Wrenbury & Nantwich Mission Area **Methodist** Churches 

**Newsletter 23 30 August**

A message from **Revd Will Morrey**, supernumerary minister in Nantwich:

 ‘The answers you get depend upon the questions you ask.’ That observation and advice was given to me many years ago by a friend who was a lawyer. It’s proved invaluable, not least on those ocassions when work involved needing to consult the legal profession!

Questioning should be seen as integral to Christian living and endeavour. Anselm of Canterbury (monk, theologian and eleventh century Archbishop of Canterbury) coined the phrase, ‘faith seeking understanding’. No doubt all of us have found ourselves confronted by searching questions as we have sought to respond appropriately to the covid-19 pandemic, and that questioning should be seen as part of the journey of ‘faith seeking understanding’ that Christians and people of all faiths share. What follows shares a little of my thinking around the lockdown and the ‘New Normal’.

Firstly, reflecting on our experience of the months of lockdown: ‘Is it ever right to do wrong? Or wrong to do right?’

When at the height of the lockdown Dominic Cummings, in the Downing Street Rose Garden, sought to explain his journey to his parents near Durham he appealed to how a good parent would intuitively seek the safety and well-being of their child (and spouse). It was the right thing to do, he argued. The difficulty with his argument, however, was that it failed to address the fact that the lockdown regulations designed to suppress the spread of covid-19, and which the vast majority observed, were at their core counter-intuitive. Intuitively we (rightly) want to be with loved ones in their distress or dying, but the painful counter-intuitive act of keeping distance was also seen during lockdown as right and for a wider good.

‘Right to do wrong? Wrong to do right?’ Are we living through a time when both may be required of us? I suspect that we are, and that it will continue for some considerable time.

It can be interesting to read biblical stories and some of Jesus’ parables again through the prism of asking whether they speak to us of actions that are are intuitive or counter-intuitive. They are, I think, a mixture of the two. Do you find that to be the case? For example, the labourers in the Vineyard all rewarded the same whatever their hours of work; the first shall be last and the last first; it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Secondly, the phrase the ‘New Normal’ is frequently being used, and while there’s a supposition that we can’t return to the old normal it seems to me that often, in both society and the church, the default image for the ‘New Normal’ is to get as near as possible to the old normal. I’m not sure that will prove possible and it is interesting that within church circles there has been frequent reference to the experience of being in the wilderness.

Captivity in Egypt was followed by wandering for years in the wilderness. A journey that could have been completed in days takes years. Why? Nomadic life becomes the norm. And then eventually there is settlement in the promised land. The changes were profound and then over the years the changes continue to be no less profound through exiles and returns. Time and again the questions keep coming, ‘How do we sing the Lord’s song in new lands and environments?’

I recall a college principal’s vote of thanks to a visiting speaker containing the phrase; ‘You may not have given us all the answers but you have helped us to ask the right questions.’ I’d suggest that as we continue the journey of ‘faith seeking understanding’ in the coming months helping each other to identify and ask the right questions is going to be key for us.

We can look forward to being helped in that task by a new minister, Rev Robin Fox, who joins us next week, and by Deacon Jill who returns from holiday too.

*Revd Will Morrey*

***St. Andrew’s Chapel, Aston***

is open again for morning worship

every **Sunday** at **11 am**.

A short service led by Jenny and David Smith

Face masks must be worn

Social distancing must be maintained

No singing

***Broomhall & Sound Chapel***

 ***“Zoom Service” Sunday 30th August 10.30 am***

 ***( opens 10.15am)***

***Led by Deacon Jill Taylor***

***Everyone welcome***

***Join Zoom Meeting***<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84907348014?pwd=RlJEL3lmWFJNbW8zQW1MZnpITnJYUT09>***Meeting ID: 849 0734 8014
Password: 074905***

***Thank you to everyone who makes this possible, especially Charles who “hosts”.***

**Prayer & Reflection**

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At Broomhall & Sound Chapel

7pm Mon 31 August

(social distancing & face masks will be required)

**Nantwich JMA**

 Victoria collected another £595 in the past week, making her total for the year £,1,234**.**87, which will be sent to the JMA central fund in London. She has beaten her target for 2019/20 and raised a total of £4,259.50 since starting to collect in January 2016.

 Last Tuesday the Methodist JMA Secretary and editor of the JMA magazine ‘Rainbow’ interviewed Victoria by phone.

 Victoria would like to express her thanks to the generous contributions of all at NMC.

**Welcome to Rev. Robin Fox**

Unfortunately, the manse at Audlem is not yet ready for occupation, as covid-19 has caused a shortage of some materials for the improvements.

We hope he can move in on Thursday 3rd Sept.

Please pray for him in this very unsettling and stressful situation.

Robin will still officially take up his post

on 1st September, but will not have many commitments until he has had time

to settle into his new home.

He will attend a

**Circuit Welcome Service (Zoom)**

**Sun 6th Sept at 6.30pm,**

also a

**Local Welcome Service**

**Tuesday 15th September 10.30am**

in St Mary’s Church Nantwich

(social distancing & face masks will be required)

**Nantwich Church Council**

**is *postponed* until Robin is available.**

**Nantwich Food Bank**

 in conjunction with

**Nantwich Food Festival**

 **‘Drop-Off & Go’ Collection**

Saturday 5th September 11am – 1 pm

Nantwich Football Club

**Needed**: Long-life fruit juice, tinned rice pudding, tinned custard, meals in a tin, tinned fruit, tinned vegetables, coffee, biscuits and chocolates, shower gel, soap, washing up liquid, washing powder, shampoo, toothpaste.

The Food Bank are **unable to accept**: Dairy, meat or fish, fruit or vegetables, half used/open packets, items that require refrigeration, anything past its best before / use by date, anything alcoholic, bleach. They can accept fresh eggs as long as they are date stamped / egg standard marked.

Social distancing requirements will be observed.

Wrenbury & Nantwich Mission Area **Methodist** Churches 

**Sunday 30 August 2020**

This short act of worship has been prepared for us to use as we are not able to gather for worship. We can remain connected in fellowship by following this simple act of worship around the time you would normally be gathered for worship in your chapel/church.

**Opening Prayer**

Lord, I draw near with faith. Open my eyes to see and ears to hear what you have for me, today and every day. Amen

**Hymn: StF 608 All Praise to Our Redeeming Lord** Sing / read / pray / proclaim the words:

All praise to our redeeming Lord,

who joins us by his grace,

and bids us, each to each restored,

together seek his face.

He bids us build each other up;

and, gathered into one,

to our high calling's glorious hope

we hand in hand go on.

The gift which he on one bestows,

we all delight to prove;

the grace through every vessel flows,

in purest streams of love.

E'en now we think and speak the same,

and cordially agree;

concentred all, through Jesu's name,

in perfect harmony.

We all partake the joy of one,

the common peace we feel,

a peace to sensual minds unknown,

a joy unspeakable.

And if our fellowship below

in Jesus be so sweet,

what heights of rapture shall we know

when round his throne we meet!

*Charles Wesley (1707-1788)*

**A Time of Prayer**

Lord God, we pray to you, as Father Son and Holy Spirit, to praise you, for You are our God. We pray to thank you for all that You have done for us, for you are always there. We pray to You as our God, who made the world, died for us, rose again to show us the way to heaven, and lives in us all. We bring before you the burden of all the sins we have committed, and we say Lord God, we are sorry for them. We know that such is your Love,

we are forgiven our sins. Thanks be to you, Our God, Amen

**Today’s Reading from the Old Testament**:

**Exodus 3:1-15**

 Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. Then Moses said, ‘I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up.’ When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, ‘Moses, Moses!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’ Then he said, ‘Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.’ He said further, ‘I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

 Then the Lord said, ‘I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.’ But Moses said to God, ‘Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?’ He said, ‘I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.’

 But Moses said to God, ‘If I come to the Israelites and say to them, “The God of your ancestors has sent me to you”, and they ask me, “What is his name?” what shall I say to them?’ God said to Moses, ‘I am who I am.’ He said further, ‘Thus you shall say to the Israelites, “I am has sent me to you.” ’ God also said to Moses, ‘Thus you shall say to the Israelites, “The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you”:

This is my name for ever, and this my title for all generations.

**Today’s New Testament Reading:**

**Romans 12:9-21**

 Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’ No, ‘if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

**Time to Reflect**

 How often have we heard the story of the burning bush? Perhaps you first heard it at school or in Sunday School. Many of us certainly knew the basic plot as soon as we saw the heading. Yet, when we read it now, in these difficult times, perhaps it is the assurance God hears our sufferings that is what we need most from this reading, rather than a familiar story. If on our next walk outside we saw what Moses did, and heard a similar promise, would we rejoice? Yet, God is telling us to do that, without flames amidst our shrubbery.

 The reading from Romans tells us, Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. In difficult moments, that is enough to ask of someone to get through these times. What is astonishing is, it can be sufficient if we will let it be. Not that we are ever alone.

 Listening to what God tells us in our despair is often the hardest thing. Why did God have to burn a bush so that it would keep burning until Moses noticed it? Moses was in the depths of despair. We don’t like to listen in our despair to anything of hope. Much of the duty of a Christian is to help one another out of the wallowing. To share our own grief’s lessons with those who are in the midst of learning them. We should weep with those who weep, yes, and yet, more than this, we should pass the tissues and try and help them through.

 At present, we are much minded to think of all that is wrong in our lives, of those dear to us being taken from us, or at risk of so being. Take thought though of all that is not awful even in our present miseries. For there is more goodness on show than at that burning bush each and every day, if we would but see it. It may be hard to see, yet that is why God gives us such lights. If we light a candle in a dark room, an experiment I recommend, you will marvel at how much such a small light can reveal. So how much more can a burning bush light up? Yet more than this, the light of God is alive in every Christian this very day, and it burns even brighter than the sun itself.

 If you doubt this, take the Romans passage, and think of examples you have seen of each verse, one or two a day this week. You will soon see much light, more than comes in at your windows in the bright summer days.

 Do not let the evil that sits in the world overpower you. Leave such to the Lord, He will deal with the evil people, turning them to good. Focus instead on the good you can do. For if we all do what good we can, that is quite enough to make the world a very different place. If we dwell on evil, we will be overwhelmed. Yet instead of decrying all that is wrong, let us concentrate on doing good. If we spend our time doing our bit of Good, we do far more than all the handwringing in history ever accomplished. Do not let yourself think yourself weak, you have prayer, you have the good you can do for others with your God-given abilities. That is quite enough to overcome a lot of evil for other folk, if you would but set to it with a will. Thus, the True Christian does not just hold to what is good in theory. We do good. For are we not True Christians, all of us?

***Take a time to sit quietly***

**A time of prayer**

Gracious God, we bring before you our prayers for the world.

We pray for all those who lack physical things, food, shelter, water, and all of life’s necessities.

We pray for those who mourn, and those who ail. Lord, for those we may help, may our hands work quickly, and for those we personally cannot help, we pray for the hands that will.

We pray for all those who work to provide care and help to others. Lord bless them and keep them from tiredness and error, and those they care for, keep them from despair. We bring the names of those known to us before you…

We pray for all in spiritual distress, who struggle to hear your message, or to come to you in prayer. Lord, help them to heed.

We pray for ourselves. Strengthen us to come through renewed in faith in certainty.

We pray for our land and nation. Lord, help us all to endure, to do our duty and to serve you faithfully. May our land be brightened by the Light of the Lord as we leave these times behind.

Lord, we ask these things, knowing that when we pray, wherever we pray, you hear our prayers. Thanks be unto you, Father Son and Holy Spirit, Amen

**The Lord’s Prayer**

Our Father ……

**Hymn: StF 504 May the Mind of Christ my Saviour**

May the mind of Christ my Saviour

live in me from day to day,

by his love and power controlling

all I do or say.

May the word of God dwell richly

in my heart from hour to hour,

so that all may see I triumph

only through his power.

May the peace of God my Father

rule my life in everything,

that I may be calm to comfort

sick and sorrowing.

May the love of Jesus fill me,

as the waters fill the sea;

him exalting, self forgetting --

this is victory.

May I run the race before me,

strong and brave to face the foe,

looking only unto Jesus

as I onward go.

*Katie Barclay Wilkinson (1859-1928)*

**A prayer of blessing**

Lord, as we go forth, may we see all the things you long for us to notice. May we be your people in all we do and say. Amen

*Original Materials by Thomas Smith*

*All Hymns reproduced under CCLi155789*

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Once a man was asked, “What did you gain by regularly praying to God?” The man replied. “Nothing … but let me tell you what I lost: anger, greed, insecurity and fear.” Sometimes the answer to our prayers is not gaining but losing; which ultimately is the gain.

[Many would say they gain a wonderful amount too!]

**Two things** stand out for me in the Burning Bush story (Exodus 3) **:**

 I believe that God’s promise and commitment to his people still stands: “***I have seen***, … ***I have heard***, … ***I know,*** *…*  and so ***I have******come*** …” (Good News Bible). Whatever sadness, doubt, anxiety, pain, etc. keeps us captive, holds us back from finding peace, joy, confidence or fulfilment in life, … ***God knows and comes*** to release us from it.

 I also love to read on to Moses’ list of excuses as to why he was the wrong person for the task, and note how God answers each doubt and thoroughly equips him, because he sees in Moses a potential that Moses himself did not realise he had. This too could be any of us. *Pat M*

**Prayer**

 Please pray for Rev. Alan Mumford, who is quite poorly in hospital; also for Louise and their family.

 We are sad to report that Jane Roberts (NMC) has passed away. Please pray for her family and friends.

 Bring to God all the needs you know of among our churches, neighbourhood, nation and wider world.

 Let us be the answer to our own prayers as far as possible.

**Free Bramley Cooking Apples**

We have been apple picking at Crewe-by-Farndon, where a tree in the church field is full of wonderful apples. It would be a shame to see them go to waste, so they are available from outside 2 Newbold Way, Nantwich, or I can deliver you a bag. Donations gratefully received for Poole Quiet Garden. *Rev. Malcolm Lorimer*

*Today’s Media are full of ‘****Life Hacks’*** *– what we used to call ‘tips’ or ‘hints’. Many publications and broadcasts offer ‘hacks’ for Christian living too. Some are a little weighty and involved, others simpler and easier to grasp. Many are just reminders of what we already know. Do any of these enlighten or challenge you?*

 “Your truest friends are the people who don’t walk out the door when life gets hard. They pour some coffee and pull up a chair. They say not, ‘Oh you are in a fix,’ but, ‘What are we going to do about it?’”

*“Do things for people not because of who they are or what they do in return, but because of who you are.”*

Our job is to love others without stopping to enquire whether or not they are worthy.

 *(Thomas Merton)*

*In a world where so many “couldn’t care less”, be someone who cares more!*

We cannot force people to accept the Gospel, but never underestimate the value of planting a seed.

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 Many people holding office in the Methodist Church these days have to undergo training in what is called Unconscious Bias. The aim is to deter people from jumping to conclusions, making sweeping generalisations, appointing to office, etc. without attending to the real facts or a person’s true experience or strengths.

 It is interesting to remember that, “The kind of God depicted in the scriptures and in the life of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ… is a God with an incredible bias, a notorious bias in favour of the downtrodden. … God is not even-handed. God is biased up to his eyebrows.”

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*“God, help me never to make false assumptions about people I’ve never met, circumstances I’ve never known, and events I’ve never experienced*.”

 “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.” (Proverbs 31:8-9)

 *“Hope is a decision we make, a choice to believe that God can take the adversity, the disappointment, the heartache, and the pain of our journeys and use these to accomplish his purposes.”* *(Adam Hamilton)*

 “Many people do not realise that the church with its structures, dogmas and doctrines is Plan B. Jesus did not seek to found a new religion centred on rites, rituals, buildings and clergy. Instead, he proclaimed the in-breaking kingdom of God, the reign of God here on earth – a vision of the way the world would be if a God of love governed our common life. Moreover, he taught a way of living consistent with that vision. To be faithful followers of Jesus is to return to Plan A.”

*(Kurt Struckmeyer, ‘An Unorthodox Faith’.)*

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This Week’s Grammar Lesson

In earlier editions we have drawn attention to problems caused simply by missing out a letter or comma. The following shows the importance of a correctly placed full stop:

 “I am giving up eating chocolate for a month.”

No, sorry …

 “I am giving up**.** Eating chocolate for a month.” !

Among the young people who have just received their GCSE results was a young naval cadet. Unsurprisingly, he gained seven Cs!

My mate was telling me he failed his exam in Aboriginal Music. I said, “Didja redo it?”

I can’t believe how desperate my maths teacher is: he keeps asking me to find his X. I think it’s time he faced the truth - she’s not coming back.

**This week we focus on Health and Well-Being** -

My doctor told me today I need to watch my drinking. I now drink in front of a [mirror](http://www.funnyshortjokes.com/c/hilarious-jokes).

I went to see the doctor last week. He gave me 4 months to live, so I shot him. Today the judge gave me 20 years, problem solved.

Diet Day 1**:** Just removed all the fattening food from my house, it was delicious.

I walk into the gym and see a bunch of ladies working out. I ask the guy who is running the gym, “Sir, what machine should I use to impress the ladies?” He smiles and says, “Try the ATM in the lobby”.

I went to the doctor’s yesterday and told him that every time I drink coffee I get a stabbing pain in my right eye. He advised me to take the spoon out of the cup.

I stepped on my weighing scale this morning and it said: “Please use social distancing, one person at a time”.

I’ll never forget my granddad’s last words. “Are you holding that ladder properly?”

Why is it that when an old person comes up to me at a wedding and says “You’re next” it’s somehow socially acceptable, but when I do the same to them at a funeral I get into trouble?

**Q**: Why did the banana go to the doctor?

**A**: Because he didn’t peel well.

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You gotta hand it to short people…. Mainly because they can’t reach.