



Message from Rev Sam Funnell

Dear Friends,

I wonder if you know what Monday 18th January is? I hear a host of possible answers – among them: ‘The beginning of another, sort-of, working week, Sam?’, ‘The 18th day of the New Year?’ or even perhaps, ‘My Birthday!’?

Well, these could well all be true, along with a load of other answers, but did you know that it’s also ‘Blue Monday’?

The third Monday in January is, apparently according to someone or other, the most depressing day of the year, if you live in the northern hemisphere, that is! A combination of the weather (cold, wet, grey, sometimes windy or snowing); the nights only just getting slightly shorter (mornings are still dark but the light does last later into the afternoon already); a while since Christmas and the absence of all (or most) of the lights and decorations; still a time to go until pay day and lots of people dreading the credit card bill hitting the mat after over-spending for the festive season and a good chunk of the winter still ahead, make this day rather a grim one for many. And all of this is without the ‘Covid-19’ factor that we’ve had to deal with this year!

I apologise if all of this is making you feel even worse....so, what to do?

Well, we could grumble about it, as no doubt we will at some point, or we could strive to find a more positive way of seeing things: less traffic on the road means we can hear the bird song that accompanies each morning; there are signs of new life and the spring to come if we look – tiny green shoots coming through from early bulbs, fresh spiky shoots on the tree branches as they prepare to grow again; vaccine roll outs gathering pace; church and community life that keeps going by mail, phone, Zoom, WhatsApp and socially-distanced chats over fences, across the roads and through windows.

We are an amazing resilient lot, human beings and we will get through this, not least because we have many good things to hold onto and, for us as people of faith, we have our God to help us. In all that we are dealing with, whether we feel good about the 18th Jan, or any other date, or not – God is still here, listening when we need to have a moan and then striving to show us something good and encouraging and joyful.

Perhaps it’s worth us all trying to start each day with an intention to find one joyful thing we can see, or hear, or know about – something that lifts our spirits and then give thanks to God for it and maybe even share it with someone else who needs a bit of a lift. Good News is infectious, in a good way, so let’s spread that abroad, whilst we keep ourselves safe from Covid and ticking off the days until we can all be together again!

With love, light and prayers,
Sam.

Methodist Church – Prayer of the Day, 12 January 2021

Sharing this, as it ties in so nicely with what Sam writes above – *Dan*



Methodist Church

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#Prayer of the day:

O God, renew our faith and holiness that we may be refreshed, blessed and transformed into the Christians you want us to be.

<http://ow.ly/xm0750D5jBu>



A Word in Season 41 – Stormy Sea – Steadfast Love

(Fresh From the Word – 12th January 2021)

'Out at sea you see God in action, see his breath-taking ways with the ocean: an ocean storm, towering waves! You shoot high in the sky, then the bottom drops out, your hearts are stuck in your throats. You are spun round like a top, you reel like a drunk, you don't know which end is up'. (Psalm 102:25-27 The Message)

Journeying to Switzerland and trips to France, I have had a few rough channel crossings which were very unpleasant; I suspect those of you who are regular sailors will have had closer experiences to the Psalmist's description.

My older brother Mike joined the Royal Navy in 1967 and trained as an MEM 1 (Marine Engineering Mechanic First Class) and for some year during the 1980s served on the Aircraft Carrier HMS Ark Royal. I was very close to him, he was my best friend as we grew up together. In one of his letters, he recorded his experience of an 'Atlantic Storm'. He was responsible for servicing the Steam Catapults on and under the flight deck. It was so bad that most of the aircraft had been transferred to the hangers below deck. Only a few were securely lashed to the flight deck. One of his duties was to ensure that the steel lashings were holding the 'planes securely. He described his experience on deck as if he were the Psalmist, one of his lasting memories was having to be harnessed and anchored to the flight deck as he watched and worked. 60-foot-high waves crashed over the flight deck, with the tremendous power of the storm-force winds tearing through the open space. The display was magnificent but frightening, he was grateful for the harness that secured him.

Mike died of a heart attack in 1997. The shock was enormous, the grief overwhelming to us all. Mike's widow asked me to read a lesson at his funeral. It was not an easy task but with God's help I managed.

Today we find ourselves in a sort of storm with lockdown and its consequences, struggling to cope with so much social and economic suffering, grief, loneliness, depression, and wondering 'where-on-earth' is God in all this?

On Monday morning, as I was reading the verses from Psalm 107 at the head of this article, a small blue card slipped out from my Bible. It was the reading I had put together for Mike's funeral service; it struck me as so relevant for today,

'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God will help her early. The Lord of Hosts is with us the God of Jacob is our refuge.

There is none like God, O Jeshurun, who rides through the heavens to your help, and is in majesty through the skies. The Eternal God is your resting place and underneath are the everlasting arms'.

(Psalm 46:1-5,7, Deuteronomy 33:26-27 RSV)

The eternal promise is that God is with us - we are not alone in this struggle against Covid, we are not alone in our worries and concerns about its implications. We have a loving Lord who brings hope, already mass vaccination is in operation.

There are other signs too of God's love. As Dan and I took a walk around our garden and Goldsworth Park lake on Sunday, we saw signs of new life – buds forming on the roses, bulbs sprouting and a tiny Wren scrabbling in the bushes, it reminded me of these words of Jesus.

'Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one is forgotten in God's sight. But even the hairs of your head are still counted. Do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows, or wrens!'

(Luke 12:6-7 NRSVA)



Some colour in our Garden.

The promise that God is with us now, wherever we are or whatever we are doing, is simply expressed in this little chorus written by Salvation Army Songster Leader, A H Vickery. I learnt it as a small child in Sunday School but it still rings true.

'I have a Pilot who guides me, Night and Day, Through cloud and sunshine I trust Him, come what may.

Dangers may threaten, but I never fear; I'm full of confidence while he is near. I have a Pilot who guides me along lives way'.

May the Lord Jesus, our Pilot, bless us with love and hope, and guide us through these troubled times towards the light at the end of the tunnel.

Graham Warr

Where is God in the pandemic?

At our House group last Friday evening, we thought about the question "Where is God in the pandemic?", based on Tom Wright's book with the same title. We had an interesting discussion, coming to the conclusion that Jesus is on the front line, suffering, dying, comforting, bringing healing and hope to all who need Him. I know many of us are finding this lockdown difficult, but we can be sure that Jesus understands and is with us all the way. This poem sums it up. It was written for Easter, but I hope you find it helpful today.

God bless

Joyce Nelson

Easter 2020

1-And where is Jesus this strange Easter day?
Not lost in our locked churches, anymore
Than He was sealed in that dark sepulchre.
The locks are loosed; the stone is rolled away,
And He is up and risen, long before,
Alive, at large, and making His strong way
Into the world He gave His life to save
No need to seek Him in His empty grave.

2-He might have been a wafer in the hands
Of priests that day, or music from the lips
Of red robed choristers, instead He slips
Away from church, shakes off our linen bands
To don His apron with a nurse: He grips
And lifts a stretcher, soothes with gentle hands
The frail flesh of the dying, gives them hope,
Breathes with the breathless, lends them strength to cope.

3-On Thursday we applauded, for He came
And served us in a thousand names and faces
Mopping our sickroom floors and catching traces
Of that *corona* which was death to Him:
Good Friday happened in a thousand places
Where Jesus held the helpless, died with them
That they might share His Easter in their need,
Now they are risen with Him, risen indeed.

Malcolm Guite

Night Blessing

May you take it steady. Instead of seeing challenges and sets backs as disappointments, may you be given the grace to see them as recalibrations, and moments to find a posture of openness and humility. You don't have to be able to cope, you just have to be able to admit you can't. And in that moment, may you discover the kindness of friends, the support of those around you and the simple gifts of faith, peace and grace. *Rev Malcolm Duncan* {Thank you to Helen Best for sharing}.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity: Climate Matters Service

As we look ahead in 2021 with hope for a better year for all, that has to include an exploration of how we can engage better with environmental issues both locally, nationally and globally.

During the forthcoming Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Churches Together in Woking are holding a service called CLIMATE MATTERS, which will be held on **24th JANUARY 2021 at 3PM on-line via Zoom.**

As part of what we hope will be a challenging and thoughtful time together, a panel of young environmental campaigners will each speak on different aspects of environmental concern.

Alison Moulden – the Diocesan Environment Officer for the Guildford Diocese will also unpack how structural and governmental change are vital to making a difference.

And we shall consider how individuals, communities, our country, churches and other faith groups unified together, can and should adapt how we live and work to care better for our planet.

There will be an opportunity to put questions to the panel and to further explore together these issues. There will also be information and resources available on-line to "take away".

We would love as many as possible to engage with this important topic.

To book a place to attend the service:

Please go to the Churches Together in Woking website: www.ctiw.org.uk select the "What's On" tab and then click on the link on that page. The log in details will be sent to those who have registered to attend.

We look forward to seeing you there.

Pippa Ford, Moderator of Churches Together in Woking.

NHS Covid Vaccine information



From NHS social media

Valerie's Quiz Corner!

ANSWER FROM LAST WEEK

- 1) Of which African country is Addis Ababa the capital? *Ethiopia*
- 2) In which West Indian dance does the dancer pass under a pole? *Limbo*
- 3) Whose tomb is simultaneously situated in Arlington Cemetery, the Arc du Triumphe, and Westminster Abbey? *Tomb of the Unknown Soldier*
- 4) What is a hurdy-gurdy? *A musical instrument*
- 5) What is the smallest breed of dog? *Chihuahua*
- 6) A figure in geometry that could be equilateral, isosceles or scalene? *Triangle*
- 7) What sort of woollen headwear was named after a battle in the Crimean War? *Balaclava helmet*
- 8) A young deer? *Fawn*
- 9) What is the square root of 81? *9*
- 10) The failure of which crop caused famine in Ireland in 1845? *Potato*
- 11) In which year did Margaret Thatcher become Prime Minister? *1979*
- 12) Brass is an alloy of which 2 metals? *Copper and Zinc*
- 13) To the nearest 100 miles, as the crow flies, what is the distance between John O'Groats and Land's End? *600 miles*
- 14) What is the name of Elvis Presley's daughter? *Lisa Marie*

THIS WEEK'S QUESTIONS

1. Portobello is a suburb of which Scottish city?
2. Round semi-sweet biscuit made from wholemeal flour?
3. In which year did the first world war begin?
4. Which vegetable can be oyster, chestnut or shitaki?
5. Unreasonably warm Autumnal weathersummer ?
6. What type of food is Basmati?
7. In which country is Mount Popocatepeti?
8. What is the only bird that can hover and fly backwards?
9. What flower can be classified as hybrid tea or floribunda?
10. Who is the patron saint of music?
11. What is the popular name for pilotless aircraft -V-1's?
12. What is the highest number in a sudoku puzzle?
13. Who is Reg Dwight better known as?
14. Which member of the royal family was murdered by the I.R.A. in 1979?
15. What is the main ingredient of Moussaka?

Forthcoming Services

Sunday 17 January, 10am 11am	Morning Worship with Mr Phil Beastall via Zoom Junior Church
Sunday 24 January, 10am 11am 5pm	Morning Worship with Rev Sam Funnell via Zoom Junior Church Foundry Worship
Sunday 31 January, 10am 11am	Morning Worship with Rev Keith Beckingham via Zoom Junior Church