

Issue 15

28th June 2020

Together as One

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

Verse for the week

'He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?' Micah 6: 8

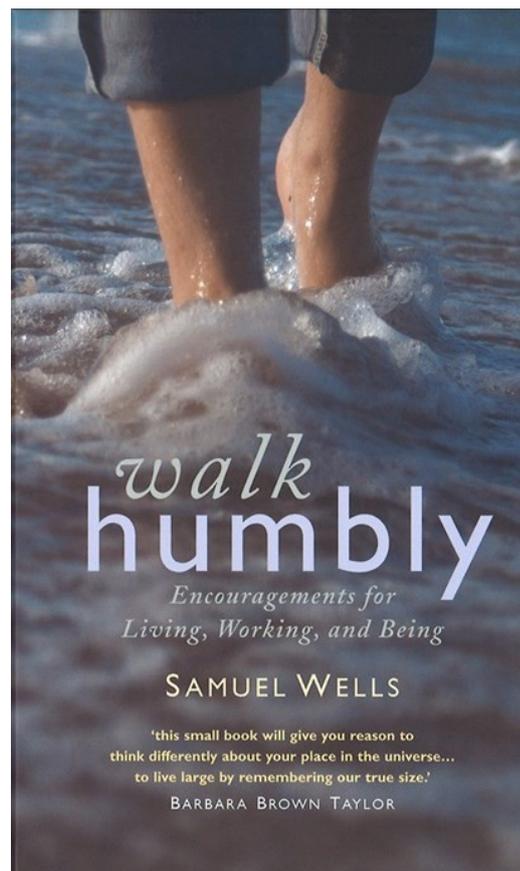
Walk humbly

As well as being the third in the trio of 'goods' required by God in the well-known verse from Micah chapter 6 above, these words are the title of a short book I have recently finished reading by the Rev. Dr. Sam Wells, Vicar of St Martin-in-the-Fields. The book may be short but it is the kind of book that requires to be read slowly not because it is difficult but because it is so rich and thought provoking. The call to humility is a pertinent one in the light of recent events. Human arrogance, selfishness and independence have been challenged by a microscopic virus. Perhaps we are not now so self-confident, so sure of our abilities, so prone to believing we are masters of our own destiny as we were last year.

Sam Wells' book begins with an age old question, why is there anything, why is there existence? He then gently reminds us that, purely in statistical terms, there is an infinitesimally small chance of any one of us existing and of the fact that we had absolutely nothing to do with our coming to be. Just considering what was necessary for your parents to meet and for their parents to meet and so on for a few generations will make the point. That is only the start of it, for there to be habitable planets and for life to exist on one of them, many infinitesimally unlikely things must also happen. He then argues that any sense we are therefore helpless in a vast universe, having no control of anything that really matters instead of leaving us feeling despair, should rather lead to humility and gratitude to the One who made all this possible; the One who made you possible and made himself known in Jesus Christ. Of course that is not all the book contains.

Reading this book has coincided with reading Isaiah chapter 40 again. The beginning and ending of the chapter are probably very familiar to you but the whole of it is good to think about too. In it we are reminded of our frailty and mortality. This is contrasted with God's enormity witnessed in creation, and God's complete ability without any need of help from us. This leads on to his compassionate promise to come to us, to be present and to renew the strength of all who wait for the Lord to come. Read it for yourself and let God speak. It is a rich seam of truth to be shared.

With love and prayers, Peter.



JPIT- Joint Public Issues Team

This week was Refugee Week and there are prayers, stories and topical concerns to be found on this webpage provided by JPIT, of which the Methodist Church is a part. [Click Here](#)

'Amazing Grace' again!

Another uplifting lockdown choir performance from around the world to share. In this version performers from 50 Covid-19 affected countries unite to sing the ever topical hymn by John Newton, former slaver and anti-slavery campaigner. [Click Here](#)

Rethink

This is the title of a series of programmes and Podcasts on Radio 4, Radio 5 Live and the BBC World Service. Perhaps you have heard some of them, as I have, or heard the interview with His Holiness the Pope on rethinking poverty. The series seeks to ask 'How the world should change after the coronavirus pandemic'. I hope you have your own ideas in answer to that question. It is good to dream dreams. It is, says the Bible, what old men do, but it need not be limited to them!



One way to approach the same question which I have also heard about is to write a letter to your future self to be opened say at the end of the year or in 12 months' time. In the letter write down the things you have managed to learn or have appreciated during this crisis: perhaps the sense of gratitude, the enjoyment of the little things, the contact with neighbours and family, the peace and quiet, the clear skies and cleaner air. These are the things that it might be easy to forget, things you might want to try to include in your changed life the other side of the pandemic.

What I am particularly interested to ask is the question 'How should the church, particularly my local church, change after the coronavirus pandemic?' Dreaming dreams and seeing visions about that reimagined future will be important in the next few months. Why not start now? Let me know what you think.

Curiosities of the pandemic

I have seen a number of unusual things during this period of lockdown and self-isolation. Have you got examples to share? I can report the following.

The curious sight of pets and their owners in a socially distanced queue waiting to be seen at the vets near us. Probably the last thing you need when you are worried about your sick dog.

The not so massed bands and the Welsh Guards having to execute new marching manoeuvres to maintain social distancing during the alternative small scale Trooping the Colour on the Queen's official birthday.

The peep-o we now play at the end of every aisle in the supermarket to try to avoid getting too close to another shopper or shopworker.

And finally

How do you approach an angry Welsh cheese? Caerphilly.