

St Paul's Methodist Church, Crawley
Extraordinary Times
a magazine to help us through COVID-19
Issue 50 **March 14th 2021**



From the minister...

I've not much to tell you this week, apart from to announce that I'm scheduled to begin a sabbatical starting on April 1st. All Methodist ministers are offered the opportunity of a three month sabbatical every seven years, which as you can imagine is a great privilege and a welcome break from active circuit ministry.

So you may start to wonder where I've disappeared to, as we get into April. I won't be preaching or leading worship at St Pauls or Trinity, and I won't be contactable by phone or email; instead I will be embarking on a programme of activities which were planned as long ago as October 2019. Due to the pandemic some of my plans have had to be altered, specifically those which involved foreign travel. I had intended to go hiking in Norway, and to have an art trip to the Netherlands to visit the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and the Mauritshuis in the Hague (specifically to look at Vermeers). But these will have to wait for another opportunity – all my activities will be here in England instead.

One of the things I always do on sabbatical (this will be my third) is to hole up somewhere out of the way in order to write some new worship songs. This doesn't come easy and requires a peaceful environment with no distractions. Last time I was blessed to be able to take up residence in a remote cottage in Brittany, but I've managed to find another good place in this country this time around.

Also in this sabbatical is the opportunity to revisit some of my old haunts up in the North East of England, where my family originate from. This will be significant, since I've lived in the south of England for 20 years now and will be even further away in my next appointment. So opportunities to journey up to Cleveland and Northumberland are few and far between. Many of us have places which have particular significance for us, and that part of the world takes me back to my younger life, when things were very different for me. As part of this I'm planning to re-tread the route of the first long distance walk that I ever did, 40 years ago. That's going to be weird. But good weird.

So please don't try and contact me between April and the end of June – I won't be around a lot of the time. If you need to speak to a minister then please contact Rev Clive McKie during April, and then our superintendent Rev Melvyn Cooke from the beginning of May onwards.

I will look forward to seeing you again in July, when I will be doing my final few services in the circuit before finishing my duties at the end of that month. Sometime in August we will be leaving Trinity Manse to move to our new circuit.

One thing I will be doing before I go on sabbatical is to finish off our weekly chapter by chapter Bible study of the Gospel of Mark. Usually transmitted live on Facebook on a Wednesday afternoon, I will be doing two special recordings featuring studies of chapters 14 and 15, which will be posted on the church Facebook page on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday respectively. Significantly, chapter 14 deals with the Last Supper and the night of Jesus' arrest; and chapter 15 gives us an account of the crucifixion.

Take care everyone, *Ralph*

What's On

Sundays 10:45am online worship with Rev Ralph Ward

Wednesdays 2pm Rev Ralph's Bible study

Find these live on [Trinity's Facebook page](#) and [St Paul's Facebook page](#) with videos available afterwards

For Kids and young people

Sundays 12noon From this week Zoom sessions for King's Kids and King's Teens will only be on Sunday at 12noon. If you haven't had your invitation please contact Carol or email ask.stpauls@gmail.com

Fridays 7pm Young Peoples' Singing Group (from 12th March)

In your prayers

Our friend Pam Vanstone has received the sad news that her brother Tom in Shrewsbury has passed away after a long illness. Please pray for Tom's wife Molly and their children, Pam and all other family and friends who are grieving.

Continue in prayer for Lyn's mother as well as members of our church community and others you know who need our prayers at this time.

Send your prayer requests to ask.stpauls@gmail.com

Permission must be received from a person before their name is put on the Church prayer list

A prayer for International Women's Day

God of love, we thank you for the richness and diversity of your creation. We celebrate women across the world whose presence and achievements have brought so much to our homes and communities.

We lift up those who struggle against inequality and lack of opportunity and look to you, Lord, as an example of how to show perfect and unconditional love to all. As the world deals with uncertainties and new challenges, we know we can depend on your unfaltering love and ask that you strengthen us in all that we go through.

Put in all of us the courage of Mary, the faithfulness of Ruth, the patience of Rachel and the hope of Sarah. Amen

(Written by Joy Nnamani, a steward at Deptford Methodist Mission, and a powerlifter who has travelled all over the world for competitions, becoming International Powerlifting Federation World Champion in 2018)

The role of women in Methodism

Women have always been vital to Methodism, although their role has not been consistently recognised or officially celebrated in the past.

John and Charles Wesley were influenced by a number of women, from their mother Susanna to the numerous correspondents with whom they discussed spiritual matters. Several letters to the Wesley brothers describe the spiritual experiences of a number of women, and in so doing also provide an insight into women's lives in the 18th century, including Selina Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon (1707-91), and the pioneer preachers Mary Bosanquet-Fletcher (1739-1815) and Sarah Crosby (1729-1804).

While Methodist women were subordinate to men until the early 20th century, their role as teachers, visitors to the sick and providing hospitality were held in high regard. Ministers' wives were considered vital in supporting their husbands' work.

Methodist women were always able speak unofficially of their spiritual lives in public, but by the 1760s John Wesley had, reluctantly, given approval for women to preach. It is likely that Methodist women were permitted to preach long before other denominations would allow it. Sadly, after John Wesley's death female preaching was discouraged, but a number of women defied this and continued to preach wherever they felt called to do so.

The novelty of female evangelists may have led to an increasing enthusiasm for women preachers amongst the breakaway churches of Methodism during the early nineteenth century. The practice of these itinerant female preachers had largely died out by the end of the 19th century, but women continued to act as local preachers. The status of women within Methodism was gradually recognised officially, for example with the foundation of the Wesley Deaconess Order in 1890. This Order aimed to reach poorer women particularly in the inner city, and to employ women in overseas work.

Women's role in Methodism was increasingly recognised during the 20th century; the Wesleyans officially allowed women to preach to mixed congregations in 1910, and in 1918 women were given the same rights and conditions as male local preachers. Following the union of the major Methodist denominations in 1932, further steps were made towards sexual equality in the Church. The Women's Fellowship was set up in 1944 to consider specific problems affecting women and was active on a number of social issues. Women were first accepted into the full ministry and ordained at the 1974 Bristol conference, although groups such as the Voice of Methodism opposed the move. The shift towards equality reached a major landmark with the election of Kathleen Richardson as President of the Conference in 1993.

While women have always played a vital role in Methodism, their contribution to mission and evangelism has not always been recognised. However, the Methodist Archives and Research Centre (MARC), held at the John Rylands Library in Manchester, has many items demonstrating the key roles which a number of women have played.

(Adapted from text by Dr Gareth Lloyd. Used by permission)

Some thoughts from women

"I raise up my voice—not so that I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard. We cannot all succeed when half of us are held back."

Malala Yousafzai

"Women belong in all places where decisions are being made. It shouldn't be that women are the exception."

Ruth Bader Ginsburg

"A woman with a voice is, by definition, a strong woman."

Melinda Gates

"I feel now that the time is come when even a woman or a child who can speak a word for freedom and humanity is bound to speak."

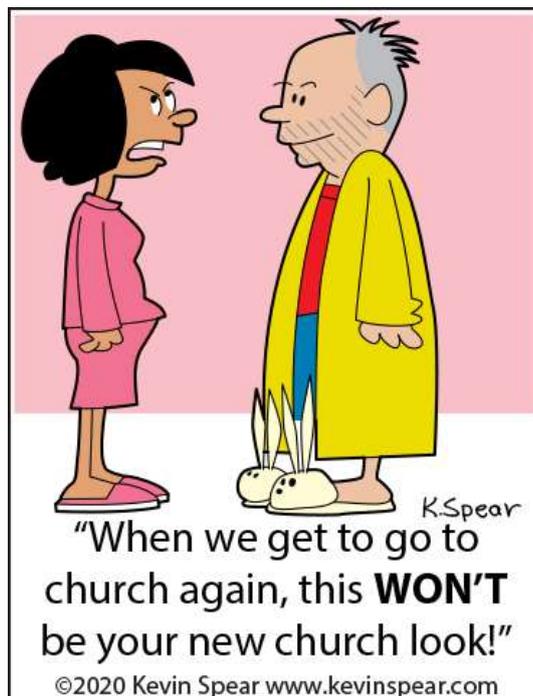
Harriet Beecher Stowe

"Human rights are women's rights and women's rights are human rights, once and for all."

Hillary Clinton

"After all, Ginger Rogers did everything that Fred Astaire did. She just did it backwards and in high heels."

Ann Richards



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St Paul's website www.crawleymethodistchurch.org.uk

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