



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

6 June 2020

Thought for the Fortnight

But Ruth said, 'Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God.'

Ruth 1:16

At about this time of year the Methodist Church, in conversation with other organisations, develops a focused toolkit of sermon materials, reflections and bible studies on one particular book of the Bible which can be delivered over four consecutive weeks. Last year it was Colossians, the year before Jonah. This year the nominated book is Ruth.

The theological grounding for the book of Ruth is God's fierce inclusivity, even though God remains, apparently, largely in the background. Ruth is a foreign woman; the writer seems very keen that we understand that as the phrase 'Ruth the Moabite' is repeated liberally throughout the text! She is 'other', not part of polite society. Yet, in a marvellous reversal of expectations, she acts as a saviour of the nation; not only is she one of only two women who give their names to biblical books, she is also one of only four women (I think) to be named in the genealogy of Abraham to Jesus.

The story begins with sadness and loss. A family of four escaping famine and finding themselves in a foreign and inhospitable land. Death pursues them. Elimelech and his two sons die leaving Naomi a widow with two widowed daughters-in-law. Given the peril widows faced at this point in history, it seems to add insult to injury that Naomi's name means 'pleasant'. However, even as she mourns her lost future, we see the foreshadowing of a reversal of fate. After all, the name Ruth means 'friend.'

'Your God will be my God', says Ruth. Brave and powerful words with which Ruth turns towards the God of the lowly, the widow, the stranger and the enemy. Here we see God working through one who the society would have written off.

I've often seen it suggested that God isn't a main character in the book of Ruth. After all, God doesn't sweep in to overturn the natural order or bring three husbands back to life. However, although the name of God is barely mentioned, I can't say that I agree. God isn't, perhaps, prominent or necessarily obvious, but the story unfolds from a place of struggle, suffering, uncertainty, beginning again and eventually renewal. In short, it comes from a place of resurrection and a place where human beings do life together. But isn't that just the point? God is implicit in the interactions, in the love of God and neighbour. Against all odds Ruth is the great grandmother of King David. God may not be prominent, but God is a main character.

Sometimes it's very, very obvious that God is working. Sometimes we don't see it. Either way, God is there.

Laura

Revd John Harwood – our own Captain Tom!

John (inspired by Captain Tom) plans to walk to and from his home to St. James Church (a half mile walk) 94 times over the next few weeks. 94 times because that is his age! He is raising money for the Church Mission Society (CMS), which is very close to his heart. If you wish to support this venture, **cheques payable to 'Church Mission Society'** can be sent to Bryan Wilson, 4 School Lane, Emsworth PO10 7ED.

Here is the link to John's JustGiving page:

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/John-HarwoodCMS>



Methodist Homes Sunday

14 June 2020 *(See page 8)*

MHA is Methodism's housing and care charity for older people. Methodist Homes Sunday offers an annual opportunity for church members to donate in support of the work. Methodist Homes Sunday takes place every year on the second Sunday in June.

On Methodist Homes Sunday we focus on:

- Celebration of the work of MHA and the value of older people;
- Awareness of future needs and ways to respond;
- Fundraising to make a difference to the quality of life for older people;
- Volunteers to work together;
- Recognition of the Church in action for older people.

A virtual MHA service will be broadcast on YouTube at 3pm on 14 June. Our theme this year is **kindness**, inspired by the book of Ruth, and the care given by our volunteers and colleagues. So this is also an opportunity for us to give thanks and celebrate our specialist care and support services, enabling people to live later life well across Great Britain.



Methodist Anecdotes

Another example from the anthology by John Vickers:

William E Sangster (1900–1960)

He was always anxious to preserve the friendliest relations with the other churches of Conway, and though he could never understand a word of Welsh it seemed a friendly gesture to be a visitor at the Welsh Methodist Church when they had their special sermons. Merely to smile in acknowledgement of the greetings of the congregation would appear boorish, so he learned to say 'bore da', 'good day'. It was singularly unfortunate that only the day before this visit his wife came home from the shops and told him about a kind of currant loaf that was new to her and which was called 'bara brith'. The words got mixed up and he stood in the church porch after the service, solemnly shaking hands as the people went out, fixing each with a warm smile and saying with great distinctness in his best Welsh, 'Bara brith!' He noticed at the time that people seemed a little puzzled, but he didn't work it out until afterwards.

Home Worship for Sunday 7 June Trinity Sunday

led by Bill

Three folds of the cloth yet only one napkin is there.
Three joints in the finger, but still only one finger fair.
Three leaves of the shamrock, yet only one shamrock to wear.
Frost, snowflake and ice, all in water their origin share.
Three persons in God, to one God alone we make prayer.

Author unknown

Prayer

Loving God,
we are limited in our understanding of you,
but we know that you care for us and for all creation.

Thank you for loving us
and remaining with us in our sorrows and joys.

Thank you for the life of Jesus
whose life shows us the way to life and happiness and trust.

Thank you for your Spirit who leads us.

Warm our hearts and unite us,
that we might open our lives to you

to accept all your love and to respond to it
by entrusting ourselves to you
with all that you have made us and given us.

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Reading: Matthew 28: 16–20

Reflection

Jesus is quoted as saying, 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.' This is the reading appointed for Trinity Sunday and, as far as I can see, it's one of only two readings in the Bible that explicitly mention the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The question is: what does the doctrine of the Trinity mean, exactly? Well, don't ask me. Christians have been arguing about it for two millennia. The disagreement was at the heart of the split between the Orthodox Church in the East and the Catholic Church in the West way back in the eleventh century. As a result of all that, however I try to understand or explain the doctrine of the Trinity I'm almost bound to be accused of heresy by somebody. If only to save myself from being burnt at the stake, I offer only this: having an intellectual understanding about the nature of a God, who is beyond all human understanding anyway, isn't our key to the pathway to heaven.

Jesus implies what the key really is when he tells his disciples that their first job is to 'make disciples' and 'baptize' people. His first emphasis is having people grow close to their Lord, being in a relationship with him; it's not knowing lots *about* him. It's only when faith has taken hold of the believer that intellectual learning can start in earnest. It's then that the new believer can be guided into working out what that faith means for their life and eternity. So it's at that stage that he tells his followers: 'teach them to obey everything that I have commanded you'. It's only then that they can explore with their minds the meaning of the faith they've come to know in their souls.

That order of priority still holds. Ask yourself: why are you committed to the person you love? Is it because you've read their autobiography and you know everything there is to know about them? Surely it's because of something mysteriously powerful that's grown in that relationship which you can't explain. Your partner may mystify you sometimes, but you still love them and continue to try to know and understand them better.

So it is, roughly speaking, in our relationship with God. It's beyond words and, ultimately, beyond our understanding: but it's only on the bedrock of loving faith that intellectual understanding can grow.

That means that we're highly unlikely ever to win other people into faith through intellectual argument. We must speak our understanding and faith as logically and coherently as we can, of course, but we should be seeking to do more than just tell those without knowledge some of the facts about the Gospel story. Our starting point has to be the most precious thing that we have and which we can – and must – share with the world around: our faith. God willing, all else will then follow.

Prayer for a Pandemic

May we who are merely inconvenienced
Remember those whose lives are at stake.

May we who have no risk factors
Remember those most vulnerable.

May we who have the luxury of working from home
Remember those who must choose between preserving their health or
making their rent.

May we who have the flexibility to care for our children when their schools
close

Remember those who have no options.

May we who have to cancel our trips

Remember those that have no safe place to go.

May we who are losing our margin money in the tumult of the economic
market

Remember those who make no margin at all.

As fear grips our country, let us choose love.

During this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each
other,

Let us yet find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our neighbours.

Amen

*Originally from **Claretian Publications**, but posted on the
<http://pilgrimwr.unitingchurch.org.au/> website*

Blessing

May the road rise up to meet you.

May the wind be always at your back.

May the sun shine warm upon your face;

the rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again,
may God hold you in the palm of His hand. **Amen**

Traditional Gaelic blessing

Prayer against fear

Dear Heavenly Father,
I am afraid.

I don't want this.
I can't control my fear.
But you can help me.
You tell me, "Fear not."

But how?
Show me how to live,
Without fear.
Let me find courage,
And strength,
In your victory on the cross,
And your resurrection.
In this truth,
Let me feel your love.
Upon this truth,
Let me build a strong character.
To resist all evil.

I trust in you Jesus.
You are the King of kings,
And the Lord of lords.
No evil can withstand your,
Power and might.

Free me, oh loving Lord,
Free me from my fear,
For love fears nothing.
In the name of Jesus,
Amen.

Home Worship for Sunday 14 June

MHA Sunday

led by Laura

(This service is based on materials produced and provided by MHA prior to Lockdown. I have adapted them for these strange times.)

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.*

Call to Worship: Psalm 66: 1–4

Introduction

Today is MHA Sunday and it is an opportunity to give thanks and reflect on the support given to over 18,500 older people through MHA's care homes, retirement living schemes and community groups. Together with 7,000 staff and over 4,000 volunteers and countless supporters, MHA enables older people to live later life well. MHA's vision is for people to find meaning and hope in later life, facilitating community in order to ensure that loneliness and isolation does not have to be part of growing old. Even in these strange times the work of MHA continues, not just in residential facilities but in the community with telephone befriending, shopping and advice and support available.

Reading: Ruth 2: 1–13

Address

There is so much in life that we don't have control over, like the weather. There's so much that happens to people, to you and me, all the time that isn't under our control, especially at the moment.

We grow old, we can't control that. Even so, there is huge business for those who want to buy into looking younger. No matter how much we spend, or how many products we use, we grow older; and whatever age we may be most of us can recall a point in our lives when we've been dependent on other people to help us.

One thing we all welcome, and one thing we can all choose to give, is kindness. During recent weeks I've tried to spend as much time as has been allowed out walking. It's fascinating how so many more people are now saying 'Good morning!' when out on walks; and not only 'Good morning' but 'How are you?' too. Beginnings of new friendships. Even smiles and waves from passing drivers are becoming more frequent, around here at any rate, and I never fail to return home feeling just a little more positive about humanity than I did when I left.

There are so many daily small acts of kindness, and when we see this, it gives us hope against the backdrop of continual bad news stories that fill our screens. There are ordinary people, all of the time, going out of their way to show kindness to others.

The theme this year is 'kindness', inspired by the kindness of MHA's staff, volunteers and supporters shown daily to those in later life. This coincides with the book of Ruth, the focus of Bible Month for this year, where Ruth becomes a blessing to her mother in law, and in turn they both are blessed. Ruth showed kindness to her mother in law and found blessing in doing so.

Can you think of times over the last week when someone has been kind to you? Can you remember something kind that you did for someone this week? What did it feel like to be given kindness? What did it feel like to show kindness?

Silence

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn (read together) May the Mind of Christ, My Saviour

Prayers of intercession

Lord God, we bring before you our prayers for the world. For its leaders and for those people and places where hope is diminished and peace can feel elusive. For those who have responsibility for decision-making.

We pray for our nation and for our community. For all who champion the cause of those in later life. We give thanks for carers, volunteers and supporters that enable MHA do what it does and has been doing for the past 77 years.

We pray for the young and old. For those who feel lonely and isolated. For the anxious. For those struggling with the current restrictions. For any who are caring for loved ones at home.

We pray for those who are suffering. For the bereaved, remembering especially those unable to attend the funeral of a loved one. For separated families. For those who are frail and in need, and for those who struggle to get the care they need. We pray for those in our community and those known to us...

Lord God, hear our prayers, for those spoken and those on our hearts. May you show us how to be an answer to our prayers, may you use us as catalysts of your love, blessing and kindness to others.

In the name of Jesus we pray. **Amen.**

Blessing

The Book of Ruth

Just a bit of fun for Bible Month. How many can you find?

H Z B Z O J S B X X G K W Y T M D P R N
P A V F S R V H D K I N D N E S S U M B
E V R C S D Y J T N Q Q W P E H H V T H
A T K V R P K Y S R B S W J E S S E T M
R F H I E C O M B A A H C Z Y U M U G E
E V N W D S A A Q A R U M B I H R L C J
A K M O E N T A N W L N A O M I W N G R
P R G D E B O C G D E I H A Q S A H R E
E B V M M N E Y A H Y A L Z U T L E E D
R B J J A S X G Q C Q R O C I H N K T L
S V B E T H L E H E M G N R X G I X U D
R N L O B U X O L L Y F E C I O R M R M
Q G R E E X J R B E Q H Q E Q W E J N D
S B Y T D M X P C M N R R U B X T D I F
U C T I L P R A H I H O D A U G H T E R
B D I V A D N H I L F M Q J E U G A L Z
J R A I G H R E L E E R M U K V U H C U
S X M F W A L N I R E H T O M N A X C E
B E D Z L Y Q W O F N B A O M U D E M S
S M U C H O V H N X V D P R C J Y X L R

ELIMELECH
NAOMI
MAHLON
RETURN
BARLEY
BOAZ
REAPERS
KINDNESS
DAUGHTERINLAW
OBED

MOAB
RUTH
CHILION
GOD
HARVEST
GLEAN
DRINK
ANCESTOR
REDEEM
JESSE

BETHLEHEM
ORPAH
LEAVE
DAUGHTER
KINSMAN
GRAIN
FOREIGNER
MOTHERINLAW
INHERITANCE
DAVID

Becket 850

This year marks the 850th anniversary of the martyrdom of Thomas a Becket; there were great and varied plans for commemorating this occasion in Emsworth and Warblington. As with most things these plans have been altered dramatically, however it would have been impossible not to mark such an important event in history to which the area has a connection.



For thirty days in May, leading up to Pentecost, 99 people travelled on a virtual pilgrimage from Emsworth to Canterbury and then returned home to sleep in their own beds. Who knew that was a thing?!

Keeping in touch via Facebook and Zoom gatherings, the journey was divided into manageable chunks, with a clear start and end point to each day. We could research the places we would have passed through on our way. From beginning to end this journey of the imagination has for some of us done what a real pilgrimage would do: given us time out, time to slow down and reflect on our place in God's plan. As on an ordinary pilgrimage we've learned along the way; 'meeting' other important characters of Christian history like Margaret Pole and Charles Wesley and learning what we can from how they lived out their Christian vocation.

Connections have been made, too, between pilgrims. Memories have been recalled, anxieties shared, prayers offered, God praised. This journey started with the motto at Bec Abbey 'Let all be one, so that the world may believe.' On this journey we have caught a glimpse of what that sort of life might be like.

So we're glad to have 'arrived' in Canterbury at Pentecost, but sad too that this particular fellowship has reached its end.



Prayer Prompts

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

*Gracious God give to us and to all your people,
in times of anxiety, serenity;
in times of hardship, courage;
in times of uncertainty, patience;
and at all times a quiet trust in your wisdom and love,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*

Thanksgiving: for sunshine and warmth; the beauty of the blue sky, the deep colour of roses; all the small things that bring us joy. That Covid-19 continues to be beaten; for the very small steps of people returning to work; for all keyworkers in community and NHS.

Pray: for family and friends; people unable to visit loved ones in hospital; school children and students.

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 10 June

Good news is especially welcome!