

Together as One

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

Verse for the week

The whole earth is filled with awe at your wonders; where morning dawns, where evening fades, you call forth songs of joy. Psalm 65: 8

Snowfall

As I went outside last Sunday morning to break the ice on the bird baths, the first snow had just begun to fall. I was therefore able to enjoy it in its pristine white purity. No vehicles had passed along the road and no human traffic along the pavements. The stillness that even this light blanketing of snow brought was multiplied by the lockdown restrictions on activity. For a moment the world felt Edenic in its unsullied perfection. I felt like the only one alive, praising and in communion with God. Of course life was all around me within the homes (people perhaps still asleep), in the plants, the dormant insects and the subterranean creatures still warm in unseen tunnels. Then as always there were the birds attracted by the fresh water and the food I had placed on the garden table and the deer recognised from the imprint of its hooves beside the garden path. I delighted in that particular crunch of boots on newly fallen snow and the icing-sugared dusting on branches and evergreen leaves. My delightful reverie was soon broken by the growing realisation that falling snow is wet and cold and even a few minutes was enough to cause me to retreat inside to the warmth of a cup of breakfast tea to continue to enjoy the scene through the window.

I know the dangers and inconveniences of snow and I could enjoy it much more that morning because I didn't have to drive anywhere. However, surely we can all appreciate the calming beauty and wonder of this natural phenomenon which, due to global heating, is likely to be an increasingly rare experience in Southern Britain. Can we imagine children growing up without seeing snow, having a snowball fight or building a snowman – all defining memories from my childhood? Just one of the losses we have brought to our children and grandchildren through our wastefulness.

The gift of wonder is God-given, uniquely human and precious. Never let the concerns of life, and I know there are plenty, take away that wonder. I hope that you too were able to stop and to gaze, to remember and perhaps to step out into the snow. It was soon gone but the experience was all the more precious for that. What a gift to escape into the joy of the delights of snowfall in these dark and demanding days. It was a life-giving, refreshing experience to lift the spirit and to raise my thoughts to God in thanks.

With love and prayers, Peter.



Photo by Chris

Preaching in Lent

We are planning to follow a preaching series in Lent, which starts on 17th February, entitled Worship in the Wilderness. As in Advent the series has been prepared by Sam and Sara Hargreaves at Engage worship. The themes for the six Sundays of Lent will be as follows:

February 21st (Lent 1) - A Spirit-led Journey
(Deuteronomy 8:1-5, 15-18 and Mark 1: 9-13)

February 28th (Lent 2) - A Simple Journey (Psalm 63:1 -8, Lk 4: 1-13)

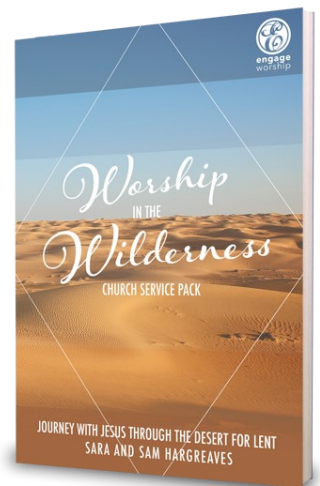
March 7th (Lent 3) - A Sorrowful Journey
(Exodus 3: 1-10 and John 11: 20-29, 32– 36)

March 14th (Mothering Sunday) - A Sacrificial Journey
(Isaiah 53: 1-12 and Matt 14: 13-14)

March 21st (Passion Sunday) - A truth-Speaking Journey (Ezekiel 37: 1-14 and Matt 4: 4-11)

March 28th (Palm Sunday) - A Surprising Journey (Hebrews 11: 32-40 and Matt 21: 1-11)

April 4th (Easter Sunday) – Circuit Service



To support the series there is also a book of personal devotions, an A5, 56 page full colour book containing five reflections for each of the weeks leading up to Palm Sunday. The themes unpack and complement the Sunday material, but the book can also stand alone as a devotional resource. If you would like to purchase one, details are here [Click Here](#)

Lent Course - Caring for Creation

In support of one of the 12 commitments we are all encouraged to make in adopting 'A Methodist Way of Life' i.e. **We will care for creation and all God's gifts**, I am planning to run a five week course during Lent on this topic. This will be run on Zoom and all are very welcome whether you have attended a group like this or not. There will be some insights from Christians with particular knowledge and experience in this field as well as time for Biblical reflection, discussion in breakout groups combined with prayer and suggestions for practical action. It will take place on five consecutive Tuesday evenings beginning on 23rd February at 7.30pm and will last about 75 minutes. Please let me know if you would like to attend and I will let you have the link. The good thing about being on Zoom is we have practically no limit on numbers, you can stay in the warm and friends can join from several churches. Put the date in your diary now! I hope to see you there.

[Tumisu from Pixabay](#)



Holocaust Memorial Day - 27th January

This week also saw the annual Holocaust Memorial Day, a day for everyone to remember the millions of people murdered in the Holocaust, the Shoah, under Nazi Persecution, and in the genocides which followed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia, and Darfur. It is poignantly and appropriately chosen to coincide with the date of the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp in 1945. You can still watch the UK memorial ceremony online here [Click Here](#) where you also find testimonies from witnesses of recent genocides as well as the Holocaust.

And finally

What do you get from a pampered cow? Answer: Spoiled milk.