

ST JAMES' CHURCH
Brownhills



Following Jesus

THE MUSTARD SEED

www.stjameschurchbrownhills.co.uk



September 2020

*Our mission is to worship God
and to serve the community by sharing the love of Jesus*

Secret place, Things inspiring praise & listening

For this September issue, as we begin a new academic year, I'm going to reflect with you on 'being with God'. Having re-entered St James' building but still being constrained by restrictions, we're all adjusting to a new normal. As we continue adjusting, I pray we'll nonetheless have the desire to be open to the opportunities that are presented to us in this phase of life to 'be' with God.

Some Christian thinkers and leaders have written a lot about the idea of 'thin places', where we can encounter God in a deeper way – places like the Holy Island of Lindisfarne.

Although I had some significant times of worship and prayer when I visited Lindisfarne, 'thin places' isn't an idea that I agree with. I feel very much positively convicted that all of us, as we pray in the Name of Jesus, can invite His Holy Spirit to rain down on us – **wherever we are – whether we're in our living room, garden, or garage...**

It may be that up until now, the church building has been the place you've most encountered God's Presence. It may be that you assume – perhaps not even realising it – that you've got to be surrounded by the rest of the church family to be able to have those moments of feeling that you really are 'with God'.

I'm just as overjoyed as many of you are to be able to worship the Lord at the church building, and that we can look forward to our Sunday Club and Tribe returning to meet together at the church hall. Yet the fact that Jesus walked with those two followers on the Emmaus Road reminds us that He is **always willing to meet with us at times and in places of challenge**, and in places that we don't think are likely.

I'd just like to offer you some ways now that you could explore meeting with and being with God this month. No doubt for many of you they're not new concepts...

These are three things we can all do that can transform whatever room of our home we choose to engage with them in: -



1) **We can all set aside a space at home where we pray to spend time in communion with God each day. In this space you might want to make sure you have a candle, and definitely your Bible.**

Let's just prayerfully reflect now on this irreplaceable spiritual practice of committing to a place and to times each day when we enter into this holy space. Let's remember that when Jesus was asked to teach his disciples how to pray, He gave them these instructions, in Matthew 6, verses 6 and 7: – *'But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.*

And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.'

So set up a quiet space to pray that just yours and God's, if you haven't already. Establish a regular practice of prayer it doesn't have to be a mega long time, just commit to making it regular to start with if it's not something you're used to. Don't worry about words if they don't come use prayers like the Lord's Prayer, or read a few verses from the Bible and talk to God about them.

2) **The second thing we can all do is spend some time decorating our home with things that draw our thoughts upwards and outwards.**

This will come more naturally to those who're more artistic among us, those who enjoy Bible art journaling.

As Paul urged in Philippians 4 verse 8: – *'Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.'*

So why not have a go? Pick out some Bible verses that lift your mood, and think about everything that is a blessing for you right now. Think about and draw, colour, paint – to say to God how thankful you are for family, friends, shelter, food, whatever comes to mind!

3) Lastly, **Listen Well – to everything again, that will draw your thoughts upwards to God and outwards to others.**

At the moment I'm really enjoying the simple Michael Smith song called 'Let it Rain' to help open me up to listen when I'm seeking to be with God.

Let's make sure that in all of our phone calls and conversations we're being totally attentive to genuinely listen to one another. Let's actively remember that we're children of God, called to see the lonely 'placed in families'

like Psalm 68 reminds us. So let's commit to instigating contact with anyone who we think may not be getting many phone calls.

It's so important that this is part of our commitment to being with God. As Jesus said in John 13 verses 34-35: *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*

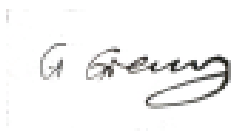
Also, whilst our private prayer and worship times are foundational for our growth in Jesus, I want to encourage us to also commit to times where we ***listen to God for one another as we pray and worship with others.***

In these unusual times that we're still in, we can all commit to discovering more of God's heart for us and for one another the revelations that He's just longing to bless us with through being in the sacred place that we make within our homes, through expressing our praise through artwork and journaling, and through listening well alone and with and for one another.

I pray you'll be wonderfully blessed by God's love as you do each of these three things.

With love, prayer and every blessing in the Lord Jesus,

Rev'd Gayle

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "G. Gayle". The signature is written in a cursive style and is enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

I know the Bible is inspired because it finds me at a greater depth of my being than any other book. - Samuel Taylor Coleridge

A grain of sand at a time

This autumn, do you feel overwhelmed with all the things that you need to get done? Then think of your life as an hourglass. There are thousands of grains of sand in the top of the hourglass; and they all pass slowly and evenly through the narrow neck in the middle.

We are like that hourglass. When we start in the morning, there are hundreds of tasks which we feel that we must accomplish that day. But if we do not take them one at a time and let them pass through the day slowly and evenly, as do the grains of sand passing through the narrow neck of the hourglass, then we are bound to break our own fragile physical and mental structure. Do not attempt more than God designed you to do.

Feel the tug

Have you ever wondered how you can be certain about who and what God really is? One Christian put it this way: "I'm reminded of the story of the little boy who was out flying a kite. The wind was brisk and large billowing clouds were blowing across the sky. The kite went up and up until it was entirely hidden by the clouds. Then a man came by and asked the little boy what he was doing, staring up at an empty sky. "I'm flying my kite," he replied.

The man replied: "What kite? How can you be sure it is still there? You can't see a thing."

The little boy agreed that he could see nothing, "but every little while I feel a tug, so I know for sure that it is still up there and is connected to me!"

When it comes to God, you don't need to take anyone else's word for it. You can find Him for yourself by inviting Jesus Christ into your life. Then you too will know by the warm wonderful tug on your heartstrings that though you can't see Him, He is up there, and that He lives in you. You are connected!

What's in your hand?

September is usually the time when we get back to our normal routines after the summer break. With the current coronavirus pandemic, it's very different this year! However, it is still a good time to consider how God can use us to make a real difference in our workplace, school, family, friends and community. He equips us with everything we need to make His love known.

When God gave Moses the job of bringing the Israelites out of Egypt, He asked the question, 'What is in your hand?' (Exodus 4:2). Moses was holding his staff, which represented his livelihood (what he was good at); his resources (his flock represented his wealth) and his security (which God was asking him to lay down). God asks the same question of us: *What has God given you?* Our gifts, temperament, experience, relationships, mind, education can be used in the work God has given us to do. How will we use them to make a difference in the places where He calls us to serve Him?

John Ortberg, in his book *It All Goes Back in the Box*, speaks of Johnny, a 19-year-old with Downs syndrome. He worked at a supermarket checkout putting people's items into bags. To encourage his customers, he decided to put a thought for the day into the bags. Every night his dad would help him to prepare the slips of paper and he would put the thoughts into the bags saying, 'I hope it helps you have a good day. Thanks for coming here.' A month later the store manager noticed that Johnny's line at the checkout was three times longer than anyone else's! People wanted Johnny's thought for the day. He wasn't just filling bags with groceries, he was filling lives with hope!

What has God given *you* that will help and encourage others?

History books will inevitably tell the story of a virus that swept the world in 2020. But it is up to us what that story will look like. Either... the story of a virus that ... showed up the weakness, selfishness and frailty of people... or how people responded with their best, how the virus was a medical but not a social tragedy.— Canon Will Hughes, Vicar of Petersfield, Portsmouth Diocese.

Historically, the Church of England has had its share of eccentric clergy. Even nowadays, hiding away in remote parishes, there are still some colourful clergy about. Clergy such as the elderly, Anglo-Catholic Uncle Eustace, who is incumbent in the small parish of St James-the-Least-of All, somewhere in Very Rural England. Eustace despairs of his nephew, Darren, who has become an Evangelical curate in a busy urban parish... and so he writes letters, to try and properly 'educate' Darren in parish life.

On how to survive a weekend away with the young people

The Rectory
St. James the Least

My dear Nephew Darren

I think your idea for both our Confirmation groups getting together for a weekend away socially distanced, of course - was excellent and our meeting last week drew most of the plans together. We didn't take any minutes, so let me record the decisions I believe we made.

Since all of us have to sleep far apart at the centre, I am prepared to spend the nights at a local hotel. By chance, I have found that there is a four star one only a few miles away, so I have booked myself in.

As the dining area in the youth centre may be cramped, I am also willing to have dinner each evening at the hotel, thereby creating more space for the rest of you. An additional sadness is that, since breakfast at the hotel is not served until 8am, I will not be able to join you either for your pre-breakfast dip in the nearby stream. It would be grossly unfair to expect you to pack lunch for me, so I will arrange for the hotel to provide me with a picnic hamper for one which I can have while you all enjoy your cheese and pickle sandwiches.

I think it will be an excellent learning experience if you prepare all the teaching sessions yourself, but be assured that I will always be on hand to give the advice of experience. That large armchair near the fire in the common room seems to be the best place for me to sit, so I can keep an eye on proceedings, while I take on the responsibilities for stoking the fire. This reminds me; do make sure that the young people are encouraged to saw enough logs each morning for me to fulfil my obligations.

Naturally, my arthritis will prevent me being able to accompany you on your afternoon hikes, but I will cheerfully park my car wherever you leave the minibus, to provide a second vehicle in case of emergencies. I do not mind in the least waiting all those long hours until you get back; I have already found an attractive tea shop in the village.

I am fully aware that not sleeping or dining at the centre, not being responsible for preparing the teaching, nor being involved on the walks will mean that my contributions will be ever so slightly limited, but these are sacrifices I gladly make in order to give you further experience in your ministerial career.

Your loving uncle,

Eustace

Always remember . . .

There are no strangers in our church –
just friends you haven't met

Readings for September

The morning readings are the ones we will use in church. The evening readings are used in the Facebook service at 6.30pm.

6th September 2020 – Morning Service -

Psalm 119 v 33–40 & Matthew 18 v 15–20

6th September 2020 – Evening Service -

Romans 13 v 8–end & Mark 7 v 24–end

13th September 2020 – Morning Service -

Psalm 103 & Matthew 18 v 21–35

13th September 2020 – Evening Service -

Acts 20 v 17–end (online)

20th September 2020 – Morning Service -

Psalm 105 & Matthew 20 v 1–16

20th September 2020 – Evening Service -

Philippians 1 v 21–end & Mark 9 v 30–37

27th September 2020 – Morning Service -

Psalm 78 v 1–4, 12–16 & Matthew 21 v 23–32

27th September 2020 – Evening Service -

1 John 2 v 18–end (online)

ACROSS: 8, Kiritathlearim, 9, Toe, 10, III at ease, 11, Hated, 13, Milletus, 16, Started, 19, Micah, 22, Leviticus, 24, Eih, 25, Mary and Joseph.

DOWN: 1, Sketch, 2, Priest, 3, Samizdat, 4, Shalom, 5, Wept, 6, Breast, 7, Embers, 12, Art, 14, Lmassol, 15, UNA, 16, Salome, 17, Adverb, 18, Decade, 20, Clever, 21, Height, 23, Tear.

Prayers & Poems

Next to you and lonely

(Matthew 25:40)

Cups of tea and people,
People who do and who know.
People with purposeful expressions,
Their eyes searching beyond her, through her,
The invisible one.
She's next to you and she's lonely.

Smiles and one-way conversations,
With thoughts and eyes elsewhere,
Never noticing the masks of brightness
Hiding hurting children,
The tired ones,
Who are next to you and lonely.

And the makers of the cups of tea,
The knowers and the doers,
Those who smile and seem to have so much.
They too wear masks that hide their crying,
The together ones
Sit next to you and are lonely.

By Daphne Kitching

We call this life?

We call this life, that is life's preparation;
We call this life, a little time of tears;
But thank you God for this designed creation,
A few short years?

By Douglas Malloch

The Spirit of Fruitiness

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-25)

It was quarterly review time for Max, a personal banking manager. He sat opposite his area manager, cup of tea in hand, as shoppers pootled along the High Street below.

"So", the area manager began, "How do you feel things have been going since we last met?"

"Pretty good," answered Max. "I've definitely been feeling calmer at work; you know, less stressed... I guess more at peace with myself."

"I've noticed that too," she responded. "You do seem calmer; less irritable. I've not really heard you complain about anything. Can I ask why you think this is?"

That conversation happened just a few months ago, and Max was able to share how he'd recently become a Christian, and what a difference God was making in his life. When God's Holy Spirit makes Himself at home within us, our lives change. St Paul calls this 'the fruit of the Spirit'.

Fruit is a great metaphor. The fruit of the Spirit isn't something we stick onto the outside of our lives, like baubles on a Christmas tree. Rather, it flows out from us, as we soak up the nutrients of God's Word and His holy presence. We cannot force out this spiritual fruit by tapping into our inner resources or by trying harder. This really is about God changing us, as we 'keep in step with the Spirit'.

Healthy fruit is a sign of a healthy tree, and it shares its harvest with the surrounding ecosystem: birds, insects, Homo sapiens, and even our mortal enemies, wasps... Paul has already shown us how sin dehumanises and robs us of life, but the Spirit makes us more like Christ,

Continued on next page

the most fully alive human of all. And when we are like Him, it's good for everyone.

Fruit brings blessing. It's a manifestation of the life of God's kingdom, bringing the sweetness of His presence to the people and places where it's tasted. In that way, it furthers God's mission. The fruit in our lives is a signpost to the life-giving God.

So today, do not hide your fruit under a bowl! Instead, put it out on the table, that people may taste your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

My advice, if you insist on slimming, is to eat just as much as you like but just don't swallow it. – Harry Secombe

More services

At the recent PCC meeting (on Zoom), it was decided that for September, we should continue the All-age Holy Communion service, as at present, and introduce two evening services.

The first will be on the first Sunday of September (6th), and the second will be on the third Sunday of September (20th).

The services we send out for 10am and 6.30pm Facebook will continue for the time being, for those who feel they are unable to rejoin us for whatever reason.

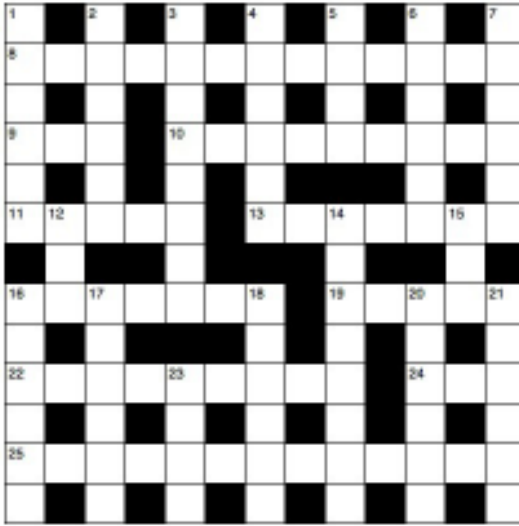
At a meeting of Sunday Club and Tribe leaders, it was decided that from September, this work on a Sunday morning should resume. So, from Sunday 13th September there will be Sunday Club and Tribe meetings in the church hall.

We are hoping that eventually we will be able to return to a full raft of services as before the interregnum, but that will depend so much on Government guidelines.

Please continue to pray for a way out of our current predicament, and that we may be able to all meet back together as soon as possible.

This will be considered again at our Zoom PCC on 28th September.

September



Crossword

Across

- 8 Where the Ark of the Covenant was kept for 20 years (1 Samuel 7:1) (7,6)
9 One of the parts of the body on which blood and oil were put in the ritual cleansing from infectious skin diseases (Leviticus 14:1417) (3)
10 Uncomfortable (3,2,4)
11 'Yet I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have –' (Malachi 1:3) (5)
13 Where Paul said farewell to the elders of the church in Ephesus (Acts 20:17) (7)
16 'Jesus bent down and – to write on the ground with his finger' (John 8:6) (7)
19 Prophet from Moresheth (Jeremiah 26:18) (5)
22 Comes between Exodus and Numbers (9)
24 and 2 Down 'Then Elkanah went home to Ramah, but the boy ministered before the Lord under – the –' (1 Samuel 2:11) (3,6)
25 There was no room for them in the inn (Luke 2:7) (4,3,6)

Down

- 1 Rough drawing (2 Kings 16:10) (6)
2 See 24 Across
3 Underground literature (including Christian books) circulated in the Soviet Union (8)
4 Lo, mash (anag.) (6)
5 The Bible's shortest verse: 'Jesus –' (John 11:35) (4)
6 'Can a mother forget the baby at her – and have no compassion on the child she has borne?' (Isaiah 49:15) (6)
7 Can be seen in a dying fire (Psalm 102:3) (6)
12 'Send me, therefore, a man... experienced in the – of engraving, to work in Judah and Jerusalem' (2 Chronicles 2:7) (3)
14 Second city of Cyprus (8)
15 United Nations Association (1,1,1)
16 One of the women who first heard that Jesus had risen from the dead (Mark 16:1) (6)
17 Braved (anag.) (6)
18 – of Evangelism, outreach initiative in the 1990s (6)
20 'Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and – in their own sight' (Isaiah 5:21) (6)
21 'Neither – nor depth... will be able to separate us from the love of God' (Romans 8:39) (6)
23 What Jesus shed in 5 Down (4)

THE PARISH OF BROWNHILLS WITH OGLE HAY

Our mission is to worship God and to serve the community
by sharing the love of Jesus

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