

# MOTTINGHAM METHODIST CHURCH MESSENGER

June 2021

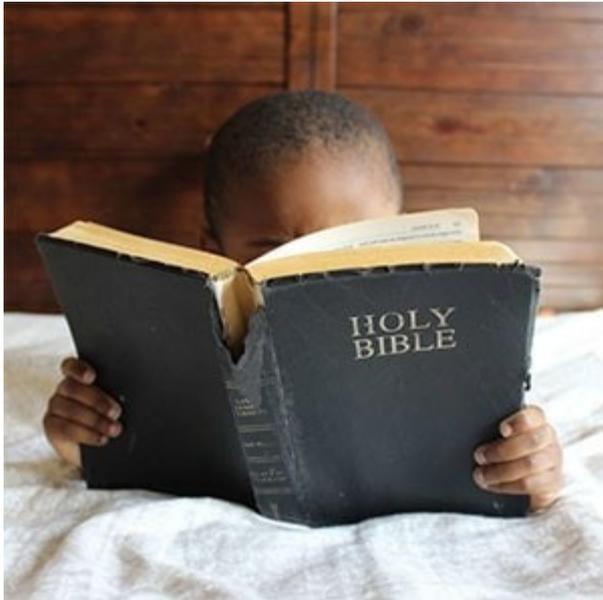
JUNING

'YOURS IS THE DAY, YOURS ALSO IS THE NIGHT;  
YOU HAVE PREPARED THE LIGHT AND THE SUN. YOU  
HAVE ESTABLISHED ALL THE BOUNDARIES OF THE  
EARTH; YOU HAVE MADE SUMMER AND WINTER.'

Psalm 74 verses 16 & 17



THE CHURCH  
IN THE MIDDLE OF  
THE VILLAGE!



## GOD ENCOURAGES US THROUGH HIS WORD

Zechariah was a prophet living in Jerusalem almost 70 years after the nation of Israel had been enslaved in Babylon. He was among the first of his people returning to their desolate homeland. The Jewish people who had survived were returning in small numbers. Their temple lay in ruins and things looked bleak. They didn't have much of anything and were especially short of hope. It is into this situation that Zechariah speaks. God gave him a series of messages to help motivate and encourage the people to both rebuild the temple and look for the fulfilment of God's promises.

Zechariah points to the coming of Jesus. The Messiah will come, says Zechariah, as Saviour, Judge, and ultimately, as the righteous King ruling His people from Jerusalem. He will punish the people for their sins, yes, but afterwards He will come to them - *if* they are obedient. Zechariah's book brims over with the hope (meaning the certainty) that God would remember His promises to His people, even after all the time they spent in captivity. Things may look hopeless now, Zechariah said but God is faithful and He will bring things right in the end.

Although they had been scattered, God had not forgotten his promises and was still willing to help them if they were willing to obey Him.

Deuteronomy 7 says 'Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love Him and keep His commandments, to a thousand generations'.

Through His word, God continually encourages, and He is utterly faithful. The God who never changes always keeps His

promises. No matter what we do or how unfaithful we may be, He is true. We can trust the One who sees all but still loves us unconditionally. Just as He encouraged the people of Israel through Zechariah's messages, so God encourages us today through His Word. - Have you read it lately?

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## LETTER FROM IAN WELCH

Dear All,

Heart-felt thanks to everyone who supported the Christian Aid Read-in and Sing-in last Saturday, 22nd May, 2021. We had some 24 readers and singers during the six hours, with a very varied and entertaining programme, and it was a memorable and enjoyable occasion.

If you haven't had the opportunity yet to donate to Christian Aid in support of this event, donations can still be made via the Christian Aid section of the homepage of our parish website: <https://www.standrewandstalban.org.uk>. When you access the JustGiving page in this section, click on donate, and please specify that the donation is in support of the read-in.

With warmest thanks for your support for this very good cause.

Ian Welch

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Information from Diane Hudson

The results of all the activities which outstrip last year's are as follows:

Total: £3,798.07, Gift Aid £707.37

**Total: £4,505.44**

Congratulations to everyone who participated or contributed to this fundraising particularly to Dawn whose bracelets raised £100.



## 'LORD, FOR THE YEARS' - THE STORY BEHIND THE HYMN:

This well-loved hymn was written in 1967 by the Revd Timothy Dudley Smith, who later became Bishop of Thetford. He later confessed: "I wrote it on a train when I was very pressed for time. I'm thankful if something I write gets picked up, but I suspect anyone who does something in a rush later regrets that they didn't find time to apply the sandpaper a bit more!"

Dudley Smith had been asked to write a hymn for the centenary service of the Children's Special Service Mission, now Scripture Union, in St Paul's Cathedral. His commission was to write words that could be fitted to Jean Sibelius's *Finlandia*, as it was to be accompanied by an orchestra with this tune in their repertoire. And so - 'Lord for the years' was written.

Dudley Smith need not have worried about lack of time - his lyrics were a 'hit' in the cathedral on the day, and went on to become so well-loved that George Carey chose the hymn to be sung at his consecration as Bishop of Bath and Wells, and then again later, in 1991, at his consecration as Archbishop in Canterbury Cathedral.

Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided,  
Urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way,  
Sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided:  
Lord for the years, we bring our thanks today.

Lord, for that word, the word of life which fires us,  
Speaks to our hearts and sets our souls ablaze,  
Teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us:  
Lord of the word, receive your people's praise.

Lord, for our hopes, the dreams of all our living,  
Christ and his kingdom one united aim;

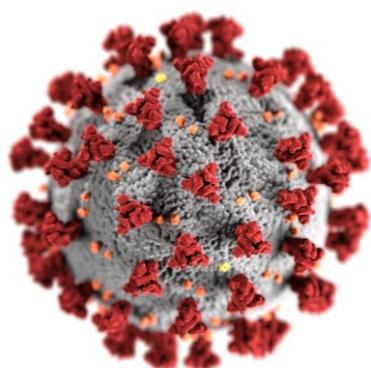
Rulers and peoples bound in high thanksgiving,  
Lord of our hopes, our trust is in your Name. ...

The hymn continued to be widely sung and loved, until in 2002 Timothy Dudley Smith was asked to write an extra verse for it so that it could even be sung around the time of the Queen's Golden Jubilee.

Many of the words in the hymn are true for the Queen herself, as she celebrates her 95<sup>th</sup> birthday. She does indeed thank God 'for the years your love has kept and guided, urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way'...

And so indeed the 'extra' verse added for the Queen has also held true:

Lord for our hopes, the dreams of all our living,  
Christ and his kingdom one united aim,  
Rulers and peoples bound in high thanksgiving,  
Lord of our hopes, our trust is in your Name.



## **INDIA - ENGULFED BY A TSUNAMI OF GRIEF - WE PRAY FOR THEM!**

Covid-19 has been overwhelming India in recent weeks, bringing its health services and institutions to their knees.

The Indian Christian community have been suffering. It is left without pastoral care.

Indian Christians report that more than 50-60 senior church leaders have died. One organisation lost three missionaries within a week. These examples are just the tip of the iceberg.

The lockdown is causing severe suffering to the poorest, the day-labourers, who now have no work and no income. Barnabas Fund is working with Indian Christian leaders to provide assistance, both food and medical help, for our brothers and sisters.

<https://barnabasfund.org>



## GRACE - GOD'S KINDNESS TOWARDS US

The word 'grace' is one of the most important words found in the New Testament. It means God's loving disposition towards us as sinners. God's 'grace' is almost another word for God's love. This grace is the foundation of our salvation. So Paul can say that 'we are justified freely by His grace' (Romans 3 verse 24); 'where sin abounded, grace abounded all the more' (Romans 5 verse 20); 'by grace you are saved through faith' (Ephesians 2 verse 8).

But the word 'grace' is also used in another way in the New Testament. It means the godly character being reproduced in Christians; Christ living in His people by His Spirit and making them like Himself - gracious.

Luke records that as Jesus grew up 'the grace of God was upon Him' (2:40), and that the people wondered at the 'gracious words' that He spoke (4:22). John says that Jesus was 'full of grace and truth' (1:14). The most common benediction bestowed on Christians in the letters of the New Testament is 'the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ' (eg Romans 16:20; 1 Cor. 16:23).

From this understanding of grace comes the reminder and the exhortation that all of us as Christians are 'to grow in grace' (2 Peter 3:18). Our lives should manifest the grace of God in love and compassion and kindness.

But grace is not something we can achieve on our own. True grace is only found in close communion with our Lord Jesus Christ.

*Herbert McGonigle*



**WAKE UP!**

**WAKE UP!**

Remember the story of Jacob, and how God met him in a dream when he was sleeping on the desert floor with a rock for his pillow? The story in Genesis 28 says this: 'When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I

was not aware of it."

I wonder what place you find yourself in today, and if you are aware of God's presence with you there?

It may be a geographical place, the place where you live or work. That may be a beautiful place to be, or it may be a very hard place to be, and you would much prefer to be somewhere else. Either way, God is with you there, for He is everywhere, and there is no place where He is not.

It may be an emotional place, as when we say, 'I'm not in a good place right now'. How are you feeling today - up or down? Again, whatever mood you are in, God is with you for He knows us through and through. Having become human, He understands all our fluctuating emotions. He can comfort us right where we are.

It may be a phase of life that you are passing through, a stage on life's journey or a transition as you move from one situation to another. You may be passing through the valley of grief and loneliness, or anxiously waiting for news of a loved one who is ill. No matter where you are, you are not alone, for God is with you whether you can feel His presence or not.

What is needed is for us to become more aware of God's surrounding presence, to wake up to His closeness as did Jacob.

*Lord, wake me up to your abiding presence, even this day.*

Tony Horsfall



## 'CHRIST BEFORE THE HIGH PRIEST AND THE DENIAL OF PETER'. By Duccio

This painting, done in tempera on wood, now hangs in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Siena. At the end of this month, on 28<sup>th</sup> June, we celebrate two of the great saints of the early church: Peter and Paul. We might relate more easily to Peter because his humanity and vulnerability spill out of the pages of the New Testament in everything he said and did.

Peter was a fisherman, who was impetuous and headstrong, not once, but over and over again, saying one thing, and doing

another. And yet our Lord chose Peter as the rock on which He would build His church, and at Caesarea Philippi Peter acknowledges that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Yet, when Jesus is arrested, the same Peter in the High Priest's courtyard declares with an oath, 'I do not know the man.'

That denial is in all four Gospels. We might have expected the evangelists would have had greater respect for this follower of Jesus. But they are not intimidated by his later fame and importance, and they record the episode in vivid detail.

That episode is recorded by Duccio in this painting, 'Christ before the High Priest and the Denial of Peter.' Duccio worked in Siena in the late 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. In his paintings Jesus and the saints are no longer remote, austere figures: he portrays them

in a natural, simple way. This picture is the first painting to depict Jesus' trial and Peter's denial together. The scene is a two-storey building: the figures above, apart from the High Priest, are all on their feet. Below, the figures are all seated, with the exception of the serving girl. Notice the wonderful array of hair styles and beards that are typical of Duccio's work.

In the painting Peter is recognisable by his halo, like Jesus above. He is in a direct line below Jesus, but just look at the contrast between the two. Jesus is standing with His hands bound in front of Him and His head to one side. Peter below is seated, looking straight at the girl, raising his hand to protest his ignorance and warming his feet by the fire. It needed courage for Peter to be there, but the Gospels tell us how quickly his vulnerability is exposed. As he answers the questions and reveals his Galilean accent, he starts to curse. He denies Jesus three times, and the scene ends in bitter tears. For all the bravado, a human, broken figure leaves the scene.

As we remember him we rejoice in that humanity of Peter, which brought him low, but encouraged him to try again. In Duccio's painting his denial takes place by the fire of the courtyard. It will be by another fire lit on the shore of the sea of Tiberias that Peter will be asked another three questions - not by a serving girl, but by Jesus. 'Do you love me?' Jesus asks. This time he responds with affirmation, knowing that his Lord has come in resurrection glory to bring a new way forward for him and for everyone as He offers life in abundance.

*Michael Burgess*



### **Mottingham Library.**

Opening times are now as follows: Monday 9:30 - 1 & 2 - 7pm; Wednesday 9:30 - 1 & 2 - 5pm; Friday 9:30 - 1 & 2 - 5:30pm; Saturday 9:30 - 1 & 2 - 5pm. You can continue to explore all that Bromley Libraries offer on:

<https://www.facebook.com/BromleyLibraries>



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

### But Please Note

**Sunday June 13<sup>th</sup>:** There will be a Zoom service at 7.30pm. Maureen Spinks will circulate the links nearer the time.

**Wednesday July 7<sup>th</sup>:** There will be a meeting at 7.30pm to discuss the future of our church following Maureen Spinks' extensive discussion with individual church members. If Covid19 regulations permit the meeting will be held in the Church Hall. Otherwise it will be by Zoom.

**For information:** There will be services of Holy Communion in the circuit on Sundays in June as follows:

Chelsfield, Chislehurst and Orpington Sunday 6<sup>th</sup>, New Eltham Sunday 13<sup>th</sup>, Petts Wood Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> and Bromley Common Sunday 27<sup>th</sup>.

Please continue to 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.

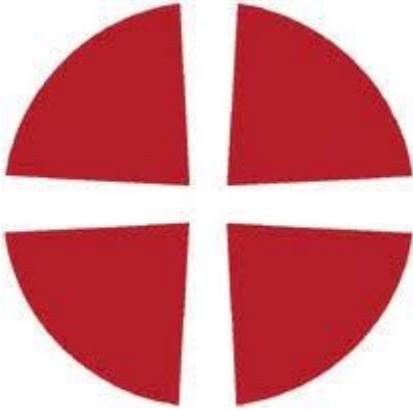


### PRAYING FOR OUR CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

We may not be open, but all the people who are part of our church, churches and community families are still out there. They will have various needs and problems and need our prayers.

But we need wisdom as we consider the future of our church:  
'Heavenly father, You know every decision we need to make and every challenge we face please forgive us for the times we try to figure this life out on our own we need You, we need Your Holy Spirit to give us strength, wisdom and direction - Amen

## A LOOK AT THE METHODISTS TODAY



The Methodist Church of Great Britain (MCGB) was formed in 1932 from a merger of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, the Primitive Methodist Church and the United Methodist Church (itself a merger of three groups in 1907), then with a total membership of 840,000 and 7,800 churches. In 2019 the MCGB had some 4,200 churches across England, Wales and Scotland, with membership of 170,000.

In terms of church buildings, it is the second largest denomination in England, second only to the Church of England (with 15,500 churches). There are 30 Districts currently which are subdivided into Circuits, on average 12 Circuits in each District, but some have just one, like the Welsh-speaking churches, or those on the Isle of Man and Shetlands. The largest is London with 35. Each Circuit has on average of 12 churches, or 140 per District (the Church of England has 380 churches per Diocese).

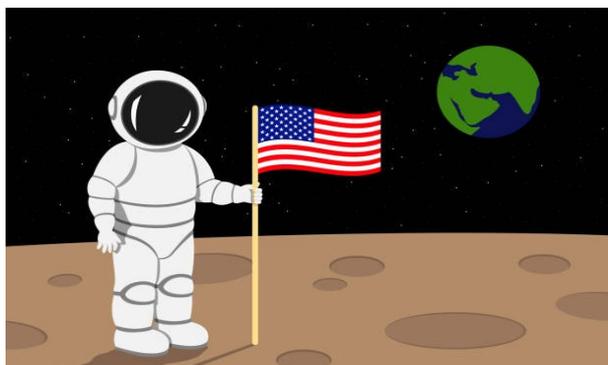
Numerically, Methodist attendance is not very dissimilar to its membership. In 2019 attendance was about 164,000, all but 20,000 attending. As with Anglican churches, they find Sunday attendance declining faster than weekday attendance, and children and young people attendance declining roughly twice as fast as adult attendance.

Individual churches naturally vary in size. A list of all 4,200 churches gave an interesting overview: Methodist churches are quite small, with two-fifths, 38%, having under 20 members per church and a further two-fifths, 39%, having between 20 and 59 members, leaving just under a quarter, 23%, with 60 members or over. The median size is 28, meaning that half the churches have 28 or fewer members while the other half have more.

The two largest Methodist churches, by congregational size, are Swan Bank, Stoke-on-Trent (465 members) and Wesley's Chapel, in City Road (464 members). Two others are over 400: Bournemouth Methodist Church (429 members) and Methodist Central Hall in Westminster (422 members).

*Peter Brierley*

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## WE CHOSE TO GO TO THE MOON

On 25<sup>th</sup> May 1961, President John F Kennedy announced to Congress that the United States ‘should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the Moon and

returning him safely to the Earth.’

This reflected the United States’ desire to catch up with the Soviet Union in the space race. Although an extremely challenging goal, it was finally achieved on 20<sup>th</sup> July 1969, when Apollo 11 commander Neil Armstrong stepped on to the Moon’s surface.

Such a challenging mission required commitment and sacrifice from many people. What is our mandate, as the people of God in today’s world? What challenge have we been entrusted with by God that requires our absolute commitment and sacrifice in these difficult days? When Jesus ascended into heaven, His last words to His disciples were significant: ‘But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’ (Acts 1:8).

Our mission is to be witnesses for Jesus, making Him known in our workplaces, to our families and friends, as well as the wider community. A credible witness speaks of what they know personally. What is my story of how Jesus has changed my life?

However, we have the gift of the Holy Spirit to empower our witness: ‘you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you’ (1:8). The Spirit enables us to display the fruit of Jesus’ character and gifts us to be effective witnesses.

‘We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard’ (JFK, 12<sup>th</sup> September, 1962 at Rice University).