

## Facebook Posts – May 2021

3<sup>rd</sup> May



4<sup>th</sup> May – Rev Jacqui Horton



I have just prepared the Worship at Home sheet for this coming Sunday and have been struck particularly by the words of Psalm 98. If you want something to carry with you into today, then do read this Psalm – it's not that long! In case, it is of interest, here is a preview (spoiler alert!) of what I have written under the 'think about' heading:

This Psalm seems very appropriate for this week. Firstly, it is all about praising God for all he that he has done (and is doing). The last line of verse 3 can be applied to the Resurrection – and we are still in the Easter season. The second section is pure praise (which is always appropriate) . The third section establishes God as the ruler of the planet – at a time when that planet is in crisis as

humankind continues to ravage the earth for its own ends. There is also the mention of justice and fairness in the last line – and we are approaching Christian Aid Week (10th – 16th May) when the combined churches aid and campaigning organisation asks us to continue to call for both justice in the world and urgent, essential, climate action.

6<sup>th</sup> May – Rev Anne Richardson

A couple of weeks ago I accompanied a family as they buried the ashes of their loved one. It was in a beautiful peaceful cemetery, attached to a parish church. It was spacious and open, with good views, and lovely trees all around. A perfect environment!

However, the Church Warden warned me about a tree. That one's diseased he said. It will be cut down soon. Yet, as you can see from the photo, it looked good - it was budding out. He explained that the tree starts well but soon the new leaves will wither, and droop, and branches fall off. It had become a danger.

I'm writing this when the Sunday lectionary includes the words of John 15:1-8, about Jesus being the vine. The words both comfort (because we can abide in God himself, through Jesus) but also challenge (because for good healthy growth there needs to be pruning.) I wonder how often we are deceived by the appearance of good life - when underneath, life has withered and perished - just like that tree?

How often do we deceive ourselves with what's in our own heart? How often do we shy away from that which will help us to heal and to grow, even though the pruning may be painful?

I'm sure when the tree is cut down, they will replant another - maybe even in a different place. But the church and cemetery will remain, a haven of peace and beauty, a sign of God's presence and of life eternal.



7<sup>th</sup> May



10<sup>th</sup> May – Rev Rosemary Wakelin

It's All About Power

The uncovering of so much more violence against women in this pandemic is unnerving, especially when it also appears to be present in schools. We know it's always been there but is tacitly accepted. Yes, it needs urgent attention, but also knowing what causes it. I think essentially it is about power. Men are usually bigger and physically stronger than women. History shows men in control unless there were exceptional circumstances. Also, until recent years women's lives were bounded by child-bearing with little or no birth control and a high maternal death rate. Women were usually denied education and ownership of property and became the "property" of their husbands. But things have changed - except women are still on the whole physically smaller and weaker! The situation has changed dramatically in this country in my lifetime. When I started teaching, women, doing the same job, were paid considerably less than men, my lesbian friend and her partner, both professionals on good salaries, were denied a mortgage on the grounds that it required a man to underwrite it. I could go on. This has mainly changed, though men can still use their superior physical strength. The business and professional, and political worlds have opened to women who now have a greater say in what happens and yes - the Churches have at last begun to catch up with Jesus! Two world wars and effective birth control, plus equal educational opportunities have changed things. Great! So what bothers me now is what do women do with this access to power and control? Women have always excelled at manipulating and other subtle strategies and we have all encountered teachers and matrons! I have suffered male abuse and assault which have left me cautious, but have been far more hurt by verbal and mental pain inflicted by women. So - as we welcome new freedoms let us turn to the Source of all Power - it comes with loving responsibility for the good of those we seek to serve.

11<sup>th</sup> May – Deacon Jen Woodfin

One evening recently we decided to watch one of our films on DVD and chose the film called 'The Post'. It depicts the tension and decision making required by the publisher of the Washington Post during the Vietnam war. The climax of the film comes when the owner has to risk the downfall of the company, and personal imprisonment, in order to publish the truth about the situation. In a final scene the owner agrees that there is a responsibility to the company and employees but then adds that the mission of the paper is to outstanding reporting and dedicated to the welfare of the nation. So, a difficult decision was made which was to transform the way that newspapers worked.

I have seen this film before and it had not struck me then, but, on this occasion, I thought this is like the church. With decisions to make about how we move forward at this time we could just be concerned about how we can pick up the pieces again, to secure are 'new normal'. Or, we could think what is our mission, or rather, what is God's mission? What are we being called to do, either together or each of us personally? There could be difficult decisions to make but if we seek to follow God's mission whose to know what amazing transformations could take place.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Post\\_\(film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Post_(film))



## 12<sup>th</sup> May – Sam Parfitt

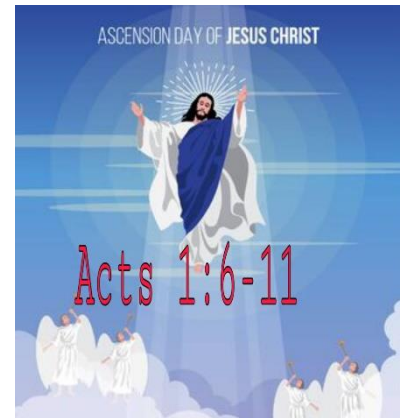
On this day in 1789, William Wilberforce made his first major speech on the abolition of slavery in the House of Commons, arguing that slavery was morally reprehensible and an issue of natural injustice. It was



over a quarter of a century before Britain completely outlawed slavery in 1833 and I think that we still have a long way to go before we are a truly inclusive society. I forgo my usual reflection today in favour of these words from the late Nelson Mandela; ‘No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite’.

## 13<sup>th</sup> May – Rev Cliff Shanganya

How good it is to be reminded at this day and time that Jesus is the ascended and triumphant King, the Lord of all who intercedes for us in heaven. Ascension day which comes ten days before Pentecost it marks an important transition between the earthly life of Christ with his resurrection appearances and the beginning of the work of the Spirit in the people of God as recorded in Acts and on up to the present-day. The fact that Christ ascended back to his Father is referred to a number of times in the Bible as an important reference point for (our faith) the Faith of Christians. For example it means that Christ is now interceding for us there, having taken into the Godhead an understanding of what it means to be human. It also means that Jesus now sits in triumph at the right hand of the Father as head of the Church awaiting the final victory of his people on earth.



Finally of course it also opens the way for Jesus to send his Holy Spirit on all who believe, as he promised, so they might experience his presence with them in a new invisible way from now until he returns again. Your own reflections over this period may be different, but this Ascension Day, take time to praise, to pray and take wonder in all God has done. As you do, my prayer is that God shines more light into all that you’ve been pondering and as he reveals more of his goodness to you, you will overflow with Hope, an unstoppable quality in our times. Have a blessed Thursday, the day of our Lord Jesus Christ ascended back to Heaven. Amen.

## 14<sup>th</sup> May





## 17<sup>th</sup> May – Rev Rosemary Wakelin

I sometimes wonder why God doesn't give up on us. Apart from the pandemic, almost certainly a result of human carelessness, we are facing a catastrophic emergency threatening the viability of the planet itself. There is some hope in that national leaders are coming together to discuss the matter, and even better, David Attenborough is going to address the meeting, but there seems to be no real evidence, except among the intelligent young, of an appreciation of the gravity of the situation. The human race should come together in a united effort to reverse the it, but as it is we seem to be more apart than ever and further separations in the pipeline as Scotland moves towards independence. The Churches don't do much better. The ecumenical movement over the last century has done much to improve relations between the historic denominations, but the Roman Catholic Church maintains its distance, and as the Churches have all seen declining memberships, new ones have been springing up attracting large crowds. The style of worship is very different and much more in tune with the Pop entertainment industry. Traditional Church goers find this very difficult to accommodate. I have only experienced occasional tastes so am not in a position to comment on the theology etc. The rich quality of the fellowship and theological thought that was my experience is immensely precious to me, and maybe that is what is experienced by these new Church worshippers. Things change, the early Methodist movement caused consternation in Church circles. Even the Reformation of the 16th century still has repercussions. It's no use asking me to jump about and wave my arms in the air! Even if I tried it would be pointless because it would lack any meaning. I will hang on to my theological experience, my right to doubt and question, and my conviction that rituals, doctrines, practices and rules are secondary to the real thing which is my relationship with Jesus. The only real fear I have is what was demonstrated in America when so called "Evangelicals" stormed the Capitol carrying banners with JESUS's name on them. I believe that was a serious symptom of something badly wrong, and which brought the Church and the beautiful word "Evangelical" into disrepute.

## 19<sup>th</sup> May – Sam Parfitt

Wesley's 'not very' merry month of May!

Have you ever had a bad month, one that's really ground you gears, or maybe you've felt that you're wading through treacle? I often describe times like these as feeling like I'm trying to climb a mountain whilst wearing roller skates! In those times I often pull out a piece of paper which lives in my office and has the following journal entries from John Wesley's diary, there is some discussion about their original order, but it reminds me that we all go through tough times (although thankfully no-one has yet turned a bull loose during one of my services!) and that there is always a better time to come!

Sunday morning, May 5, preached in St. Ann's, was asked not to come back anymore.

Sunday p.m., May 5, preached at St. John's, deacons said, "Get out and stay out."

Sunday a.m., May 12, preached at St. Jude's, can't go back there either.

Sunday p.m., May 12, preached at St. George's, kicked out again.

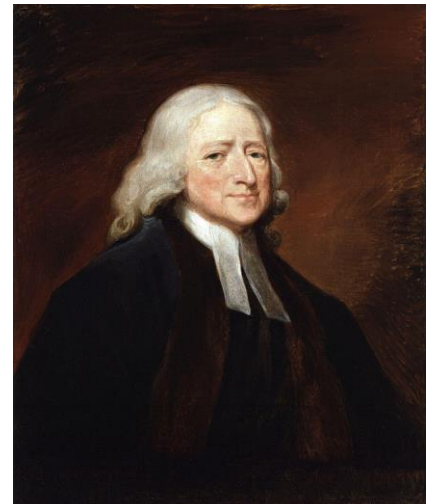
Sunday a.m., May 19, preached at St. somebody else's, deacons called special meeting and said I couldn't return.

Sunday p.m., May 19, preached on the street, kicked off the street.

Sunday a.m., May 26, preached in meadow, chased out of meadow as a bull was turned loose during the services.

Sunday a.m., June 2, preached out at the edge of town, kicked off the highway.

Sunday p.m., June 2, afternoon service, preached in a pasture, 10,000 people came to hear me.



## 20<sup>th</sup> May – Rev Anne Richardson

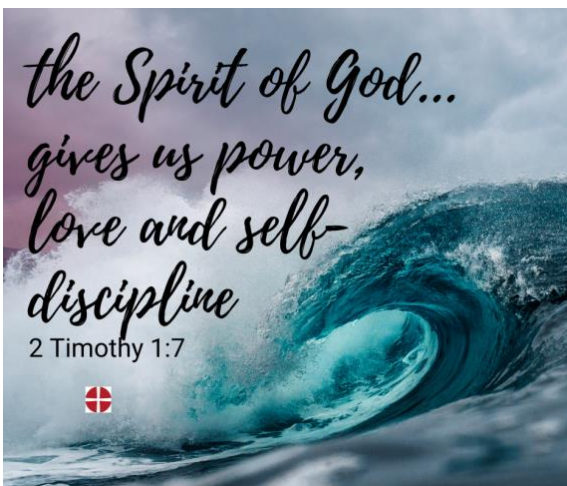
If I get the opportunity, I like to go to the coast for a walk. There's something about walking by the sea – fresh air, that salty tang – nothing quite like it!

At Hunstanton, I walked away from the main town past the old lighthouse and onto the beach. This area is often used by sporty types, wind and kite-surfing. They need the wind of course, but I was mesmerised watching as they cleverly turned their sails or kites into it. The kite surfers actually lift off from the sea, pulled by the wind – they can even turn somersaults in the air – before landing safely again. They have such skill to use the power of the wind, to turn into it and go where it takes them. It brings a different meaning to the phrase – to go with the flow! Certainly, it's exhilarating to watch! What must it feel like to do it? I'm sure it must take much practise and dedication, not to mention the cost of the wet-suit, kite and surfboard, and the training. Yet it's obviously worth it.

Is there a parable here for us, and our life in the wind of the Spirit?

As we prepare to celebrate the festival of Pentecost on Sunday, it's worth considering.

## 21<sup>st</sup> May



## 24<sup>th</sup> May – Dee Moden

Bear Grylls, Adventurer – Explorer – Author - Man of faith, wrote 'Soul Fuel', a book of daily devotions, to enrich, empower, encourage, and bless people in their journey of faith.

He says: *Sometimes people ask me about the stuff I have done, and they will mention me reaching the top of Everest or surviving a jungle or crossing an ocean, things they think are successes, which to me are the least interesting part of my story.*

*The more relevant question might be is where does my strength come from, I often don't feel very strong and life can feel a battle. But any strength I do have seems to come in the quiet moments at the start of my day. It comes when I am on my own, on my knees. It comes from taking time to be still with God.*

*God for many is a difficult word as can be church or Father as they could be painful or negative, but let's try and see beyond the words to the force behind them, that force is love. He is good, He is on our side, your side holding out a hand, no matter how far we think we have fallen. All that Jesus ever wanted was to share isn't it?*

*Love, this love is there to hold us, guide us, strengthen and rescue us. It's a power that I can turn to, however far away I feel. I kneel simply because it is where I find strength.*

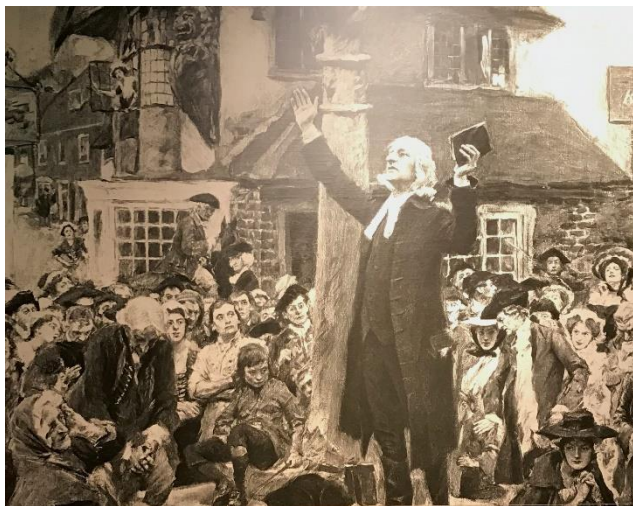
He says that even with a lifetime of faith behind him, the journey isn't easy and I am sure we all can identify with that, especially in these present times! So for him starting his day with God is essential and it is food, good food for the Soul.

There is no greater privilege than to start the day in God's presence, giving us strength for the day ahead.

Photo wallpaperstag.com



## 25<sup>th</sup> May – Rev Jacqui Horton



It was 'Wesley Day' yesterday when Methodists remember an occasion recorded by John Wesley in his diary on 24<sup>th</sup> May 1738. John had been a Christian all his life and he worked very hard at it! So hard that he envied other Christians that he met who seemed to have a joy and a freedom that eluded him and his brother Charles. In the May of 1738, he was desperately praying for an assurance of God's love that was received by his heart and not just his head. And then it happened - he was sitting in a Bible study meeting that someone else was leading and, suddenly, he felt an inner joy. He described it as 'my heart was strangely warmed'. His life, and his ministry, changed from that point. He now believed with his heart what he had always known with his head. He was set free from all the worry, and striving

to earn God's love. He now knew that God loved him anyway! Charles had had a similar experience a few days previously and he wrote in a famous hymn 'my chains fell off, my heart was free'. Challenging thought for the day - what chains do WE still carry with us?

## 27<sup>th</sup> May – Rev Cliff Shanganya

Imagine never worrying about anything! That may seem impossible; everyone has worries on the job, at home, at school. But Paul's advice is to turn our worries into prayers. Do you want to worry less? Then pray more! Whenever you start to worry, stop and pray. Also take time to listen to what God has to say to you, and thank him for all the good work he has done—in your life, in your church, in your community, and in the world.

Have a blessed day!



Philippians 4:6-7 NLT

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. [7] Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

## 28<sup>th</sup> May





## 31<sup>st</sup> May

One of Margaret Abbot's favourite bible passages is from Ecclesiasticus 43, verses 11-14. "This beautiful piece of scripture reminds us of God's hand in all of nature beginning with the rainbow. So with sunshine and showers, we look and hope to see a rainbow which gives us joy and hope for the future".

11 Look at the rainbow and praise its Creator!

How magnificent, how radiant, its beauty!

12 Like a bow bent by the hands of the Most High,  
it spans the horizon in a circle of glory.

13 He commands, and snow begins to fall;  
lightning strikes to carry out his judgements.

14 The storerooms of the sky are thrown open,  
and the clouds roll out like flying birds.

(From GNBDC)

