



The Methodist Church
Blackheath and Crystal Palace Circuit
Quarterly Newsletter

Issue 32

June 2020

Superintendent Minister's Letter:

The Holy Spirit

'We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets.' (The Nicene Creed)

Dear Friends,

We have just entered the season of Pentecost, the season of the Church's year in which we concentrate on the activity of the Holy Spirit. I have often found, throughout my ministry, that whereas many people of faith can relate quite readily to the person of Jesus, the frail human being born as a baby in Bethlehem who grew to be the greater teacher and healer whom we call God the Son, and likewise we can relate to God the Father, the creator of that it is bright and beautiful in our world, the Holy Spirit is much more difficult. The Holy Spirit is more difficult to imagine, lacking a physical form and so difficult to understand. We are told that the Holy Spirit is all around us but we simply can not see it. It is particularly difficult to explain the Holy Spirit to children.

Yet I would suggest that without an understanding of the Holy Spirit, our faith would be meaningless. It is the Holy Spirit that changes the events in Israel some 2000 years from history into a modern day reality.

If we go back to the New Testament, the Greek word 'pneuma' is translated as 'Spirit', and is used to describe the active 'Holy Spirit' of God in the world. The same word is also used for 'wind' and 'breath' and so gives the impression of the lively, divine energy that came down on the disciples on the day of Pentecost. Paul's letters tell us that this Spirit, which gave new life and hope and unity to the newly born Christian community after Pentecost is also the Spirit of Christ, whose purpose is to continue the work of Jesus in the world. John's Gospel also describes the 'Spirit of truth' who is known only by those who possess him (John 14:17) will teach all things (14:25) and guide into all truth (16:13) So it is the Holy Spirit that brings us to God the Father and who relates us to Jesus, indeed according 1 Corinthians 12:13, no one can acclaim Jesus as Lord without him.

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Within the life of the Church, it is the Holy Spirit who gives spiritual gifts to all individual Christians. Paul gives us a few examples of the variety of gifts of the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12. For example, there are words of wisdom, or knowledge, the gift of faith, of healing, miracles or Prophecy. These gifts are exercised not by individuals, but in the community of believers where they work for the common good.

When gifts of the Spirit are exercised well they lead to the building up of the Christian community and so are known as 'fruits of the Spirit'. Fruits of the Spirit are seen when the Christian community shows love and care, compassion and kindness to the world in which they live.

As we continue to work our way through this Coronavirus pandemic, we are hopefully getting closer to the day when our lives can begin to return to something close to normal. People are talking of the 'new normal' being a life in which we can return to shops, to work and even to church again but with significant restrictions on how we can gather.

Now more than ever, we need the presence of the Holy Spirit to help us move forward. Now we need the wisdom, the comfort and the courage that only this Spirit can bring us. May we continue to pray for this Spirit to guide, guard and challenge us in his ways of truth and love,

Amen.

Richard



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Aldersgate Sunday 24th May

24th May is Aldersgate Sunday, and it commemorates the day on 24th May 1738 when John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church, had an experience that would change his life for ever.

John Wesley was born in 1703 at Epworth, in Lincolnshire, where his father was the Rector. When John was five there was a fire at the Rectory from which all the family except John managed to escape. He was finally rescued from the top floor where he was trapped, and in later years he spoke of himself as “a brand plucked from the burning” and said that God had saved him “for a purpose.”

Both John and his brother Charles became Anglican priests, but John became increasingly at odds with the Anglican Church, who regarded his preaching as “too enthusiastic.”

By the spring of 1738 John was feeling increasingly downhearted; in January of that year he had returned from an unsatisfactory time in America, and by the middle of May he had had further setbacks when the pulpits of several Anglican churches were closed to his preaching, and this added to his depression.

He was still troubled when he got up on the morning of Wednesday 24th May. As was his custom, he opened his Greek New Testament at random

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and his eyes lighted on the words in Mark's Gospel, "Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God."

In the afternoon he went to Evensong at St. Paul's Cathedral, where the choir sang the anthem, "Out of the deep have I called unto thee, O Lord," and the combination of the words and music made a great impression on him.

What happened later that day is described in his Journal thus:-

"In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where someone was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

Although to an extent John later tended to downplay the significance of this Aldersgate experience, it would now seem to us to have been his 'Damascus Road', which turned his belief into one of heart and soul, which imparted the evangelical zeal which led him to spend the rest of his life in the restless search to fulfil the mission which he considered he had been entrusted by God, to preach "the glad tidings of salvation to all who would listen."

Marian Young
Anerley Methodist Church



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A reflection from Rev. Abe Konadu-Yiadom

Dear friends,

Imagine a world where everything familiar has gone, the capital city's most famous religious landmark has been destroyed, you have been transported to a foreign country, and have no idea when or if you will be permitted to go home. That's roughly what happened to the Jewish people in what is called the Babylonian Captivity more than 500 years BCE (Before the Common Era). Jerusalem and its Temple had been destroyed.

In exile, the Jews weren't treated too badly, but they were bereft of the land they believed God had given them and where they felt Him to be present. When their captors, innocently, asked them to sing one of their religious songs, they baulked "How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" (Psalm 137 – some of you might remember a Boney M version of this psalm). But their faith matured in the 70-year exile. Scribes consolidated the Scriptures, new kinds of congregations, called synagogues, sprang up where they could worship and teach the faith. Their somewhat provincial view of God actually got bigger – not only did they find Israel's God accessible in their foreign surroundings, but their prophets began to see that God was for all people. The writings of this time reflect a very different understanding of God. For example, Isaiah chapter 55 talks about ALL coming to God and in chapter 56, the writer talks about the foreigners coming to know God and 56 v 8:

"I will gather others to them besides those already gathered".

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Chapters 56- 66 are a reflection on what the exile means to the people of Israel. Finally, and after many of the original exiles had died, the Persians conquered Babylon, and gave the exiles the option to go home, which many did. But life was never the same again.

Maybe there is a lesson here for us and for many people around the world who, because of Covid-19, suddenly have found themselves severed from routine and getting into new habits for an unspecified period. We have not been able to worship in our churches and Holy Week and Easter were observed in a very different way but maybe with all the services you have received by post or email, or YouTube, the opportunities to worship on television, radio or online, has given you a chance to reflect on your faith and your relationship with God, just as the Jewish people had to do 2500 years ago.

It's too early to say what the long-term impact will be of this pandemic, even as we consider the easing of lockdown and its future impact on our church life. But we shall be changed by this experience. The Circuit Services led by Richard and others from the circuit have are and continued to be well received. We have witnessed unprecedented hits for the YouTube Bible Studies which have been led by Revd Rohama and me. Do our Sunday services or Bible Studies have the same impact?

There is much on which to ponder about this time: the climate and the environment are certainly benefitting. A friend of mine woke up last week to this family of sparrows in her garden. She has aptly named them the 'Peckham Sparrows'.



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We have also witnessed much kindness everywhere. Some people have been really enjoying not having long journeys to work but for others it has heightened their sense of vulnerability and aloneness.

But although we are not yet able to return to our churches, I hope you have realised that Church, the Body of Christ on earth has not stopped. We continue caring for one another, preaching God's word, looking out for our neighbours, far and wide, and proclaiming Christ's light in the darkness of Coronavirus.

Now isn't this provocative?

Pandemic

What if you thought of it as the Jews consider the Sabbath— the most sacred of times?

Cease from travel. Cease from buying and selling.

Give up, just for now, on trying to make the world different than it is. Sing. Pray.

Touch only those to whom you commit your life.

Centre down.

And when your body has become still, reach out with your heart.

Know that we are connected in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.

(You could hardly deny it now.)

Know that our lives are in one another's hands.

(Surely, that has come clear)

Do not reach out your hands.

Reach out your heart. Reach out your words. Reach out all the tendrils of compassion that move, invisibly,

where we cannot touch. Promise this world your love—

for better or for worse,

in sickness and in health, so long as we all shall live.

(Lynn Ungar, 11.03.2020 www.lynnungar.com)

May the real blessing of the risen Christ continue to guide and protect you.

Abe Konadu-Yiadom

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A message from Jeannette Warren of Burnt Ash:

Hello everyone,

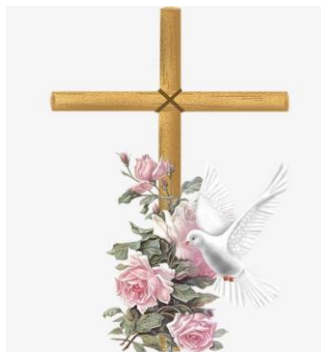
I hope you are keeping well and managing to stay safe and alert. It seems that things have changed slightly, which means some people can go back to work physically, if they can't work at home. They must walk, or cycle or drive their car, but not take public transport. Where are all the construction workers going to park their cars in the city while they build skyscrapers? Mm I wonder?

Some are not sure where it leaves them, and whether things have changed for them at all. They can play golf, but not other things. Some children can go back to school, but not others. Even playgroups are contemplating starting back if they are given permission. The question most people ask is "is this too soon?" Nobody knows and many are just scratching their heads. I have had two communications today about hair and chiropody appointments in July. So in spite of all our doubts there is hope that things will be up and running later on.

Where is God in all this? He is there in all our doubts and uncertainties. Perhaps we could take a lesson from the Easter Story. When Jesus died all the disciples and his followers were in despair, what had seemed so good was all finished. However, as the story unfolds, they came to realise that it isn't finished, it had only just begun. We too have learned so much through this pandemic. Many lives have been lost, but we have come to realise what are the important things in life. The NHS, community, family, and human relationships. Nature has flourished when cars and aeroplanes have stopped, and birds sing.

So, take heart and then thank God for all his blessings,

God bless you all



Jeannette

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On-Line Bible Study: Introduction to James

“But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act— they will be blessed in their doing”.

(James 1.25 NRSV)

For any of you who may have missed it, the on-line Bible study sessions organised by Revds. Rohama and Abe on the Book of James have been very well received. James is a short, snappy, and challenging book, full of wisdom about how best to live as a follower of Jesus. Also, a letter, the book has a lot to say about holiness and justice. For James, holiness without just living is impossible – ‘faith without works is dead’ (James 2.26).

The book of James challenges Jesus’ followers to live out their faith by good deeds and you can follow the Bible study on-line as follows:

- ❖ Week 1: Doers of the Word <https://youtu.be/pnk3SNcZ1t0>
- ❖ 13th - Week 2: Faith & Works <https://youtu.be/t-SEGhP5b9g>
- ❖ 20th - Week 3: Speech & Wisdom <https://youtu.be/1yMd3mfSQPg>
- ❖ 27th - Week 4: Living for the Word <https://youtu.be/pLbZ2OcqUts>

We look forward to seeing you ‘Online’.

Revds. Rohama and Abe

Jack Smith: Wesley Hall Methodist Church

Jack's funeral service will take place on Monday 8th June at 2pm. It is hoped that as we are not all able to join with his family as would be normal, we can keep Jack and his family in our thoughts and prayers at the time of his funeral service. Pam Clews will be conducting the service. It is hoped that we will be able to hold a memorial service at a later date. Peter is doing a run to raise funds for Alzheimer's in memory of his Dad and details of how money can be donated will be given out in the next few days.

Graham and Peter would like to thank everyone for the support that has been give to both their Dad during his illness and to themselves since his death.

Sandy

Wesley Hall

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Prayer

God's Spirit is approaching

Through time, across continents, soaring over creation

God's Spirit is speaking

Whispering and comforting, roaring and challenging

God's Spirit surrounds us

Beyond touch, warmly embracing

God's Spirit transforms us

Making our horizons wider, our faith stronger, our hopes possible

Amen



God of all hope we call on you today.

We pray for those who are living in fear:

Fear of illness, fear for loved ones, fear of other's reactions to them.

May your Spirit give us a sense of calmness and peace.

We pray for your church in this time of uncertainty.

For those people who are worried about attending worship.

For those needing to make decisions in order to care for other

For those who will feel more isolated by not being able to attend.

Grant us your wisdom.

Holy God, we remember that you have promised that

Nothing will separate us from your love – demonstrated to us in Jesus Christ.

Help us turn our eyes, hearts and minds to you.

Amen

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April 8, 2020

All We Can and the Methodist Church in Britain have launched an Emergency Coronavirus Appeal, to equip those living in some of the world's most vulnerable communities to combat the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Coronavirus poses a catastrophic threat to communities with weaker healthcare systems, or those who lack access to clean water and handwashing facilities. All We Can and the Methodist Church in Britain's global response will enable vulnerable communities to access the support they need to face Coronavirus. In Maua Methodist Hospital in Kenya, staff are being provided with essential personal protective equipment; in Cameroon, internally displaced families are being provided with vital hand sanitiser to help protect themselves from the virus; and in Uganda, families who would have no means of accessing markets following the banning of public transport by the Ugandan government, and therefore no means of buying essential supplies to feed their families, are being lent regularly sanitised bicycles.

Work has already begun to help equip vulnerable communities around the world, by providing emergency grants to help churches overseas meet the challenges Coronavirus will pose. All We Can and the Methodist Church in Britain are committed to supporting communities for the duration of this pandemic and beyond, and more avenues are currently being explored to enable support to reach those most in need. But more funding is urgently needed to scale up this response and ensure that communities can protect the most vulnerable and rise to face the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Please do all that you can to help save lives – You can find out more information, including a ways to donate and prayer resources,
<https://www.allwecan.org.uk/give/current-appeals/emergencycoronavirusappeal/>
Pray. Give. Save lives today.

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Worship With Us

If you have missed any of the Circuit services on YouTube, details below, or available via the Circuit website

<https://bhcpmethodist.org.uk/>

The readings are taken from the Revised English Bible (REB)

Service for Pentecost, 31st May 2020: <https://youtu.be/xzy6VYZDMpU>

Service for Sunday 24th May 2020: https://youtu.be/e_f3o8RnBMM

Service for Sunday 17th May 2020: <https://youtu.be/-R6lhWDG4ZU>

Service for Sunday 10th May 2020: <https://youtu.be/zUfSV4H5jjk>

Service for Sunday 3rd May 2020: <https://youtu.be/IwxLVj2Kf7M>

Service for Sunday 26th April 2020: <https://youtu.be/IVaokv76bgo>

Service for Sunday 19th April 2020: <https://youtu.be/QGZalhowe0M>

In addition you may wish to view the following

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgY7_PJL9LgBkVGI3o0Jjiw/

which has been prepared by the London District Office

'Keeping the Faith during lockdown'.

Additional worship resources are available from the Methodist Church

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/>

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