

5. Matthew 18:12-14

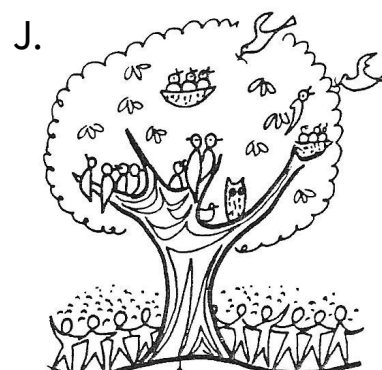
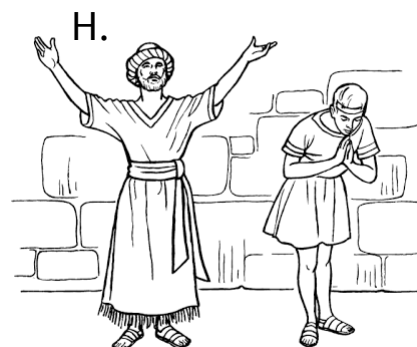
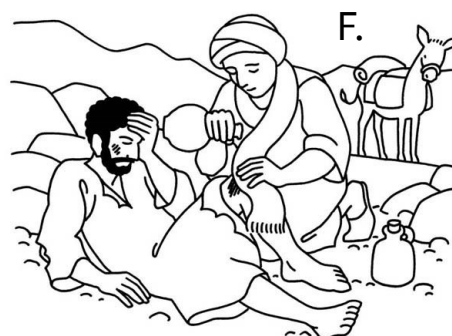
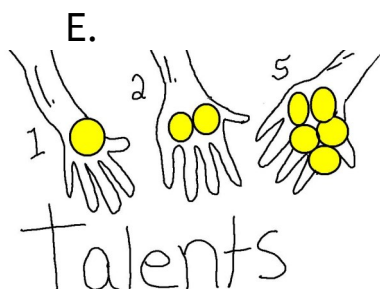
6. Matthew 2:1-16

7. Matthew 25:14-25

8. Luke 10:30-37

9. Luke 12:16-21

10. Luke 15:11-32



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.



What do you think?

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