



Emsworth Methodist Church & Pastoral Centre



a serving and worshipping Christian church in the heart of Emsworth,
working closely with other churches and with the local community

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Newsletter

23rd May 2020

Thought for the Fortnight

*When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.
And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent
wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.*

Acts 2:1-2

There is no denying that there are times when Scripture really seems to grate against human experience. After all, it's little more than three months since I met with Ruth, who was planned to preach at Pentecost (our Church Anniversary), to organise the service. There was to be a post-box in the Pastoral Centre so people could choose their favourite hymns. Indeed I had a list of 'things to do and people to contact' none of which has been able to come into being. 'They were all together in one place', says the writer of Acts. Be nice, wouldn't it?

Convocation, the gathering of Deacons from around the country for prayer, bible study and business, takes place every year during the week of the first May Bank Holiday. Normally about three hundred of us descend upon Swanwick Conference Centre in Derbyshire. There is much chatter: it's a time to catch-up with people perhaps not seen since the previous year. It's a busy time: there's always much to do; but also a time to re-group, to

remember and reaffirm our calling as Deacons to share the love of God in the communities we serve.

As with all things, this year Convocation was different. I don't know how many of you have used Zoom Conference Calling? If you have, I'm sure you can imagine what it would be like to have over 200 people, all eager to speak, some on computers and some on phones, on one call. If you haven't, just imagine a lot of noise!

Was it odd? Yes. Is it odd to be sitting here recording a service into my computer instead of celebrating with all of you in church? Yes.

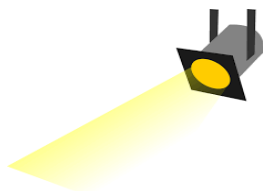
But it's still happening. It's still Pentecost. It's still Church Anniversary. We are no less part of the Body of Christ because we can't meet together.

Pretty much since the Holy Spirit came upon the people in that crowd in the weeks following Jesus' death, there have been people who have tried to stop the Spirit moving. They have never succeeded. In some parts of the world the Christian faith has been banned, forced underground, only to re-emerge stronger. For us it is only our buildings that are closed, we are free to worship, in fact encouraged to do so, in other ways. Statistics suggest as many as one in four adults have engaged with some sort of TV or online service since lockdown began. Far more than we would expect normally; and we only need to look at the sheer numbers of people practically falling over themselves to serve their neighbour to see that the Spirit is still moving.

None of this, of course, takes away from the sorrow and frustration many will feel at not being together on this day; but if we feel like we're still standing waiting for the coming of the Spirit, we can be assured that it is, in fact, already here.

Laura





Spotlight on... Dot

What job did you do? I trained as an occupational therapist and after a variety of hospital jobs and a break in career to be mum to our two sons, I ended up managing Physical Disability Services in West Sussex. I loved it, especially driving around the beautiful countryside to meet up with colleagues.

What are your hobbies? All things creative - with fabric and wool, working in the garden, singing and playing the piano (the latter for my own amusement only), and walking in this glorious sunshine.

Tell us one surprising thing about you. I have always kept a diary of every holiday and trip I've been on, and encouraged the boys to make holiday scrapbooks when they were young.

What is your favourite food? A banana a day.

How would you spend an unexpected £1,000? I'd share it with the family.

What is your favourite verse in the Bible? Psalm 23 – difficult to pick one verse.

What is your ambition? I was given a small cushion by two of my grandchildren, which says "Grandmas are the fabric that holds a family together". I hope I can be this for my family.

Tell us a bit about your family, including pets I have two super sons, Matthew and his lovely wife Sue in Cowplain, and Simon in Woodley. My special honorary daughter Sada, and her husband Mekis. Plus a range of grandchildren, including Christa and Caitlin whom many of you know. I'd love to have a dog, especially for company at the moment. In 'normal' circumstances I go over to Matthew once a week for dog walking and cuddles with his two English Springers.

What is your favourite TV programme? I'm not a great TV fanatic but I enjoy Antiques Roadshow and quiz, gardening and wildlife programmes.

What is your favourite holiday destination? For many years Philip and I went to Madeira regularly – for the stunning environment, the walking along the levadas and the challenge of climbing the mountain peaks.

What is the best advice you have been given? "Always try to smile, however hard it seems" said to me by one of my mother's sisters when I was quite young. She always had a smile on her face and was so positive about life to the very end.

Who do you most admire? Probably Mother Teresa. Philip and I went to India in 2005 and visited the house in the slum area of Calcutta where Mother Teresa lived, worked and died. A very moving and profound experience. One of her most famous quotes is "Peace begins with a smile".

What are your favourite books? I used to be an avid reader, but I find reading quite difficult these days; my long-standing favourite author is Joanna Trollope.

What is the best thing about attending this church? The sense of family and friendship, and of course the Pastoral Centre.

What is your favourite hymn? *Brother, sister, let me serve you.* For me, the words sum up what the Christian life is all about, but I find it impossible to sing these days, especially verses 4 and 5, without welling up with emotion – but that isn't necessarily a bad thing!

Methodist Church Ladies Group

Dear Friends

It really goes without saying that I have missed you all and our fortnightly gatherings. As I write we would be coming to the end of our programme and the committee would be planning activities for the summer months. Of course, in the present situation there will be no planning until restrictions are lifted and we are free to move about freely.

I would like to thank all our speakers and especially those who have appeared on our programme and have not been able to share their interests with us. Perhaps we shall have the privilege on the next programme.

I am trying to telephone you all individually at least once but I confess I have fallen behind with my calls – but the call will come eventually, you'll see!

It just remains for me to say I hope you are well and in good spirits. Try to keep safe until we can all meet again.

Love and blessings to you all,

Judy

Thy Kingdom Come

In 2016 the ecumenical community began an event called 'Thy Kingdom Come' which is a global wave of prayer for people across the world to come to faith. Not so that they can be 'just like us' or so that they can come to church on a Sunday but so that they can know what it means to be loved by God.

The ten days between Ascension Day and Pentecost (21st – 31st May this year) were chosen for this purpose and for the past three years Christians in Emsworth have gathered together each day for corporate prayer. This year, of course, things are different, but the world needs to know the love of God as much as ever, so we're going to join together online instead.

At time of writing plans are still being made, but we're hoping to come together on a Zoom call at around 9am on each of those mornings for a short prayer time which will be led by representatives from the churches. In due course Alan will send a link around and it is just a case of clicking on the link at the appropriate time. If you're not online please still join in with this corporate act by adding your own prayers.

Methodist Anecdotes

John Vickers has recently published an anthology of Methodist anecdotes that he has collected through half a century of reading. John would be pleased to provide free copies to anyone who would like one, with the suggestion that they make a donation to Christian Aid. If you would like him to put one aside for you, please let him know. Here's a taster:

Rodney ('Gipsy') Smith (1860–1947)

I was still far from perfection in this art [of reading]. I certainly could not read a chapter from Scripture right through. What was I to do with the big words? First of all, I thought I would ask a good brother to read the lessons for me. 'No,' I said, 'that would never do. I think that the people would prefer me to read them myself.' Then I thought I should get over the difficulty by spelling out to them any word that was too difficult for me. But I felt this would be like an open surrender.

The plan I adopted was this – I went on reading slowly and carefully until I saw a long word coming into sight. Then I stopped and made some comments; after the comments I began to read again, but took care to begin on the other side of the long word.

Home Worship for Sunday 24th May

led by Bill

Ascended Lord,
you call those who follow you to a time of waiting
that they may be able to receive the empowering Spirit
and the gifts you delight to shower on your family, the Church.
Take from us obstinate refusals.
Give us receptive hearts.
Make us fertile ground, that in us you may fulfil your will to share the
news of new life you have sown in our souls.
Thanks be to God. Amen

Our Lord's Prayer

Reading: Mark 16:14-20

Reflection

The last chapters of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke are all very different, but they all agree on one thing: Jesus tells his followers to go out and spread the Good News of life renewed in Christ. The question is: how are we supposed to share and demonstrate that Good News?

Jesus is reported as saying that believers will be able to carry out all sorts of miracles, including handling venomous snakes and drinking poison, without being injured. Some churches in America have taken that literally. People handle snakes during their services, saying that Jesus has commanded them to do it, resulting in a lot of injuries and around 100 deaths in the last hundred years. To state the obvious: please don't do this at home.

Nonetheless, I believe that the *principle* of what lies in the signs that Jesus is reported as talking about still holds firm. The principle is this: we are called to do extraordinary things. He calls us to do the impossible, to achieve the unachievable, to take risks in his service.

What may he be calling me or you or our fellowship to do which seems impossible? Maybe it's something that you really don't feel properly equipped to do, like dealing with those Zoom meetings and email services which are such a daunting learning curve for me and everyone else. Maybe you're faced with a challenge in your own life or someone else's life that you just have to deal with, but it scares you stiff just to think about it. Or perhaps our fellowship is challenged by someone suggesting a different way to share our faith. Others may say 'it'll never work'. They *may* be right – but, we have to ask ourselves, is Christ encouraging us to do this impossible thing in his power?

In these difficult times God in Christ is challenging us to go out and follow new ways to offer people new life in him. He challenges us to trust in his power to make the unachievable come true not just now but in all the days ahead. The words of a familiar song say it all:

*You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains
You raise me up to walk on stormy seas
I am strong when I am on your shoulders
You raise me up to more than I can be.*

Prayers for others

High King of the universe, in your ascension a cloud hid you from sight, yet, in you, mortal humanity has been raised to life in God.

We pray for those whose life is clouded:

Raise them to life in you;

For those clouded by fear:

We pause & name those we know

Raise them to life in you;

For those clouded by anxiety:

We pause & name those we know

Raise them to life in you;

For those clouded by hostility:

We pause & name those we know

Raise them to life in you;

Grant them the knowledge of your comforting, healing, loving power. For your name's sake we ask it. Amen.

Blessing

May the King of glory fill us with joy, make us expectant, keep us in unity, and bring us the Strength from on high.

Alleluia!



Home Worship for Sunday 31st May

Pentecost and Church Anniversary

led by Laura

Opening Prayer

Loving God, we gather as a community – though dispersed for a season. May each and every one of us know your presence. May we see you more clearly, love you more dearly, follow you more nearly, day by day. *Amen.*

Prayer of adoration and confession (from the Diaconal Prayer Handbook)
Eternal God, you are the source of all life, the fount of all wisdom, the wellspring of all grace.

Your days are without end, your loving mercies without number.

I depend on you and remember your goodness to me, and to those who have gone before.

Your story has been told in every generation: the Lord Jesus Christ lived among us, full of grace and truth, revealing your tender mercy, he healed the sick, comforted the broken and lost.

In humility he washed the feet of his disciples, calling us to follow his example as one who serves.

You are my God, ahead of me, leading me, guiding me and calling me; you are the Lord God, the all-wise, the all-compassionate.

And I lift my heart in worship today and forever. Amen.

Reading: Acts 2: 1-21 (Read by the Deputy Warden of the Diaconal Order: Deacon Ruth Richey)

Reflection (See page 1 of this newsletter)

Prayers of Intercession (by Deacon Christine Walters)

Let us pray:

Loving God, on this Pentecost day, we celebrate the giving of your Holy Spirit and the birthday of your Church and we also celebrate with joy the Anniversary of our Church in Emsworth.

God - the Holy Spirit, your energy and life help us to know, love and worship Jesus.

God - the Son, Jesus Christ our Saviour and Friend, always with us on our journey of life.

God - our Father and Mother, God of mystery and power, long searched for by people through the ages.

Loving God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we are astounded and often frightened that you have made us partners in your mission - so we humbly bring our prayers and concerns for the world.

We pray for your Church in every land and all who take the good news of Jesus to others, in word and deed. We pray for Churches who during this pandemic are helping communities with food, with phone calls for the lonely and helping hands delivering shopping. But we think too, of your Church in countries where there is already hunger and poverty, as well as the virus. There they are striving to help people with the very basics of life, showing the love of God. We ask that you will pour your Spirit out on your Church, that we are inspired to give generously of our time and love as we reach out to help others. May many see your beloved Son Jesus in all that you call us to do and be.

Lord, in your mercy: HEAR OUR PRAYER.

We pray for the leaders of the nations, all who make decisions affecting millions of people. May your Spirit inspire and guide them in ways of justice and peace. Headlines about the pandemic make us forget that many people still suffer violence, war, hunger and famine, as well as Coronavirus. We pray for refugees, people fleeing from persecution or famine. We remember the work of Food Banks in the UK and people who have been challenged to help their neighbours. In refugee camps, in hungry homes, we pray that your strength and peace will help the lonely, the forgotten, the helpless - that they might be raised from despair and find your hope and care.

Lord, in your mercy: HEAR OUR PRAYER.

We pray for all who are ill and distressed this day, and for Doctors, Nurses and all who care for them. We remember loved ones unable to be with the ill and dying, unable to grieve, and we pray for all recovering from the Coronavirus, who feel vulnerable in body and mind: may they know a great sense of your love and peace. We remember all who mourn, may they too, know your love and understanding. And we pray for those known to us, may we be inspired by your Spirit to lovingly support them. We pray too, for those who have no faith in God to sustain them, those who have given up on the journey of discovering you, may they somehow understand how precious they are to you and may the energy of the Spirit and the love of Jesus guide and protect them.

Lord, in your mercy: HEAR OUR PRAYER.

On this Anniversary day, we pray for the life of our Church and Pastoral Centre, that everything we do will glorify God. We ask that every member of our presently dispersed community may be deeply aware of the love that binds us together. And we ask for wisdom and discernment when plans are made to open the Church building again for Sunday worship and for the Pastoral Centre to be able to continue its work of offering friendship and care for the wider community.

God of wind and water, flame and colour, your life has flowed through our history, leaping from one generation to another. Give to us that life of your Spirit today and every day, that we may better understand and glorify Jesus, and live his resurrection life.

We ask these prayers in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, Amen.

Blessing



Meeting 7th May 2020

**via Zoom
during Covid-19 Pandemic**

Prior to the meeting our Chair, Revd Andrew Sheard, circulated the following points to all on the committee and all agreed this was a sensible way forward in the current situation:

1) Defer the AGM until later in the year as circumstances allow.

When we know more about how we come out of lockdown we can plan an AGM, but it is likely to be some time in the autumn.

2) Current Officers stay in post until then.

Our Chair had spoken to the Secretary and the Treasurer who had confirmed they were willing to stay in post until the AGM. Our Chair confirmed he was also willing to continue during this interim period.

3) We have an informal Zoom meeting on Thursday 7th May.

Our Chair suggested there may be value for us to 'meet' on line via Zoom to share news about our respective churches and how we are coping in the current circumstances. What are we learning from this experience and what might God be doing amongst us? To end our session with prayer.

At the meeting our Chair set out three points to consider, namely:

a) How to mark this year's Thy Kingdom Come 21st – 31st May.

It was agreed that each church would be asked to lead a shared worship at 9am during the week. Chair said he would write to all church ministers to facilitate this.

b) The Virtual Pilgrimage to Canterbury offered on the CTiE website was commended to all as it was felt this could be shared more widely throughout and beyond our churches. We were told more people were

joining every day and it was hoped more would add their contributions particularly during Thy Kingdom Come week.

c) Should an ecumenical thanksgiving event be planned at the end of the crisis? This was welcomed by all and would reflect the coming together of all the goodwill shown by all residents in Emsworth and involving the Emsworth Alliance.

News from around the Churches

St Thomas' Catholic Church – There is live streaming of masses throughout the country. Locally, Zoom worship has been arranged at 9am daily, mostly lay led. Two retired priests are helping. The face to face contact Zoom allows was extolled.

Baptist Church – On-line pre-recorded services are provided locally. 'Dial a Sermon' was also available for people without IT. Phone calls were felt to be important for pastoral care. All members are being encouraged to follow the Transformed Living Course. A weekly letter is sent to those without IT. Youth Zoom meetings and Zoom prayer meetings are proving helpful.

Methodist Church – Bill and Laura are providing audio services with transcripts provided in bi-weekly newsletters e-mailed to all or sent by post. Good contact is being kept with all through Pastoral Care groups. Laura posts daily messages through the church Facebook page however there is no need to be on Facebook to access them. Dot is co-ordinating the making of mask extenders for local hospitals. She would be pleased to receive any spare buttons at least ¾" in diameter. Mandy Mani, the Pastoral Centre Manager, has been furloughed. Laura has contacted all the PC volunteers.

URC Waterside – is now part of Havant with Emsworth. Sunday worship is provided as read only and copies sent to those people without IT. There is good pastoral care via a long-standing care group arrangement. The appointment of a new minister is on hold at present but a profile is already prepared and has been sent out via the national network.

Anglican Church – Pre-recorded services are provided on-line each week and some informal services are provided via Zoom. There is daily worship at 9am via Zoom. Youth and Children's work is also being provided via Zoom including worksheets etc for younger children. All on the electoral roll were allocated a befriender if not already belonging to an established group. Many already belong to house groups or other groups e.g. Mother's Union, Choir. Communication via phone and post are also important.

There was then a time of prayer for all.

No date was set for future meetings.

Sue D



Prayer Prompts – 23rd May 2020

You are invited to use the suggestions listed below in your prayer times.

You paint the sunrises and sunsets.
You are the songwriter and conductor of the birds.
You are the one who sends water for the clouds, rivers and earth.
You shape the mountains and arrange the stars in the sky.
You are the life giver and midwife for the animals in the fields.
You shape me and mould me and I thank you.
Never let me forget or neglect you.
Let me always respond to your thirst for my love.
Even when I feel I am worthless...
May you be the power of love, the force of your Spirit within
Loving you as you deserve to be loved
Thanking you and praising you.

Prompts for prayer:

NHS staff we know or remember from News reports.
People helping us: shopkeepers, deliverers, family, friends.
The worldwide Church, a dispersed community of people serving & loving.
All who mourn the passing of loved ones.
Thanks, that God loves me, that Jesus is with me to the end of time.

We have a small **Prayer Chain** working within the church. If you, or anyone you know, is in need of prayer please do contact Chris Walters on 01243 379254 or email c.walters5@homecall.co.uk

Dial-a-Prayer

A FREE phone service to hear prayers and news from the Methodist Church has been launched. Content is updated weekly on Thursday evening.

Listen to a prayer: 0808 281 2514

Listen to news: 0808 281 2478

Please send contributions for the next fortnightly newsletter to

notices@emsworthmethodistchurch.org or
newssheet@emsworthmethodistchurch.org

by Wednesday 27 May

Good news is especially welcome!