

Junior Church: Young Peoples' Group
Some Thoughts for the Week Beginning 24th May 2020

Hello Everyone,

I cannot believe that we are just starting the ninth week of lockdown. How have our feelings about it changed? What impact has it had on our development as people of faith? There has been a lot of debate about the schools going back but still with no clear way forward or a definite date. Most of the discussion has surrounded junior schools and nothing really firm about secondary schools. It might be good to go back before the start of the summer holidays just to get into the routine of school again, to mark the end of the school year and to meet friends again.

I don't know how you have found working at home. It helps to have a quiet corner where you feel comfortable and, hopefully, be undisturbed. My brother and sister-in-law are both working at the kitchen table. If one has a loud video or telephone call the other retreats with laptop to the downstairs toilet for peace and quiet.

I'm lucky. My desk sits in a corner of a room with a window to the side that overlooks the garden and provides a lovely view over rooftops towards Redstone Hill. I think I can see Richard and Helen's house with its pyramidal roof set against the backdrop of trees. I can see an upstairs window and I'm sometimes tempted to wave in their direction, although they would never see me. Still, it is nice to have that visual connection.

Best of all, the window faces northeast in the direction in which the sun rises. When lockdown began I would catch the direct rays of first sunlight for about 15 minutes at the start of the working day. Now, as summer approaches, the sun is stronger and its rays are directed across the desk for about 1.5 hours. I feel like a cold-blooded reptile warming itself in order to gain energy for the day ahead.

Last Saturday I participated in an event called DAWNS (try exploring <https://dawns.live/> and <https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/visiting/dawns>). Just over 4,000 people the length and breadth of Britain joined together via their smart phones to celebrate the daily miracle that is the sunrise. The blurb stated that it encouraged us to 'consider our relationship with time, nature and community'. We were invited to take up a position where we could watch the sun rise. It began very early, at 3.43am, when the official dawn first touched the most northerly tip of mainland Britain, marked by [a solo violin playing a piece specially composed](#) which evoked the magic, mystery and glory of the rising sun. We all had a map with pins marking our individual locations and we could watch as darkness gradually gave way to light across the country. Four other musicians, in England, Northern Ireland and Wales, each joined the violinist as the dawn reached their locations. It was an experience I will never forget. I never knew and may never meet any of the other participants, but for about 80 minutes we were joined in a very special way, celebrating creation and God who made it.

When I was a student in Edinburgh I attended the Methodist church across the square from the university's music department. There another student was studying for his music degree. His name was James MacMillan. Today he is one of the UK's most celebrated composers. The single greatest influence on his music is his Christian faith. One piece I really like is '[O Radiant Dawn](#)' ([YouTube Apollo5](#)). It may not be your taste in music, but it is quite short so do have a listen and think how the composer uses the music and the rising and falling of the voices to express the wonder of the dawn and the expectation of and yearning for the dawn.

The words are interesting too. You can see the sun representing the coming of Jesus, the Son, who brings light to the world. James MacMillan uses the words of Isaiah that we are probably all familiar with: 'The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light'. And, thinking especially of those stricken with Covid-19: 'Come shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death'. For too many people the period of lockdown has been a period of darkness. And that darkness may linger well after lockdown.

The promise of the light is God's promise, symbolized each day with the rising of the sun. It is the promise of a new day with its opportunities to learn, serve and grow.

Have a wonderful week and an enjoyable bank holiday

Rodney