

MOTTINGHAM METHODIST CHURCH MESSENGER February 2021

GOD'S LOVE

"The Lord your God is among
you; He is mighty to save.
He will rejoice over you with
gladness; He will quiet you
with his love; He will rejoice
over you with singing"

Zephaniah 3 verse 17



THE CHURCH
IN THE MIDDLE OF
THE VILLAGE!



LOVE IS...

The Apostle Paul says: 'Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.' (1 Corinthians 13: verses 4-8).

Love is unconditional:

At heart, love is not just feelings but action! Paul talks here about unconditional love, using the word *agape*, which demonstrated in God's love for us: 'We love, because He first loved us.' (1 John 4: verse 19).

Love is forgiving:

According to the film *Love Story*, 'Love means never having to say you're sorry.' This is rarely true in our experience! According to Paul, love is being ready to forgive others and 'keeping no record of wrongs' (verse 5). We can only forgive others because we know God forgiveness in our own lives.

Love is sacrificial:

Paul says that *agape* love is not selfish or self-seeking, but selfless and self-sacrificial, putting the needs of other people first. This is modelled by Jesus giving His life for us on the cross. Take the words from 1 Corinthians and instead of the word *love*, substitute your own name. Now substitute the word *Jesus*. This is the Jesus who is available to you to make your love for others grow and flourish.

Someone once compared love being like a group of porcupines huddling together on a cold night. The closer they get, the more they jab and hurt each other. 'To love at all is to be vulnerable.' (C S Lewis).

Paul Hardingham



IN OTHER WORDS

J R Miller (1840-1912) was considered by many to be the most gifted devotional writer of his generation. His book 'In Green Pastures' was much loved. Here is J R Miller's paraphrase of the famous 'love' passage in 1 Corinthians 13 verses 4-8

Love thinks no evil. It does not suspect unkindness in kindly deeds. It does not imagine an enemy in every friend. It does not fear insincerity in sincere professions of esteem. It does not impugn others' motives nor discount their acts.

On the other hand, it overlooks foibles and hides the multitude of faults that belong to every human being, even to those who are the holiest and the best. Love believes in the good that is in people and tries to think of them always at their best, not at their worst.

It looks, too, at the possibilities that are in people, what they may become through divine love and grace, and not merely at what they now are. It is wonderful how seeing through love's eyes changes the whole face of earthly life, transfiguring it. If the heart be filled with suspicion, distrust, and doubt of people, the world grows very ugly. But love sees brightness, beauty and hope everywhere.

YOU ARE LOVED BY GOD: One of the most beautiful passages in Scripture is in Isaiah 43 verses 1- 4 'you are mine. When you pass through the waters I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned...For I am the Lord, your God,. you are precious and honoured in my sight, and I love you!' Write down that last phrase on a card: It is tremendous - and astonishing. YOU are loved by GOD. Who else do you need to impress? What other ladder do you need to climb? What are you going to add to your CV to top that? When you are tempted to despair, when you are afraid, anxious, alone, remember: God loves you. He said so Himself.



WHEN WILL OUR CHURCH BE OPEN AGAIN FOR WORSHIP? ...NOT YET!

But please join the 500 who meet together on line for worship each week on <http://www.orpchiscircuit.org.uk/> (Videos), or access the printable Sunday worship service from the website.

And Join Maureen Spinks' Zoom Evening service at 6.30 pm each Sunday in February by phone or internet! Phone 01689 821956 or E-mail mdospinks@gmail.com and Maureen will send you the links.



WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

St Andrews and St Albans

Sunday worship on Zoom at 10.30 am each Sunday.

ID of 675-014-6024 and the Password 859013

St Andrews:

Open for private prayer from 10am to 11am on Fridays

St Albans:

Open for private prayer from noon-1 pm on Thursdays

St Edwards:

Sunday Parish Communion at 10.30am, Wednesday night Prayer at 7pm Morning Prayer at 8am - All Welcome as there is a large enough building to socially distance; all services also continue to be live-streamed on Facebook at:

The church is open for private prayer from 10am to 1pm Monday to Saturday.

St Edward's Food Bank is open for donations on Monday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday - 9.30am to 1pm & Wednesday 6-7pm.



THE PATH TO EASTER

The following opportunities are available to us to follow the path to Easter during Lent:

- **'WOVEN - A LENT COURSE'**

This course is designed by the London District of the Methodist Church to help participants share reflections on the Lectionary readings through Lent with Maureen & Deborah Spinks. Each session will be self sufficient where readings are concerned, but full copies of the course material can be downloaded from the website: <https://www.methodistlondon.org.uk/lentcourse2021>

Date and Time

Thursday afternoons 2.30pm from 18th February or

Monday evenings at 7.45pm from 22nd February

Phone 01689 821956 or E-mail mdospinks@gmail.com to obtain the Zoom links for the course.

- **'AFTER LIFE ... AFTER LIFE?' A LENT STUDY**

Churches Together in Mottingham Zoom Lent Study is based on a Lent Study book entitled 'After Life... After Life?', by Christian author, John Symons, who considers bereavement in the light and hope of the Resurrection. The book is published by Shephard-Walwyn Publishers, 2020, at £9.95 a copy - a very good investment. However, material will be made available prior to each session. The Study will be led by Ian Welch.

Date and Time

Each Wednesday in Lent from 24th February at 8 pm,

Zoom ID 675-014-6024 and Password 859013.

There will be 5 sessions:

1. A Testimony;
2. Three Witnesses;
3. Heart and Mind;
4. Mind and Heart;
5. The 5 Clues



ASH WEDNESDAY

My memory of the Passover in Jerusalem by
David Winter

Ash Wednesday introduces the Christian preparation for Easter, which normally coincides with Passover, the major Jewish celebration of the year. It's near Easter because Jesus was crucified at Passover, having just shared this very meal with His disciples.

Passover celebrates and recalls the Israelites' escape from slavery in Egypt. Led by Moses they crossed the Red Sea and 40 days later entered the 'Promised Land.' They shared the Passover meal at their last night in Egypt and have kept it all for nearly the past three thousand years or so that have followed.

Many years ago, when I was in Jerusalem to produce a radio programme, I was invited to join a Jewish family for their Passover meal. It was a great occasion, very like our Christmas, a family event with deep religious significance for those who seek it.

At the meal in Jerusalem, we ate modest lentils and unleavened bread - Matzos as we now call it. We also drank plenty of wine but not from the cup at the end of the table. That is 'Elijah's cup', only to be drunk from when the prophet comes to announce the arrival of the Messiah. At the last supper Jesus instructed His disciples to drink from that cup after supper, which may have shocked them at the time. Jesus was showing that the Messiah had come!



CALL TO PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY FAMILY

In the Bible Timothy urges us not to neglect our intercessions: "I urge then, first of all, that prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made for all people..." (1 Tim 2 verse 1) All the people who are part of our church and community are still out there and need us to respond to Timothy's request.



TEMPETATION

'I can resist everything but temptation' (Oscar Wilde). During Lent we remember Jesus' experience in the wilderness (Matthew 4 verses 1-11), when 'He was led by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil.' (verse 1). Temptation is a test of obedience, whether we do things our way or God's way. After 40 days of fasting Jesus was tired, hungry and vulnerable. Like Him, the Devil will attack us at our most vulnerable moments, especially during this pandemic.

The first temptation was to turn stones into bread:

Jesus' ministry was not about meeting His own needs, but being nourished by God's word. 'We do not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God' (Deuteronomy 8 verse 3). Like Jesus, we are called to make God our priority and trust Him completely.

The second temptation was to put God to the test:

Jumping off the Temple pinnacle would have been a dramatic way for Jesus to gain popularity, but this is not God's way! 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' (Deuteronomy 6 verse 16). We too need to learn this lesson!

The third temptation was to worship Satan:

Finally, the devil took Jesus to a mountain to offer Him worldly power. In contrast, His calling as Messiah was marked by suffering and honouring God. 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only' (Deuteronomy 6 verse 13). This is often our experience in living for God.

Jesus stands with us in our temptations. As we claim the promises of Scripture, we will find strength in the power of the Spirit and the victory of the Cross.

Our dear friend Gerald Woods died on Saturday 6th February. He was a wonderful addition to our church family and we will miss him. Our sympathy goes to Ged, his son, and the family. A tribute will be included in the March Messenger.



PRAY FOR INDIAN CHRISTIANS

Release International, in its recently published annual Persecution Trends survey says attacks are set to rise in many countries worldwide including India under militant Hinduism.

“Yet despite persecution and pandemic, we see clear evidence of the boldness, courage and trust in God of Christians under pressure around the world” says Release International CEO, Paul Robinson

In India, Christians and other minorities fear religious intolerance will continue to grow during 2021, largely due to growing Hindu nationalism. Hindu extremists attacked churches and individual believers throughout 2020. Christians suffered 225 incidents of religiously motivated violence during the first ten months compared to 218 incidents in the same period in 2019. Many of these attacks were by vigilante mobs.

In September 2020, Hindu extremists incited mobs of up to 3,000 people to attack Christians in three villages in Chhattisgarh state.

There has been a significant rise in the number of attacks against Christians since the coming to power of the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) in 2014 and following the subsequent landslide victory of BJP Prime Minister Narendra Modi in May 2019.

Release International is an inter-denominational Christian ministry working through local church partners in more than 25 countries, helping persecuted Christians prayerfully, pastorally and practically. Our ministry is based on Hebrews 13 v 3: 'Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.'

More at: www.releaseinternational.org