

Minister: Rev Derek McLean

5th August 2020

Dear Friends

Now when Sanballat heard that we were building the wall, he was angry and greatly enraged, and he mocked the Jews. He said in the presence of his associates and of the army of Samaria, 'What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they restore things? Will they sacrifice? Will they finish it in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish—and burnt ones at that?'

(Nehemiah 4:1-2 NRSVA)

Ezra-Nehemiah is a story of return from exile. The people were trying to restore Jerusalem which had become a broken ruin. Unsurprisingly, there were competing priorities. Understandably, some people thought that worship was the most important thing. Some were too shocked and dazed at the desolation and loss to contribute helpfully. Individuals were acutely aware of their own situations and personal loss.

... The threat was still out there, ready to return and cause chaos at any time. What was needed was strong leadership, clear thinking and planning, and barriers put in place to minimise the risk that pandemonium descended again.

I am reluctant to take this analogy too far. There has been too much damage done by using the imagery of “war” and “battle” to describe our feeble efforts in the face of this pandemic.

Nevertheless, the situation faced by Nehemiah is in many ways a close parallel to that which we face today. We need to continue to put our faith in God and to follow the way in which Jesus leads us. We also need to be organised and to plan and to determine which of us can build which section of the wall as we try to keep ourselves safe.

Good news: Zeph's will reopen from Monday from 10am to 2:30pm.

Good news: we have clear plans to enable us to do that and to continue to operate the Food Bank.

Church Council will meet on Wednesday next week (12th) and look at next steps. We will be considering how we can reopen our premises for worship, for church activities, and to resume our role as a beacon of hope for the community.

Fear not: we will continue to support those of you who cannot and should not return to the church premises any time soon. Our worship will continue to be available online even when some of us are able to go back into the building. We will not expect volunteers to put themselves at risk. We will continue to monitor the Government regulations and guidance and all of the advice we are getting from the brilliant Methodist Connexional team.

But don't forget, Nehemiah was clear that he expected everyone to contribute to the return. I am calling for each one of you to help in the process, even if you need to stay home: please keep praying!

God bless you all – and stay safe.

Rev Derek

Welcome Service The Welcome Service for Revd Debra Chidakwa-Akue will take place on the evening of **Thursday 10th September**. Debra will serve Christchurch and Nativity when she joins the Circuit. Please get this date in your diary. Fuller details to follow when we know what can be arranged.

Online Worship 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

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

Our Preachers for August are: 9th Heather Corlett – Trial Service; 16th Graham Tennant; 23rd Joint service with Birstall led by Rev Paula Hunt (joining instructions to follow) and 30th Derek McLean (we were to have had a joint service at their church on that Sunday)

Prayer Pointers this week

On my day off last week, I cycled round all twelve of the circuit churches which were within the Leicester, Oadby & Wigston restriction zone at that time and paused and prayed outside each one of them. Please hold in prayer:

- The twelve churches affected: Christchurch, Mayflower, Wesley Hall, Uppingham Road, Edgehill, Harrison Road, Claremont St, Bishop St, Nativity, South Wigston, Wigston Magna and Oadby.
- Rejoice in the Mission which has been and is still being done in Jesus' name in these places
- A city which has many global cultures come together giving thanks for our glorious diversity
- A city where we have such diverse places of worship and expressions of faith. Pray that we can engage with all of these communities respectfully and honestly.
- A city where there are factories in which exploitation takes place
- A city containing much open space and beauty
- A city loved by God.

We also rejoice with those who have benefited from the easing of restrictions and been able to see family for the first time in ages. We remember those who are still feeling isolated and alone.

Transport

There are a few items of furniture at the Oadby manse which will need to be transported to Edson's manse in Gartree Rd ready for the arrival of Revd Debra Chidakwa-Akue. The largest of these are bookcases which are 80x28x202cm. If anyone has a van or very large car they can offer to transport these it would be much appreciated. Alternatively if you are hiring a van and could spare an hour of the hire for this job that would be a good alternate.

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. 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.