



Prestwood Methodist Church

A worshipping and friendly community following Jesus

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Sunday 23 August 2020 – 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time

A headline on the BBC website created some excitement in our household this week. ‘Singing no riskier than talking for virus spread’ suggested we might be able to sing again in church, even without a solution to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the detail of the article, and [the research behind it](#), is less conclusive. It turns out that singing does not produce substantially more respiratory particles (the moisture that comes out of our mouths that could spread the virus, if we are contagious) than speaking at a similar volume. So singing in church would be no more risky than all of us shouting at the same volume. But as visiting preachers have often remarked of Prestwood, for a small congregation we can make a lot of noise when singing. Our singing would be louder than our quiet prayers or responses. Hence singing with our usual enthusiasm would present a greater risk than quiet talking.

The science doesn’t yet seem to have attempted to factor in wearing face coverings while singing. Is that even possible? If you’ve tried this at home, let me know how you get on!

Even with the current rules, if you have a health reason why you can’t wear a face covering for the whole service, you are within your rights to remove it once you are seated and safely at 2 metres from anyone not in your household. We will not be questioning anyone’s right to remove their face covering.

Plans are in place for a communion service at PMC on 20 September, and for two services each in October and November. Details will be in the Open Door by the end of the month. Services will start at our normal time of 11am, and will last no more than 40 minutes. We do not anticipate any need to book people in as some churches are doing, as the church can accommodate 20 people with 2 metre distance between individuals.

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.

Radio



The next Open Door will include some thought-provoking reflections from Rev Adam Wells on the value of listening. It is interesting to see therefore that the 8.10am service on Radio 4 this week is titled ‘The inspiration of listening.’ We are promised an exploration of stillness, while listening to voices of the past, to nature, to breath and to spirit.

Zoom to pray, Thursday 10-11am



Zoom prayer meetings resume this Thursday with Tina Hillas and Rev Nigel Wright. Everyone is welcome, but check here for a new meeting id and password each week.

If you can’t Zoom, contact Nigel for instructions on how to phone in.

Zoom meeting ID: 810 0286 8553

Passcode: 316922



Readings for this week:

Exodus 1:8 to 2:10

Psalms 124: 1-8

Romans 12: 1-8

Matthew 16: 13-20



I’ve turned again to the Vine at Home for some thoughts on the readings this week.

Reflection on this week’s readings by Emma Dobson in the Vine at Home (summary)

Emma starts by reflecting on the value of rules and laws to keep us safe, and moves on to concerns when rules do not seem fair. She identifies unfair rules from the lectionary readings:

‘In Exodus the King tells the women who act as midwives for the Hebrew women: when you help the women to give birth, let the baby girls live, but kill the baby boys.

‘But they know, deep down, that’s wrong. They trust in God and they feel in their hearts that God is telling them not to follow it...They secretly let all the babies live.

‘In the book of Romans, it says:

Do not be shaped by this world. Instead be changed within by a new way of thinking. Then you will be able to decide what God wants for you.

From The Vine by Emma Dodson (continued)

‘What I think this passage means is that, sometimes, we’ll come across things that just don’t feel right, and that’s ok; we can turn to God, who will help us to think differently about it.’

Emma suggests we can learn from two women who have challenged rules – Rosa Parks, who challenged rules about where black people had to sit on a bus, and Greta Thunberg, who continues to challenge governments’ lack of action on climate change.

‘Greta broke the rules that say that every child needs to be in school every single day to send a message that she is serious about wanting change. If you think there is a rule that is unfair, you can sign a petition or write a letter to your member of Parliament.’

Finally, Emma points to Romans 12:6, reminding us that we all have different gifts. ‘For me, that means that we don’t all have to do the same things. We all have ways we can make a difference. All of these things give us skills to speak out when a rule is leading to people being treated unfairly.’

Read the full reflection at www.barnsleymethodist.org.uk

Prayer from The Vine at Home

God of all grace, hear us now.

You know that there is much that is not right with our world, our community, our family and our own lives. You know the things that trouble us, the thoughts that weigh heavy on our hearts.

As we’ve reflected on Greta Thunberg’s example, so we pray for all affected most by the climate crisis and climate injustice – those whose homes, livelihoods and families are at risk of destruction by rising sea-levels, floods or increased storms.

God of all grace, we hand these thoughts and prayers to you now. You who say ‘come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest’.

AMEN

Bible characters in lockdown by Mary Spooner: Thomas and other disciples after the Crucifixion

It had been an extraordinary day for the disciples. Three days earlier, Jesus had given up his life on the cross at Calvary. His body was taken down and buried in the tomb of a rich man called Joseph, who had secretly been a believer. The tomb was sealed with a heavy stone rolled in front of the entrance, guarded by soldiers in case any of his disciples came back to try and steal the body.

Not only were the disciples devastated, but all their hopes were dashed. They had given up everything to spend the last three years with the Lord and been quite sure that he was eventually going to deliver their country from the Romans. They were devoted to Him and their hearts were broken.

Now they were really frightened, because as Jesus’ closest followers, they too could face arrest.

On Sunday morning, most of them were together in an upstairs room, with the doors locked. There was an excited hammering on the door, and they heard Mary Magdalene calling out to them. She told them that she and three friends had gone early in the morning, to take spices to the tomb – and had found the stone rolled away, the guards gone and the tomb empty. But they had seen two angels sitting by the tomb, who asked them why they were searching amongst the dead, for One who was alive? The other women had run away frightened, but Mary stayed outside the tomb sobbing. She claimed that she had turned and met Jesus Himself, and that He had told her not to cling to Him, but to go and tell His disciples that He had risen from the dead. The disciples thought that her grief had affected her mind and couldn’t believe her story. Peter and John had run to the tomb to check her story and found it empty and came back thoroughly puzzled.

However, that very same evening when several of the disciples were still together behind locked doors, suddenly Jesus appeared in the room with them and showed them His hands and His feet. Now they were overcome with joy, even after Jesus vanished. When Thomas came in later, they eagerly told him that Jesus was alive again and they had seen Him. Thomas was bitterly upset and said he could never believe it. He had seen Jesus die. He said he would have to touch Jesus’ wounds before he would ever believe their story.

Thomas spent eight days in misery, while the other disciples were happy, but bewildered. Then once more they were together in a locked room when Jesus appeared to them again. He said to Thomas ‘Reach out your hand, and touch my wounds, and don’t be afraid to believe any more.’ Thomas didn’t need to touch Him. He fell to his knees and gasped ‘My Lord, and my God. At last he grasped who Jesus really was.’

So Jesus appeared especially to Thomas, not with a rebuke for his doubts but with unconditional love.

Prayer

As we too still experience a measure of lock down, and many people doubt the existence of God, may our own faith be renewed and our love for the Lord grow stronger.

Let us pray that He will give us faith to believe and to trust our lives entirely to Him. And may we feel His presence close by and say in all sincerity ‘My Lord and my God’.

To read the story in full, see John chapter 20.

