



Prestwood Methodist Church

A worshipping and friendly community following Jesus

Minister: Rev Nigel Wright 01494 431819

Stewards:

Sandie Wheatley 01494 712373

Bridget Appleby 01494 890840

Mary Spooner 01494 862431

Website: www.prestwoodmethodists.org.uk

Email: steward@prestwoodmethodists.org.uk

Sunday 2 August 2020 - 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time

The good news I was looking forward to bringing you was that we have provisionally planned to hold services at Prestwood Methodist Church on the following dates:

20 September (Rev. Nigel Wright)

11 October (tba)

18 October (Rev. Nigel Wright)

1 November (tba)

15 November (Rev. Nigel Wright)

I still hope that we can go ahead with these dates, but with rules constantly changing it's impossible to predict. The plan *had* been to recommend that face coverings be worn as you enter the church and find your seat, but that provided once seated you were 2 metres away from anyone not in your household, you could remove the covering during the service. Then the government announced on Friday that places of worship were included, along with public transport and shops, as locations where you **MUST** wear a face covering at all times, even if you're 5 metres from the nearest person. A disappointing decision, but we will abide with the rules as they exist in September.

Bridget

Virtual Church



The "[Amersham Methodist Circuit](#)" YouTube channel posts twice a week (Wednesday and Sunday). CDs/ DVDs are available for the Sunday service if you can't watch on YouTube.

The service from Wesley United Church in Ontario, Canada on 26 July, with Rev Jenny Stephens delivering the address is now available on the [Wesley United Cambridge](#) YouTube channel.



Radio



The 8.10am service on Radio 4 is led by the Rev Dr Isabelle Hamley, Chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury. She draws on the book of Job to chart her own walk with God and with Covid-19.

Readings for this week:

Genesis 32: 22-31

Psalms: 17: 1-7, 15

Romans: 9: 1-5

Matthew 14: 13-21

Please see the Methodist Worship at home resources for more details. Nigel's reflection looks at prayer in the context of Daniel 9. For the next three weekends Nigel is on holiday, so you will only be receiving the Methodist Worship at Home resources along with Keeping in Touch. Mary will be providing more Bible characters in lock down from next week.

Lighthouse

It was the strangest Lighthouse week we've ever had. It started around 7.30 am, preparing for an 8am Zoom prayer session. The reflection on the next page was one I wrote for the Friday session, which by coincidence relates to the Gospel reading this week.

There were Lighthouse Live shows for children at 10am and 4pm. These can still be viewed online at <https://go.allstarskidsclub.com/catalog> - scroll down the page until you get to Lighthouse, then select a day, and you have a choice of an hour long morning or afternoon programme, or you can just hear the Bible story, watch the dance, follow the craft or join in 'Mindfully with Jesus'. I particularly enjoyed the last of these – a 20-minute yoga-like session, retelling the Bible story through postures. Be warned though, some of the postures might not be safe if you're 16+!

Our Lighthouse day continued at 7pm, with a two-hour online Lighthouse Youth session. Matthew and his friends from other churches were running this, with Malcolm and I running tech support in the background. This finished around 9pm, but with post-discussion conversations going on until 10pm. A long day, and a strange week, with many lessons to takeaway.



Bridget

Zoom to pray, Thursday 10-11am

There will be no Zoom prayer groups for the next two Thursdays. These will restart on 20 August.



Feeding the 5000 (and the 4000)

You'll remember the stories. Jesus tries to get away to have some thinking time, but the crowds find Him and follow Him. Instead of sending them away, he has compassion for them, teaches them, and cures the sick. As the day wears on the disciples suggest to Jesus that He should send the crowds away to get some food. But Jesus gives them a curious response: you feed them.

Well, there's no 'Just Eat' app the disciples can use to order food for everyone, and even if they could, they were poor men and women who couldn't afford to buy that much food.

We know what happens next. In Matthew and Mark's versions, the disciples find five loaves and two fish to feed 5000, then later, seven loaves and a few small fish to feed 4000. On the second occasion the disciples show the same lack of faith as on the first occasion. Despite what happened before, they doubt that all can be fed.

When I returned to this story, I was surprised reading the accounts in the first three Gospels how similar they are. I was also struck by the absence of a key character. Only in John's version does this critical character occur.

"There is a boy here who has 5 loaves and 2 fish" the disciples tell Jesus. If the story is about some magical process by which Jesus create bread and fish, what does that tell us about what we should do today? We can't do magic. If faith means assuming that racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, disablism, or any of the other prejudices that lead to hunger or unfairness in society will disappear, as long as we have faith, then I think we've missed the point.

For me, the real miracle of the story is the way the faith and generosity of one person had an enormous impact on the hearts of other people .



Imagine this. You're going on a day's outing, up into the hills where there are no cafés (or they are all shut because of COVID-19 restrictions). You know you will be out all day. You take some drinking water, and maybe sandwiches, cereal bars, fruit and perhaps chocolate. The first century pack lunch would be bread and salted fish. But then you're all together with a bunch of people. This chap Jesus has just been preaching about love and sharing and generosity. You have food in your pocket, but perhaps the stranger next to you doesn't. If you get your pack lunch out, you might feel duty bound to share. Perhaps it's easier to keep your food hidden, and snaffle it on your way home.

Then a child shares his lunch with those around. You feel encouraged to do the same. You get out your lunch, and share it with the stranger next to you. It turns out that there are enough people with plenty to share that when the meal is finished, there are twelve baskets of food left over. Perhaps enough to take to a homeless shelter, or in Jesus' time to feed the lepers living outside the city.

The message I take from this is that sometimes the task seems enormous and unachievable. How do we build God's Kingdom on Earth? Like the boy, we have to show faith, that by doing what little we can, the total effort will be enough.



Prayer

Lord, we thank you for those people across the Lighthouses, young and old, who didn't tell people to go away this year when there could be no face-to-face Lighthouse. We thank you for their faith, followed up with prayer, courage and sheer hard work. For their faith to believe that if they did what they could your people could be fed this summer with the Good News of your love and salvation.

We offer these prayers to you.

AMEN

Bridget

Hymn

This hymn links the themes of light, bread and our need to find out what little thing God wants of us today.

Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people,
light for the world to see.

Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your Church gathered today.

Longing for peace, our world is troubled.
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has power to save us.
Make us your living voice.

Longing for food, many are hungry.
Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us your bread, broken for others,
shared until all are fed.

Longing for shelter, many are homeless.
Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us your building, sheltering others,
walls made of living stone.

Many the gifts, many the people,
many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another,
making your kingdom come.



Bernadette Farrell (b. 1957)