



Prestwood Methodist Church

A worshipping and friendly community following Jesus

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Sunday 9 August 2020 - 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Our first round of risk assessments for people hiring the church have been reviewed, and we hope that our building will be in regular (but controlled) use again soon. We have thought ahead to make sure that when the times comes, use by hirers (and in particular the need for cleaning in between user groups) will not prevent us using the church for worship. The updated guidance doesn't make it clear who has to wear face coverings. Other churches have interpreted the guidance as suggesting that readers and preachers do not need to wear face coverings, and circuit advice is that we could remove them for communion. We hope to get clearer guidance as we get nearer to the date proposed for our first service (20 September).

Please let me know if you would like to see any of the risk assessment documents and action plans!

I've had lots of lovely tributes to Tony Jukes, as well as a couple of articles for Open Door. My plan is to replace the edition of Keeping in Touch for 30 August with Open Door, and then from September send out a newsletter once a fortnight instead of every week.

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 readings this week are from Romans 10 and Matthew 14.

Note there is no Zoom prayer session this week. These will resume on Thursday 20 August at 10am.



Radio



The 8.10am service on Radio 4 is led by Chine McDonald, a writer on race and faith. The service will explore the cross as a symbol of black liberation, in the light of the Black Lives Matter movement.

Scam emails

The circuit administrator has asked me to let you know that there has been a report of someone claiming to be Rev Adam Wells sending emails asking for donations via gift cards. I'm sure you all know our ministers would never make such a request!

If you do receive any dodgy emails purporting to be from either of our ministers please forward them to the circuit administrator, Lu, at:

amcircuitmethodist@gmail.com



Readings for this week:

Genesis 37: 1-4, 12-28

Psalms 105: 1-6, 16-22, 45b

Romans 10:5-15

Matthew 14: 22-33

The Genesis reading this week is the start of the Joseph story, and so it's appropriate that Mary's lockdown Bible reflection this week considers Joseph's multiple experiences of being locked down – by his brothers, by Potiphar, and by the Pharaoh's butler who let him down and left him languishing in jail.

The Gospel reading is Jesus walking on the water, with the story of Peter trying to have faith, failing, and being saved by Jesus. The reflection in the Methodist Worship at home resource looks at this story with more sympathy to Peter's story, suggesting that perhaps we can learn from him to trust Jesus in difficult times.

The opening prayer from the Vine at Home resource by Tim Baker links to this story, and encourages us to keep our eyes on God.

Prayer by Tim Baker in the Vine at Home

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Lord of all faithfulness,
Thank you for never giving up on us
and for always welcoming us home.
We are sorry for the times when our trust in you
wavers
when we take our eyes off you
because we are more concerned with ourselves.
Help us to stay oriented towards you
and faithful in all we do. AMEN

Bible characters in lockdown: Joseph

Although indulged by his father after his mother died, Joseph was hated by his brothers, who were very jealous of him.

When he was a young teenager his brothers threw him down into a dry well, and then sold him to some merchants travelling to Egypt. He was probably bound and had to walk most of the way. His brothers had stripped off his coloured coat, and soaked it in the blood of an animal, pretending that he had been killed by a wild beast. They believed they would never see him again.

In Egypt Joseph was sold in the slave market to Potiphar the Captain of the Guard under Pharaoh.

Joseph's faith in God was so strong that everything he did succeeded, and Potiphar was extremely impressed. Eventually he promoted Joseph to oversee his household, and again everything ran smoothly. However, Joseph was a handsome young man and Potiphar's wife found him very attractive. She tried to seduce him, but he resisted her and kept out of her way. One day she grabbed hold of him, and he fled from her, leaving his robe in her hand. She was so angry, that her obsession turned to hatred, and she told Potiphar that he had tried to rape her and showed him the garment as proof. Joseph was stripped of all his privileges and thrown into prison unable to defend himself. Surely this would cause him to feel abandoned by God. But instead, over time he gained the respect of the jailor, and was put in charge of the other prisoners. Two of them had been the King's butler and the King's baker, and they shared with him disturbing dreams they had. After Joseph prayed about it, God gave him the interpretation of both men's dream. All came about exactly as he prophesied, and the butler was released back to his old job. Joseph pleaded with him to speak on his behalf to Pharaoh because he was innocent.

The butler forgot all about his promise, and for another two years Joseph was left shut away in prison. Everything must have seemed dark and hopeless. However overnight, everything changed miraculously. Pharaoh had a dream which frightened him so much that he demanded his wise men should interpret it for him. When no one could do it, his butler remembered how Joseph had explained his dream to him, and it had come true. Pharaoh immediately sent for the Hebrew slave to be brought to him. What a shock this must have been for Joseph, out of the blue. However, God's timing was perfect. When Pharaoh confronted him with the challenge, Joseph did not take credit for himself. He said, 'I cannot do it myself, but God will give me the meaning of your dream.' After he explained that there would be 7 years of abundant harvest, followed by 7 years of famine, Pharaoh was even more perplexed. Joseph suggested an intense programme of storing up surplus grain into huge storehouses during the first 7 years, to provide enough for the 7 years of famine. Pharaoh said 'As your God has revealed all this to you, who is wiser than you? I will put you in charge of the whole project.'

Joseph had some dreadful experiences, in the pit, in the slave market and shut in the prison. However, his faith remained strong and was fully rewarded. Unbelievably, he became second in command to Pharaoh.

During the famine, Joseph saw his brothers when they came down to Egypt to buy food, although they did not recognize him. He had the opportunity to get his own back for all he had suffered. But instead, after he revealed himself to them and they were terrified, we read Joseph's wonderful words in Genesis chapter 45: 4-12 'You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good. He sent me here to keep you all alive to become a great nation.'

In many ways, Joseph's story is an illustration of the Lord Jesus. Even after all He suffered on the cross, He offers us eternal life and a place in His Kingdom for all who will come in repentance and faith to Him.

See Chapters 37 to 45 of Genesis if you want to re-read the full story of Joseph.

Prayer

Dear Lord,
During these days when lives are disrupted, help us to wait patiently as Joseph did and to forgive all those who have hurt us. We are helpless without your care and guidance. We long to feel your presence and to have a deeper faith. Thank You for Your unconditional love. Help us to love and trust You and to care for one another. AMEN



Mary

A prayer for the people of Beirut

I'm sure the people of Beirut have been in our thoughts this week, after the terrible, needless explosion. This prayer is on the Methodist Church website, written by Revd Ruth Gee, Assistant Secretary of Conference

Gracious God,

We pray for those who live and work in Beirut that the bereaved may be consoled and the injured comforted and healed.

We pray for the rescue services and the hospital staff giving thanks for their commitment and skill.

In the midst of catastrophe, we pray for peace, truth and justice.

As the sound of explosion fades and the smoke clears give wisdom to those who lead, courage to those who serve, and hope to all.

AMEN.

If you would like to make a donation, the Methodist relief charity, All We Can, has an emergency appeal for Beirut. [See www.allwecan.org.uk/give/current-appeals/beirut](http://www.allwecan.org.uk/give/current-appeals/beirut) if you would like to donate.