**Wrenbury & Nantwich Mission Area Methodist Churches**

**Newsletter No 46 21 February 2021**

Our Old Testament reading this week is the story of Noah and his family and all the animals emerging from the ark, after the earth had been flooded. A time of mass death and destruction, but the title of Genesis 9 is “New Beginning”, a story of hope. Many of you may have felt trapped in your own form of an ark for almost a year!! Shielding from the invisible killer virus rather than flood water (although some people have had to contend with that as well recently). The only communication they had with the outside world was via a bird, not the telephones, televisions and internet we are very fortunate to have today.

We find ourselves in a pandemic which has killed over 2.4 million people worldwide, each death bringing much grief and sadness, but must be put in the context of a world population of 7,874,965,825. It is not just the death rate that needs to be remembered but the impact of living through the pandemic, being isolated, balancing home schooling and work, front line workers suffering fatigue and stress……..

God made a promise to Noah that he would never destroy the earth with flood again, and a reminder of that promise would be a rainbow in the sky. What I hadn’t noticed before in Gen 9: 15 is God saying the rainbow was a reminder to him also: *“I will remember the agreement that continues for ever between me and every living thing on earth.”*

The rainbow that was used in Genesis as a sign of hope is probably more popular today than it has ever been, having different meanings for different groups of people. I’ve seen some beautiful rainbows in the sky the last couple of days. Every time I see a rainbow it brings me joy, hope and a reminder of God’s love for his creation. I know I’m not the only one to marvel at the wonder when a bow appears in the sky; it’s a talking point, something we want to share with others. Some of you may still have rainbows in your windows acknowledging the great work that has been done particularly by NHS workers. For others the sign of the rainbow has been used to represent inclusivity, particularly for LGBTQ + community.

It feels like we are cautiously hopeful at the moment. Noah sent a dove out to see if it was safe to leave the ark, but there was nowhere for it to land. It then came back with an olive branch in its mouth, a sign the waters were receding. The signs appear to be hopeful at the moment. The number of deaths and hospital admissions is receding, the vaccine programme is being rolled out well, but needs to cover the whole earth to really be effective. We eagerly await the news Boris will bring us on the 22nd, longing for the day when the doors of our arks can open again and we can safely walk down our gang planks.

Until then many of us sit and wait and ask questions or even blame God. Why has God made this happen? Why has God allowed people to die, or become seriously ill, especially those we love? Why does God take the good people? They are really good and important questions, that we’ll never fully know the answer to, until the day we meet him face to face. It doesn’t mean we shouldn’t ask the questions or even get angry with God.

Back in Genesis we hear how God created the earth and then gave all living things, all the creatures of land and sea, and the world itself for mankind to manage. God made us stewards of his creation. We have a collective responsibilty to care for the planet, to use its rescources wisely before we destroy the world. Many viruses have evolved from animals. As we make vaccines available to our population, we have to ensure all people around the world have access to the vaccine for the virus to be overcome. What toxins are we putting into our world and bodies by our manufacturing processes, or radiation into the atmosphere through our advanced technology? We all have a part to play in caring for our world and each other, we can’t just pass the blame and look to someone else.

We’ve now entered “Lent” - a period of time leading up to Easter when we remember and celebrate that because of Jesus’ death on the cross, death is not the end, there is hope and assurance of eternal life in heaven, where there will be no more pain and suffering, instead peace and joy in the presence of God.

Our gospel reading in Mark 1 is still at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. He is baptised by John and then goes into the desert for 40 days where he was tempted. We have created “Lent” as a period of time to help us focus on God and the great price he paid to have a relationship with us. In recent years there has been a great emphasis on *“what have* *you given up?*” as a test to overcome temptation. We miss the point completely if we think its all about giving up alcohol, chocolate or cake, although it may be helpful to regain some discipline and loose a few lockdown pounds we may have put on!

Perhaps this lent you could do something, rather than give something up (restrictions permitting), a random act of kindness every day, donate an item of food every day for the Food Bank, spend more time in prayer or reading a book or doing a lent course.

I hope and pray that every day through lent you will see a rainbow in some form and remembered that you are loved and cherrised by a God who has made a promise to never leave us or foresake us.

 **StF 636 v3:**

O joy that seekest me through pain, I cannot close my heart to thee; I trace the rainbow through the rain, and feel the promise is not vain, that morn shall tearless be.

**With love and prayers *Deacon Jill* x**

***Broomhall & Sound Chapel***

Sunday 21 February 10.30 am Zoom

Led by Mrs Jenny Bourne

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82976672769?pwd=aG9pSjMvR3dzaDJaZlFkcnduSmFTZz09>

Meeting ID: 829 7667 2769

Passcode: 366121

***Lightwood Green Chapel***

Sunday 21 February 6.30 pm

Telephone conference service

It’s very easy to join : ring 0330 336 0036

Then enter PIN 571297

This week’s lectionary: -

Mon 22         Isaiah 55 1-13          Psalm 87

Tue 23          Isaiah  56 1-8             Psalm 89 1-18

Wed 24         Isaiah  58 1-12          Psalm 89 19-37

Thur 25        Isaiah  60 1-7            Psalm 90

Fri 26            Isaiah  60 8-16          Psalm 91

Sat 27          Isaiah  60 17-22        Psalm 92

**LENT COURSE** by Zoom

*Starting Tuesday 23 Feb at 7.30,*

*then every Tuesday in Lent*

Based on Andrew Roberts’ book “*Holy Habits”.*

Led by Andrew & Jill Taylor

23 Feb – Habits: “Serving, Gladness & Generosity”

 2 March - Habits: “Breaking bread, sharing

 resources & eating together”

 9 March – Habits: “Prayer, fellowship & worship”

16 March – Habits: “Making disciples & eating

 together”

23 March – Habits: “ Gladness, generosity &

 worship”

*Everyone is very welcome to join us for one or all of the sessions. It’s not necessary, but you may find it helpful to read Andrew Roberts’ book “Holy Habits”. It is a great book to read during Lent, even if you’re not able to do the course. It can be ordered by Denise & Steve at Nantwich Book Shop.*

Join Zoom Meeting

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87967239246?pwd=NXhxOU1GYXZ4VThXRDBhSmJDVzRqZz09

Meeting ID: 879 6723 9246

Passcode: 212993

**Wrenbury & Nantwich Mission Area Methodist Churches**

**Worship Sheet No 46 21 February 2021**

**Opening Prayer**

We come before you, Almighty God, ever mindful that you have called us as your own. Lead us in your truth and teach us your paths of steadfast love and righteousness. Amen.

**Hymn: “Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah”**

**StF 465**

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,

 pilgrim through this barren land;

I am weak, but thou art mighty;

 hold me with thy powerful hand:

Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,

 feed me now and evermore;

 feed me now and evermore.

Open thou the crystal fountain

 whence the healing stream shall flow;

let the fiery, cloudy pillar

 lead me all my journey through:

strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer,

 be thou still my strength and shield;

 be thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan

 bid my anxious fears subside;

death of death, and hell's destruction,

 land me safe on Canaan's side:

songs of praises, songs of praises,

 I will ever give to thee;

 I will ever give to thee.

*William Williams (1717-1791)*

**Let us pray together**

O Lord, we lift up our hearts and minds and bless your holy name. For you have created all things and your glory is seen in the heavens and on the earth. Thank you for your bountiful provision and your love that goes before us. May this time of Lent enable us to walk humbly and be mindful of your covenant with us. Forgive us, Lord, for the words said and deeds done that have been selfish, inconsiderate, or hurtful to others. We thank you for your mercies that are new to us each day and that wash us clean. In Jesus Name. Amen

**Today’s Reading OT: Genesis 9:8-17**

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ‘As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark.  I establish my covenant with you, that never

again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.’  God said, ‘This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.’ God said to Noah, ‘This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.’ (NRSV)

**Today’s Gospel Reading: Mark 1: 9-15**

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.’

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.’ (NRSV)

**Time to Reflect.**

*Here we are at the beginning of a new Church season in Lent 1. There are two readings for today. The Gospel passage should be familiar to folk as portions of it have already featured twice in this year’s lectionary, and the Genesis passage which I find particularly applicable to our present situation worldwide.*

*Noah and his family have been restricted to an Ark for 378 days, not just 40 days. Which is so similar to how long this Pandemic has been making our lives difficult. When Noah disembarks and makes sacrifices to God, then God promises to establish a covenant which has the rainbow as a sign.*

*What will you sacrifice to God to open a way for God to bless you? Our hands are full of many different things that we need to let go of before we can take up new things.*

*Just as God wiped the earth clean of all wickedness by way of the flood waters, so too does the Baptism of repentance wash us clean.*

*The wilderness, like Lent, is also a time for reflection, fasting and spending time in prayer as we prepare for what God is going to do in us and through us.*

*What are the “struggles” that you have faced in this last year? What path will you take in the Lenten season ahead?*

**Take a time to sit quietly.**

**A time of prayer**

Lord God, we pray for those who find themselves in restricted spaces and unexpected places.

We pray for places affected by climate change,

areas where water is scarce and crops fail,

places where flooding is affecting people’s homes.

We pray for those who are homeless and have lost everything through earthquake or fire.

We pray for those who wait for medical results, for those who are ill in hospital or at home.

For those who have lost their jobs and those who await news about benefits.

We pray for our healthcare workers, nurses and doctors, essential service workers, teachers and police.

For our children whose education has been so badly affected, and parents who are juggling time constraints.

For those who are grieving the loss of loved ones.

For Religious leaders and funeral parlours who minister to the bereaved.

For those who are working on the Vaccine rollout, scientists, government leaders, economists, and medical aid associations.

Breathe new life into your people and all circumstances as we approach Easter. May we always know your presence with us. Amen

**The Lord’s Prayer**

Our Father ……

**Hymn: StF 233 When Jesus came to Jordan**

When Jesus came to Jordan

 To be baptized by John,

He did not come for pardon,

 But as his Father's Son.

He came to share repentance

 With all who mourn their sins,

To speak the vital sentence

 With which good news begins.

He came to share temptation,

 Our utmost woe and loss,

For us and our salvation

 To die upon the cross.

So when the Dove descended

 On him, the Son of Man,

The hidden years had ended,

 The age of grace began.

Come, Holy Spirit, aid us

 To keep the vows we make,

This very day invade us,

 And every bondage break.

Come, give our lives direction,

 The gift we covet most:

To share the resurrection

 That leads to Pentecost.

**A prayer of blessing**

May Almighty God, who has called us by His grace, bless and keep us by confirming and strengthening us through Jesus Christ, our Lord, and fill us with the power of the Holy Spirit to be His instruments of peace in the world. Amen.

*Original Materials by Fiona Calverey*

*All Hymns reproduced under CCLi 155789*

**Broomhall & Sound Church Council**

23 Feb 10.30am by Zoom

Join Zoom Meeting

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89841093383?pwd=WGtRVEZlb1MzSGxpOTZyS203ZjNsQT09

Meeting ID: 898 4109 3383

Passcode: 318238

 Chester and Stoke-on-Trent District

**Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

**‘ALL ARE WELCOME’**

**District Lent Series 2021**

**Thursday Evenings** **7.30 – 9.00 pm**.

25 February – Scriptural Faithfulness

4 March – Physical & Mental Impairment

11 March – Economic Justice

18 March – Living with Difference

For the Zoom link, email Rob at

chester.stoke@bt connect.com

The (Women’s) **World Day of Prayer** service due to be held at NMC on Friday March 5th has been postponed, we hope only until later in the year.

An Exploration of **Christian Mindfulness**

The life of Jesus through mindfulness, to help people in this difficult time of lockdown

**Continues on Thursdays 6.45pm**

Places are limited, but to see if you can still join in and for further details please contact

Rev. Malcolm Lorimer maxcricket@btinternet.com or 01270 625278

**Toilet Twinning** **Project**

The response to this has been truly amazing **!**  Any further donations you wish to send via the Maidments ***must reach them this week****.* (Please say if you need it collected – tel. 627170.) Or you are still welcome to send direct to Tear Fund.

**Nantwich Food Bank**

The impact of Covid has created a 5-fold increase in the number of families needing help. 68,000 food parcels were delivered in the past year. The new manager (following Jane’s promotion) is Damien Gear, who is already working closely with the CAB and is eager to develop contact with other organisations authorised to refer clients.

**PRAYER**

 A reminder that no-one else can tell you who to pray for, as we do not all know the same people and their needs. It is evident that awareness of others and the pastoral care offered is very strong among our congregations.

 Please think of those you know who are ill or recovering, anxious about treatment they face or distressed by the results of tests; or grieving, lonely, confused by present circumstances or exhausted. May they all be aware of God’s presence with them, giving love, peace, strength and hope for the present and the time to come.

“God, whose touchstone is the desert and the cross, draw near with your ancient strength which we experience but do not understand, know but never see. Accompany us throughout the weeks of Lent, that we may face the demons, fantasies and fears which accompany us; so that, journeying with Jesus in desert places, we may by your mercy renew our commitment to the life of Christ and our vocation to the way of the Cross.” (David Moore)

Not everyone is on a half-term break this week.

**English Lesson**

Language and the meaning of words are always evolving. Here are some new definitions you may

have missed:-

Extreme: a dried up river

Prefix: broken

Investigator: a large reptile in his undershirt

Ransom: one who walked part of the course

Tapestry: where the Spanish grow savoury

 appetisers

Pixilate: an overdue elf

Misnomer: one who yearns for small garden

 ornaments

Nomad: a commercial selling small garden

 ornaments

Reiki: an indiscriminate garden implement

Starfish: a bit like a staff

Important: an ant purchased overseas

Finance: very good ants

Sycophant: Dumbo with flu

Winery: complaints department

Omelette: a short period of meditation

Brief: a very small piece of French cheese

Figurine: butter substitute made from figs

Flattery: the opposite of Hillary

Dressage: a sausage in a frock

Temptress: part-time wig

Fantasist: a swelling caused by too much fizzy

 drink

Codswallop: attack with a fish

 (BBC Radio 4)

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Sh**redder**
The new employee stood before the paper shredder looking confused.

"Need some help?" a secretary asked.

"Yes," he replied. "How does this thing work?" "Simple," she said, taking the fat report from his hand and feeding it into the shredder.

"Thanks, but where do the copies come out?"

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**A priest who loved playing golf apologised for his absence from meetings by saying he would be on a course, involving people with a handicap!**

**Drink 'Till She's Cute**

A man stopped at his favourite watering hole after a hard day’s work to relax. He noticed that a man next to him ordered a short and a beer. The man drank the short, chased it with the beer and then looked into his shirt pocket. This continued several times before the man's curiosity got the better of him. He leaned over to the guy and said, "Excuse me, I couldn't help noticing your little ritual. Why in the world do you look into your shirt pocket every time you drink your short & beer"? The man replied, "There's a picture of my wife in there, and when she starts lookin' good, I'm headin' home"!

**With apologies to all natural blondes!**

**Flying First Class**

On a plane bound for New York the flight attendant approached a blonde sitting in the first- class section and requested that she move to 2nd class since she did not have a first-class ticket. The blonde replied, "I'm blonde, I'm beautiful, I'm going to New York, and I'm not moving."

Not wanting to argue with a customer, the flight attendant asked the co-pilot to speak with her. He went to talk with the woman asking her to please move out of the first-class section. Again, the blonde replied, "I'm blonde, I'm beautiful, I'm going to New York, and I'm not moving."

The co-pilot returned to the cockpit and asked the captain what he should do. The captain said, "I'm married to a blonde, and I know how to handle this." He went to the first-class section and whispered in the blonde's ear. She immediately jumped up and ran to the 2nd section mumbling to herself, "Why didn't anyone just say so?"

Surprised, the flight attendant and the co-pilot asked what he said to her that finally convinced her to move from her seat. The pilot replied, "I told her the first class section wasn't going to New York."

**Jealous Blonde**

A blonde suspects that her boyfriend is cheating on her, so she goes out and buys a gun. She goes to his apartment that same day, with the gun in hand. Sure enough, when she opens the door, she finds her boyfriend in the arms of a redhead. She points the gun at her boyfriend and stares him down for a moment. Then, suddenly, she's overcome with grief, so she puts the gun up to the side her head. Her boyfriend screams, "Honey, don't do it..." The blonde yells back, "Shut up! You're next!"

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**Q:** How many Sandhurst cadets does it take to

 change a light bulb?

**A:** None, it's a second-year course.

**Q:** Did you hear that the Army just bought twenty

 new septic tanks?

**A:** Yeah, and the Army coach says as soon as they

 learn to drive them, they're gonna be sent to

 the front line.

Two hunters are out in the woods when one of them collapses. He doesn't seem to be breathing and his eyes are glazed. The other guy whips out his phone and calls the emergency services. He gasps: "My friend is dead! What can I do?" The operator says: "Calm down, I can help. First, let's make sure he's dead." There is a silence, then a shot is heard. Back on the phone, the guy says: "OK, now what?"

**Q:** Why did the lion always lose at poker?

**A:** *He was playing with a bunch of cheetahs.*

**Q:** Why can’t dinosaurs clap?

**A:** *Because they’re dead.*

**Q:** What’s the difference between a hippo and a

 Zippo?

**A:** *One is really heavy, and the other is a little*

 *lighter.*

**Q:** What do you call farm animals that have a

 sense of humour?

**A:** *Laughing stock.*

**Q:** What do a shark and a computer have in

 common?

**A:** *They both have megabites.*

**Q:** What did one fish say to the other?

**A:** *Keep your mouth shut and you’ll never get*

 *caught.*

**Q:** What did one flea say to the other flea when

 they came out of the cinema?

**A:** “*Should we walk home or take a dog?”*

**Q:** What steps do you take if you a tiger is running

 towards you?

**A:** *Big ones.*

**Q:** What happened to the dog that ate nothing but

 garlic?

**A:** *His bark was much worse than his bite.*

Two silk worms got into a fight. It ended in a tie.

The early bird might get the worm…

 But the second mouse gets the cheese.