

Issue 25

13th September 20

Together as One

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

Verses for the week

You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing your praises and not be silent. Lord my God, I will praise you for ever. (Psalm 30: 11 and 12)

Applause

One of the many absences we have seen lately is that of shared acclaim expressed in applause or cheers. I have watched football and cricket in which the absence of a crowd response has been most noticeable when a goal was scored, a six hit or a wicket taken. The great England fast bowler Jimmy Anderson reaching the exceptional landmark of 600 test wickets on that final day of the final Test Match of this shortened summer of cricket should have been accompanied by shared celebration ringing around the ground. The recorded crowd noise played in the background to mask this absence served only to highlight it.



Watching the live prom concerts played by socially distanced musicians, sometimes arrayed around the entire hall, and finishing with the conductor's familiar flourish but greeted by silence seemed to me to devalue the effort and to ill-use the skill on display. This was most evident at the end of the symphonic organ prom, a supreme exhibition of the energy, athleticism and musicianship required in playing a four manual concert ending in total silence caused my heart to ache at the affront to this natural inclination of the human soul.

Why should I be so affected by the loss of this normal I long to see restored? Isn't it an innate human desire to affirm greatness and to share in doing that? Isn't there, I suggest, a deep need to praise, to acclaim and to worship within us all? Isn't this a desire put there by God? Isn't it what Saint Augustine meant when he said, 'the human heart is restless until it finds its rest in God'? Surely the desire to acclaim and to praise is part of the human desire for God put there by our creator so that we might seek Him as spiritual creatures seeking the God who alone is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Of course we can and should celebrate and acknowledge great human achievement, sporting prowess and artistic ability but we must hold that in its right proportion, for all true adoration and worship belongs to God who alone is worthy of all praise from every tongue, in every place, for all time and beyond time.

With love and prayers, Peter.

Lee Abbey Immersive Meditations

As part of my planned sabbatical I was due to visit Lee Abbey - whether you have been often, as we have, or have never been able to visit you can get a taste of the atmosphere and the experience and connect with God via these meditations which I recommend. [Click Here](#)

Education Sunday

The second Sunday of September is Education Sunday. This year especially we need to pray for all involved in education particularly those known to us who receive education and those who provide it. Here is a prayer you may like to use.

Loving Lord, we think of the children and young people close to our hearts and know they are precious in your sight, fearfully and wonderfully made; we place them into your hands today. Strengthen and nurture them. Be with them in their coming in and going out, at home, at school, at college, at university, in their learning, exploring and creating through sports, activities and clubs, in their friendships and their quiet times. Mould them in your image, through the positive influence of those whose lives cross theirs, through the love and example of those who care for them, and through the constant love of your Son, Jesus, who walks alongside them every step of their lives, whether they know it or not. Amen.

September

September is, according to the Met Office, the first of the autumn months. The prospect of autumn may not be very attractive especially if you have already spent too much time this year isolated and missing regular activities and events. The seasons will change whatever we may feel so we need to find good in it to celebrate and explore. God is not the God of spring and summer only. The period from 1st September to 4th October is increasingly being marked in the Church as Creation Season, a time to remember God as Creator and Sustainer of all life and to focus more attention on the climate emergency caused by global heating. The following may help you reflect in this season. There will be more about Harvest Celebrations in the next issue of Together as One.

From **Blackberry Picking** by Seamus Heaney

Late August, given heavy rain and sun for a full week, the blackberries would ripen. At first, just one, a glossy purple clot among others, red, green, hard as a knot. You ate that first one and its flesh was sweet like thickened wine: summer's blood was in it leaving stains upon the tongue and lust for picking. Then red ones inked up and that hunger sent us out with milk-cans, pea-tins, jam-pots where briars scratched and wet grass bleached our boots.

Round hayfields, cornfields and potato-drills we trekked and picked until the cans were full, until the tinkling bottom had been covered with green ones, and on top big dark blobs burned like a plate of eyes. Our hands were peppered with thorn pricks, our palms sticky as Bluebeard's. We hoarded the fresh berries in the byre.

And finally

The recruitment consultant asked me,
'What do you think of voluntary work?' I said, 'I wouldn't do it if you paid me.'



Photo by Shelley Pauls on Unsplash

A Hymn written by Andrew Pratt

The footprints where your people tread
have marked and marred the earth,
the global warming that we dread
has shadowed us from birth.

As climates change and nature shifts,
we play a god-less game.
We reap rewards from what we sow,
yet try to shift the blame.

O gracious God we pray for help,
that we might learn to live
in harmony within this world
with all you gave and give.