

The Link Magazine

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MINISTER'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

September, being the start of the Methodist year has often been a time of endings and new beginnings. So Happy New year to you all! As the summer draws to an end (what summer, some may ask), churches across the lands are planning to plan and think creatively how we can celebrate Harvest and God's goodness to us in this time of pandemic. Harvest is also a time for endings and new beginnings, the ripened crop is gathered in and soon it will be time to prepare the ground to be sown again. Jesus told a parable about a farmer who went out and sowed his crop which ended up in a variety of places, such as between rocks, choked by weeds or eaten by birds. Other seed however, fell into good soil and brought forth grain (Mark 4:2-9). What is the most important lesson to be drawn from this parable of the sower? Is it that our lives need to be like fertile soil, receptive to God's Word, so that we bear a rich harvest to His glory? Or the point of the parable could be that we need to guard against shallow discipleship and that we need to have our lives deeply rooted in Christ. That is certainly an important point, because often people commit themselves to Christ in a surge of enthusiasm, and then quickly fall away. We can even say that by telling this parable Jesus is telling us that some people will never respond to the gospel. The truth of course is that all of these points are valid. There is, nevertheless, a further lesson in Jesus' words which is perhaps even more important than any other and that is quite simply we all need to sow. The seed may be the object of the story, but the sower has to first sow it, and for the word 'sower' read 'us'. We are the ones called to spread God's Word, the

responsibility of proclaiming the good news of Christ is entrusted to all of us. Sowing of any kind is a risky business, whether we are farmers, gardeners or Christians sowing the seeds of the gospel. As Christians we are called to respond creatively to the challenges that face the church and community. We are called to help bring about new beginnings, not only in us, but also to all those we meet.

Every blessing,

Tanya

WORSHIP IN SEPTEMBER

At the moment the churches in the circuit are planning the best way to allow worship to resume in the churches safely. Hopefully this will be sometime in September but the best way of achieving this is being decided. For Lidgett Park and Shadwell the arrangements will be communicated by Revd Tanya once they have the approval of the Circuit Superintendent and the Church Council'

SPIRITUAL GEOMETRY

He drew a circle that shut me out-
 Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.
 But Love and I had the wit to win:
 We drew a circle that took him in!

REMINDER

David Wilkes is making a CD which is going on sale to raise funds for the church project. The recording should be complete by the beginning of September if all goes well and we look forward to getting the CD shortly afterwards. Ed.

It is with sadness that we record the death of Joan Gelsthorpe, wife of Ron, a long-standing member of our church family.

PRAYER FOR CHANGE

This prayer also appears in the magazines of our covenanting churches, St Edmund's and St Andrew's.

This prayer is from 'Around a Thin Place', an Iona Pilgrimage Guide. The book formerly belonged to the late Jean Walker, a regular contributor to Prayers for Change.

The Water of Life

Generous God,

forgive us that we turn the tap and forget
how precious is this gift of water.

Forgive our waste.

Forgive the little we have done to provide lean water for all.



We pray for those who must continue to walk several miles to draw water;

for those whose land is dry – who pray for rain and it does not come – whose crops, livestock and children die;

for communities where water is contaminated and carries disease;

for people threatened by rising sea levels or flood waters.

Loving God,

as we rejoice with villages where clean water can now be drawn,
strengthen our resolve to care for all you have created,
that we may be worthy of the water of life,
that you have so lavishly given us in Jesus Christ.

Amen

METHODISM IN LEEDS (PART 1)

Following his retirement, Fred Langley undertook a course of study with the Open University in Religious Studies. As part of this he wrote a dissertation on *Some Aspects of Methodism in Leeds*. I have been fortunate enough to have seen this recently and was surprised to find what an important Methodist centre Leeds was from the very beginnings of Methodism. I thought people would be interested to share some of the things that Fred discovered. It is a tale of success and growth, but also one of controversy and schism. Fred's dissertation was a substantial piece of work and, despite my editing, is too long for a single issue of the Link. Part 2 in October will deal with the problem of *Dissent and Schism*. Some of the material included here also comes from *A History of Methodism in Shadwell* by D. Colin Dews, prepared for the bicentenary of Shadwell Methodist Church in 2014. Finally, we had an excellent 8-part series in the Link by John Summerwill entitled *What is the point of Methodism?* which is well worth reading again and which addresses not only the history but also the present state of Methodism in Britain and possible future trends. It can be found in issues of the Link from February to October 2016. I can let people have electronic copies of these if they no longer have their own. I will be referring to some of the points John made. I am grateful for John's comments on this article.

John Wesley was elected as a Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford in 1726 and was ordained as an Anglican priest two years later. In 1729, while lecturing at Oxford, he joined the Holy Club which had been started by his brother Charles and became its leader. It was from the systematic pursuit of Bible study, prayer and good works that the group was labelled the Methodists, initially a term of derision but readily adopted by the group. In 1735 John and Charles embarked on an ill-conceived mission to the new colony of Georgia in America. The mission lasted 2 years and during this time John came into contact with the Moravian church and was influenced in his theology by his Moravian friend, Peter Böhler.

Following return to London John was in despair feeling he did not have the faith to preach and finding little comfort in his religion, but he persevered with the encouragement of Böhler. On 24th May 1738 he attended an evening meeting in Aldersgate. Here, while someone was reading from the preface to Paul's Letter to Romans, he felt his 'heart strangely warmed' and an assurance that his sins were forgiven through faith in Jesus Christ. This has been regarded by many as his moment of conversion. Wesley broke his relationship with the Moravians in London in 1739 over theological differences.

About this time, George Whitefield, formerly also of the Holy Club, returned to England after a much more successful mission to Georgia and began as a reforming preacher. He was banned from the pulpits of the Church of England but started an open-air revival in and around Bristol. John was persuaded by him to go to Bristol and join him in his work and this was the beginning of Wesley's great open-air ministry. Methodist societies were established in Bristol, London and the developing industrial cities (Leeds in 1742).

However, Wesley and Whitefield had theological differences. Whitefield was inclined to Calvinism which believed in the doctrine of predestination, namely, that only the elect could be saved, whereas Wesley regarded this as heretical and believed that salvation was open to all (Arminianism). They also had different views on the legitimacy of slavery (Wesley being against). They separated in 1741 and travelled different paths, although they remained friends. Whitefield continued his ministry and went on to found the Calvinistic Methodists.

Leeds became a Methodist centre of some importance. Wesley had established a system of control through annual conferences, initially in Bristol, then in London from 1744 and with Leeds as a centre from 1753. Only a limited number of approved preachers were allowed to attend conferences and the absence of lay

involvement in decision making was much later to become a source of friction and schism.

The question of the relationship between Methodism and the Church of England became an issue starting with a debate at the Leeds conference in 1755. No decision on separation from the Anglican Church was reached and the debate was repeated at the Leeds conference on 1781 (where members took communion at the Parish Church before their meeting) and again at the Leeds conference of 1789. Relations with the Church of England were becoming increasingly strained and the final break came in 1795, a few years after Wesley's death on 27th March 1791.

There followed a rapid growth in Methodism throughout the 19th Century, mostly in urban centres so that by the end of the century there were 450,000 members. Because adherents were encouraged to live by the tenets of thrift, hard work and sobriety, the result was that they became economically comfortable and unwilling to disrupt the established social order. In the cities, many moved to better suburban housing and built new churches there, something which was a factor in the emergence of new Methodist groupings, notably the Primitives, who had closer contact with lower paid workers and also made a significant impact in early trades unionism.

Local Developments.

John Nelson, a stone mason from Birstall, while working on the Treasury buildings in Whitehall was converted after hearing John Wesley preach. On his return home Nelson also began to preach at his own house and later in Armley where he established a Methodist Society in 1742. News spread of the people flocking to hear him and Mary Shent walked there with her two friends (both Marys) to listen. She then won over her husband, William Shent, who owned a shop at the corner of Briggate and Duncan Street in Leeds. Shent began to preach at his shop and invited Nelson over to preach there. Another society was established. John Wesley travelled to

Leeds and by 1743 the two societies in Leeds and Armley had been incorporated into his connexion.

During the late 18th and early 19th centuries there was a rapid growth in membership of the Methodist Church in Leeds. The single Leeds circuit of 1768 gave rise to separate circuits in Wakefield and Bramley. The circuit was then divided into Leeds East and Leeds West and then again into four in 1840 when there was a circuit based on Brunswick, one based on Oxford Place, one based on St Peter's (replacing Boggard House) and the Leeds fourth circuit based on Wesley Meadow Lane. Meanwhile, chapels were also being established in the rural communities. Of interest to us is the Thorner Methodist Society which came into existence in 1784 under the influence of the Pawson family and in Shadwell where a farmer, William Dawson was granted a licence for his farmhouse to be used for Methodist meetings. By 1797 a Methodist Society had been established in Shadwell with a roll of 10 members and with Matthew Dodgson as class leader, later to become a local preacher. The country societies, although associated with the large urban societies were regarded as of lesser status and the circuit ministers rarely visited their country brethren where preaching was in the hands of the local preachers. In Shadwell, a chapel was opened in 1814 (now the village library). The foundation stone for the present chapel was laid on 27th April 1892.

Arthur Bantoft of Barwick Methodist church has written an interesting history of the development of Methodism in the Barwick, Thorner and Seacroft area. A lady called Betty Dunwell began to hold meetings in Barwick around 1750 and the first chapel was built in Barwick in 1803. The foundation stone of the present chapel was laid in 1899.

Stan Pearson

I try to avoid looking backward and keep looking upward.

Charlotte Bronte

A kind word is like a spring day. ***Russian Proverb***

APART YET TOGETHER

John and Margaret Summerwill send their thanks to all the people who have sent them good wishes on their Golden Wedding Anniversary. They had a lovely family weekend, albeit the Covid-19 regulations had to be observed even in a family dining room with a 2-metre gap between them and their offspring. Wearing masks would have been a step too far, making eating the celebration cake a messy challenge.



In these uncertain times
we know you might feel unsure
But flowers still grow, birds still sing
and waves still sweep the shore.

And with the rising
and setting of the sun,
Nature reminds us all
that brighter days will come.

From the National Trust Magazine with thanks to Lynne Pulein

FAREWELL TO THORNER METHODIST CHURCH

Thorner Methodists met in the village for the first time some 266 years ago this year at the home of John Preston on 6th May 1754. In September 1760 a licence was granted for meetings of worship for Methodists in the house of John Pawson who went on to become a Methodist Minister in 1785. Incidentally, John Pawson was ordained by John Wesley and he went on to become President of the Methodist Conference twice in his lifetime! In 1803 a new chapel was opened in the village, the premises of which are now in the building known as the Village Shop and a blue plaque can be seen in the ginnel alongside the shop acknowledging this event. The present Church building on Main Street was opened as a Day School in 1857. The Congregation continued to grow and in September 1876 the foundation stone was laid for the church on Carr Lane and this Chapel was opened on 10th April 1878. This Chapel continued in use until 1985 when it was converted into flats.

The Methodists moved back to worship on 8th December 1985 to the old Methodist School on Main Street which had in the interim become the village post office; the post office was relocated across the road to the shop which is now the delicatessen. This new Chapel was opened by the then District Chairman of the Leeds District, the Rev'd Roger Ducker on Saturday 7th December 1985, the day before it opened for Sunday worship and we have remained there ever since.

It is with great sadness that we have had to close our chapel on Main Street when our Minister, the Rev'd Dr Daniel Mwailu, retires from Ministry at the end of August this year. Our congregation has dwindled in numbers to a maximum of ten people worshipping weekly which means we are no longer viable as a church. We have held many Ecumenical meetings and services together with the folk at St. Peter's C of E since the Anglican - Methodist Covenant was signed in November 2003. It therefore felt fitting to hold a service at the Chapel on Sun 2nd August, led by the Rev'd Andy Nicholson, as a welcoming service for the congregation of Thorner Methodists as some have decided to join the congregation at St. Peter's

ensuring a worshipping community of Christians Together in Thorne.

The final Methodist service was scheduled to be held on Sunday 9th August and this was to be led by the Rev'd Kerry Tankard, the Yorkshire West District Chairman. However, due to Covid-19, the chapel closed when the lockdown was announced in March this year and unfortunately, will not be able to reopen in the foreseeable future and so we held a virtual service online on Sun 2nd August at 10:30am presided over by the Rev'd Andy Nicholson with many of the former Methodist Ministers of Thorne Methodists taking part.

We as a church have over many years had coffee mornings and social events to raise money for outside organisations. None of this would have been possible without the support of our Methodist friends around the Circuit giving their time and money as you've supported our many differing charitable causes so many thanks to you all for your loyal support!

This is not the end but merely the beginning of another chapter as we begin to worship together at St. Peter's going full circle from the time when our founder, the Rev'd John Wesley, an ordained Church of England vicar, first founded the Society known as Methodists.

Ann Johnson

Senior Steward of Thorne Methodist Church, 2003-2020

I would like to thank the Rev'd Tim Morris, Minister at Thorne from 1997-2007. He has provided my information concerning Thorne Methodists past which I obtained from his booklet entitled "Thorne Methodist Church 1754-2004", which he published in 2004 to celebrate 250 years of Methodism in Thorne. This booklet has been updated by Tim and entitled Thorne Methodist Church 1754-2020. I have copies if anyone would like one. They are free and donations are requested to be given in lieu to Christian Aid.

(The editor remembers preaching in the Carr Lane church during his time on note as a local preacher.)

PROJECT NEWS. SEPTEMBER 2020.

With the start of lockdown, all the fund-raising events had to be cancelled and so, in May, the Project Group began their monthly baking lists. From small beginnings, the orders for our home baking has grown enormously and August saw our largest set of orders yet!

The baking has been completed by the Project Group helped each month by Sue Wittrick and Val Faint, to whom we say a big “thank you”. We also had help from Maureen and Bernie, who run Oasis Zambia, for the last couple of months.

The Yorkshire Day lunches, bought, prepared and delivered by Haydn and Jenny Dalton on August 1st were a great success and we have had many comments of appreciation.

For those of you who have not tasted our baking, we have offered scones, tray-bakes of various sorts, individual cheesecakes, whole cakes, quiche, sausage rolls, Cornish pasties, marmalades and jams with Yorkshire specialties offered alongside the Yorkshire lunches. A list to set the taste buds afire!

All our baking has been donated by the bakers, adding their own contribution to the fund-raising and enabling good profits to be made each month. For this, I thank them all. They have also sweated in kitchens on the hottest day of the year (July 31st)!

The Project for our two charities has now finished. At the time of writing I have to receive confirmation from Alan Wittrick of the total raised this year, but I do know that our lockdown baking has raised £2,000. A magnificent total, I think you will agree.

The bakers are having a well-earned rest in September but will be meeting (virtually or in real life, we shall see!) to decide on the way forward. It is highly unlikely that our Coffee Mornings will be starting any time soon, nor any planned events.

The Christmas Concert with the Wendel Singers and the YEP Brass Ensemble has been booked for Tuesday December 8th. Will it go ahead? It would be lovely to think so, wouldn't it? A truly lovely way to start to get back to normal (whatever that is in the future).

The Group will make provisional plans for next year's fund-raising which will be for Church funds and a replacement dishwasher and hope we can see them to fruition. If not, we will continue to think of non-social ways to continue to support the Project. We will keep you informed of our ideas.

Until we can meet again, sincere thanks from us all for your marvellous support in these difficult times.

Margaret Farrar.

On behalf of Betty Ashton, Kathy Benson, Pat Brooke, Heather Crosby, Jenny Dalton, Mary Patchett, Jan Rippin, Jan Sanders.

DID ANY OF US IMAGINE?

Did any of us imagine, nigh on 5 months ago, that the pandemic situation would have barely changed? I said to a neighbour, 'When it's all over we'll have to have a street party'. 'As soon as it's all over I'll have a day when I eat every meal in a cafe'. How much of our lifestyle I took for granted. How much more thankful I should have been. Why did I not realise what a privileged life I had? I've heard people saying, 'This pandemic proves there is no God'. Others say, 'It's all Gods judgement on human wickedness'. My personal belief is unchanged. My God doesn't give favours to some of his children and blight others, any more than a human parent favours his compliant child above the strong-willed individualist. I don't expect miracles for myself.....I don't even believe in physical miracles.....but I do have a God who walks with me come the proverbial hell or high water. St Paul expresses it perfectly in Romans 8 verses 31 to 39. So perfectly in fact that I

want these verses read at my funeral! He concludes that nothing at all in all creation can separate us from God's love shown in Jesus. Let's hang on to that.

Pat Nolan

BOOK REVIEW

The Pearl That Broke Its Shell by Nadia Hashimi

This book was given to me as a birthday present and I have to admit that I found it a very difficult read and would have given up but for the fact that I felt accountable to the donor, the problem being that the setting was Afghanistan and the numerous characters had similar names which confused me.

Nadia Hashimi's parents left Afghanistan in the 1970's for America She was born there but in 2002 visited Afghanistan with her parents for the first time.

The novel centres round the lives of two women, Shekiba and her great great granddaughter, Rahima. Afghanistan's patriarchal traditions valued sons over daughters. In many ways Rahima's story is a modernised version of Shekiba's struggles, both women finding a new freedom in the male roles they were able to adopt. Shekiba's journey began when she was taken to the King's palace in Kabul where she became a guard of the King's harem. Only women dressed as men could be appointed as male guards would never be trusted! This gave her an independence unknown to Afghan women.

Rahima, on the other hand, had a less traumatised early life but, unfortunately, being born into a family of girls, which was seen as a great misfortune, life had its difficulties. Her father yearning for a son developed a drug and mental health problem but there was a solution to ease the financial stress, known as the bacha posh. In certain circumstances a young girl may disguise as a boy until of marriageable age, go to school and earn money during free

time. Rahima became a bacha posh, turning her life upside down, playing games with her male friends who never suspected her true identity.

Shekiba's early life was traumatic and Rahima's life became more traumatic with passing years but both women managed to overcome the difficulties life in Afghanistan posed for women.

To quote the author "The country is fraught with problems, child marriages, warlords, political unrest, drug addiction and more. I wrote this story to share the experience of Afghan women in a fictional work that is made up of a thousand truths. Rahima was a former bacha posh who is married to a warlord when barely an adolescent. She is a living legacy of her great great grandmother, Shekiba and draws strength from this relationship. They share a common tenacity, a desire to survive despite everything. This tenacity is what I see changing the face of Afghanistan today and giving hope for tomorrow."

This book left me with the feeling of gratitude that I was born in a country like the UK with all its imperfections.

Barbara Holmes

GOD'S PLAN FOR SENIORS

Most seniors never get enough exercise. In His wisdom God decreed that seniors become forgetful so they would have to search for their glasses, keys and other things, thus doing more walking. And God looked down and saw that it was good.

Then God saw there was another need. In His wisdom He made seniors lose co-ordination so they would drop things, requiring them to bend, reach, and stretch. And God looked down and saw that it was good.

Then God considered the function of bladders and decided seniors would have additional calls of nature, requiring more trips to the

bathroom, thus providing more exercise. God looked down and saw that it was good.

So, if you find as you age, you are getting up and down more, remember it's God's will. It is all in your best interest even though you mutter under your breath.

With thanks to Rachel Mounsey

LOCKDOWN, NOSTALGIA AND WHIMSY

With restricted movement outdoors during lockdown, more reading, watching T.V. and listening to the radio has taken place in my, and I am sure, in the majority of the church family homes. Cover to cover reading of the Yorkshire Evening Post and 'The Link' (thanks Stan) and no missing of Desert Island Discs.

If you have, like me, contemplated which eight records you would choose for your stay on the Desert Island my thoughts were awakened by an article in the Y.E.P The article reported that Dame Fanny Waterman was 'downsizing' her home. About the same time, I misread Barbara Holme's piece in 'The Link' and mistook "Children's Hour" for 'Children's Favourites' the Saturday morning radio programme.

What is the connection between Desert Island Discs, Dame Fanny Waterman and Children's Favourites you may ask? Having started this piece I'm beginning to wonder that myself, but here goes.

Mum and dad had a regularly tuned decent sounding upright piano as mum could play sufficiently well to accompany dad as he rehearsed at home for major amateur public choral concerts or more local music gatherings. I had a very early introduction to said piano, but that's another story. On changing houses the piano languished for a while in 'the front room' as neither of my

elder siblings wanted to learn to play and dad's singing became more social, although he could be relied upon for the odd solo at church services and concerts (ring any bells Howard?). A family decision had to be made. Have the piano and persuade Colin to have a go or get rid of the piano. I had a go and in December 1953 obtained from Trinity College of Music London a Student's Certificate for Theory of Music. April 1954 found mum, my music teacher and I on a tram travelling from Shaftesbury Cinema stop on York Road to the Cross Flatts Park stop on Dewsbury Road. We had been asked to attend a gathering in what to us at that time (and probably still is) a large stone-built house. There I was presented with the book 'Frédéric Chopin' by the Local Secretary of the Leeds Centre of T.C.M. as a Special Prize for gaining maximum marks (100) in the Theory of Music exams. The secretary was not Miss Waterman, but I have always understood that the house (not the one she is living in now) was her family home and she was there at the presentation and I could have received a 'well done' from a young but very up and coming pianist and teacher. This one brief meeting was to be the pinnacle of my musical endeavours as the following examination for practical playing, by now having a competitor from homework, church youth activities, school rugby and cricket (including the odd trip to Headingley nets) resulted in a merit pass and a subsequent halt to lessons. Incidentally in 1954 I was presented with a Bible inscribed '1st Prize' in the circuit's Scripture Exams. Funny how theory and practice in music and religion have aligned i.e. good in theory but could do a lot better in practice.

To return to the connections. I believe a number of church members have made lists of their favourite hymns for various occasions and no doubt one or two would find their way onto a list of 8 discs for the Desert Island. Have your thoughts turned to compiling a full list which would cover your lifetime?

Lockdown has given the opportunity not only to listen to the current castaways but to hear archive material from years back. What would I choose? Being maybe a little self-indulgent I would probably choose 'Christians Awake' to remind me of Christmas morning playing, before the piano found a new home, the modest

level of prowess mum and dad's financial lessons outlay had achieved.

Saturday morning was Children's Favourites time and I would sit in the dining room, 'Echo' radio correctly tuned and wait in anticipation for usually the final record of the morning. Often, I was disappointed but it appeared that I was not alone in wanting to hear that final selection. No, it was not Burl Ives - Big Rock Candy Mountain nor the theme from Dick Barton Special Agent. Yes, you've guessed it - the wonderful strains of 'Sparky's Magic Piano'.

Much, much harder of course in real life but oh, the dreams.

Colin Watson

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS

“—the word of the Lord has come to me again and I have spoke to you again and again, but you have not listened. And though the Lord has sent all his servants the prophets to you again and again, you have not listened or paid any attention.” (Jeremiah 25: 3b-4).

I am sure that, like me, many of you have been deeply disturbed by the fiasco surrounding exam results and university applications this year and also the way in which algorithms and mathematical models have resulted in individual injustices, blighting the future of often socially deprived young people.

One of the memories I have is of being addressed by a new chief executive shortly after the conversion of the hospital I worked in to an NHS Trust. I and others were informed that any doctor who wanted to remain working entirely in clinical medicine was sticking to their comfort zone and in some ways lacking. This, to my mind, revealed a deep misunderstanding of the time, effort and hard work necessary to be a first-class clinician and it also failed to recognise the role played by clinicians in developing, organising and auditing their service to ensure the highest possible standards. Of course, professional bodies can sometimes be protectionist, rigid and

inward looking, but this does not justify sweeping attitudes like the contemptuous dismissal of experts by some in government.

To look at the other side of the coin in our structure of government, ministers with great powers are often appointed for political reasons rather than any knowledge of or expertise in the work of the departments they control. They are also birds of passage often spending only a year or two in their appointments. Even in the ranks of the senior civil service which supports and advises them, there is a philosophy of moving people on, ostensibly to widen experience of government, rather than encouraging longer and deeper involvement in any particular area. We see the same occurring in other public bodies and business organisations where people are appointed without any clear evidence of expertise in the field.

There is a deep arrogance underlying this approach, that somehow these people are so clever and gifted that they can override the years of experience of the people they deal with. The legacy of this and, particularly the last few months, will be with us for a long time. The problem of speaking truth to power is, as Jeremiah tells us, a very old one, as real now as ever it was.

Stan Pearson

PSALM 23

God is my pathfinder, protector and provider.

When I open my heart to the divine, the universe and humanity,
I feel I have all I need.

When it is time to rest, God urges me to stop.

Time to move, I'm urged to follow.

Worn down by life, my spirits are lifted.

I am shown the safe places to pause, pointed towards the safe
paths to follow,

and embraced by overwhelming love and compassion at every
turn.

As I am faithful. As I discern.

As I crawl, stumble and leap towards God's ways,
glimmers and glimpses of heaven can appear,
reflect and imbue my life and the life of the world.

When the sun sets or the storm rolls in, the memory, promise
and hope of God warms my heart.

When anxiety shakes my being, when confusion overwhelms,
when illness limits my options, God's presence stills the storm.
A presence I can wait upon, be overcome by, and glimpse in a
loving face;

a presence to nudge me, redirect me, calm me and reassure me.
The blessings of life are all around me.

Are they mine to hoard or to share?

Are those around me my sisters and brothers, or competitors?

The answer is always love. Love pouring over me,
warming my heart and pouring out through my life.

As I crawl, stumble and leap towards God's ways,
love, truth, and compassion follow in my wake.

Heaven breaks into my life and can be glimpsed in the world.

God is my pathfinder, protector and provider. **Amen.**

David Coaker

The above is taken from Progressive Voices, the quarterly
magazine of the Progressive Christian Network, Britain, to which I
belong, with permission. ***Gerry Leake***

TOWARDS REOPENING - thoughts from Roundhay Quaker Meeting.

Along with other places of worship the Roundhay Quaker Meeting
on Street Lane closed at the end of March 2020 for both Meetings
for Worship and as an accessible venue for local community
groups. There was a rapid transition to Zoom allowing a virtual
Meeting for Worship to take place each Sunday together with some
study groups and business meetings. However faces on screen
and voices through the ether are not the same as "real meetings"
and we miss not being able to come together as people.

There is a lot of guidance available and even more myths and strong opinions about the way forward. Maintaining the 2 metre distance is problematic because it greatly cuts down the numbers who can attend, even when we have worked out a one way system. Sanitize your hands on the way in, keep your coat on because you cannot go back to collect it and wear a mask. Lip reading is difficult when the person you want to talk to has a mask on but you can smile meaningfully with your eyes despite having a mask on.

We have not solved all the problems yet and it will be a while before those who have been sheltering can safely be welcomed back.

We will just have to proceed slowly and be led to the time when the doors can be fully opened once more.

Dr Martin Schweiger

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

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I am speaking to you from lockdown Burnley. Our town is in one of those areas where extra measures have been introduced to address an increase in COVID cases. It's bad news, especially for single or older people, that we cannot visit each other's homes.

But there is also a deeper, emotional impact. It may just be me, but I'm finding it hard not to feel guilty. I almost want to apologise to family and friends, as if I personally am responsible for the spike. It is a symptom, perhaps, of the culture of scapegoating that we are in danger of drifting into. We are living through a time of huge anxiety and worry, and it is a natural instinct in hard times to look for someone to blame. It might be young people crowding into beer gardens. Or families eager to take their cooped-up children to a busy beach. Or public figures who don't live up to their own advice. Or members of particular ethnic or religious groups. Many people

want scapegoats. And whilst natural, this instinct is also a profoundly dangerous one. Those who blame others often do so in order to evade responsibility themselves. If it's the fault of the other, then I myself must be innocent.

Scapegoating is convenient because it gets you off the hook. People of faith have an interesting way of dealing with this instinct to look for scapegoats. In the Bible the Book of Leviticus describes a Jewish practice where the priest on the Day of Atonement would pray the sins of the people into a goat who would then be set free into the wilderness, carrying all those sins away with him. For Christians like myself, this practice points to Jesus who we believe carried on his back the sins of the world when he went to the cross.

The interesting things about these beliefs and practices is that they do not allow the believer to evade their own responsibility. You can only transfer your wrongdoing to the scapegoat if you first accept that you have something to transfer. They acknowledge that sin is corporate and that everyone carries some responsibility.

And that presents a broader challenge. COVID is a lethal and invisible foe. It won't be defeated by blaming or scapegoating particular individuals or communities. In fact, giving way to that instinct could make things worse because it will damage relationships and fracture communities. If by contrast people look first to themselves, to their own patterns of behaviour, then not only will we defeat the virus, but our common life will be strengthened. As Jesus once said to a crowd anxious to scapegoat a woman, 'Let the one who is without sin cast the first stone.'

Bishop Philip North 10/08/20

Hope is itself a species of happiness and, perhaps, the chief happiness which this world affords.

Samuel Johnson

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