

# MOTTINGHAM METHODIST CHURCH MESSENGER

## August 2020



**'The LORD Himself goes before you!'**  
Deuteronomy 31 verse 8



**THE CHURCH  
IN THE MIDDLE OF  
THE VILLAGE!**



## THINKING ABOUT THE PSALMS

*'Most of Scripture speaks to us; the Psalms speak FOR us.'* (St Athanasius).

### **Psalm 40 - desperation to security**

*'I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry.'* (Psalm 40:1).

*'Dear God, I pray for patience, and I want it now!'* Most of us can identify with this prayer, especially as we face an uncertain future. Psalm 40:1-3 describes how David waited *patiently* on God (lit: *'I waited, waited for the Lord.'*). Do we also intensively wait on God?

David speaks of falling into a deep, dark well and sinking deep into the sludge: *'a slimy pit of mud and mire'*. This expresses his desperate helplessness that threatened to take his life. We don't know what David was going through, but in our current situation we can easily identify with him.

David cried out to God, who answered his prayer: *'He lifted me out of the slimy pit, he set my feet on a rock'*. There is a world of difference between quicksand and rock, as God lifts us from desperation to security. Waiting on God is not inactivity, but it means engaging in service to God and others, as we discern His will and accept His wisdom and timing.

In response, David offers praise to God: *'He put a new song in my mouth. Many will see and fear the Lord and put their trust in him.'* His song is an expression of gratitude and trust in God, who can deliver us from every sort of pit and mire. People of praise never take their life for granted and they are credible witnesses to others, with a personal story of faith to tell.

*'Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, who does not look to the proud.'* Whatever our current circumstances, we can confidently turn to God alone for help, as our loving heavenly Father.

*Paul Hardingham.*



## WHEN WILL OUR CHURCH BE OPEN AGAIN? ....NOT YET.

Although the Government permitted churches to open for worship from 4th July, the Council and church members have taken the difficult decision not to open the church for any activity until the end of September. This decision was based on the fact that the COVID 19 is still active and no longer declining in the population and there are already parts of the country where the numbers are increasing and restrictions have been re-instated meaning that freedoms have been reversed at short notice. In addition the Council took into consideration the possible adverse impact which the return of children to school in September might have because of the greater mobility of a large portion of the population, and that this might not become obvious until later in the month.

The Council will re-consider the situation on the 10<sup>th</sup> September with a view to reinstating worship in the church on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> September.

We can continue to meet together on line for worship on <http://www.orpchiscircuit.org.uk/> (Videos), or using the printable worship service.



### **TO OUR UNCHANGING FATHER, GOD,**

You created us. You know us through and through and still you love us. Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, you accept us and call us your children when we put our trust in Him. In this world of change and uncertainty you are our still point. You know our names; you provide for us and have good plans for us. We are completely safe and secure in you. How wonderful that is! Thank you, loving Father.



## THE TRANSFIGURATION

### Beholding the Glory

I think the monk who lived in cell no 6 at the Dominican convent of San Marco in Florence must have felt that tingle down his spine when he entered his room and saw for the first time the fresco of the Transfiguration that Fra Angelico had painted. I am sure the sight would have stopped him in his tracks, just as Peter, James and John were stopped in their tracks as they beheld their Lord transfigured before them on the mount.

From 1436 Fra Angelico painted a whole series of frescoes for the convent. Here in cell number 6 there is a restrained simplicity and directness about the Transfiguration. One of the three disciples looks out towards us, while the other two are caught up in wonder and awe as they look on Jesus with the faces of Moses and Elijah on either side.

Here Fra Angelico is providing a focus for devotion and prayer for the monks of his community. The scene speaks to us of that sense of awe and reverence.

On August 6 the Transfiguration is remembered. The Gospel accounts relate that special moment of revelation to the inner group of disciples. The glory shown to them evoked a sense of wonder and marvel, but also a sense of loss. For the glory proved elusive and just out of human reach. The moment of revelation passed, and the disciples had to go down the mount again to meet the crying needs of the world, all but forgotten when they were with their Lord on the mountain top.

We have moments of glory. They pass, and we must return to our daily lives. As we think of this painting, remember with thanks those moments of glory when God revealed himself to us, and take them with us as we continue to face the challenges of our lives.

*Adapted from Michael Burgess*



## AS FINE SILVER...

Malachi 3 verse 3 says: *"He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver."*

This verse puzzled some women in a Bible study. They got to wondering what this statement meant about the character and nature of God. One of the women offered to find out the process of refining silver and get back to the group at their next bible study.

That week, the woman made an appointment with a silversmith to watch him at work. As she watched the silversmith, he held a piece of silver over the fire and let it heat up. He explained that in refining silver, one needed to hold the silver in the middle of the fire where the flames were hottest, so as to burn away all the impurities.

The woman thought about God holding us in such a hot spot, and then she thought again about the verse that says: "He sits as a refiner and purifier of silver." She asked the silversmith if it was true that he had to sit there in front of the fire the whole time the silver was being refined. The man answered that yes, he not only had to sit there holding the silver, but he had to keep his eyes on the silver the entire time it was in the fire. If the silver was left a moment too long in the flames, it would be destroyed. The woman was silent for a moment. Then she asked the silversmith, "How do you know when the silver is fully refined?" He smiled at her and answered, "Oh, that's easy - when I can see my image in it."

If today you are feeling the heat of the fire, remember that God has His eye on you and will keep watching you. His aim is not to abandon or destroy you, but to refine you - until He sees His image in you.

# When You Pray

## SUE COPE REFLECTS ON THE NATURE OF PRAYER

I have been studying prayer recently because I was finding life difficult and I know that many people are praying right now for Covid 19 to disappear or for themselves to be safe.

I looked at The Lord's Prayer and comments on it, then asked God what I am to take from all of the information.

What I took from Matthew chapter 6 is that prayer is not showy. And, from the same chapter, I learnt the characteristics of Prayer which are evident in the Lord's Prayer. These are:

### ***1. Our father in Heaven, may your name always be Holy***

Jesus is saying start your prayer by acknowledging that God is supreme.

### ***2. Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven***

Here we are still acknowledging that God is creator and Lord of all, but we are also saying that he has a vision of life on earth being like Heaven in spirit and attitude. This is something we should want to be part of, wanting to bring God's love to the people around us. But it also means that we want God's purposes to be accomplished in this world as well as the next.

### ***3. Give us today our daily bread...***

Bread is a staple food; it is simply flour and water sometimes with yeast added to make it rise or a bit of lard to make it keep. We are asking God for the necessities of life. We are asking him to provide us with what he sees we need - No more! No less!

### ***4. Forgive us our trespasses or debts as we also have forgiven our debtors***

Things happen which are bad and we might have to forgive others. How can we expect God to forgive us if we don't know what forgiveness is? And the only way to know what forgiveness is is for us to realise how hard it is to forgive. Jesus says our forgiveness will happen if we forgive others. Notice! We have to forgive others first!

### ***5. And lead us not into temptation.***

Jesus knew how hard temptation is, how subtle it can be and how the devil can dress evil up as being something you should do for your own good. The devil is a liar. Jesus is encouraging us to ask for help in recognizing temptations in life.

### ***6. But deliver us from evil.***

This is the last phrase in Matthew, but we have chosen to round off the

prayer *to* acknowledge that this is God's world and everything should be done in his power and for his glory with '*for Thine is the kingdom, the power and the Glory for ever, Amen.* Amen indeed!

So, what did I learn about prayer:

- Prayer is worship first and foremost and not about asking God for things. Only 1 of the 10 lines asks for something for ourselves, and then it is only for what we need.
- Praying for other people and sad or troubled situations is covered by the wish for God's world to be as heavenly as he intended it to be.
- We worship God and we mention other people's problems and we might even say that we have a problem BUT we cannot let our problems be the focus of the prayer. God and our relationship with Him is the focus of our prayer,
- Payer should be sincere and not showy.

Adapted from the Circuit video by Sue Cope – 'TEENAGERS on Prayer'



## PRAYING FOR OUR CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

This month the doors of our church will start to be opened. But not everyone will be free to visit. All the people who are part of our church, churches and community families are still out there. They will have various needs and problems and need our prayers. Below is guidance for our prayers based on our normal activities and links.

**Sunday:** Worship and Messy Church - pray for ourselves our members and visitors.

**Monday:** Pray for our ministers - Duncan, Terry and Maureen.

**Tuesday:** Pray for the Good Companions and All Sorts Craft Group

**Wednesday:** pray for those who normally go to the Community Lunch

**Thursday:** Pray for Churches Together in Mottingham - St Andrews, St Albans, St Edwards and Our Lady Help of Christians

**Friday:** Pray for the shop owners, library, Councilors and neighbours.

**Saturday:** Pray for those who normally go to The Youth Club

## WHEN CHRIST STOOD IN TRAFALGAR SQUARE



I'm not a big fan of statues - but my favourite was the life-sized figure of Christ that stood in London's Trafalgar Square during the Millennium celebrations.

It stood on the square's previously-empty fourth plinth, going almost unnoticed among the surrounding grand statues.

The statue, called *Ecce Homo* (Behold the Man), was built by artist Mark Wallinger and erected in 1999. He explained: "I consciously made Him life-size. We are made in God's image, and He was made in our image.

The figure was made of white marble resin, and depicted Christ standing before the multitude with His head slightly bowed. I found the statue of Christ deeply moving and kept returning to Trafalgar Square to stand and gaze at it because to me, the statue declared Christ's vulnerability. It stood as a reminder that the God of all creation came to earth as a man and lived among us. He gave up His life so that we might have salvation.

In a BBC interview, the artist said that he wanted the statue to be an antidote to the "spiritually empty celebration" then taking place at the Millennium Dome in Greenwich.

In April 2017, the statue of Christ was placed on the steps of St Paul's Cathedral during Easter. I watched as tourists passed by not noticing the figure. It was a modern-day parable in marble resin.



When the Apostle Paul took a stroll around Athens, he spotted the various altars and statues to the Greek gods. He found an altar 'To an Unknown God' and declared that this was "the God who made the world and everything in it" who



had made Himself known in Jesus Christ.

Just as Mark Wallinger took possession of the fourth plinth in Trafalgar Square for Jesus Christ - the reason for the Millennium celebrations - so Paul claimed the 'unknown God' altar in Athens for the Christian gospel.

The Bible has always been wary of putting people on pedestals. It shows us all sides of the people it describes, warts and all. It tells us that Moses was a murderer, that David was an adulterer, that Paul persecuted the first Christians and that Peter denied Christ. But all of us have feet of clay, and few of us deserve to be memorialised for centuries in stone or marble. Rather, we are gently encouraged to love God and to love our neighbour as ourselves.

Maybe that's the best way to make our mark in history.

*Peter Crumpler*



## THE MOTTINGHAM LIBRARY IS OPEN!

### Hours of business:

Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturdays from 10am-2pm

Now, explore all that Bromley Libraries offer on: <https://www.facebook.com/BromleyLibraries>

Then join our Chris on a virtual walk around the Village of Highgate - seeing one of Highgate's oldest pubs, a house 2nd only to Buckingham Palace, and the square haunted by a headless chicken! Chris is currently doing a series on Highgate as follows:

- Broadcast Sat 1st August 4pm - Highgate - the top of the hill
- Broadcast Sat 15th August 4pm - The Heights of Highgate
- Broadcast Sat 29th August 4pm Highgate - the final hill.

The talks remain on Bromley's facebook page for some time, so you don't need to watch at the broadcast time if this is inconvenient.



## WHY SOMETIMES WE NEED A BROKEN HEART

There is a Hasidic (Jewish) tale which evokes Deuteronomy 11 verse 18, and seems especially apt for now:

'The pupil comes to the rabbi and asks, "Why does Torah tell us to 'place these words *upon* our hearts'? Why does it not tell us to place these holy words *in* our hearts?"

'The rabbi answers, "It is because as we are, our hearts are closed, and we cannot place the holy words in our hearts. So, we place them on top of our hearts. And there they stay, until, one day, the heart breaks, and the words fall in."

It's often the case that our own breakthroughs seem to happen when we, ourselves, break open, isn't it? This has been, without doubt, a time of breaking open; if not for us personally, then almost certainly for some of those we know and love.

And we're all affected, in different ways. We've all experienced disorientation. We've all lost direct contact with people we love. Many still have no physical contact with others. There's a place for keeping calm and carrying on, but there's time enough to honour sorrow, too.

The words of the Hebrew blessing below have flowed through the world, in song, this season. So often, it's when 'all is well' that we perceive God's blessing in our lives. But how meaningful are the words of the blessing when all is *not* well?

We can now treasure the words that may have rested till now *on* our hearts, waiting for the time they rest *in* our hearts. The words of the blessing are:

'the LORD bless you and keep you;  
the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you;  
the LORD turn his face towards you **and give you peace.**'

*Adapted from Brian Draper*

## JUST AS I AM

### The story behind the hymn



The hymn 'Just As I Am' must be one of the most famous in the world. It has been sung by tens of millions of Christians at Billy Graham Crusades the world over, just for starters! Yet it was not written by a professional who was 'aiming' at a specific market, as many songs seem to be written today. Instead, it was written by an artist in Victorian times.

Her name was Charlotte Elliott, and she was born in Clapham in 1789. She grew up in a well to do home, and became a portrait artist and also a writer of humorous verse. All was well until Charlotte fell ill in her early 30s, and slid into a black depression. A minister, Dr Caesar Malan of Switzerland, came to visit her. Instead of sympathising, he asked her an unexpected question: did she have peace with God? Charlotte deeply resented the question and told him to mind his own business.

But after he left, his question haunted her. *Did she have peace with God?* She knew that she did not, that she had done some very wrong things. So, she invited Dr Malan to return. She told him that she would like to become a Christian, but would have to sort out her life first.

Dr Malan again said the unexpected: "Come just as you are." The words were a revelation to Charlotte. She had assumed that she would have to put her life in order before she could hope to be accepted by God. Instead, she realised that Jesus wanted her just as she was - and He would take care of the sin. Charlotte became a Christian that day.

14 years later, in 1836, Charlotte wrote some verses that summed up how it had been between her and Jesus that day. They

(Just as I am cont)

ran:

*Just as I am, without one plea,  
But that thy blood was shed for me,  
And that thou bids't me come to Thee  
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!*

*Just as I am, tho tossed about  
With many a conflict, many a doubt  
Fightings within, and fears without,  
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!*

Charlotte could not have dreamed that 150 years into the future, her verses would be sung by millions of people all over the world, as they responded to the Gospel presented at many great Billy Graham crusades, and made their way forward to do just as the hymn describes - to come to Jesus Christ, despite sin and fear and doubts, to come 'just as I am.'

AND  
FINALLY...

**WHEN PRAYING, DON'T GIVE GOD  
INSTRUCTIONS - JUST REPORT FOR DUTY!**

*Anon*

### **NOTICE BOARD**

**The Minister:** Rev Duncan MacBean. Tel: 07432 093353

Please Note: The minister's normal day off is a Friday

**The Deacon:** Maureen Spinks. Tel: 01689 821956

Please note: The deacon's normal day off is Tuesday

**The Senior Steward:** Dallas Green. Tel: 020 8617 0076