

Issue 10

24th May 2020

Together as One

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

Verse for the week

'The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding. Nehemiah 2: 20

Time to think about rebuilding?

I have written here before about one of the experiences that shaped some of the people we read about in the Old Testament, namely their exile from the land after the conquest by the Babylonians. That experience has much to say to us now. It has been in my thoughts quite often recently. We are exiled from family, friends, from what was normal and from church buildings. With a slight and tentative easing of some restrictions we are beginning to consider a life beyond this lockdown exile but many questions arise. How will we live with the virus still present? How will we keep it contained? How will we balance the risks? How can we begin to imagine church in this new world of living with coronavirus?

The Bible is full of helpful wisdom about both how to live in exile and what we might do next. Isaiah and Jeremiah in part address the first question and both are full of hope and confidence about the presence and power of God even though the exile was long. Ezra, Nehemiah and Haggai specifically address the second question and questions that follow from it. How are we to rebuild? What lessons are there to be gained from the experience of exile and what led to it? How then must we live in the future? What needs to be built from the loss and destruction, the ruins and the pain? What have we learned about sustaining our spiritual lives without the familiar places and ways of worship? Are there new patterns of prayer and Bible reading which perhaps should have been there before, but which now have become more important and better established? How have we found ways to 'sing the Lord's song in a strange land'? Some of that has been singing and worshipping in the strange cacophonous online world.



Ezra, Nehemiah and Haggai are about finding the determination and courage to rebuild even though danger and opposition is all around. They describe how physical rebuilding is vital, both of the city walls of protection and the place of worship, but what is more important is the 'rebuilding' of the worshippers. Rebuilding their commitment to worship God, to his ways and commands is central, hence there is public reading of God's commands and instructions and confession of past sins and failures. See Nehemiah 8 and 9. You may want to read it again if you haven't done so recently. There is no need to read the lists of names and numbers although they are there to ground these events in time and place. What is the Spirit saying the churches, to us, through Nehemiah today? I would love to hear any insights you have or which you gain from your reading.

With love and prayers, Peter.

From A Rocha the Christian Conservation Charity

Discover the secret world of moths. Did you know there are around 2,500 species of moths in the UK? And a fair number are as colourful as butterflies! Create a light trap and become a night-time moth-detective with just a white sheet and a torch or lamp (or a stronger UV lamp if possible). Have fun identifying the moths drawn by the light that land on your canvas.

Stargaze. Choose a clear night and spend some time outside looking at the sky. It's a great way to calm your mind and find perspective. Download an app - Sky Map (Android) or Sky Guide (iphone) - to help you identify what you are looking at and learn more about God's amazing universe. Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust share some good tips on stargazing here, [Click Here](#) This is an activity that you can enjoy individually or with the whole family.

Research your favourite wild mammal. During this stay-at-home period, you may find you have some extra time on your hands. It's a great opportunity to learn something new about nature! Discover more about UK mammals here [Click Here](#)

Spot and count butterflies. The lockdown will stop scientists from examining some conservation sites for vital species data this spring. Groups such as Butterfly Conservation want help from "citizen scientists". They have urged people to count and send pictures of insects they spot outside. Anybody who's got access to a garden, a park, or is going out and about on their daily exercise is being asked to see if they can monitor the butterflies to help with the science. A phone app to help with identification and recording can be found here [Click Here](#)

Walk and Pray

If you are able to get out for a walk remember to pray as you walk. There are some prayer ideas here. [Click Here](#)

Even the seagulls are suffering! As you can see with fewer people able to visit the coast the seagulls are having a hard time of it.



Waste recycling

Waste recycling centres at Newtown Rd, Newbury and at Padworth have now reopened for essential visits only. There is strict social distancing in place and a new appointment booking system. You can find details or book an appointment here [Click Here](#)

Local Council Services

There is helpful advice for residents during the pandemic on the West Berkshire Council website here [Click Here](#)

Bible Month

Bible Month this year will focus on the Old Testament book of Ruth. The readings for the services in June will be from the successive chapters of Ruth. More resources will follow soon.

And finally

I bought a new thesaurus today only to discover all of its pages are blank.

I have no words to describe how angry I am.