

**MOTTINGHAM METHODIST  
CHURCH MESSENGER  
September 2020**

September

**'Taste and see that the Lord is  
good'**

**(Psalm 34 verse 8)**



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



September is usually the time when we get back to our normal routines after the summer break. With the current

coronavirus pandemic, it's very different this year! However, it is still a good time to consider how God can use us to make a real difference in our workplace, school, family, friends and community. He equips us with everything we need to make His love known.

When God gave Moses the job of bringing the Israelites out of Egypt, He asked the question, 'What is in your hand?' (Exodus 4:2). Moses was holding his staff, which represented his livelihood (what he was good at); his resources (his flock represented his wealth) and his security (which God was asking him to lay down). God asks the same question of us: What has God given you? Our gifts, temperament, experience, relationships, mind, education can be used in the work God has given us to do. How will we use them to make a difference in the places where He calls us to serve Him?

John Ortberg, in his book 'It All Goes Back in the Box', speaks of Johnny, a 19-year-old with Down's syndrome. He worked at a supermarket checkout putting people's items into bags. To encourage his customers, he decided to put a thought for the day into the bags. Every night his dad would help him to prepare the slips of paper and he would put the thoughts into the bags saying, 'I hope it helps you have a good day. Thanks for coming here.' A month later the store manager noticed that Johnny's line at the checkout was three times longer than anyone else's! People wanted Johnny's thought for the day. He wasn't just filling bags with groceries, he was filling lives with hope!

What has God given you that will help and encourage others?

Paul Hardingham

# 20 SEPT

## REMEMBERING THE ROLE OF ANGELS

### Angels Unaware

One of those surveys which some newspapers love to publish claimed recently that a large number of British people believe in angels - almost as many, in fact, as claimed to believe in God. They didn't tell us what people meant by 'angels'. I suspect quite a few were thinking of young children who die, who are often now said to be 'angels' 'up there'. They're not, of course. They are transformed human beings. Be that as it may, when Christians celebrate the feast of St Michael and All Angels on the 29<sup>th</sup> of this month, there will be many of us, inside and outside churches, who will wonder exactly what or who we are celebrating.

Most simply, the word in the New Testament means 'messenger'. An 'angel' is a being who brings to us God's message or his help. In the Bible angels are variously described. The familiar notion of wings and flight comes from a vision given to Isaiah in the Temple when he was being called as a prophet. The angel Gabriel, who told Mary that she was chosen to be the mother of the Messiah, is not described at all, but his words are recorded in detail. Angels speak to people in dreams (Joseph, the husband of Mary, for instance) and Jesus spoke of 'angels' who particularly care for children ('guardian angels').

Most people, even very devout ones, have never knowingly encountered an angel, I guess. However, the New Testament tells us that in 'showing hospitality to strangers' some of us have 'entertained angels without knowing it'. Clearly wings and eyes of flame are not obligatory - Just human care.



'Oh, go on, be an angel and make me a cup of tea!'

Canon David Winter



## DAWN'S REFLECTIONS ON LIVING IN LOCKDOWN

### The Hardest Part

My initial NHS experience of lockdown was, for me, very unhappy. Following a bone graft, I was due to have my teeth implants put in at Guys a day following lock down but that was put on hold until further notice. I have since had the implants put in. Following my initial joyfulness they failed big time after three weeks. Knowing what I know now, I would never have gone through this treatment. I am left with nothing resolved. I feel that I have been butchered by the surgeon who carried out my last operation. He has left me very disfigured and at 60 I can well do without it. For the moment I have developed a very painful problem with my jaw joints which could take 3 months to heal before anything further can be done.

I had major problems getting my repeat prescriptions. Having queued at the chemist I was informed that the surgery had failed to send the prescription although requested by me. My problem is that if I'm in pain I cannot move, therefore I am in more pain, so it's a vicious circle and difficult when living alone. In addition, having woken one day with arthritis linked "trigger finger", which is very painful, Queen Mary's rheumatology department prescribed more pain medication rather than my normal steroid injection. It has been a very difficult time.

### Day by day living

I learnt what shops to go to without waiting to be let in and I started to receive "Hello Fresh" deliveries to avoid long queues. I have been blessed with really friendly neighbours with whom I have been meeting on our landing for a chat. My door has been open to anyone during lock down and I know who I can visit. In addition, I also know what church is open for people experiencing difficulties and took a neighbour in crisis. With God's help she is doing well. I

meet up with Rita from St Andrews for walks. She and I have watched the Methodist service together.

## Blessings and Encouragements

In these darkest of dark days I still had my faith in God which never left me. Along with a friend and neighbour I went to private prayers on Fridays at St Andrews where the minister laid hands on me and prayed for my recovery. I found that very comforting.

With my faith in the blood of Jesus I am confident that the healing of my jaw joints will be a lot shorter than the anticipated 3 months.



## 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



## ETERNITY IN THE HUMAN HEART

*'He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.'* (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

The 60s hit 'Turn! Turn! Turn!' by the Byrds is based on verses in this chapter: *'There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.'* The different seasons of life are not random, for God is in control and His timing is perfect: *'He has made everything beautiful in its time.'*

The verse goes on to say that God *'has also set eternity in the human heart.'* This means that we all have an in-built sense that there's more to life than we can see, as we search for meaning in life. However, we can fill our lives with other things: career, pleasure, shopping and relationships. While good in themselves, these things can never ultimately satisfy. It is only a relationship with God through Jesus that truly satisfies. How does this challenge us?

Firstly, we are to live for God in all that we do, knowing that it all counts for eternity. This includes helping others find a personal relationship with Jesus Christ for eternity.

Secondly, we accept that there is a lot in the current 'season' where it's difficult to know what God is doing: *'no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.'* However, we do know that everything has consequences for eternity.

Finally, how can we be more aware of eternity every day? Spending time with God in worship and prayer will bring us the true pleasure that belongs to eternity.

*'You made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.'* (St Augustine).

Paul Hardingham



## WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES IN OUR CIRCUIT

### **Bromley Common**

Sunday worship - 10.30am from 6th September

### **Chelsfield and Orpington**

Sunday worship - shorter act of worship at 10.30am

### **Emmanuel**

Sunday worship - 10.30am each Sunday.

### **Petts Wood**

Sunday worship - smaller shorter services at 10:30am

### **Chislehurst**

Sunday worship - from 6th September at 10.30am

**NOTE:** These arrangements may be subject to alteration.



## WORSHIP AND PRAYER OPPORTUNITIES IN OUR MOTTINGHAM CHURCHES TOGETHER

### **St Andrews and St Albans**

Sunday worship - From 13<sup>th</sup> September alternately at St Andrew's and St Alban's

### **St Andrews**

Wednesday - opening for private prayer 6-7pm

Thursday and Friday - opening for private prayer 10am to noon

### **St Albans**

Thursdays - opening for private prayer Noon-1 pm

### **St Edwards**

Monday to Saturday - open for Morning Prayer at 8am,  
- open for private prayer from 10am to 2pm

Wednesday - service of night prayer at 7pm

Sunday Worship - 10.30am morning service.



## PRAY FOR THE PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS IN CHINA

Chinese authorities removed 250 more church crosses earlier this year, The crosses were removed from 'Three-Self' churches in Anhui province. The

action was part of an on-going and wider campaign aimed at deleting Christian images and replacing them with Communist ones.

One congregation of 100 Christians defended their cross at the historic Gulou Church in Fuyang city. But the next day government officials returned, and it was taken away.

An elder from a Three-Self church in Hanshan county said that to know that crosses were being taken down on many churches "makes us very sad because the cross [is] the primary symbol of our faith. But we don't dare to disobey central government orders: little fish don't eat big fish."



## 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

**From Saturday 12th Sept 4pm** - Beyond the Garden Gate 1 - an exploration of the streets north of Covent Garden

**From Saturday 26th Sept 4pm** - Beyond the Garden Gate 2 - more explorations north of Covent Garden

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.







## THINKING ABOUT THE PSALMS

### Psalm 23 - a psalm for the pandemic

There are few psalms as personal and real as Psalm 23. It records David's experience of God as his Shepherd going through dark times.

In the midst of the effects of a global pandemic, this psalm speaks to the fears that can overwhelm us.

**He Knows Me:** 'The Lord is my shepherd...' Just as a good shepherd knows every sheep in his flock, so God know each one of us intimately.

**He Provides for Me:** 'He makes me lie down in green pastures...' Just as the shepherd knows the needs of his sheep, so God will provide what we need in our lives and circumstances.

**He Guides Me:** 'He guides me along the right paths...' Just as the shepherd leads the sheep to the best pastures, so God provides the best for us, as we listen and follow Him.

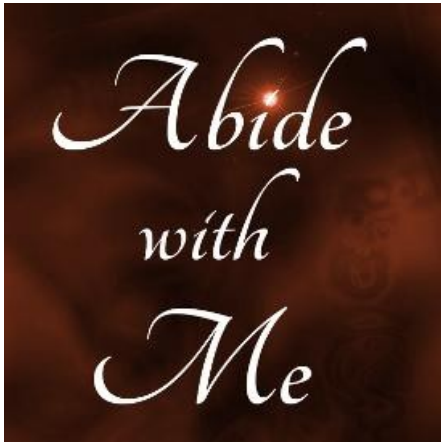
**He Protects Me:** 'Even though I walk through the darkest valley...' Just as the sheep have no need to fear danger when following the shepherd, so we live knowing God's presence and protection.

**He Comforts Me:** 'your rod and your staff, they comfort me.' As the shepherd's rod defends the sheep, and the staff enables him to control the sheep, so God comforts us through His Word and discipline.

The final verses of the psalm (v5-6) offer the security of knowing that our lives are in His hands, even through death, as He leads us to the home we've been looking for all our lives.

Some years ago, a great actor was asked to recite Psalm 23, but asked one of the other guests to do the same. His remarkable rendition was followed by the other man, an older Christian speaking from the heart. Afterwards the actor said: 'The difference between us is that I know the psalm, but he knows the shepherd.'

Paul Hardingham



## THE STORY BEHIND THE HYMN

One of the most famous hymns in the world came out of Brixham, near Torbay, Devon, in 1847.

In those days it was a poor, obscure fishing village, and the vicar was the Rev Henry Francis Lyte. It was a discouraging place to be a pastor, but Henry felt that God wanted him there, and so he stayed, though it was lonely work, and he suffered constant ill health.

By the time he was 54, Henry had contracted tuberculosis and asthma, and he and his family knew he was dying. It would have been so easy for him to look back on his life and feel a complete failure. What had he ever much accomplished? And yet - and yet - Henry knew that in life it is not worldly success that matters, but how much we respond to Jesus Christ, and how much we follow Him.

In September of 1847 Henry was preparing to travel to the south of France, as was the custom for people with tuberculosis at that time. One day before he left, he read the story in the gospel of Luke about the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. They were met by Jesus on the day of His resurrection, and they invited Him to stay with them because it was getting late. "Abide with us", they said "for it is towards evening."

"Abide with us - for it is toward evening." These words struck a chord with Henry, who knew that it was getting 'towards evening' in his life. So, he sat down and wrote this hymn as a prayer to God - Shortly after Henry wrote that hymn, he preached his last sermon. He was so ill he practically crawled into the pulpit to do so. A few weeks later, in Nice, France, he died, and so of course he never knew that his hymn would go on to become greatly loved the world over.

(The following are just some of the verses)

Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;  
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide!  
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,  
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;  
Earth's joys grow dim; its glories pass away;  
Change and decay in all around I see;  
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.

I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless;  
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness.  
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?  
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me.



## WHEN WILL OUR CHURCH BE OPEN AGAIN? ....

The Council will re-consider the situation on a zoom meeting on the 10<sup>th</sup> September with a view to reinstating worship in the church on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> September. Information will be circulated nearer the time.

We will continue to meet together on line for worship on

<http://www.orpchiscircuit.org.uk/> (Videos), or using the printable worship service. These provisions are planned until November.

### 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



## GOD IN THE ARTS

**He gave us eyes to see them**

Michael Burgess considers 'The Madonna of the Goldfinch' by Raphael. It hangs in the Uffizi in Florence.

The weeks and months of lockdown have been difficult and testing times for many of us, but they have also provided the opportunity to look afresh at the world of nature. With less traffic on the roads, less air pollution, and less noise pollution, the sky has seemed bluer and the bird song more joyful and confident.

Raphael was only 37 years old when he died in 1520, but his work is marked by maturity and great beauty. No more so than in this painting which shows Mary with a young Jesus and John the Baptist. You could easily miss the tiny bird which is carefully held by John and gently stroked by Jesus, who has one foot resting on His mother's. It is an intimate, tender scene which was painted in 1505 as a wedding gift for Lorenzo Nasi. It was badly damaged by an earthquake in 1548, painstakingly restored in the early part of this century, and now hangs in the Uffizi in Florence.

As we look, we rejoice in the grace and simplicity of the scene. We look again and ask ourselves 'Why a goldfinch?' The bird has a red spot on its head, and legend tells that the goldfinch flew down to the cross of Calvary to take a thorn from the crown of thorns. As it pulled the thorn in its beak, its head was splashed with a drop of blood.

And so this painting of gentleness and innocence opens out into a wider canvas of redemptive love. Our thoughts move from infancy to the cross. Mary, sat on a rock, is reading 'The Throne of Wisdom', and the artist is inviting us to ponder where true wisdom is found. Here, as we look at the wonder of nature and new life with a mother and children, but also as we look ahead to the 'wisest love' of Jesus who is our Redeemer.