

Issue 11

31st May 2020

# Together as One

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

## Verse for the week

'For he knows how weak we are; he remembers we are only dust.' Psalm 103: 14

## He remembers we are but dust

These words come from Psalm 103, a wide-ranging and rich psalm. Its words inspired one of our much loved hymns, Praise my soul the King of Heaven. The psalm begins and ends in praise both personal and angelic, the praise of earth and heaven. Encapsulated between this universal praise is described God's action in bringing forgiveness, healing, redemption, justice and grace. God is praised as the one who is, in that oft repeated Old Testament description, slow to anger and abounding in love. Then beyond the midpoint of the psalm, flowing from the confident assertion that God is like a compassionate father (v 13), comes a brutally honest acknowledgement of human frailty and mortality (verses 14 to 18). Henry Lyte in his hymn paraphrases this in the profound couplet, 'Fatherlike he tends and spares us, well our feeble frame he knows'.



I have found myself declaring the psalmist's words 'he remembers we are but dust' repeatedly in the last month and expect to do so again this week at yet more funerals. Perhaps they seem cruelly insensitive at a funeral when human frailty and mortality are all too evident. Often it seems people prefer to focus on the celebration of life to the exclusion of the reality of death. Lately human frailty and mortality have forced themselves back into view, although they have never and will never go away. To consider them is not morbid negativity for it is the reality of the human condition and is all too evident at a funeral.

Yet in this psalm this stark truth is not the last word. It affirms that fleeting, temporary human life on earth exists within the context of the eternal love of God (v 17). This verse begins with a significant 'but'. But the love of God endures for ever; his righteousness is towards his children's children. The fact God knows we are frail, mortal, made of the stuff of earth is no surprise as he made us so but because God knows our every weakness, embraces and conquers every human sin and weakness in Jesus we have hope and a future. In love, by love and for love our God has rescued and redeemed us in accordance with his nature as compassionate father, as loving-kindness, as healer and Saviour. In the frailty of virus disease and amidst the horrific consequences of its ravages, it is to the God who knows we are only made of mud that we can turn with confidence and deep assurance.

With love and prayers, Peter.

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## Safeguarding Concerns

We know that with the many extra pressures placed upon families and relationships at the moment through being closely confined and through economic or health challenges, the incidence of abuse particularly at home has increased. If you have any concerns about the safety of people you know, whether children or adults, or feel you are at risk, please remember safeguarding support is still in place and operating.

- If you have a concern about a child please contact West Berkshire Children's services helpline **01635 503090**.
- If the concern is for an adult the number is **01635 519056**. You can also raise a concern about abuse here [Click Here](#)
- In an emergency ring 999.
- Further support and advice can be found by contacting the Circuit Safeguarding Officer, Janice Schofield (07771 769424) or by contacting me.

## Food Parcels

If you receive a weekly/fortnightly government food parcel and don't need it, West Berks Foodbank would be grateful to receive it and can redistribute the contents to its clients. Call West Berks Foodbank on **01635 813390** to arrange collection. However, it's worth noting that if you cancel your government food parcel, you will automatically be removed from the online shopping priority customer list.

## Breaking Open - an article by Brian Draper

I found this article very relevant as we live through this crisis together [Click Here](#)

## Thy Kingdom Come

I hope you have been able to take part in Thy Kingdom Come which culminates at Pentecost today. Please do let me hear news about those for whom you have been praying, so that we can encourage one another. One of the blessings of this period for me has been the short, 4 minute, daily podcasts from Tom Wright. Perhaps you have listened to them too. Speaking as an historian he condenses years of scholarship and biblical research into these short broadcasts which provide consistent and convincing evidence about the good news of Jesus to share with those for whom we are praying and others too. Here is just one example I found particularly helpful. [Click Here](#) Why not listen to the others too.

## Bible Month

We will be reading the book of Ruth during June, so now is the time to get ready. During the 4 Sundays in June the worship at home material will cover the 4 chapters of the story. Why not begin reading now and send in your questions and thoughts so that we can share in this together. If you receive the newsletter by hand you should also receive a copy of the text of the book (in large print if you need it).

Rachel Borgars (Circuit Superintendent) is hosting a study group exploring the book of Ruth via Zoom on the four Thursdays of June at 7.30pm. If you would like to join in please contact her by Email [rachel.borgars@methodist.org.uk](mailto:rachel.borgars@methodist.org.uk) or telephone 01256 895878.

## And finally

What did the fish say when he swam into the wall?  
Dam!