

HEATH STREET

BAPTIST CHURCH

September-November 2021



Newsletter 1060

Letter from the Minister

Greetings to one and all from Heath Street Baptist Church!

Now, as I begin, I'm very conscious that the current issue of our church newsletter appears after an extremely lengthy gap. Who is to blame for this unwonted disruption to the church newsletter supply chain?

The customary excuses are Brexit and the pandemic, but the real culprit is closer to hand, since I have consistently failed to supply my faithful editor with a 'Letter from the Manse'. Apologies on that front here; for some excuses, see below!

At any rate it is certain that the non-appearance of a church newsletter does not mean the life of the congregation has been anything less than eventful, and I'll treat this letter as something of a catch-up of the most notable happenings of the past months (although take that with a pinch of salt: plenty of important things happen in a church that never come to the attention of the pastor, and I'm also guaranteed to forget some of the most important things that did!).

Let me begin on a very serious note, recording with sorrow the recent deaths of family members of Heath Street worshippers in Namibia and Iran. These were both untimely deaths at the hands of Covid19,

and we ask God to give comfort and peace to the bereaved, as well as the strength and wisdom needed to cope with the emotional and practical impact of these deaths.

No less seriously, it has been a great joy to see our baptistry in use this summer. In July a young couple from Iran who have enriched our fellowship for some months answered the call of the Lord Jesus and were baptised into his death and resurrection. In September we will again have occasion to fill the pool, we hope, for the baptism of my daughter, Frida King. In the coming months we also look forward to receiving a number of people into membership at our communion service, including Beza, Emad, Julie, Frida, Shona, Tom and Zahra. The congregation has also been blessed with several rather younger new arrivals, since Andrea and Lydia have both given birth safely in recent weeks. I am sure readers will join me in extending congratulations to the two families, and invoking God's blessing on them, and I'm led to believe there may be pictures of the two newcomers in this very newsletter.

Congratulations are also in order for success in examinations, and in various directions.

Firstly to Ilya, who took GCSEs this summer, just a few years after the Ghasempour family arrived in the UK. The progress Ilya has already made with his English is a great testament to his character, and he now goes on to sixth form with the stress of his first English-language examinations behind

than necessary). Laura has thus acquired the highly prestigious Baptist Driving Licence: a dubious privilege, some might say. A third and final person deserving congratulation is Fr. John Moffatt S.J. John's guidance in Spiritual Exercises was already a valued part of the ministry at Heath Street, but it has



him. Laura Somers is another successful examinee. Laura not only passed an official driving test but immediately afterward took and passed a far more stringent trial. This second test involved taking a big car full of teenagers and camping equipment on a 300-mile round trip, without any of the misadventures that might be expected (such as: forgetting one or more of the party in a service station; filling the petrol tank with diesel; shouting and/or screaming more

been all the more valuable during lockdown. At Sunday worship this summer, John let slip from the pulpit that he would be undergoing his viva on the following morning. A viva, for those lucky enough not to know, is the somewhat barbaric academic interrogation that lies in wait like a lion at the end of the doctoral path. However, I'm pleased to say that John passed ('with minor corrections'!). John has been studying medieval Islamic philosophy, and we pray that God will make



Revd Dr Moffatt's learning a blessing to His Church, use John to promote conversation and charity between faiths, and equip him to build up the academic community in general. Whether, when my own time comes, I have sufficient sangfroid to preach and minister on the eve of my own viva remains to be seen!

Speaking of preachers, I have found it both a challenge and a blessing to turn to the Preacher (aka Solomon aka Qoheleth) through these summer Sundays, listening for the voice of Christ in the book of Ecclesiastes. Until now Ecclesiastes has been a book from which I've preached very infrequently, but its disillusioned and occasionally caustic wisdom has been a constant stimulation, and I hope to remedy matters by returning to it next summer, seeking to learn more from the figure of the king Walter Brueggemann so shrewdly described as 'Israel's ironic icon of human achievement'.

Regular readers may possibly recall me announcing a new experiment in congregational theological engagement a few

issues back. With Covid-necessity proving in this case, as in so many others, to be the mother of Zoom-invention, the idea was to listen to substantial lectures on theological themes week-by-week. These lectures would be videos, all of them already found online, and we would also meet online on a weekly basis to consider and discuss each lecture. This ongoing experiment is proving relatively successful, and the weekly Zoom has seen a group of church congregation members and friends gathering from as far afield as Den Haag, Canada, and Carolina. I am happy to report that this intrepid group continues to wend its way through this year-long series, meeting every Friday at 9pm, UK time, to ensure our brains are in gear for the intellectual rigours of the weekend.

Now while it might be objected that our Friday nights could be put to more festive use, I for one have come to look forward to these lively discussions just as much as I have relished the learning, wisdom and piety of the scholars whose theology we have been contemplating. Over the year the course of study has traversed various fields. Early summer led us through a sequence of lectures on theology and the arts (The Merchant of Venice with Rowan Williams; visual art with Ben Quash; Dante's Commedia with Vittorio Montemaggi). In

August we have been learning from the wisdom of the Eastern Orthodox tradition (not least from the saintly Kallistos Ware), and our thoughts will turn to contemporary ecotheology and Black Theology in September and October respectively. Details of the course are included again in this newsletter. Should any readers wish to join, they would be most welcome, while anyone wanting to participate but needing technological assistance should contact me.

Church staff members have also not been idle. It has been a pleasure to have the aforementioned Laura join the team. Laura has taken over some of Ron Sear's caretaking duties and is branching out into some repair and restoration work that when it comes to a Victorian church is sadly never out of season. John Henry has been busy too – at least before beginning his paternity leave – and has put in place the beginnings of what promises to be a first-rate audiovisual set-up for recording and livestreaming. Our children's worker, Wilf, has been delving into the Old Testament, recording storytelling videos on Judges (found on our Heath Street Arts YouTube channel), and is mulling over plans for a regular live storytelling event at the church.

As for the King family, this summer has been a memorable one, due to the sale of the Denning Road manse and the purchase of

a new one, and not least to the fact that the former and the latter did not quite coincide (at the time of writing the new manse is still not quite ready for us to move into). For the children this has been an excuse for a long Finnish summer. For Heini and me it has been the occasion for something of a metropolitan odyssey, one that has taken in Blackheath, Marylebone, Dalston, Willow Road, and currently Marylebone again. The final stage of our peregrinations – or so we hope – will be the Old Fairground Site on the Vale of Health, where we'll be residing for some weeks close to Wilf in a caravan.

While this has mostly been an enjoyable period, it has obviously not been without its trials, but these are (in Pauline phrase,) 'light afflictions, which are but for a moment'; and in any case they promise to be amply compensated by the new manse in due course. I should put in writing my appreciation to the members of the diaconate and to others who have lavished so much time, care and love on all the negotiations and arrangements.

Times of uncertainty then, but also times of adventure and of hope! As the Preacher proclaimed: 'for everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven'.

With love,
Ewan

Book review

Wants are the bands and ligatures between God and us. Had we not wanted, we could never have been obliged. Whereas now we are infinitely obliged, because we want infinitely. From Eternity it was requisite that we should want. We could never else have enjoyed anything: Our own wants are treasure. And if want be a treasure, sure everything is so.

~ Thomas Traherne, Centuries of Meditations

Everyone has desires. We know that our lifetime is limited and we want to experience, gain and accomplish certain things before it is too late. Fear of missing out, the pace as well as instability of modern life, new technologies and pressures in society make us vulnerable to comparison and seductions. And the disappointment and uneasiness that follow the brief satisfaction of desires seem unavoidable. In view of all this, what is the connection between desire and holiness? And how could Christians who are “really interested in what it could be to live well and expectantly in dark times” meet the challenges of our modern world?

In *Holiness and Desire: What Makes Us Who We Are?*, Jessica Martin reflects upon these questions using a variety of sources,

including her own life story, culture criticism, biblical interpretation, poetry, surveys and even an episode of the series *Friends*. I liked that she addresses the reader in the beginning, to manage expectations and explain her approach to this inquiry. The first section, “Scripture,” reflects upon the authority of the Bible and what kind of relationship humans are invited to make with it. In the second section Martin looks at human desire, which includes the sexual kind but also everything else that humans long for. Holiness is the topic of the third section, which imagines ways to live holy lives within the shaping constraints of the modern world.

This book is a wonderful journey that invites you to leave the motorway of your usual thoughts, to wander around, get lost

and try to see things from a different angle. Be prepared for some uncomfortable facts as well. I learned quickly not to ignore the footnotes, which led me to explore online advertisement videos, poems, song lyrics, Bible quotes and other material. I had planned to read this book in a few days. In the end it took me several weeks because it engaged and inspired me so much. It definitely was worth the time, and I highly recommend it.

Birgit Leuppert



Reading, in the kind of attention it asks for, is a form of prayer, as well as a form of love.

Jessica Martin

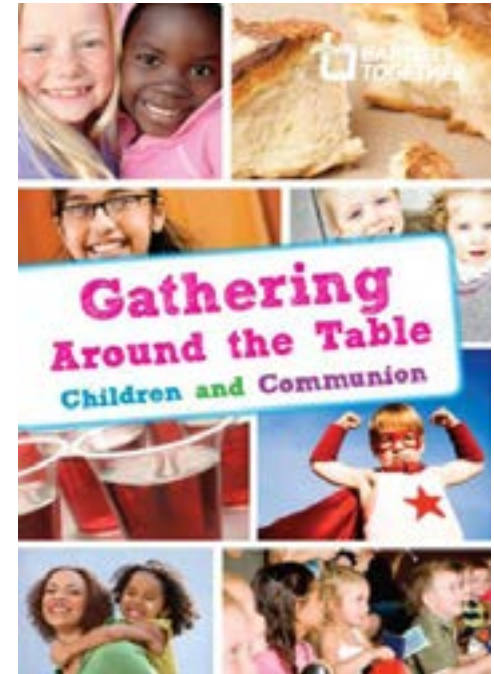
Book review

The book *Gathering Around the Table: Children and Communion*, published by the Baptist Union of Great Britain, sets out on the challenging task of exploring the place of the child within communion. It is presented through six separate 'studies', each intended to convey a different concept about communion and children in a church context. The first explores Jesus' meal-taking, as described in the Gospels, through looking at the people Jesus chose to eat with- sinners and pharisees, tax collectors- the rejects of contemporary society, and goes on to raise questions about how this should affect the way that churches today rule who can partake of communion, a meal that is ultimately intended to reflect the sacrifice of Jesus himself. The second looks in somewhat greater detail at the particular situation that Paul describes in chapter 11 of 1 Corinthians, where the congregation are rebuked for taking communion 'unworthily', allowing social status and division to impair the significance of a communion service.

Paul goes on to urge the people to 'come together' in communion only after self-examination, and the book raises questions about how this passage ought to reflect ideas on the significance and gravity of communion. The third study reflects on the various elements of communion, and the meaning behind them, raising questions about what it is that we expect from those who come to the table for communion in terms of spiritual maturity, and how this is reflected in the way that communion services are conducted. The fourth raises questions about the position of children within the church as a whole, through reflecting on both the ways in which Jesus interacted with children in the Gospels and on the history of the church and its inclusion of children in its various practices throughout the last century. The fifth of the studies discusses the role of the church in the nurture and development of children's faith and suggests that not only is the church crucial to the faith development of children but that the

spirituality of children is also beneficial to that of the adult congregation. The sixth and final study suggests and evaluates various ways in which children can be included in the practice of communion and considers what each implies about the way in which a church views children. The book concludes with the reflection that every church will have to make its own decisions when it comes to the inclusion of children in communion. It argues it is important to treat children as such, remembering to treat communion seriously, as an important moment, while also recognising children as significant members of the church family, and that the ultimate decision on how each church will choose to include children in its communion services ought to be made in a way that is best fitted to suit the whole congregation, without compromising anyone's experience.

Frida King



Changing the church's constitution to catch up with a COVID world

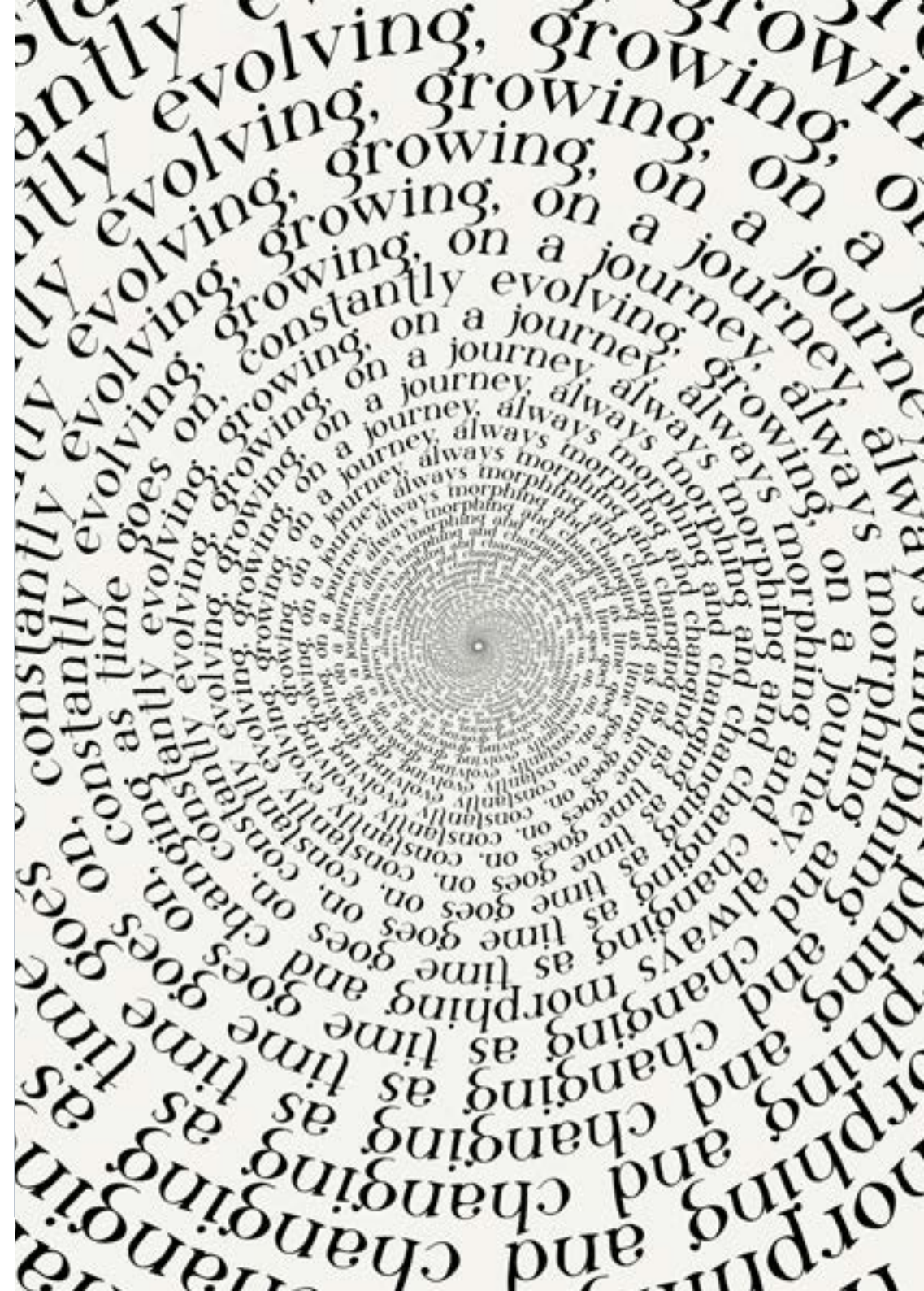
Members and friends who came to the last church meeting kindly ploughed through a long, boring resolution to change the formal rules that govern Heath Street Baptist Church. We all agreed to make this change.

When we agreed our constitution, only in 2018, it never occurred to us that we might have to hold meetings online. At that stage, we probably wouldn't have known how to do it. But of course in 2020 we discovered Zoom and used it for meetings, and for the first couple of lockdowns we could do that "legally" because a blanket national arrangement was made that said we could. But that permission ran out a few months ago, so we needed to make the changes to our governing document. We were not just thinking pessimistically that we might be locked down again and have to meet electronically but more constructively realising that there could always be church members who are shielding or temporarily housebound or

away from London who would like to take part in discussion and decision-making. So we have given ourselves the right to have "hybrid" meetings as well – that is, people joining in online and in person.

The Deacons were pleased that everyone at the church for the last meeting agreed with the idea and also that, as it had to be a formal decision, all the members at the meeting voted in favour of the changes.

Gaynor Humphreys



New Arrivals



Readings and Prayers

September 12-18

Proverbs 1.20-33

12th	Laura Somers
13th	Cole Ellenbogen
14th	Victoria Tjirimuje
15th	Nathan Biadun
16th	for all who sing in our community choir
17th	Susan Le Quesne
18th	Rhona MacEachen

September 19-25

Proverbs 31.10-31

19th	Fiona Ranford
20th	for the bereaved
21st	Robin Thorne
22nd	Gabrielle Falardeau
23rd	Theresa Thom
24th	Joachim King
25th	Margarite Biadun

September 26-October 2

Esther 7.1-6, 9, 10; 9.20-22

26th	Evelyn Baker
27th	for the life and ministry of St. Mary's Hampstead
28th	Francesco Giannoccaro
29th	Tom Somers
30th	Wilf Merttens
1st Oct	Lydia Baker
2nd	Mysie Johnson

October 3-9

Job 1.1; 2.1-10

3rd	for those in hospital
4th	Sarah Harper
5th	Nomsa Ndebele
6th	Beryl Dowsett
7th	Thaddeus King
8th	Monsignor Phelim Rowland
9th	Coco Ellenbogen

October 10-16

Job 23.1-9, 16, 17

10th	Josh Somers
11th	Beza Geberegziabher
12th	Andrea MacEachen
13th	Elya Ghasempour
14th	for all who attend Contact Club
15th	Annie Fang
16th	Nesa Thorne

October 17-23

Job 38.1-7[34-41]

17th	Frida King
18th	Jen Finamore
19th	Selena Barrera
20th	HK
21st	for Kasai province, DRC
22nd	Ali Ghasempour
23rd	Ewan King



Readings and Prayers Continued

October 24-30

Job 42.1-6, 10-17

24th	Edward Humphreys
25th	Thomas Roy
26th	Susan Brandt
27th	for our worshipping congregation
28th	Hildegard Williams
29th	Leo Patterson
30th	Michael Bloxham

October 31-November 6

Deuteronomy 6.1-9

31st	Birgit Leuppert
1st Nov	for those in prison
2nd	Bala Kapi
3rd	Ottilie Johnson
4th	Eleanor Patterson
5th	Kylo Layton
6th	John-Henry Baker

November 7-13

Jonah 3.1-5, 10

7th	Nathalia Bell
8th	Christina Cairns
9th	for the children who attend Storymakers
10th	Beauty Kunene
11th	Gaynor Humphreys
12th	Rebecca McLeod
13th	Peter Forrest

November 14-20

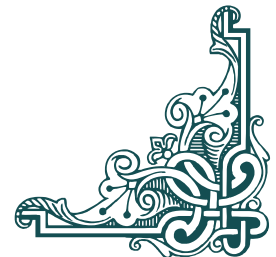
Daniel 12.1-3

14th	Anselm King
15th	for our Sunday Club
16th	Leila Ranjbar
17th	Tom Brandt
18th	for the World Baptist Alliance
19th	Ethan McLeod
20th	for the parents, carers and children who attend Oldtime Nursery

November 21-27

Daniel 7.9-10, 13, 14

21st	Isabel Somers
22nd	David Neil
23rd	Neil McLeod
24th	Genna Naccache
25th	for our deacons
26th	Paul Conrad
27th	John Walsh



Weekly Activities

Sundays	11 am	Divine Worship Live and on Zoom using the following link: Zoom: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87179878823
Tuesdays	10 am	Oldtime Nursery Introducing old melodies and traditional stories to a new generation of children.
	1 pm	Lunchtime concerts Live and live-streamed on Heath Street Arts YouTube channel YOUTUBE https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGEsAPLUIxRXRp1NZAmg5lQ
Wednesdays	3:30 pm & 5 pm	Storymakers Club An after-school club aimed at children between the ages of 7 and 13.
Thursdays	10:30 am	Oldtime Nursery
Fridays	9:00 pm	Lecture Series These weekly Zoom discussions each focus on a theological lecture, available online. Zoom: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87179878823 More info: https://53theologylectures.webflow.io

Events

Sunday 26 September	11 am	Baptism of Frida King
Sunday 10 October	12.15 pm	Church meeting
Saturday 27 November	11 am	Moving Chamber Choir Concert



Letters cut by Micah Purnell ready for a 12x8ft wall in Belfast. Part of Hit the North Street Art Festival Sept 21

Please see the church website for updates: heathstreet.org

Copy for the next newsletter should reach Eleanor Patterson (eleanorlaise@gmail.com) not later than Wednesday 10th November.

Church Officers:

Gaynor Humphreys (Treasurer) Wilf Merttens (Church Secretary)
Annie Fang (Deacon) Sarah Harper (Deacon)

HEATH STREET BAPTIST



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