

MOTTINGHAM METHODIST CHURCH MESSENGER October 2020

October

Honour the Lord from your wealth
and from the first of all your
produce.

Proverbs 3 verse 9



THE CHURCH
IN THE MIDDLE OF
THE VILLAGE!



MUSINGS ON MY SABBATICAL

My sabbatical was an odd experience, to say the least. I considered postponing the start and I could have done so, but in the end I only delayed the start by 2 weeks. From the time I began sabbatical, I was in lockdown at home like everyone else. Annoyingly, I found it really hard to relax because we have a house-full (6 adults and a 10-year-old child) all going slightly stir crazy from having been in isolation since the middle of March. After a few weeks of this, I realised that I was suffering from a lack of solitude because it has been in silent retreats and in times of solitude that I have had my most significant times of spiritual growth. A particularly meaningful scripture for me is:

This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says:
"In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it." Isaiah 30:15,

This served as a solemn reminder to me to do what Jesus so frequently did and, when the pressure of people around me grows so intense that I cannot discern the voice of God, I should make time to be alone and reflect on my relationship with God.

it is true that constant exposure to people and the issues that they face or create can be very draining. Anyone who has gone through protracted crises knows this all too well. You come out of the other side of it worn out, unsure about what 'normal' is going to look like after all your deeply-felt pain and lovingly-expended effort.

Sabbatical is not just about recuperation. It is referred to as a 'gift' by the Church. It can allow ministers to reflect on their spiritual journey, to dip into solitude if that is their wont, to spend time on their pain and their journey. I didn't have the easiest

sabbatical and all the plans I had made fell by the wayside, but I have come out of it with clear goals, some of which relate to me alone and others which relate to my work in the Church. I was reminded of an old Jewish saying: "If you want to hear God laugh, tell Him your plans". My prayer throughout my sabbatical was "Loving God, you know what I need. Please help me to get what I need". My prayer may not have been answered the way I wanted, but I do think it was answered.

Thank you to all the people who kept things running, who continued the work of Church and allowed me to withdraw for a season. I truly appreciate your gift of sabbatical to me.

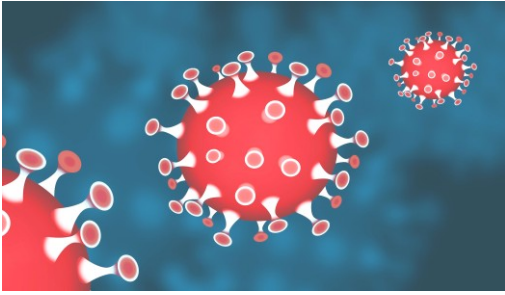
Shalom, Peace, Duncan MacBean



YOU ARE LOVED BY GOD

One of the most beautiful passages in Scripture is found in Isaiah 43: '...you are mine. When you pass through the waters I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned...For I am the Lord, your God,.. you are precious and honoured in my sight, and ...I love you...(Isa 43: 1- 4)

Write down that last phrase on a card: 'You are precious and honoured in my sight...I love you.' It is tremendous - and astonishing. YOU are loved by GOD. Who else do you need to impress? What other ladder do you need to climb? What are you going to add to your CV to top that? When you are tempted to despair, when you are afraid, anxious, alone, remember: **God loves you.** He said so Himself.



THE TOLL OF COVID-19 ON PRISONERS

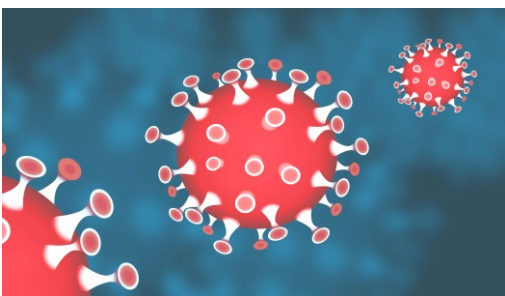
Prison Fellowship is still helping our prisoners as it seeks to help those in desperate need...

Prison Fellowship has reminded its supporters of the hardships facing prisoners during coronavirus. Many prisoners have had to spend nearly 23 hours a day in their cells.

Though such lockdown has been essential for the protection of both staff and prisoners against the coronavirus, it has had the effect, says Peter Holloway, CEO of Prison Fellowship, of creating for the prisoners "a much harsher sentence" than they would normally have had.

He goes on: "Most Prison Fellowship volunteers are not currently allowed into prison, and we feel the loss of that 'ministry of presence' as an organisation. Yet we are not passive! We know that soon our programmes and that loving presence of our volunteers - showing Christ's love in a thousand small ways - will be more essential than ever."

Yet Prison Fellowship itself is struggling, as donations have inevitably plummeted due to Covid-19. If you can help, please go to: <https://prisonfellowship.org.uk/insight/>



THE TOLL OF COVID-19 ON LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

Coronavirus has left low-income families struggling with a significant deterioration in living standards and high stress levels. So warns a new report from Child Poverty Action Group and the Church of England.

The report, *Poverty in the pandemic: The impact of coronavirus on low-income families and children*, is based on a

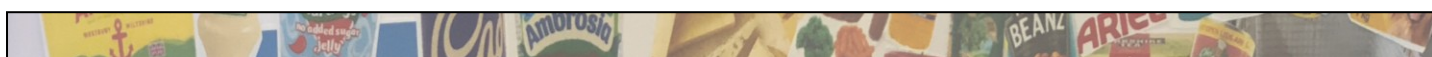
survey of families with children who are eligible for free school meals.

It found around eight in 10 respondents reported being in a worse financial position than before the pandemic, and half were much worse off because their income had fallen while costs have risen.

Nearly nine in 10 respondents reported spending substantially more than before on food, electricity, and other essentials - usually because they have been at home much more. Many families also said that the cost of food had gone up significantly during the early part of lockdown.

The Bishop of Durham said: "In these unprecedented times, we all need to ask ourselves urgently how we can help our neighbour. It is also imperative that the Government does all that it can to protect families and children."

Alison Garnham, Chief Executive of Child Poverty Action Group, said: "Low-income parents have been living under a cloud of anxiety in lockdown - trying to find money for family basics as their costs have been rising. That's taken a very heavy toll."



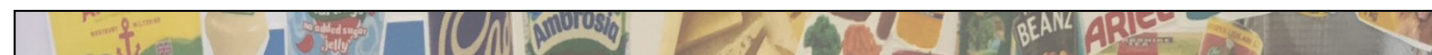
NO HARVEST THANKSGIVING?

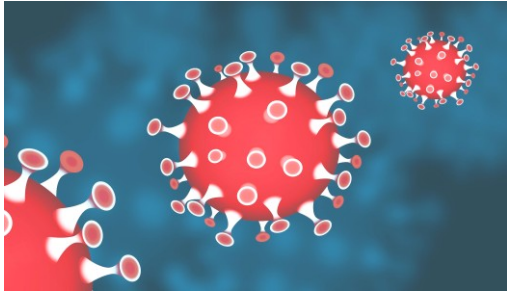
We may not have our usual harvest thanksgiving services this year but never were our gifts more needed. One of our sister churches, **St Edwards, St. Keverne Road, Mottingham**, runs a successful food bank providing many families and individuals with items and food they desperately need.

In thanksgiving for all we have, as church, Messy Church and community, let's donate generously to St Edwards's food bank during October. The doors are open on Monday, Thursday, Friday, & Saturday from 9.30 to 1.00, & Wednesday 6.00 to 7.00.

Things for Harvest Collections:

Tins – meat, fish, vegetables; fruit - pies, puddings etc in tins; pasta and rice in packets; pasta sauces; cereals, biscuits; tea, coffee, sugar and long-life milk; sanitary towels, toothpaste, soap, nappies.





THE TOLL OF COVID-19 ON CHRISTIANS AROUND THE WORLD

Oppression and discrimination against Christians has increased during Covid, says Release International, which has launched an appeal to help Christians suffering during the pandemic.

Many Christians have been denied food and relief aid and excluded from support systems during lockdown. They have been abandoned by families because of their faith and refused relief by governments and Non-Government organisations (NGOs).

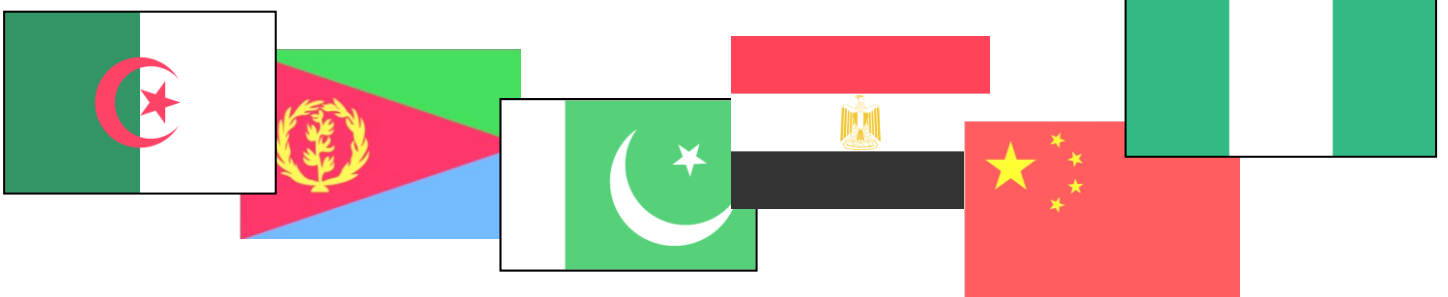
Several countries have stepped up persecution against Christians. "Covid-19 is having a devastating impact on the lives of many poor Christians. In places hostile to the faith, Christians are experiencing increased hardship. "Food is now in short supply. They are unable to work and can't earn, and support is being withheld because of their faith. Their cries for help are being ignored by local charities who are distributing food packages only to families of other faiths. Christians fleeing persecution have been barred from refugee camps. The situation is especially hard for converts from a Muslim background.

Paul Robinson of Release International says: "Right now, it's up to us in the family of faith to give them our support."

www.releaseinternational.org/covid

Release international has highlighted the plight of the Christians in the following countries:

Algeria, Eritrea, Pakistan, Egypt, China, Nigeria.





BIBLE SUNDAY

Why should I read the Bible?

The Bible is the world's best-selling book of all time. However, it isn't one book, but a library of 66 books, composed by some 44 writers over a period of 1500 years in a range of literature including history, poetry, prophecy, letters and apocalyptic (end times). Despite having a number of different writers, the Bible claims one author: God himself!

This is the basis of the unity of its message and authoritative claim to be the primary way by which God speaks to us: 'All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work' (2 Timothy 3 verse 16). The Bible is inspired ('the word of God in the words of men') and presents itself as a **manual for life**, equipping us to live for God in every aspect of our lives. We also have the promise of the Holy Spirit to guide us in applying the words to our lives: 'the Spirit will guide you into all truth' (John 16:13).

However, the Bible could also be described as a **love letter** from God, as He uses it to deepen our relationship with him. As Jesus said: 'You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me' (John 5 verses 39 & 40). Christians follow a person not a book, and the Scriptures are intended to help us to know Jesus better.

At her coronation the Queen was given a Bible with the words '**the most precious thing this world affords**'. Does this reflect our own attitude to the Bible?

Paul Hardingham



YOUR CHANCE TO LEARN MORE FROM THE BIBLE

Join Maureen's Zoom Bible Study at 7.45 pm on Mondays by phone or internet!

Subject: The last 12 books of the Old Testament - the Minor Prophets.

Phone 01689 821956 or **E-mail** mdospinks@gmail.com and Maureen will set you up.



THINKING ABOUT THE PSALMS – THE BIBLE'S POETRY BOOK

Psalm 90: A psalm for our time

'War simply aggravates the permanent human situation so that we can no longer ignore it. Human life has always been lived on the edge of a precipice.' (CS Lewis on World War II). Coronavirus powerfully illustrates this, and Psalm 90 demonstrates a right response to the crisis: 'Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.' (verse 12).

The Shortness of Life: We live as though life will go on forever, but in reality our time on earth is short: 'A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by' (verse 4). By contrast God, who inhabits eternity, sees the whole of history in a single moment. How can we see our lives in the light of God, who is 'from everlasting to everlasting' (verse 2). True wisdom is making sure that we don't waste the time we are given in this life!

The Fragility of Life: Living to 80 years old is definitely an achievement! We know how we wear out in life until we are dust again: 'You turn people back to dust, saying, 'Return to dust, you mortals.'(verse 3). This is the result of turning from God to sin: 'You have set our iniquities before you' (verse 8). True wisdom warns us not to trust in our own abilities or seek satisfaction in the things of this world.

The Love of God: During the pandemic, many have lost loved ones, yet if we allow God's love to take hold of our lives, even death can bring us closer to God: 'Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.' (verse 14). True wisdom is able to ask: 'May the favour of the Lord our God rest on us' (verse 17).

Paul Hardingham



WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES IN OUR CIRCUIT

Bromley Common Sunday worship - 10.30am

Chelsfield and Orpington Sunday worship - shorter act of worship at 10.30am

Emmanuel Sunday worship - 10.30am

Petts Wood Sunday worship - smaller shorter services at 10:30am

Chislehurst Sunday worship - 10.30am

It is wise to contact the church beforehand to book to attend its service

NOTE: These arrangements may be subject to alteration.



WORSHIP AND PRAYER OPPORTUNITIES IN OUR MOTTINGHAM CHURCHES TOGETHER

St Andrews and St Albans

Sunday worship On Zoom at 10.00am
ID of 675-014-6024 and the Password 859013

St Andrews

Wednesday Midweek service on Zoom at 10.00

Friday Open for private prayer 10am to 11am

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
except Wednesday

Wednesday - service of night prayer at 7pm .



THE MOTTINGHAM LIBRARY IS OPEN!

Hours of business now:

Monday, Friday and Saturday
from 10am-5pm

Wednesday 10am -2pm



Tel:020 8857 5406

Now, explore all that Bromley Libraries offer on:

<https://www.facebook.com/BromleyLibraries>

Then join our Chris's Bite-Sized London explorations:

Saturday 10th Oct -Wonderful Westminster 1 - an exploration
through the streets from Parliament to Smith Square

Saturday 24th Oct - Wonderful Westminster 2 - an exploration
through the streets from Smith Square to Westminster Abbey

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.



WHEN WILL OUR CHURCH BE OPEN AGAIN FOR WORSHIP? ...NOT YET!

At the start of October the Council has
decided not to open the church for worship.
The matter will be addressed again at the
start of November

But please join the 500 who meet
together on line for worship each week on
<http://www.orpchiscircuit.org.uk/> (Videos), or
access the printable Sunday worship service from the website.

BUT NOTE! The church hall is now available for regular activity
bookings. Phone 07757 717399.



PRAYING FOR OUR CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

We may not be open, but 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

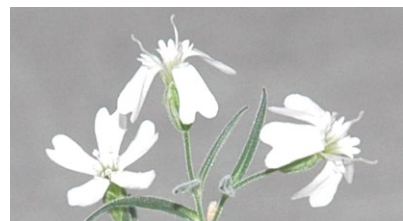
Friday: Pray for the shop owners, library, Councilors and neighbours.

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



PARABLE: THE STRENGTH OF A SEED

At this time of year we enjoy the fruits of our gardens, fields and hedgerows: vegetables ripen, crops are harvested, and berries begin to show bright among the leaves. Much of this growth started with a few seeds in spring: this miracle of life coming from small dead-looking things. There is a league table of long-lived seeds. The winners so far are from the narrow-leaved campion, buried by squirrels in the Siberian permafrost over 30,000 years ago. When those seeds finally germinated, they became healthy plants that flowered and produced seeds of their own.

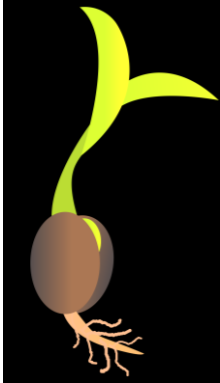


The Bible contains many links between seeds and spiritual growth. The parable of the sower (Matthew 13) is the most famous.

(Parable: the strength of a seed cont)

A person may hear or experience something of God which has the potential to germinate into a life of following Him, resulting others coming to know God too. But things can happen that snatch that seed away, killing it before it has finished germinating, or choking its growth.

Sometimes the knowledge of God gets trampled, churned too deep in the mire of life to receive the warmth and light it needs to develop into faith. But buried seeds don't always die, they can lie dormant, remaining alive but inactive until the earth is turned over. The possibility of something altering the life of that buried seed resulting in a changed life may seem infinitesimally small, but it's not zero. The seed may be incredibly tough, but it is just waiting for a chance to grow.



The Gospel story plays on the fact that it took a long time for the disciples to understand the full implications of Jesus' teaching. They could have been discouraged, but Jesus was not. It can take a long time, sometimes decades, for people to work their way through the various barriers, and sticking points, that may keep them from following through on their spiritual experience. When we finally receive - or are open to - the encouragement, challenge, or experience that helps our faith in Christ grow, we can experience the rich fruit of a transformed life.



Adapted from Ruth M Bancewicz

NOTICE BOARD

The Minister: Rev Duncan MacBean. Tel: 07432 093353 (Day off Friday)

The Deacon: Maureen Spinks. Tel: 01689 821956 (Day off Tuesday)

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