

Issue 9

17th May 2020

Together as One

Newsletter of the Methodist Churches in Hungerford, Lambourn, Newbury and Thatcham during Coronavirus Pandemic

Verses for the week

Rescue me from my enemies, Lord, for I hide myself in you. Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground. Psalm 143: 9+10

The cross has not lost its power

This week I heard an interview with the historian and writer Tom Holland in response to something he had written in the Sunday Telegraph recently. Tom Holland is a later convert to Christianity from an atheist background and such people often have much to tell us because their insights can be clearer and sharper. He was berating church leaders for 'sounding too much like middle managers' rather than fulfilling the prophetic role to which we are called. He suggested you would think a crisis like this would only add to people's rejection of the Christian message. After all, how can a good and all-powerful God allow all this terrible global suffering? This is an age old dilemma, at least as old as the Book of Job.



However, reflecting on the power of the cross and the resurrection, Tom Holland affirmed what I believe to be true too. That is, we have within the Christian narrative of God present in suffering, enduring the horrific exposure, agony and public humiliation of the death of a slave, nailed to a rough cross of wood, the only hope in the midst of suffering. When this current crisis is over, suffering will not end but at this moment the reality of death, the fear of sickness and the very real pain of loss are in sharp focus. When else, except perhaps in times of war, do we pay daily attention to grim statistics which enumerate the death of strangers? That is why he was berating us for not speaking prophetically into this situation where people are confronted with the why question of pain and suffering. It is not that we have easy explanations or are immune to the suffering and pain ourselves, but we do have in our knowledge and experience of God in Christ suffering and dying, conquering and triumphing over death the message of hope the world needs. The cross has not lost its power or its relevance. Have we rather lost our confidence to tell this truth to a confused, hurting and desperate world once again? The message of the cross is the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18). Let us be confident to tell others what we know as Tom Holland bids us do, it is both a prophetic and a pastoral imperative.

Ascension Day

Falling 40 days after Easter Sunday, Thursday is Ascension Day. It is a day we tend to overlook although I do try to find a service to attend on that day. Why not read the accounts of this event in the life of Jesus at the end of Luke and the beginning of Acts. It marks the end of Jesus' earthly ministry, reminds us of his role as priest and intercessor, as well as pointing forward to his return in glory.

Thy Kingdom Come

Since 2016 the Church has set aside the period from Ascension Day (21st May this year) to Pentecost (31st May) for prayer. It is more important than ever that we continue to pray during and after this crisis. If you receive this newsletter by hand you should also receive with it a prayer journal to help your prayers during these 11 days. This includes a reading, a short reflection, a prayer and an action for each day. This has been written by this year's Methodist Youth President Thelma Commey. To download a copy [Click Here](#)

The main aim is to pray for 5 people who are special to you, who God brings to mind. Pray particularly for them to come to faith in Jesus, for God's kingdom to come in their lives. There are more resources here, [Click Here](#) stories and blogs to explore here [Click Here](#) and a new song here [Click Here](#)

VE Day

The national commemorations of the 75th anniversary of VE Day were rather different from those planned but I thought the broadcast events were nevertheless both moving and appropriate. It was a day for those who had lived through the war and especially those who have served in it to be given a voice. It was poignant to hear from those living in a care home under today's restrictions of their memories of 75 years ago.



We have also heard there were some local celebrations too, socially distanced tea parties in the open air, singalongs and acts of remembrance. Chrissy in Hungerford shared this. 'On VE day a neighbour brought me this lovely bunch of Lily of the Valley. They were one of my mum's favourite flowers and they grew in our garden at home in Cardiff. I did not know until I looked up about these flowers that they are extremely poisonous if ingested and that their sap is a skin irritant! However the scent is beautiful and brings back many memories of Mum. She loved the perfume, Muguet du Bois, first launched by Coty in 1941. I can remember putting on the perfume at her dressing table and she also had Muguet perfume sachets amongst her clothes. Sweet memories indeed!' Please do let us know what you did and send us any photographs.



The Story Project

Stories are the way we communicate our feelings, emotions, beliefs and values. Stories share truth and reveal our heart. Each of us has a story, and our story is worth sharing. Having the confidence to share our life and faith story can sometimes be difficult and it is worth thinking about in advance. Why not try writing down a brief account of how and why God came to matter to you and how and why he matters now? Then pray God will give you an opportunity to share your story with someone soon. The Methodist Church is collecting and sharing stories on this website run in association with Cliff College. [Click Here](#)

Football and coronavirus

[Click Here](#) for a short article reflecting on the upheaval caused by the cancellation of a football match and the upheavals of the coronavirus. Food for thought, I think.

And finally

Thanks for explaining the word "many" to me, it means a lot.