

Minister: Rev Derek McLean

29<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Dear Friends

*Let the wise also hear and gain in learning, and the discerning acquire skill (Proverbs 1<sup>5</sup> NRSV)*

Greetings, wise people. I'm sure that you've all been following this advice from Proverbs throughout the period of lockdown. When we can finally gather again, I'm looking to hearing about all of the new skills you've acquired.

Perhaps there will be new languages learnt, cooking or practical skills acquired, qualifications earned, art projects completed, new clothes hand-made...

Then again, it may be that all of the acquired skills are ones related to keeping safe: how to participate in worship via zoom, how to shop online when slots are only made available at 3am on Tuesday morning, how to do a Risk Assessment for reopening...

Or perhaps, like me, you've been rather too busy with continuing to work, or with the practicalities of life to achieve any of these things. I've certainly failed in one regard. I had ambitions to learn some basic Arabic before my scheduled trip to Israel-Palestine, but I've certainly made no progress on it. I did look at the resources in February, but nothing much has happened since.

Despite that, I have managed to do some learning as I've opened a few books. I was grateful to receive "New Testament Eschatology in an African Background" by John Mbiti, from Albert Mosley, and I used a book token I'd been given to buy "Forbidden Fruit and Fig Leaves – Reading the Bible with the Shamed" by Judith Rossall.

Mbiti's book got me thinking about the assumptions which we too readily make. Mbiti writes about the way in which the Gospel was received by a Kenyan community who had a variety of terms for the future which covered periods ranging from minutes, to days through to maximum period of two years hence. They were also a people whose view of fire was unambiguously positive. Not surprisingly, an understanding of eschatology intended to convey the far off future, in which fire is a threat, gets lost in translation: the words are translated accurately, but the meaning is incomprehensible. To what extent are we making the same mistake in conveying the Gospel to a contemporary world which doesn't share our frame of reference?

There is much in Rossall's book which I had expected: it is an excellent pastoral resource, for instance rejecting the way in which we often expect "an injured party" to forgive "the offender" without any real recognition of the damage done by a theology demanding that people "forgive and forget" without justice being achieved. However, the part of the book which challenged me most was the exploration of the way in which our words can cause further damage. Rather than primarily teaching me pastoral lessons, I'm forced to reflect on what it says about our liturgy.

I expect you to hear more about both of these themes in sermons, articles and letters from me in the future. In the meantime, in August we will be hearing from two people who are also learning about the way our words convey Good News of Jesus during our worship. Heather Corlett will have a Trial Service as she completes her Training as a Local Preacher, and Graham Tennant will preach for us nearer the start of that particular journey in faith.

God bless you all – and stay safe.

Rev Derek

**Worship** Our online worship continues each **Sunday at 10:30am**.

We continue to worship Sunday by Sunday, gathering electronically but worshipping in our own homes. People are joining the worship on a variety of technology and it is good to see so many involved.

Please let me know if you would like to join, and I can send you a link, and also talk you through setting this up. Email for information: [derek.mclean@methodist.org.uk](mailto:derek.mclean@methodist.org.uk)

Don't forget that it is possible to phone in, even if you haven't got a computer.

Our Preachers for August are: 2<sup>nd</sup> Derek McLean; 9<sup>th</sup> Heather Corlett – Trial Service; 16<sup>th</sup> Graham Tennant; 23<sup>rd</sup> Joint service with Birstall led by Rev Paula Hunt and 30<sup>th</sup> Derek McLean – welcoming Wigston Magna (we were to have had a joint service at their church on that Sunday)

### **Prayer Pointers this week**

The extension of the Leicester lockdown has been incredibly tough, and this has been felt acutely across Oadby & Wigston where infection numbers have been lower than parts of the city, but higher than much of the country. It has triggered strong emotions – some of those expressed on Social Media, others in quiet conversations. Whether we live just inside the area or just outside, we are all deeply affected. We pray for:

- People locally who are suffering with the virus and for all those caring for them.
- Those doing the testing.
- Those making difficult decisions about the continuation of restrictions
- We keep praying for all frontline workers: this week, we remember those working in emergency services, particularly those in the Police who are trying to ensure compliance with rules designed for all of our good
- We remember those who are finally getting medical treatment again after long delays.
- We pray for the ongoing work of the Food Bank. (Open for donations each Wednesday afternoon; distributing food alternate Fridays and making an increased number of home deliveries)

### **Reopening**

Our building has been open throughout this crisis as we seek to serve the needy. We've just had a lovely letter from Neil O'Brien (our MP) commending us on the work we've been doing. We are now looking at the next steps. We hope that Zeph's will be able to open within the next few weeks – look out for an announcement. The Church Stewards are also meeting next week to draw up a Risk Assessment to prepare the way for our eventual reopening for worship, and for our many community groups to start to use the premises again. Church Council will meet on the 12<sup>th</sup> August. Please hold in prayer all those undertaking this preparatory work for us.

### **Affinity**

If you've not yet seen the new edition of Affinity, let me know and I will send you a copy.

### **Leicester Trinity Methodist Circuit**

The Circuit is seeking to help all of our local churches to continue their Mission and Service to local communities and their worshipping presence, glorifying God in different parts of the city and surrounding area. All churches have been asked to undertake an audit of their mission and ministry by the 20<sup>th</sup> July. Please pray for those who are facing difficult decisions and for the circuit team evaluating the choices being made. Following a generous donation, the circuit has set up a fund to enable it to offer support to help those churches in their Mission. If you want to support this in addition to the brilliant way you are supporting our own local church, please let me know.