



Dore Methodist Church

Weekly Update

18th September 2020



Message from Gail.

Dear Friends,

You may well have heard me speak before about the difference between happiness and joy, it's something I think we need to regularly remind ourselves of as we continue to live through these "topsy-turvy" months, when our outer circumstances can change from day to day. Just when we thought we were coming through this pandemic, cases have started to rise again, government advice changes, and uncertainty about the future causes worry and concern.

One of the lectionary readings for this week is from the first Chapter of Paul's letter to the Philippians. Although written while Paul is in prison, (and that certainly must have been a difficult place!) this is a joyful letter, and Paul reminds his readers, that in contrast to happiness, joy runs deeper and stronger. It is the quiet assurance of God's love at work in our lives. Happiness depends on happenings, but joy depends on Christ.

Philippi was a city in the region of Macedonia and the people of the Church there were a great encouragement to Paul. The Philippian believers had enjoyed a very special relationship with him, and despite his own difficult circumstances, he writes to them emphasising the real joy of Christian life. In a life dedicated to serving Christ, Paul had faced excruciating poverty, abundant wealth and everything in between and it's from these life experiences he is able to express his faith in the way he does. The concept of rejoicing appears sixteen times, and the chapters radiate this positive message culminating in this lovely verse: "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice." (4:4)

As a Church community the fellowship in Philippi would have read his letter together and been heartened by it. God's word is a living word, and so I encourage you to read his letter, (one chapter a week over the next four weeks.) so that we too may share Paul's aspirations to know Jesus more and more, and like those early Christians, be inspired by this letter. As you read it write down words or phrases which especially jump out at you and share them with us all here in our weekly update. By doing that we are able to nurture one another with God's word and rejoice in finding the joy that is in Christ.

Blessings

Gail.

Pause for thought and prayer



O breath of life, come sweeping though us... (Singing the Faith 391)

During these last few months, we have come to realise more than ever the changing nature of each day. Some days make us smile and others make us take a deep intake of breath. I am reminded that our life begins with that first gasp of breath and ends with our last gasp, and each day in between we breathe the first breath of a newly created morning. Let us pray this week for the breath of Christ to come and cleanse and renew, to restore and revive.

Isaiah 42:5: God, the LORD, created the heavens and stretched them out. He created the earth and everything in it. He gives breath and life to everyone in the all the world.

Prayer for the week: Breath of God come breathe your life into the tired and the weary, that may they find in Christ the one whose yolk is easy. Come breathe your wisdom into the leaders of the world's governments that they will make wise decisions. Come breathe the warmth of your comfort to those who are bereaved that they may know your peace. Come breathe your reviving power into your church, so that we may witness to your love and grace. **Amen.**

Worship for Sunday 20th September.

Worship material for next Sunday, 20th September, prepared by "Twelvebaskets", follows.

Grace Food Bank.

Once again, many thanks to everyone who contributed to the latest foodbank collection. A number of people have asked about donating money. If you would prefer to send a cheque please make it out to "The Grace Foodbank" and, either post it to them at 240 Lowedges Road, Sheffield, S8 7JB or put it in an envelope and I will collect it from you when we do the next food bank collection.

The next collection will be on Monday 21st September. If you would like me to collect from you, please phone me on 0114 473 1998 (or email me at peter.ann.smith@gmail.com) and then leave a bag outside your front door for collection by 9 a.m. on Monday 21st September.

Thank you.

Peter

Update on re-opening for worship.

Following Church councils agreement for the re-opening of the premises, and the writing of the required risk assessments, the leadership team are now taking the agreed plan cautiously forward and this update gives you an outline of our direction of travel. We have been mindful all through this pandemic of our duty of care and the following process is based on small, safe, steps.

The hall has now been redecorated and there are various things which need to be done throughout the building, including a deep clean, to ensure we meet the "Covid-safe" requirements for opening. We hope to get this done over the next few weeks.

Given the current requirements for worship, our recent survey indicated that many would rather continue using the weekly vine material at home. However, some of you would welcome the opportunity to come into the building for worship and prayer within a small group. With this in mind, we are working towards starting a shorter midweek service, (which may include communion) following all the current Covid-19 guidance. Starting this way will give us the opportunity to identify any problems in organising such a service and help us to commence those first small steps with confidence. It also means those who would like to meet together for worship may have the opportunity to do so, while recognising that others do not feel it is the right time to be together yet.

Having outlined this direction of travel we are also mindful of the rising numbers of Covid cases, and changing government advice, which may mean these plans will have to be changed. It is important that we all bear in mind that whatever activities we are involved in, the government's latest advice is to minimise the amount of contact we have with people who are outside our own household. It is part of our responsibility to one another to ensure that we are not inadvertently spreading the disease.

We continue to move forward in faith and hold one another in love.

Rev Gail Hunt on behalf of the leadership team.

Please send any items for our weekly "Update" to the Baileys by TUESDAY evening.

Tel: 235 1085. Email: john.bailey23a@btinternet.com

The Vine – Sunday 20th September 2020 - 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Call to worship

Generous God,
We come to you knowing that we need your grace again,
Your generosity again,
Your love again.
We come to you, just as we are, knowing that we are accepted.

Amen.¹

Hymn: 132 STF – O God, our help in ages past

- 1 O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come,
our shelter from the stormy blast, and our eternal home.
- 2 Under the shadow of thy throne thy saints have dwelt secure;
sufficient is thine arm alone, and our defence is sure.
- 3 Before the hills in order stood or earth received her frame,
from everlasting thou art God, to endless years the same.
- 4 A thousand ages in thy sight are like an evening gone,
short as the watch that ends the night before the rising sun.
- 5 The busy tribes of flesh and blood, with all their cares and fears,
are carried downward by the flood, and lost in following years.
- 6 Time, like an ever-rolling stream, bears all its sons away;
they fly forgotten, as a dream dies at the opening day.
- 7 O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come,
be thou our guard while life shall last, and our eternal home.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748) Reproduced from Singing the Faith Electronic Words Edition, number 132. CCLI 554990

Opening Prayers

Gracious God, we come to worship as people seeking to know you more, seeking to take our next step in following Jesus Christ. Come amongst us, as we worship.

We pause, for a moment, to give you thanks for all the blessings and gifts we have received from you – in the quiet, we are grateful.

[Hold a moment of quiet]

Gracious God, we have come to worship, knowing we don't always get it right, knowing we have failed your hopes for our lives, knowing we have hurt others, and knowing we have missed opportunities to spread your love.

We pause, for moment, to say sorry, and to acknowledge where we have gone wrong.

[Hold a moment of quiet]

¹ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

Gracious God, in the stillness, we know ourselves to be forgiven and accepted by you. No matter where we have fallen short, you love us all the same.

We pause, for a moment, to offer you the rest of our time in worship. Remove our guilt, our burdens, our weariness, our negativity, and move through us to bring hope, grace, possibility and love.

In Jesus' name we pray, **Amen.**²

We will now say the Lord's Prayer

Readings: Philippians 1:21-30

21 For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. **22** If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me; and I do not know which I prefer. **23** I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; **24** but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. **25** Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, **26** so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.

27 Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, **28** and are in no way intimidated by your opponents. For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God's doing. **29** For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well— **30** since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.³

Matthew 20:1-16 The Laborers in the Vineyard

20 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. **2** After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage,^[a] he sent them into his vineyard. **3** When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; **4** and he said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went. **5** When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. **6** And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, 'Why are you standing here idle all day?' **7** They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.' **8** When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.' **9** When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage.^[b] **10** Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage.^[c] **11** And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, **12** saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' **13** But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage?^[d] **14** Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. **15** Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?'^[e] **16** So the last will be first, and the first will be last."⁴

² Opening prayers by Tim Baker

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Reflections on the readings:

What are you being called into next?

What does your walk of Christian discipleship look like so far? How might you describe that journey?

Have things on that journey always gone smoothly? Have they always gone the way you might expect? Or have things been rather more up and down?

Life can often be like a roller coaster. We never quite know what is coming next and, as the Baz Luhrmann song puts it:

“Don't worry about the future, or worry, but know that worrying is as effective as trying to solve an algebra equation by chewing bubble gum. The real troubles in your life are apt to be things that never crossed your worried mind.”

Our gospel reading today certainly leaves some people with a story to tell...you can almost hear the conversation in the pub, on the corner, over the fence: 'you won't believe what happened to me at work today!'

The injustice of it seems apparent to those who have been working all day for the same pay as those who have worked but a few hours. As it would be to us, perhaps, in their shoes. And there is much important work being done today on 'equal pay for equal work', ensuring that women – and other disenfranchised or overlooked groups of people – are not receiving less money for the same work. There is much that could be interrogated here, but much of that does not seem to be Jesus' point in telling the story.

Rather, he tells this story to get to the heart of what all good story-telling does – to help us change the way we see the world, to challenge the prejudices and biases that we carry around. This is a story about a radical new system of finance, which is not about 'earning' our place in society, but understanding that God's grace is at work in all of our stories. This story is a warning to all of us who feel happy with the lot we've been given in life, we who feel we 'got a good deal'. 'Watch out', this story warns us – another world is possible, where grace abounds.

No more meritocracy. Only love, and generosity.

Are we envious, because he is generous?

Or can we be generous, like the Master?

Do we tell our stories through the lens of grace, or – when we reflect on our lives to this point – do we prefer to think that we earned our place at this table, that we worked hard for this house, that we are somehow 'owed' something?

How do you tell your story?

Paul offers us a powerful example of how we might do it: 'For me, to live is Christ, to die is gain'.

That oft-quoted, oft-misused little sentence is – for me – a great invitation into rethinking our lives. An invitation to let go of the narrative the world is selling us: 'me, me, me, more, more, more...etc.' and embrace a Christ-centric narrative, a story where I see God at work in my life, and make space for God to work through my life in order to touch others.

Then, when we embrace that as a way of life (and it takes work, consistently finding that base-note and returning to it), then we begin to see that our lives are not about ourselves. I am not here for me. I am here for you, for you all, for us.

Me becomes we.

I becomes us.

Selfish becomes community.

Ambition and envy become love.

Greed becomes generosity.

It won't always be easy, and the challenges of living our lives as if they are not our own is counter to so much of the way the world asks us to think. How might your story become more in line with Jesus's invitation to be more connected, more neighbourly?

Perhaps you might like to begin, or end, or summarise, with something like Paul's words: "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."

May your stories be rich with the grace of God, and may you come to see that grace at work in your life, Amen.⁵

Prayers of intercession

For our intercessions, we will hold three short periods of quiet, in which each of us is invited to bring our own prayers to God.

Firstly, we pray for those close to home, calling to mind the name or the face of somebody in our own family, amongst our church congregation or a close friend. In the quiet, we hold them and their situation up to God.

[Silence]

Living God, you know our hearts and our hurts. We commit them to you now, and invite you to come close to those we have prayed for, bringing them your healing, your comfort, your hope.

Secondly, we pray for situations further afield – taking a moment to pray for something we have heard in the news that troubles us, or for someone we have never met but whose story has affected us. In the quiet, we hold these people and situations up to God.

[Silence]

Living God, you know the pains of your world. It can feel like a dark world when we switch on the news, or read our newspapers. In the darkness, bring your light. In the conflict, bring your peace. In the brokenness, bring your healing.

Finally, we spend a moment praying for the church: perhaps this church congregation, the wider Christian church, or all people of faith. In the quiet, we pray for all who are gathering in worship today.

[Silence]

Living God, help us – your people – to be your hands and feet in the world. May we find ways to be an answer to prayer, to bring transformation in our own lives, communities and our world.

We pray these, and all our prayers, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**⁶

⁵ Reflection written by Tim Baker

⁶ Prayers of intercession by Tim Baker

Hymn: 351 STF – In Christ alone my hope is found

- 1 In Christ alone my hope is found,
he is my light, my strength, my song;
this Cornerstone, this solid Ground,
firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
when fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My Comforter, my All in All,
here in the love of Christ I stand.
- 2 In Christ alone! -- who took on flesh,
fullness of God in helpless babe!
This gift of love and righteousness,
scorned by the ones he came to save:
till on that cross as Jesus died,
the wrath of God was satisfied
for every sin on him was laid;
here in the death of Christ I live.
- 3 There in the ground his body lay,
light of the world by darkness slain:
then bursting forth in glorious Day
up from the grave he rose again!
And as he stands in victory,
sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
for I am his and he is mine --
bought with the precious blood of Christ.
- 4 No guilt in life, no fear in death,
this is the power of Christ in me;
from life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
can ever pluck me from his hand;
till he returns or calls me home,
here in the power of Christ I'll stand!

Keith Getty (b. 1974) and Stuart Townend (b. 1963) Reproduced from
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Blessing

I want to live in a world more like your kingdom,
And less like the kingdom of greed we find ourselves in.
No longer the kingdom of comfort,
But forever, the Kingdom of heaven.

Be at work in me, Lord God, by your Spirit, **Amen.**⁷

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker