

# MOTTINGHAM METHODIST CHURCH MESSENGER July 2020

JULY

'God is our refuge and strength, a very  
present help in trouble'

Psalm 46 verse 1



THE CHURCH  
IN THE MIDDLE OF  
THE VILLAGE!

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## THINKING ABOUT THE PSALMS

*'Most of Scripture speaks to us; the Psalms speak FOR us.'* (St Athanasius).

### **Psalm 46 – a psalm of comfort in anxious times**

To say that we are living in uncertain times is an understatement! Psalm 46 speaks into our anxiety and fear, just as it did to Israel originally. At this time, we must focus on God, who alone can deliver us in such times.

*He is our refuge:* *'God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.'* (verse 1). In the midst of our difficulties, God promises Himself to be our refuge, strength and help. A 'refuge' is a place of trust, where God promises to protect us. When the whole world is turned upside down, we can come without fear.

*He is our resource:* *'There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells.'* (Verses 4 & 5). Jerusalem was able to withstand enemy attack, because of the water that resourced it. For us, this is a picture of the presence of God's Spirit, who resources us when we are under pressure. This psalm promises that God's is with us in all our troubles on a daily basis: *'The Lord Almighty is with us.'* (verses 7 & 11).

*He is our ruler:* *'He says, 'Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.'* (verse 10). When we consider all that God has done in the past, we can see the way in which He has worked among us to provide, protect, and deliver us. We are called to 'cease fighting' God and surrender our lives to God. Let's worship Him, as we let go fear and as we depend on Him in this current time of crisis.

*'A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing; our helper he, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing'* (Martin Luther)

Paul Hardingham



## WHEN WILL OUR CHURCH BE OPEN AGAIN?

This is the question everyone is asking. As a church, our responsibility is to ensure that before we open the church to any activity we make sure we have the capacity to comply with all the safety requirements which ensure that no one coming to the church is put at risk of contracting COVID-19 as a result of the visit. We are not yet in a position to achieve that standard. However, we can continue to meet on line for worship on <http://www.orpchiscircuit.org.uk/> (Videos).

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0800 804 8044  
**DailyHOPE**  
A free phone line of hymns,  
reflections and prayers

### DAILY HOPE PHONE:

**Free national phone line for worship and prayer.**

Government figures show that 2.5 million people aged 75 and above have never used the internet. And so, to help them, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, recently launched a free national phone line to bring worship and prayer into the homes of those without access to the internet.

The line - which is available 24 hours a day on **0800 804 8044** - has been set up particularly with those unable to join online church services during the period of restrictions in mind.

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**Sadiq Khan** has praised church leaders for providing hope and leadership throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Speaking recently to Premier radio, the Mayor of London praised the support he has received from faith leaders in the lockdown. He spoke of 'the massive contribution... (that) the leadership of the Christian community has provided.'



## LOCAL IS BACK!

Odd things have been happening to our world in these past weeks of lockdown.

**It's got bigger.** We've been speaking regularly via the web with friends in Australia and the United States. Worshippers from Canada and South Africa are taking part in our online church services. Other churches are telling the same stories, with increasing numbers of people logging on.

**It's got smaller.** Even with the relaxation of regulations, many people are still working from home, home-schooling and mostly exercising within walking or cycling distance from where they live.

**It's got faster.** Arrangements for funerals are speeded up, with registration and funeral planning carried out over the phone. A doctor's appointment by telephone cuts down waiting time.

**It's got slower.** Shopping takes longer with queues that people would have complained about before the lockdown. The shops have done a great job to keep the shelves stocked and maintain social distancing.

What will the long-term impact of the Covid-19 lockdown be? One of the key outcomes is that local is back.

For decades, we've been hearing about globalization, and how the world is a much more connected place. It is, and the internet has kept many vital businesses running these past weeks.

But we've also come to value what's on our doorstep and in our local streets.

Neighbours have become more important. We're valuing local shops, pubs and restaurants, parks and open spaces. All the people working hard to keep local services going.

Christianity is now a major global religion, with billions of followers around the world. But it began local. It began with Jesus Christ, travelling by foot, preaching and healing around a small area

of the Middle East. From its local roots, the faith spread around the world.

Today, churches around the world are deeply rooted in their local communities and are seeking to follow Christ's example of love and caring.

Each of us is rooted into our family, into our key relationships and into where we live.

During this pandemic, each of these has grown in importance.

*Peter Crumpler,*



## FAITH FLOURISHING IN LOCKDOWN

**ONE IN 20 STARTS PRAYING  
SINCE CORONAVIRUS BEGAN**

Is the nation turning to God in prayer? Well, not quite yet, but recent research from Tearfund has shown that prayer is more common than many would think, with just under half (44%) of UK adults saying that they pray, and one in twenty (5%) saying they have started praying during the lockdown.

In addition, a quarter (24%) of UK adults say they have watched or listened to a religious service since lockdown, 5% of whom say they have never been to church before. Some churches are seeing double, sometimes triple, the number of people watching their Sunday meetings online that would normally attend in person.

I am struck by Augustine's prayer, 'You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you'. Could it be that as the noise and busyness of normal life have subsided, restlessness has started to surface and, faced with new fears and uncertainties, hearts have started to turn to God?

Let this research give you a new courage to offer to pray for people you know who are struggling, or invite them to watch an online service. And let's also turn our prayers and actions beyond our immediate horizons to remember that we are part of a global community.

*Ruth Valerio (Tearfund)*



## SEEKING GOD IN LOCKDOWN

According to one survey, during the lockdown, a quarter of adults in the UK have watched or listened to a religious service and one in 20 have started praying. While the majority of people who contract Covid-19 survive, it reminds us that we are much more frail and weak than we like to think. As the prophet Isaiah says:

*'All people are like grass, and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the Lord blows on them. Surely the people are grass. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures for ever.'* (Isaiah 40 verses 6-8).

Isaiah's words really resonate at this time. In more normal times we can avoid facing up to our vulnerability, but this pandemic has forced us to recognise our weakness and fragility.

However, this shouldn't lead us to despair or fear; rather it is an opportunity to worship and praise for his constancy and care. In Peter's first letter he quotes this passage from Isaiah and says, *'For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God'* (1 Peter 1 verse 23). Peter contrasts our mortality with the eternal Word of God, which bring us new birth and life through the power of the Spirit. Jesus died for our sins and rose again to make us right with God, so that through faith in him we can know eternal life. We don't need to be afraid of our frailty, for God is a dependable foundation on which to build our lives and face eternity.

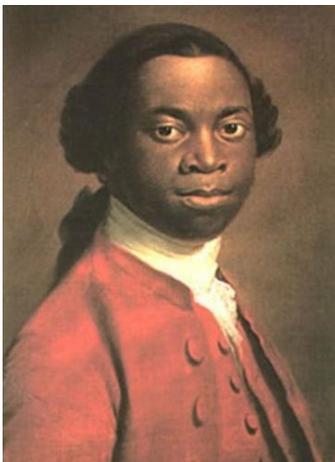
*'We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree. And wither and perish, but nought changeth Thee.'* (Immortal, invisible, Walter C Smith).

**30**  
**JULY**

## IN MEMORY OF THOSE WHO FOUGHT TO ABOLISH SLAVE TRADE



**THOMAS CLARKSON** (1760-1846) was an Anglican clergyman and one of the most prominent of the anti-slavery campaigners. In 1787 he helped form the first Abolitionist Committee, and his energy and hatred of injustice made him a 'moral steam-engine'. He travelled hundreds of miles, gathering evidence from people caught up in the slave trade, from ship captains to doctors.



**OLAUDAH EQUIANON** (1745 - 1797) had been kidnapped in Nigeria, sold into slavery and sent to the West Indies. When he finally escaped, he made his way to London and became one of the most prominent black campaigners. His brutal autobiography of 1789 ran to nine reprints, and was translated into many languages, bringing home to people the horrors of the slave trade.



**WILLIAM WILBERFORCE** (1759 - 1833), of course, became the main figurehead in Parliament. He came from a wealthy family in Kingston-upon-Hull and represented the town in Parliament. He was recruited by Thomas Clarkson, who saw the need for a brilliant advocate within Parliament. Wilberforce was an inspired choice: not only wealthy and well-connected, but a gifted orator with a social conscience, especially after his conversion in 1785. He made his first speech in Parliament against slavery in 1789, but it was not until 1807, after a debate that raged for many years, that the Abolition Act was finally passed.



## PRAYING FOR OUR CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

The doors of our church still might be closed 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.

Below is possible guidance for our prayers based on our normal activities and links.

**Sunday:** Worship and Messy Church - pray for ourselves our members and visitors. Pray for our allocated preachers this month: Deborah Spinks, Sue Cope, Maureen Spinks and Terry Wright.

**Monday:** Pray for our ministers.

**Tuesday:** Pray for the Good Companions and All Sorts Craft Group

**Wednesday:** pray for those who normally go to the Community Lunch

**Thursday:** Pray for Churches Together in Mottingham - St Andrews, St Albans, St Edwards and Our Lady Help of Christians

**Friday:** Pray for the shop owners, library, Councilors and neighbours.

**Saturday:** Pray for those who normally go to The Youth Club

## LET US PRAY TOGETHER AS A CHURCH FAMILY

When you call, may we respond;

When we falter, be our guide.

When you speak, may we hear;

When you ask, may we answer;

When we hesitate, be our resolve.

When you show, may we see;

When we disregard, be our conscience.

When you lead, may we follow;

When we stray, be our shepherd.

When you send may we go;

When we fear, be our courage.

When you challenge, may we listen;

When we fail, be our rock.

When you give, may we receive;

And may we love, as you first loved us.

*(Paul Martin)*