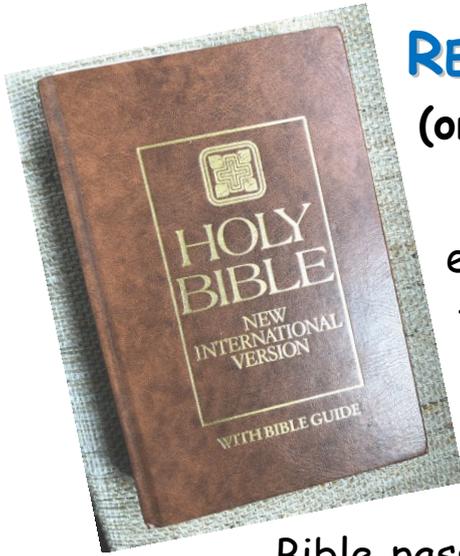


# MOTTINGHAM METHODIST CHURCH MESSENGER

August 2021



THE CHURCH IN THE MIDDLE OF THE VILLAGE!



## REFLECTING ON THE BIBLE

(or 'Meditating on scripture')

Many children enjoy boiled sweets - especially trying to see how long they can make them last. The pleasure of holding the flavoured sweet in your mouth is far better than crunching it up in a few seconds!

There is a way of doing much the same with a Bible passage. Centuries ago, before Bibles were widely available, the abbot of a monastery would gather his monks together and read to them the Bible passage that was set for the day. He would read it three times and the brothers were encouraged to listen attentively and choose a phrase to remember. They would then go about their daily work in the garden, in the kitchen, in the infirmary or wherever. Through the day they would meditate on the phrase they had chosen and, rather like sucking a boiled sweet, would draw out the meaning for themselves.

You might like to try something similar: choose a passage from the Bible and begin to read it very slowly as if it were addressed to you. A few verses from Psalm 103 would be a good place to start.

Stop when a phrase captures your attention. Maybe it touches you in some way, attracts or even disturbs you. Repeat the phrase slowly over and over again, taking its meaning into yourself. Let it sink in slowly. What does it have to say to you? Why do you think it caught your attention? Where is the connection for you? What memories does it evoke? Is there a word, a phrase, a sentiment, or an image that you can hold on to?

Move into prayer, expressing to God the thoughts and feelings that have spontaneously arisen in you. Let your mind be at rest and your heart open to the love and peace of God. When you are ready, carry on with reading the next bit of the passage or just leave it there for the day.

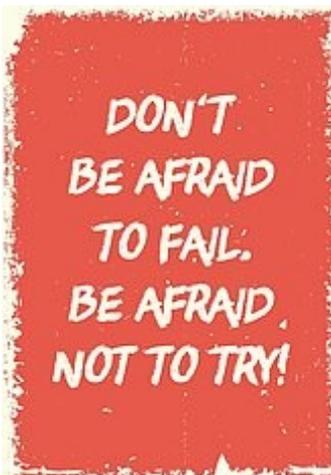


## **PSALM 25:** A personal prayer for **Reflecting on the Bible.**

Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths.  
Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are  
God my Saviour, and my hope is in you all day long.

Remember, Lord, your great mercy and love, for they are from  
of old.

Do not remember the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways;  
according to your love remember me, for you, Lord are good.  
Amen



## **DON'T BE AFRAID TO FAIL**

In my local church, we use a parish prayer which includes the line: 'Help us to be brave enough to fail - but try again.'

Encouraging words indeed, and if we look back throughout the centuries, many men and women who have made the world a better place have taken those words to heart.

For example, where would we be today without electricity? Yet at school, Thomas Edison was told he was "too stupid to learn anything." He was sacked from his first two jobs; and made 1,000 unsuccessful attempts at inventing the light bulb. But in the end, he succeeded, and changed the course of world history.

Car manufacturer Henry Ford revolutionised transport in the USA, but he had five businesses fail before he founded the successful Ford Motor Company.

Winston Churchill was a Nobel Prize-winning, twice-elected Prime Minister, but he struggled at school, was defeated in early elections for public office, and did not become Prime Minister until he was 62.

As the late Nelson Mandela wisely observed: "Do not judge me by my successes, judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again."

So, let us commit ourselves to loving God with all our hearts, to putting our abilities at His disposal, and to never giving up.



## THE TRANSFIGURATION OF JESUS

It's an unusual story. One day, Jesus is with three disciples on a high mountain in Galilee, when His appearance dramatically changes. Moses and Elijah also suddenly appear. From a cloud comes the voice of God. What is this all about?

This event was witnessed by James, Peter, and John. They were close friends of Jesus. In the future, they were to become prominent leaders in the Early Church. They needed to see something special that would help them remember Jesus in the difficult years ahead. They had a glimpse of Christ in His divine glory. His face shone like the sun and His clothes turned white as light.

While this was an extraordinary sight for the disciples, it also served to encourage Jesus who once had glory and majesty in Heaven. One day He would have it again. But firstly, He had to fulfil His mission: to suffer on the cross and die.

Why were Moses and Elijah standing with Jesus? Moses was the giver of the Law and Elijah represented all the prophets. They had pointed people to the promised Messiah. Jesus was about to complete God's plan of salvation.

God's voice was heard to remind Peter there was no need to build shelters. They were not going to stay on the mountain. God spoke to get the disciples to fix their attention on Jesus. The wonder of the Transfiguration was a short interlude before Jesus had to return to His work and subsequent death on the cross.

This story is a reminder that our times of spiritual blessing have to be followed by down-to-earth commitments and responsibilities. In the same way that Jesus gave His friends a glimpse of His awesome glory, to help them face challenging and traumatic times ahead, our

special times in His presence are provided to encourage us and equip us for the trials we may have to face.

Our journey through life may sometimes rise to the peaks but we can't stay on a 'high' all the time - no matter how much we want it! We have to descend to face everyday challenges if we are to fulfil our calling in Christ. From our mountain-top experiences we all need to find a balance between times alone with God and serving Him in the company of others.

*Lester Amann*



## PRAYER WALK 21 AND OIKOS

Hope for Every Home, part of HOPE Together, has recently launched OIKOS, a new prayer walking app, as part of Prayer Walk 21. You can find the app free in your app store under OIKOS Outreach.

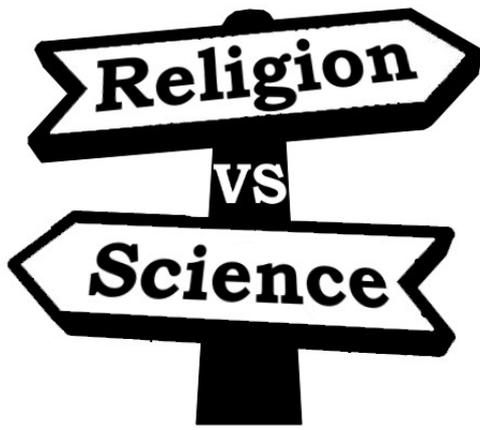
Hope says that: "During Covid and lockdown God has taken His church out of the building, reconnected people with their local communities and mobilised us through our daily walk. Now the invitation is to turn the daily walk into a prayer walk. Over the next year the Prayer Walk 21 challenge is to pray for the people in every street, every road, and every lane in the UK."

The OIKOS app is simple to use. To pin a prayer, use your finger to move the map to where you want to pray and tap the screen. You can also pin a 'share' when you have shared faith through a caring action, an invitation, or a conversation for example.

Praying for the people in every street, every road, every lane in the UK is huge but it starts with each of us stepping outside our front doors and praying as part of our day to day lives. There are resources available on the Hope for Every Home website to support you at [www.hopeforeveryhome.org](http://www.hopeforeveryhome.org).

So, as part of Prayer Walk 21, download the OIKOS app. Pray as you walk your local streets and get your friends involved too!

*Colin Hammacott*



## GOD IN THE SCIENCES

Physicist and Priest: John Polkinghorne  
(1930-2021)

At the age of 48 the Cambridge Professor John Polkinghorne decided he'd done his bit for physics and that it was time for a different sort of adventure. Resigning his academic position, he trained

for ordination in the Church of England. In an interview 40 years later he said, *"It's one thing to go to church on Sundays but to give up a professorship and train for something else - that was a bit more than a gesture...I think a lot of people realised I was a religious person but they didn't expect me to take it quite that seriously...People were saying to me, 'Oh John what are you up to?' They mostly weren't thinking so much about my becoming a clergyman but just the fact that I was a Christian."*

John saw his work in science as a Christian vocation, and felt a responsibility to use his talents in that area. Once ordained he found himself thoroughly engaged in the conversation about science and religion. One of his main messages was that *"I'm not a vegetarian butcher. There is a cousinly relationship between thinking about theology and thinking about science."*

When asked for a Bible passage to appear at the end of his 2009 interview John chose Colossians 1:15-20: *'He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the first-born from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to*

reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.'

John's explanation for his choice speaks volumes to anyone interested in the science-faith dialogue. "I value this passage because it speaks of the cosmic significance of Christ, the One in whom all things hold together and who redeems all things (notice, not just all people) by the blood of his cross. Here meet my deepest religious beliefs and my strongest scientific concerns."

Dr Ruth M Bancewicz,



## MOTTINGHAM LIBRARY INFORMATION

Opening times are now as follows:

**Monday** 9:30am - 1pm & 2 - 7pm;

**Wednesday** 9:30am - 1pm & 2 - 5pm

**Friday** 9:30am - 1pm & 2 - 5:30pm

**Saturday** 9:30am - 1pm & 2 - 5pm.

You can continue to explore all that Bromley Libraries offer on:

<https://www.facebook.com/BromleyLibraries> Tel:020 8857 5406



### The Revd Sonia Hicks, newly appointed President of the Methodist Conference 2021/2022

The Revd Hicks has served as a Circuit Superintendent in three connexions: Britain, the

Methodist Church in the Caribbean and Americas and the Methodist Church in Ireland (MCI).

Sonia's commitment to oppose all forms of injustice began when she was a member of the Youth Exchange to Zimbabwe. She has

since been Convenor of the World Relief and Development Committee for MCI, and has served as a Trustee for both *All We Can* and *Christian Aid Ireland*.

The Revd Hicks has also served on the South East District Synod Planning Group, on the Methodist Diaconal Order Leadership Group and on the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee.



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

**But Please Note**

Each Sunday in August at 3.30 pm there will be a short service of worship and fellowship in the church led by Deacon Maureen Spinks.

**Please feel free to join us**



There will be a meeting of the Church Council in September to discuss the future of the church. Final arrangements including date and time will be circulated in advance of the meeting.

## **OUR PRAYER FOR OURSELVES:**

Faithful Father,

When we don't know quite how to go forward; when our confidence in what we thought we could control is undermined; remind us that one thing is needed - to sit at your feet and listen to You..

As we take time to listen to You, Lord, and to meditate on Your Holy Spirit-inspired Word, may we know Your peace - and Your good plans for us In Jesus' name, Amen.

## **PRAYING FOR OUR CHURCH AND COMMUNITY**

We may not be officially 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.



## WE PRAY FOR THE CHRISTIANS IN IRAN



The persecution of Christians is set to intensify in Iran, following the election of hard-liner Ebrahim Raisi as the Islamic Republic's new president.

That is the warning from Release International, which is also urging Iran's new president to allow full religious freedom and release all prisoners of faith.

"This victory for the hardliners will mean hardship for the Church," warns Release International CEO Paul Robinson. "They are likely to intensify their crackdown against Christians who are often regarded as enemies of the state. Already many Christian leaders have been forced to leave the country."

Voters boycotted the election in record numbers. Only 48.8 per cent turned out to choose their country's next president. This was widely seen as a snub for a system that prevented most candidates calling for reform from standing.

As former head of the judiciary, Ebrahim Raisi was responsible for the continuing imprisonment of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, the British-Iranian charity worker accused of spying. Analysts say Raisi is the favoured successor to Iran's ageing supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

82-year-old Khamenei's stated objective is to 'purify the revolution'. His broader aim is said to be the establishment of an Islamic civilisation, which would inspire and rally the Muslim world.

"Time and again we see persecution increase wherever Islamist radicals strengthen their grip on power," says Release CEO Paul Robinson. "In Iran, Pakistan, and in Nigerian states that have adopted Sharia (Islamic law), persecution has been the inevitable consequence of uncompromising Islamist theocratic rule."

Under Islam, politics and religion are inseparable. And as Iran has become progressively more hard-line in its approach, the Church has been swept up in the crackdown against political opponents.



## GOD IN THE ARTS:

### 'Jacob's Dream' by Jusepe de Ribera.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> century a Chinese philosopher, Chang Tsu, had a very vivid dream. He dreamed he was a butterfly, happily flying here and there. When he awoke, he thought to himself, 'Did Chang Tsu dream that he was a butterfly, or did the butterfly dream that it was Chang Tsu?' Dreams are often like that: crucial experiences which cause us to ponder and wonder about their meaning. The prophet Joel suggested that it was old men who dream dreams, while young people see visions. But dreams invade and colour our sleeping hours, whatever age we are.

In the Bible dreams are vital events. Think of Joseph in the Old Testament dreaming of his superiority among his brothers, the dreams of the cup bearer and baker at Pharaoh's court, Daniel interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dreams, and Joseph's dreams in the Gospels that were so crucial for the safety of the Holy Family. This month in our paintings we focus on 'Jacob's Dream' by Ribera.

Jusepe de Ribera was a Spanish artist, whose most productive years were spent in Naples, where he died in 1652. 'Jacob's Dream' from 1639 is based on Genesis 28. After depriving his brother Esau of his birthright, Jacob is sent to Laban. At Bethel he rested and in his sleep received the vision of God's angels on the ladder to heaven with God's reassuring words of promise and blessing. When he awoke, Jacob set up an altar at Bethel, which he declared was the house of God and the gate of heaven.

To baroque artists, this scene in Genesis was seen as a prefiguration of the coming of Jesus, and in John's Gospel Jesus Himself told Nathanael that he would see the angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. For Ribera the subject of Jacob's dream is treated with great tenderness as Jacob sleeps beneath the luminous expanse of sky, which occupies a major part of the

canvas. Not for him the depiction of winged messengers; no, the light of heaven falls down upon the sleeping figure, casting shadows on the ground. The angels, ethereal and insubstantial, are contained in the glory of light. The tree at the other side looks like a fallen cross, and Jacob almost like a sleeping disciple in Gethsemane. But here, he is in deep repose as his face is lit up with the golden glow of the heavenly messengers.

For Jacob, the dream is the golden assurance of God's blessing. As his saga continues in Genesis, he marries Laban's daughters, wrestles with the divine stranger, is given the name Israel, and his 12 sons become the ancestors of the 12 tribes of God's people. So, the blessing of the dream is worked out in his life and the life of Israel.

Dreams can come to give visions of the way life should be. Like Jacob, or perhaps like Martin Luther King and his prophetic words in 1963 - 'I have a dream'. In this month of August many of us will go on holiday to enjoy rest and recreation. As we end the days with sleep, we pray that like the Psalmist we will lie down in perfect peace and safety and know the refreshment Jacob found at Bethel: a repose which will restore our souls and bodies to bring life and vision wherever we may be.

(‘Jacob’s Dream’ hangs in the Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain.)

*Michael Burgess*



**Barbara Easton, newly appointed Vice-President of the Methodist Conference 2021/2022**

Barbara’s vocation has been the world of education.

Before becoming Connexional

Director of Education in 2014 she was an RE teacher, inclusion and interfaith specialist and secondary headteacher in various challenging

contexts in the West Midlands. She now leads the Methodist Academies and Schools Trust. Through international Methodist education and her upcoming role for global Methodist Women, she seeks for Methodism to have an impact greater than the sum of its parts.



## .QUEEN'S PLATINUM JUBILEE - A CELEBRATION OF FAITH & SERVICE - 2-5 JUNE 2022!

The Jubilee celebration is an amazing opportunity to bring our communities together for the celebrations, which end on Pentecost Sunday.

HOPE Together, the Church of England, the Methodist Church, Biblica and other key partners are currently planning for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, with a specially commissioned souvenir book for us to give away; a new anthem for communities and churches to sing; a '70 Acts of Service' community challenge for us to adapt to use together with churches and other organisations in our area, and lots of resources for children and schools.

Rachel Jordan-Wolf, HOPE's executive director said, "Churches are in an ideal place to bring communities together for national celebrations. We have the tables, chairs, crockery and PA systems - and we love making cakes!

The beautifully illustrated souvenir book to be published for the celebrations uses rarely seen prayers, which the Queen prayed in preparation for the Coronation, and highlights how God has answered those prayers over the past seven decades.

The 'Platinum Jubilee Celebration of Faith & Service' will build on the successful partnership facilitated by HOPE Together, which enabled local churches to bring their communities together for the Diamond Jubilee and the Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations.

Over the next year HOPE will provide churches across the country with all the resources and ideas they need to run a great all-age community event that will celebrate the Queen's 70 years of faith and service ending in a celebration service for Pentecost.