



Newsletter

7th March 2021

Daily Bible Readings

- Monday 8th:** Psalm 84; 1 Kings 6:1-4, 21-22; 1 Corinthians 3:10-23
- Tuesday 9th:** Psalm 84; 2 Chronicles 29:1-11, 16-19; Hebrews 9:23-28
- Wednesday 10th:** Psalm 84; Ezra 6:1-16; Mark 11:15-19
- Thursday 11th:** Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22; Genesis 9:8-17; Ephesians 1:3-6
- Friday 12th:** Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22; Daniel 12:5-13; Ephesians 1:7-14
- Saturday 13th:** Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22; Numbers 20:22-29; John 3:1-13

This week's zoom service details are:

- Call: 0203 481 5237
- You will be asked to enter the meeting ID: 843 8780 7513
- You may be asked for a participant ID or passcode: 610037

Several of our Church family have had or are going to have medical procedures during the pandemic and we want you to know that we are praying for you all and wishing you a speedy recovery. Under normal circumstances we could visit but nonetheless you are all in our thoughts and prayers.

In the light of the recent government announcement it does appear that we may be able to meet for worship in the near future, which gives us something to look forward to.

Take care everyone, Jacquie

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

Loving God, all the world belongs to you.

Forgive us that we so often live as if the world belongs to us.

Help us to learn how to use the things of your world with wisdom and humility and to be aware of the needs of others, not just our own desires.

When we are daunted by fear of the future, inspire us by your Spirit to learn how to live hopefully.

Move us through the beauty that we encounter in your world to creative ways of working with you for its sustainable future.

Loving God, all the world belongs to you, Amen.

POET'S CORNER ...

SNOWDROPS

The lovely little snowdrops are blooming once again
The snow and ice did them no harm, nor bitter wind and rain.
Iris reticulata has raised its lovely head
The mauve and white a pure delight within my snowdrop bed.

I look a little further and spot a yellow flash,
A tiny group of crocuses, nestling in the grass.
There's more bloom in the garden, that at first meets the eye,
Red primroses, with yellow eyes are peeping out nearby.

So pristine are these blossoms, tiny fragrant, pure,
A promise of the warmth to come, of that we cannot be sure.
How we rejoice at all these beacons, promises of spring,
Beloved heralds of warm days, such joy to us they bring.

We welcome them with open arms, they give us so much pleasure
Mother nature's gifts to us, a joy we humbly treasure.

Pauline Rayment

DAYTIME TELLY

Daytime telly is a bore,
Most of it we've seen before,
Sometimes forty years ago.
'Who's done what?' I tend to know.
I know where the crooks can be found,
'Cos I watched it first time round.
Change the channels, one, two, three.
Is there something new to see?

King of Queens and Mike and Molly,
Frasier, Raymond, Phil and Holly,
Heartbeat, Minder, Avengers too,
Cheers and Poirot – he finds the clue.
Kitchen Nightmares, Undercover Boss,
Then Columbo and a Touch of Frost.
Friends and The Sweeney are popular viewing.
The It Crowd know what they're doing.

The Lynley Mysteries, Lewis and Morse
All portray the boys in the Force.
Midsummer Murders and also The Bill.

Is there anyone left in Midsummer to kill?
Salvage Hunters, whose doing the bluffing?
Cookery programmes and Money for Nothing
Then it's time to have a punt
As we study Bargain Hunt.

If we must come to the crunch,
We can switch to Steph's Packed Lunch.
Escape to the Country's a lot of fun,
Homes under the Hammer and A Place in the Sun.
Judges Judy and Rob Rinder -
(Bob sues Jack and Grace sues Linda)
Jeremy Vine and Matthew Wright
Both have chat shows quite forthright.

Next we have the lunchtime news,
Mostly bringing on the blues.
Then it's Doctors, the day's first soap.
Shakespeare and Hathaway know how to cope.
Possibly Father Brown is next,
Solves the crimes to great effect.
You can choose Tenable, sometimes Lingo,
Then the Aussie soaps with wombat and dingo.

The Bidding Room and Pointless too,
Flog It, The Chase to name but a few.
Richard Osman's House of Games.
(Every show seems much the same).
But now the dinner must be ready
And it's News again already.
Washing up and clearing away
Marks the end of our 'Telly Day.'

Evening's coming, so what's doing?
We must plan the next stage viewing.
But here and now there is no time
To carry on this 'telly' rhyme.
There's no space to give a voice
To our early evening choice.
If I did, I'd be a bore.
That's a different poem, I'm sure.

God in the Flesh!

Hello from the Manse!

Have you got ready for your journey down the road map?

If you were with us last Sunday it was nice to be joined by Rev Teresa Rutterford. As we were chatting afterwards, Teresa said this wonderful phrase to me that I think we all want. "I can't wait until we see God in the flesh" i.e., that as ambassadors for God we step into the gap left by God's physical presence. In being disciples, our aim is to be Christ like. We all miss fellowship! I believe everyone has someone they can't wait to hug. I wonder what comes to mind when you read the phrase God in the Flesh?

So, we are still getting our heads around the road map out of lockdown and when we can meet certain people. Just as important is to think about who over the next couple of weeks needs us to be God in the Flesh for them? For some people coming out of lockdown it will be just as if someone turned the lights on, life is back to normal. For others it will be quite hard. People may be fearful that it's not safe to come out. Others will try and catch up on everything that we have not been able to do for the last year.

For those of us following Jesus' way of life, he leaves us with the task of stepping into the gap. While one day God will return, in the meantime He needs us to be Him in the flesh. It's a bit more than acts of kindness to help people get back on their feet. It's about stepping into their shoes, seeing it from their point of view and travelling with them.

It was demonstrated in the story of Mary and Martha Anointed at Bethany (John 12). The twist here is that Mary is teaching Jesus. In the story as Jesus is reclining at the table, Mary runs in and pours a pint of expensive perfume on his feet. Traditionally Preachers like myself tell you it's Mary that gets Jesus ready for what is about to happen. My twist though, is to look at it from Mary's point of view. She sees what Jesus is about to go through and walks in his footsteps for a very short while, to see the world through His eyes and knows what He needs. In her way she steps into the gap. The Perfume was probably being kept by Mary for her own funeral and giving it to Jesus means she gave everything she had. As we come out of lockdown there are going to be people in our lives that need us to do the same, God in the flesh.

Over the pandemic, we as a world, have been nursed by our Keyworkers. Now it's our turn to do the same.

My prayer this week is that we step into the gap and become God in Flesh for those around us.

God Bless

Pete

Sunday 7 March 2021

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

Opening Prayer

God, whose temple is the whole creation,
we praise you for the signs of spring:
crocuses breaking through the cold earth,
early morning sunshine through the clouds,
days lengthening.

We praise you that earth tells us of your
presence.

God, whose temple is found in community,
we praise you for the people around us:
our families and friends,
the neighbours we'd like to know more,
the strangers who surprise us with kindness.
We praise you that we look at others and
glimpse you.

God, whose temple is written into our bodies,
we praise you for our human bodies, and we
praise you that our bodies
are a temple of your Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Hymn: Love divine, all loves excelling (StF 503)

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen
to it here:

[Love divine, all loves excelling \(StF 503\)
\(methodist.org.uk\)](https://www.methodist.org.uk)

Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heaven to earth come down,
fix in us thy humble dwelling,
all thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesu, thou art all compassion,
pure, unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation,
enter every trembling heart.

Come, almighty to deliver,

let us all thy life receive;
suddenly return, and never,
never more thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray, and praise thee, without ceasing,
glory in thy perfect love.

Finish then thy new creation,
pure and spotless let us be;
let us see thy great salvation,
perfectly restored in thee:
changed from glory into glory,
till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love, and praise!

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Let us pray together

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you are wisdom in
our world; you flow through creation and
consciousness.

Our attempts to house you in bricks and
mortar are foolish. Come to us as we gather
here within this church made to honour you,
and lift the stones from our hearts, so that we
may be your Church in word and in deed.
Amen

Today's Gospel Reading: John 2: 13-22

Time to Reflect

When I am writing we are in the middle of a
lockdown. Many of our church buildings are
closed for public worship, though a few are
open. We have had to get used to worshipping
in our homes, using You Tube videos or Zoom
video meetings, or through worship sheets

like this one, or a mixture of all three and perhaps other possibilities. Many will miss the architecture and the atmosphere of their building, or the fellowship and bustle and chatter before and after services. Some people have been deprived of that for nearly a year. This causes us to ask what makes a church?

In the story we just read, Jesus was forcing people to face the same question. Traditionally there was only one "house of God" for the Jews - the Temple. That was where God dwelt. There is very little archaeological evidence of synagogue buildings in and before Jesus' time - some scholars would say there was none. There is evidence in Jewish writings that synagogue meetings happened in this period, but not perhaps in dedicated buildings. The house of God was the Temple. And, as you may imagine if there is only one house of God it becomes even more special. And here Jesus is, wading into this holy place, clearing it out and laying down rules as to who can do what there! What right had he? Jesus would appear to be claiming to be the "messenger of the covenant" whom God promised to send to his Temple in Malachi 3: 1-4, who would purify not only the Temple, but God's people - starting with the religious officials! But then he gets even more radical. When he says "Destroy this temple and I will raise it up in three days", he is essentially saying God is not living in the Temple Herod built, but in his own body. He is the real temple, the real house of God.

Do we tend to get too attached to our local building? Sometimes churches are called Bethel, which is Hebrew for "house of God", and sometimes we think God dwells there and we feel we cannot worship him anywhere else. Jesus challenges that way of thinking. He is the one above all in whom God dwells. In him God became flesh and dwelt among us. And it is in drawing closer to Jesus in a personal relationship that we enter God's house and offer him the worship he truly seeks. And we can do that anywhere - in our kitchen as much as in St. Paul's Cathedral, or

in our local chapel. Draw close to Jesus, and he will draw us close to the Father and the Spirit, so we can worship him in Spirit and in truth.

Take a time to sit quietly

A time of prayer

In the name of the one who came to cleanse the Temple, we pray for the institutions by which we organise our society: for churches and chapels and house groups; for educational establishments; for places of healing, law and order, commerce and recreation.

May they serve the greater good, and adapt to the changing needs of the time. In the name of the one who came to redeem the world, we pray for those institutions by which we regulate global relations: for governments and rulers, democracies, monarchies and dictatorships; for bodies that regulate trade, diplomacy and the balance of peace; for environmental, development and welfare organisations.

May they serve the greater good, and adapt to the changing needs of the time. In the name of the one who came to save us from ourselves, we pray for those institutions we have in our lives: for our friends, families and colleagues; for our local communities; for the church communities to which we belong.

May they serve the greater good, and adapt to the changing needs of the time. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: Listen to:

<https://youtu.be/SnuRldNwiwg> or sing a

verse of a hymn that comes to mind

A prayer of blessing

The almighty and merciful Lord,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
bless us and keep us, now and always. Amen.

Original Materials by John E Staton

Hymns reproduced under CCLi 1144191.

Local Churches please insert CCLi No here

John 2: 13-22

13 The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. 15 Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. 16 He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" 17 His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." 18 The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" 19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." 20 The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" 21 But he was speaking of the temple of his body. 22 After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

Scene 3 Isolation

Each of us have had extended times of being away from those we love because of the pandemic. We reflect on the experience of Jesus feeling isolated and alone in the garden of Gethsemane, and we explore what it means to truly 'be there' for someone – in alternative and creative ways – through times of separation.

The garden of Gethsemane – Mark 14.32-42

They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.' He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. And he said to them, 'I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake.' And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. He said, 'Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.' He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, 'Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to him. He came a third time and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.'



Voices

Here Relative making a Covid-secure visit to a residential home

I keep hearing the phrase, 'We stay apart so that when we can meet again, no one is missing.' Doesn't make it any easier in the meantime. But we're doing this because we love each other and want to protect one another. It's for the best – keeping our distance, relying on phone calls and letters. It's frustrating – I want to be there for you, just as we always have been, but it's impossible right now. We're both exhausted, you and me, it's been a long road since this virus first started. We don't know when respite is coming – the vaccine is out there but the timing isn't in our hands. It broke my heart to hear you upset on the phone, begging me to come and see you when the first lockdown lifted, but I knew it still wasn't safe. It's tough on all of us, but I know you feel cut off, isolated from the rest of the family. But you're doing great – the staff tell me you're keeping your spirits up for the most part, you always have a smile for them. Don't worry, please, we're almost there. We just have to keep each other going. We have to trust, believe, that we'll see each other properly soon. You're in safe hands, I'm carrying on keeping everyone else going. I'd do anything to be there for you, I really would, but this pandemic divides us, physically. But not in spirit. No, not in spirit.

There Disciple in the garden

Lord, I want to be there for you, just as you asked, but it's so hard. We're exhausted, it's been such a long day – a long week – a long road since we started out on this journey with you. We don't know when the next rest is coming, it's draining, and when we do lie down, we're asleep as soon as our heads hit the ground. It broke my heart when you got angry with us, shouted at us, pleaded with us to stay with you. I want to. If willpower alone was enough, I'd always be there, by your side, day and night, ready to act, ready to defend, be whatever you need me to be. I know you're struggling, I hear the distress in your voice, see the look in your eyes. Is it fear? Doubt? This is tough on all of us, and I know it affects you more than us, you're cut off in a way, isolated, taking the brunt of all this. But you're doing great – did you hear those crowds the other day?! We just have to keep each other going. Don't worry, Lord, please, we're almost there. I'd do anything to be there for you in this moment, I really would, but my body won't let me.

Scene 3 Isolation

Conversation and reflection

- 1 Invite one another to talk briefly, or reflect on your own about the sacrifices you have made during the pandemic to keep one another safe, and how it has felt.
- 2 How have you felt or experienced Jesus' presence during times of isolation?
- 3 Share some 'good news' stories about new and creative ways people have found to support one another in the last few months.

Listen

[I am Here for You](#) Stuart Townend

[Can you hear me?](#) Thomas Hewitt-Jones, sung by the Choir of Royal Holloway

Prayer action

Suggest that people look through a window, stand facing a wall, or hold a family photograph, as you pray for those in care homes, still unable to see loved ones regularly and 'normally'.

Caring, compassionate God, it's not easy for those who are far from family. Those in residential and nursing homes have been particularly affected by this pandemic. They have lost friends and relatives, and haven't been able to see their family. As we age, communication can become more difficult and we adapt less easily to new technologies. We ask your blessing on each person living in a care home, and for each of the staff looking after them. We pray for their families and friends. God grant that we may feel connection despite distance. Amen.

Follow-up activity

During this coming week, contact someone who may be feeling especially isolated at this time, and/or consider sending a gift to care staff at local residential and nursing homes, to encourage them at this time.