



# Dore Methodist Church

## Weekly Update

### 13<sup>th</sup> November 2020.



## Message from Gail

As you read this we are now half way through the second period of lock down. When it was announced I know we were all disappointed to be taking a step backward again. As we closed our Church doors in March, we did so of course because we were asked to by the government and when gradually restrictions were relaxed we have been cautious about opening, not because we didn't want to, but because myself and the leadership team love you our church family and care about your safety. Then just as we had done all the preparations to re-open, albeit in a limited way, this second wave came and it wasn't possible to go forward as we hoped. Last week on remembrance Sunday I was reminded that in the 7 months of the blitz about 40,000 civilians lost their lives to German bombing raids. The number who have lost their lives during the first 7 months of Covid exceed this total and by the time you read this it may have reached 50,000 or be very close to it – this is a deadly virus we are fighting. We do not fight it however in the same way that we do a military conflict, but rather through consideration for others and acts of kindness – But in both cases there is self-sacrifice.

I am very grateful to the leadership team who have worked through the complexities to get our building ready to open again when possible, and a fuller summary of this can be found in the new Church magazine. All the decisions we have made have been done with the respect and concern for others at the heart. On a personal note, during these past few months ministry has been challenging and demanding with big learning curves. Some days have been very long, emotions have been high and juggling has become a skill! But time and time again, I turn to the word of God and find encouragement for such a time as this.

In our weekly Bible readings these last four weeks we have stood beside the young Christians in the ancient city of Thessalonica in their time of difficulty and uncertainty, and drawn strength for our own turbulent times today. We have discovered in this letter practical advice for Christian living - the Gospel message being not only about what we believe, but also how we must live. And when burdened by grief and overwhelmed by difficulty, it reminds us of the resurrection hope.

These closing words found in our final reading, Chapter 5:11-24, start by saying: "*Therefore encourage one another and build each other up.*" On a grey and foggy November day, when it's easy for our mood to drop, I want to encourage you not to lose heart, and as the following verses remind us: "*Rejoice In the lord*" - Rejoice in who Christ is and what he has done. Rejoice not just for ourselves but others too. "*Pray without ceasing*" - There is no right or wrong way to pray, just

be conscious of Christ always with you and let that relationship deepen. “Give thanks in all circumstances” - This isn’t about giving thanks for all circumstances, but that Christ is IN all circumstances.

As we reflect on these final words and seek to apply them to our lives, verse 24 summarises everything: “The one who calls you is faithful.” It is precisely because of this, we can hold onto what is good in all things and all circumstances.

Shalom

*Gail.*

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### **Pause for thought and prayer.**



**Let all that you do be done in love.** (1Corinthians 6:14)

Love in the time of Covid19 has become even more prized. I took it for granted, given and received, as a natural right between family and friends. When physical presence is removed love remains; but how to show it? In spoken words, cards, emails, gifts. Gestures which now take on huge significance, as we show how much we love. Maybe love had become accustomed, ordinary, acknowledged but never refined or nurtured. When the new normal comes in, we must work towards showing an extraordinary, exceptional appreciation, to those we love and those we should love. (By Sue Whalley)

**Prayer for the week:** Lord Jesus, your love conquers all and never fails. Help us to love others freely, with heart-felt compassion, kindness and goodness. We are reminded that the greatest expression of mercy is love, and one of the greatest expressions of love is forgiveness, which restores relationships and life. So, we pray this week that love will prevail, and hold before you the conflicts, discords and troubles which cause strife and disagreements. Where there are break down of relationships, where violence erupts and injury caused, we pray a hand of love will reach out. **Amen.**

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### **Worship for Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> November.**

Our worship material for next Sunday, prepared as usual by Twelvebaskets, follows.

### **Church Magazine.**

The November/December edition of our Church Magazine is now available. It will be sent by email to those who receive Weekly Updates by this method, and paper copies will be delivered to those who receive paper copies of the Weekly Update. It is also available on our website.

## Grace Food Bank

Thanks to everyone for another excellent collection last week for the Food Bank.

The next collection will be **Monday, November 16th**. The next two collections (November 16th and 30th) will be for the Christmas Wishlist. It is an opportunity to share our traditional Christmas food with others.

### *This Year's Christmas Wishlist*

Boxes of Christmas biscuits, medium or small, not large tins  
Small Christmas Cakes or packs of Christmas Mini rolls etc  
Chocolates/sweets in medium sized boxes, anything that looks festive  
Selection boxes/chocolate coins  
Pringles, cheddars or similar crisps in a cardboard tube (easier for packing)  
Bottles of fizzy grape juice or similar  
Tins of Salmon  
Tins of Ham  
Sachets of instant custard  
Small boxes of crackers/biscuits for cheese  
Boxes of Mince Pies (without brandy). These often have a short shelf life

Everything should have a sell by date after 25th December 2020

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 16th November.

**Although food donations are important and very much appreciated please do not put yourselves at risk of contracting COVID-19 by shopping for the Food Bank. Stay safe.**

Thank you

*Peter*

**Please send any items for our "Weekly Update" to the Baileys by TUESDAY evening.  
Telephone: 235 1085. Email: john.bailey23a@btinternet.com**

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**Sunday November 15<sup>th</sup> 2020 - The Vine at Home**

**33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time.**

### **Call to worship**

Grace is here to welcome us,

Christ is here amongst us,

The Spirit moves by ways we do not know,

And God comes close, closer than we can imagine.

Come close, Lord Jesus. **Amen.**<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Prayers by Tim Baker

## Hymn: 363 STF My Jesus, my saviour

My Jesus, my Saviour,  
Lord there is none like you.  
All of my days I want to praise  
the wonders of your mighty love.  
My comfort, my shelter,  
tower of refuge and strength,  
let every breath, all that I am,  
never cease to worship you.

*Shout to the Lord all the earth, let us sing,  
power and majesty, praise to the King.  
Mountains bow down  
and the seas will roar  
at the sound of your name.  
I sing for joy at the work of your hands.  
Forever I'll love you, forever I'll stand.  
Nothing compares to the  
promise I have in you.*

Darlene Zschech (b. 1965)

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### Opening Prayers - Teach us Lord, how to pray.

[pause after every line.]

Let us pray.

Prayer in the music.

Prayer in the stillness.

Prayer in the movement.

Prayer in our actions.

Prayer in our everyday.

Teach us Lord, how to pray.

**Amen.**<sup>2</sup>

### We say the Lord's Prayer

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<sup>2</sup> Opening prayers by Lucy Zwolinska

## Readings: Matthew 25:14-30 - The Parable of the Talents

<sup>14</sup> “For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; <sup>15</sup> to one he gave five talents,<sup>[a]</sup> to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. <sup>16</sup> The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. <sup>17</sup> In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. <sup>18</sup> But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. <sup>19</sup> After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. <sup>20</sup> Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.’ <sup>21</sup> His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ <sup>22</sup> And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.’ <sup>23</sup> His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ <sup>24</sup> Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; <sup>25</sup> so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’ <sup>26</sup> But his master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? <sup>27</sup> Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. <sup>28</sup> So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. <sup>29</sup> For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. <sup>30</sup> As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’<sup>3</sup>

### Reflections on the reading

Today’s Gospel passage is one of the strangest stories in the New Testament. It belongs in that group of sayings and stories from Jesus that we find a little bit uncomfortable and maybe wish weren’t there.

Yes, we’ve all heard the straight-forward, Sunday School interpretation of this passage: ‘use what you’ve got’. ‘Put your talents to work’. ‘Don’t hide your light under a bushel’. It’s not a bad message, and I’ve always been passionate about seeing people’s potential fulfilled, and using our gifts, but I think there might just be something else going on here.

Shall we see what happens if we turn the thing on it’s head?

The traditional interpretation hinges on one assumption, for which I can see no clear evidence in the passage: that the master / giver of gold is somehow meant to represent God. But is that really true? Jesus never seems to say so. Do we really believe in a God who would give more gold to people who were more talented already, or who would say ‘to those who already have, more shall be given... and to those who have little, what little they have will be taken away’. This certainly

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<sup>3</sup> Bible Text is from New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved

doesn't seem to match with the image of the Kingdom of God that Jesus paints elsewhere in the gospels.

So, go with me for a moment here, what if it's the other way round...

What if this is not a story about how we should use what we have wisely (an interpretation that is helped by the confusing translation issue that the currency in this story is translated 'talents', the same word as we use for gifts/skills). What if, rather, it's a story about how unfair the world is and how many of us will be cast out by the system if we stand up to greed, or are unwilling to line the pockets of the wealthy with our hard work? Suddenly it becomes quite a different reading.

Here, we see the Master as a sort of archetypal capitalist overlord – someone who has plenty of wealth to spare, but only really wishes to use it to generate more. 'Wealth creators' is a modern phrase for this kind of master. He may not be evil, but he is certainly playing the game in order to benefit himself. Hence the story – he makes a small investment in three small businesses he is connected to, and leaves with an expectation of some return on his investment.

Of course, he does rather well out of the whole affair, his investments double in the two larger of the three businesses. But the third appears to function more as a non-profit, or a social enterprise company. This third investment does not grow. The third businessman appears to operate counter to the system of greed and wealth creation. He is doing something very different. He's protecting the money that isn't really his to spend, and getting on with other things – things which are far less money-related or not driven by profit.

And the investor is bitterly disappointed. The counter-narrative offered by this third business doesn't help him get any richer, so he throws him out.

Where is the Kingdom of God in this story?

Where is the Kingdom of God in our story? In our week? In our day? Have we missed it, because we made certain assumptions about what it would look like?

As we head towards Christmas and Advent, it strikes me every year that the incarnation of God, the birth of Christ, breaks all the assumptions that people have about what that might look like. The Kingdom of God comes near, and hardly anyone even notices...

We are the people of the counter-narrative. The Jesus-stories are about a man who resisted the status quo and built a movement based around love, self-sacrifice, justice and peace. How are we building that counter-narrative today? As a church, and as individuals, have we fallen in with the master's way of thinking: profit, self-promotion and 'growth'? Or can we offer a different way of looking at the world, which goes 'not to those who need us, but to those who need us most?'

That's my kind of Christianity.

Lord, forgive me for the times when my head is turned by the world's agenda, by money and wealth. Show me how to stay focused on your Kingdom.

*At this point it would be good to share your thoughts on this reflection. If this is not possible, you may just like to ponder these two questions in the quiet for a few moments, perhaps taking notes and then find a way to discuss your answers and reflections in the week.*

Two questions for us to ponder today:

- How does the 'alternative' reading of this famous story from Matthew 25 make you feel? Have you heard it before? Is it helpful, or not really?
- Are there other places or stories in the Bible where there could be an 'alternative sermon' to the traditional messages we draw out? See if you can make a list of 3 or 4 stories and how they could be looked at a different way...

Let us pray.

Holy God, we thank you for your holy book, and the Living Word we can unpack from in your scriptures. Show us, today, how we can continue to be challenged and inspired by the stories we find in the Bible. Show us how to read, interpret and apply those stories today, in 2020.

In Jesus' name we pray, **Amen**.<sup>4</sup>

### **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.

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<sup>4</sup> Reflection written by Tim Baker

Finally, we spend a moment praying for the church: perhaps our 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**.<sup>5</sup>

### **Hymn: 109 STF In the darkness of the still night**

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| <p>1 In the darkness of the still night,<br/>in the dawning of the daylight,<br/>in the mystery of creation,<br/>Creator God, you are there.<br/>In the breath of every being,<br/>in the birthing and the growing,<br/>in the earth and all its fullness,<br/>Creator God, you are there.</p> | <p>2 In the homeless and the hungry,<br/>in the broken and the lonely,<br/>in the grieving of your people,<br/>Creator God, you are there.<br/>In the tears and in the heartache,<br/>in the love through which we serve you,<br/>in the anguish of the dying,<br/>Creator God, you are there.</p> |
| <p>3 In our hearts and in our thinking,<br/>in the longing and the dreaming,<br/>in the yearning of our heartbeat,<br/>Creator God, you are there.<br/>In the love for one another,<br/>in the sharing of our being,<br/>in receiving and forgiving,<br/>Creator God, you are there.</p>       | <p>4 In our joys, our hopes, our healing,<br/>in awakening to revealing,<br/>in your call and our responding,<br/>Creator God, you are there.<br/>In our prayer and in our service,<br/>in our praise and in our worship,<br/>in your love that is eternal,<br/>Creator God, you are there.</p>    |

Margaret Rizza (b. 1929)

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### **Blessing**

God of grace, Spirit of hope, Christ who transforms us – send us out with your courage, your love, your peace to bring into a community and a world in need.

Go in peace, and serve the Lord. **Amen**<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Intercessions by Tim Baker

<sup>6</sup> Blessing by Tim Baker