



Prestwood Methodist Church

A worshipping and friendly community following Jesus

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Sunday 26 July 2020 - 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time

While COVID-19 is new, and the experience of lockdown was unique, the experience of being shut-in or isolated is not new. Many characters in the Bible have experienced this, and Mary Spooner has agreed to write a series of short articles about these people, highlighting what we might learn from ancient experiences that is relevant to today.

We're still working on plans for re-opening the building for limited hire and for worship. We're waiting to hear from our ministers about their availability for September.

Tony Juke's funeral service is at 2pm on Monday Monday 27 July. The link for those who wish to join the service remotely and the order of service are in the email with these notices.

I'm collecting people's memories of Tony for Open Door, so please send me any recollections as soon as possible. Please let me know by next weekend if you are planning to send me something for Open Door, and make sure it's with me by 7 August.

Bridget

Virtual Church



The "Amersham Methodist Circuit" YouTube channel will now be posting only twice a week (Wednesday and Sunday). CDs/ DVDs are still available.

The service from Wesley United Church in Ontario, Canada on 19 July, with Rev Jenny Stephens delivering the address is now available on the [Wesley United Cambridge](#) YouTube channel. She will be preaching again this Sunday at 3.30pm UK time.



Radio



The 8.10am service on Radio 4 is titled "Great is thy faithfulness". It draws on Lamentations 3:17-24, focusing on hope during uncertainty.

Prayer handbook

A reminder to let Tina know this week if you'd like her to order a copy of the 2020/21 Methodist Prayer Handbook. Its title is 'The Earth is the Lord's' and it's inspired by Psalm 24 v.1, recognising how human activities have a major impact on the life systems of our world. Cost £4.50 for standard or large print.



If you have any suggestions for books that you've read and enjoyed that you think others will enjoy, please let me know and I can include them here, or in the forthcoming Open Door. Any other contributions for Open Door should be forwarded using the email address at the top, or phoned in if you're not on email.

Methodist Conference

The **Methodist Church** 

There is a report for local churches about the business of the 2020 Methodist Conference available on the Methodist website now. A link is included in the email with these notices for those receiving Keeping in Touch electronically. Otherwise you can find it on the Methodist Church website. From the homepage at www.methodist.org.uk select The Methodist Conference page, and you will find a link to the 'Conference Business Digest' there. We have been asked as local churches to respond to the issues raised under three headings in particular:

Inclusive Methodist Church asks us to consider how we confront and challenge all racism and other forms of unjust discrimination in our local context.

3Generate requests that all Church Councils include the 'Eco Church challenge' on its agenda in the next year. This is about more than recycling a few bottles and reusing a few bags; it's about challenging those in power on issues of climate change, poverty and peace, and considering how we use and invest our resources.

Oversight and Trusteeship presents a possible future where 'a church' might be split across several sites, with a single church council. This would help to overcome dwindling numbers, not just of attendees, but of people willing and able to take trustee roles, and hopefully 'enable local missional communities to flourish' and help us to fulfil our calling.

The Digest is only three pages, so please take a look if you can. If you would like a paper copy, please let me know and that can be arranged.

Bridget

Lighthouse

The last chance to join in with Lighthouse online this week (27 – 31 July):

- Lighthouse Live for children of any age. Two shows a day at 10am and 4pm). See lighthousecentral.org.
- [Lighthouse Youth](#) for 12+ at 7pm.
- [Lighthouse Prayer](#) for 18+ at 8am.

The links are at www.prestwoodmethodists.org.uk



Zoom to pray, Thursday 10-11am

Zoom meeting on Thursday with Tina Hillas and Rev Nigel Wright. Everyone is welcome, but please note that the meeting id and password changes each week, so check here for details.



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

Zoom meeting ID: 854 9660 7875

Password: 981731

Readings for this week:

Genesis 29: 15-28
Psalm 101: 1-11, 45b
Romans 8:26-39
Matthew 13: 31-33, 44-52

Please see Nigel's reflections and the Methodist Worship at home resources for more details.

Bible characters in lockdown: Noah in the Ark

After such a strange year, and while many of us have been confined to our homes, I thought it would be interesting to look at examples of people in the Bible who were 'shut in' and see what we can learn from their experiences.

An early example is that of Noah. Prior to the flood, the human lifespan was very much longer. Noah was many years building the Ark, during which time he warned everyone of the coming judgment. The New Testament (1 Peter 3: 20) says that God was waiting patiently during that time, for people to turn away from their wicked ways. Noah pleaded with them to come into the Ark for their safety and protection. However, they scoffed at him and mocked him, and in the end, only eight people were saved from the flood.

It is significant that flood stories appear all over the world in every culture, and with strong similarities. The Ark was the size of one and a half football pitches, built in three storeys, with the capacity to house up to 40,000 animals the size of sheep. It may be that God used some sort of migration instinct to bring them to Noah: 'They came to him'. Similarly, although we are not told, it is possible that they experienced some sort of hibernation period whilst on board for a year. When people have tried to reconstruct the Ark, it has been found impossible to capsize. When Noah and all his family and all the animals were finally on board, the Bible says 'God shut him in'!

Jesus used this story as an illustration of what would happen in the last days before His return, which would be just like in the days of Noah. Luke 17: 26-27:

Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. ²⁷ People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all.

People would lose all respect for God, and for authority of any kind, and would not only mock those who believe in Jesus but often try to kill them. It is reported that 100,000 Christians have been martyred for their faith in 40 countries during 2019 mainly in Africa and Asia, and almost all go unreported in the media.

How is the story of Noah relevant to us? John 3: 16 reminds us:

God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life.

The Lord Jesus is our Ark, and if we put our faith in Him, He promises to bring us safely through all the traumas of this life, into His Heavenly Kingdom. He has paid the penalty for all that would separate us from God, and says 'I know the thoughts I have for you, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope'. May we trust Him and experience the comfort of His presence with us through His Holy Spirit.

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,
We thank you that You have made a way for us to come into Your presence through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus if we will surrender our lives to You. You know our needs, our fears and our sorrows and You long to carry them for us. You have given us the Holy Spirit to be our comforter. Help us to trust You. AMEN

Mary

Read Chapters 6 to 9 of Genesis if you want to be reminded of the story of Noah.

