Wrenbury & Nantwich Mission Area **Methodist** Churches 

**Newsletter 26 - 20 September**

Well we’ve reached newletter 26, which means that for half a year we have been a dispersed church, worshipping at home. It seems a long time since we gathered in churches, yet at the same time it doesn’t feel like half a year (although they say time goes quicker the older you get, or maybe time flies when you’re having fun!).

It was wonderful that a number of us were able to gather in St Mary’s to welcome Rev Robin Fox as minister of Nantwich & Audlem Mission Areas. We continue to work towards opening our own churches. Thank you to property stewards and stewards who have worked hard to complete risk assessments and make our building Covid compliant and as safe as we can make them. Nantwich church council will meet on Monday 21st Sept at 2pm to make the final decision as to whether they believe the building can be made safe to open, but also to decide **IF** it is the right time. We must continue to ask the question **WHY** we are re-entering our buildings for worship, when more people have been able to explore and deepen their faith since our buildings have been closed. Aston Chapel is open for morning service every Sunday and Broomhall & Sound are doing an excellent job of hosting a “Zoom” service regularly accessed by people from every church/chapel across the 2 mission areas, which is just a joy to see.

For those of you who were able to attend, Robin’s welcome service gave you an idea of what worship will look and feel like. It’s so hard not being able to sing, and having to wear face masks, but maybe it makes us focus on words or being in God’s presence more than on the sound we make. The experience will enable a number of you to make an informed decision about re-opening for worship, and you can share your experience with others.

Even when a decision has been made to open our buildings, I can’t emphasise enough that it will not be appropriate for everyone to return at the moment. You must consider your own safety, we do not want to put anyone at unecessary risk. Any decision we make as churches could easily be overturned by a decision of the Government.

This week’s gospel reading is the parable of the vineyard workers. The vineyard owner upsets a number of his labourers by paying those he took on late in the afternooon the same amount of money as those who had done a full day. “*It’s not fair!”* was the cry. “*We worked longer than they* *did, they should receive less*”. The workers who had worked all day received the full wage they had agreed to work for. I’m sure I would have been miffed as well, but it was the Landowner’s money, it was his choice to decide if he wanted to be generous and reward everyone equally. The parable was told to illustrate God’s grace: we don’t get treated by God the way we really deserve; He offers us grace, forgiveness and acceptance, often when we don’t deserve it.

My girls would often say, “*It’s not fair, why do I have to do something, when she doesn’t …..?”* We may not realise it, but we often think things aren’t fair in church. There will be a challenge at Nantwich, that if and when it opens we will only be able to welcome 30 people, half the size of a normal congregation. Who will decide who gets the seats - first come, first served? Members first, non members if space? Regular attenders or someone we’ve hardly seen?

Churches around the country have historically had problems with pews/seats. We form habits, and many of us sit in the same place every week. The regulars get to know where they can or can’t sit. Regrettably, I have heard so many tales, and experienced for myself, of being asked to move because the seat I was sitting in was someone else’s. It really isn’t the welcome

many of us want to receive, and something that has stopped many people returning.

We all need to demonstrate God’s grace in how we deal with situations, even if it means we don’t get a seat. Think of the joy of allowing someone on the fringe of church to feel truly welcomed into our church and God’s kingdom.

We’re in the wonderful season of harvest, which is so important, especially to our country chapels who have so much more reason to be thankful, as many have worked the land. The country chapels have always been so good at supporting one another and going to each other’s harvests. Can I ask you to prayerfully consider not doing that this year? Numbers will be very restricted. It would be far more gracious to allow people on the fringe of church or from within the local community to attend their local chapel this year, than turn them away because it’s full of members from another chapel. It may not feel fair, but sometimes we are asked to make sacrifices for others. The church is the only organisation in existence where we should be more concerned about our non-members than our members.

Those who get their newsletter hand-delivered should have received an envelope from **All We Can**, asking you to support their work as part of our harvest celebrations this year. If your church/chapel is open you are very welcome to bring them back to church and they will be collectively sent off on your behalf. Alternatively you may like to set up a regular payment directly.

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



**Harvest Appeal 2020**

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**Change Begins with your regular support.**

£6 a month could help break the cycle of poverty for a child in Uganda. With a bicycle they can access education and start a journey in fulfilling her God given potential.

Leaflets are available with the newsletter for you to consider making a one-off or regular payment to All We Can. If you receive the newsletter electronically but would like an actual envelop contact Pat or Jill. You can make a donation through your local church by clearly labelling your donation, or looking on the web site.

Your support would very much be appreciated.

“When asked, ‘What is more important: Prayer or Reading the Bible?’ I ask, ‘What is more important: Breathing in or Breathing out?’”

*(Charles Spurgeon)*

Mosaics are made from broken pieces, but they’re still a work of art. And so are you.

*(Contemplative Monk)*

This space should have been filled with a photo of **Rev. Robin Fox,**

takenafter a service of welcome to the Nantwich Mission Areaat St. Mary’s Church Nantwich last Tuesday.

Unfortunately, technology and ignorance joined forces to make my only option a full-page picture with lines across – not flattering! - so I’ve sent out an SOS and hope to do better next week.

As Robin starts to meet us and get involved in church life here, let us all renew the vow made by the Circuit:

“***We will work with you and pray for you***.”

***St. Andrew’s Chapel, Aston***

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

led by Jenny and David Smith

*Face masks must be worn*

*Social distancing must be maintained*

*No singing. Max 30 people*

**Wrenbury & Nantwich Mission Area Methodist Churches** 

**Sunday 20 Sept 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**

 Loving God, I know that you are with me in every moment of my life, but as I set this special time aside, I pray that I might feel your presence.  *[Pause].*

 I pray that you will send your Holy Spirit, that in the stillness I might hear your Word and be joined in fellowship with sisters and brothers who gather in your name this day.  **Amen.**

**Hymn: Only By Grace Can We Enter**

**(StF 565)**

Sing/ read /pray /proclaim the words :

Only by grace can we enter,

 only by grace can we stand;

not by our human endeavour,

 but by the blood of the Lamb.

Into your presence you call us,

 you call us to come.

Into your presence you draw us,

 and now by your grace we come,

now by your grace we come.

Lord, if you mark our transgressions,

 who would stand?

Thanks to your grace we are cleansed

 by the blood of the Lamb.

Lord, if you mark our transgressions,

 who would stand?

Thanks to your grace we are cleansed

 by the blood of the Lamb.

Only by grace can we enter ...

*Gerrit Gustafson*

**Let us pray together**

Gracious God, I praise you for who you are. For you are the Lord, the giver and sustainer of life, whose nature is love. I thank you that even when I rebel against you, your unquenchable love seeks me out. I thank you that in Jesus you made the first move and have rescued me. I pray that as your Word ministers to me, I might so open my heart to your grace that it might fill me, transform me and overflow into all my relationships and dealings with the world.

**Amen**.

**Today’s Old Testament Reading:**

Exodus 16: 2-15

 The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness.  The Israelites said to them, ‘If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.’

 Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not.  On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days.’

 So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, ‘In the evening you shall know that it was the  Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, and in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your complaining against the Lord. For what are we, that you complain against us?’  And Moses said, ‘When the Lord gives you meat to eat in the evening and your fill of bread in the morning, because the Lord has heard the complaining that you utter against him - what are we? Your complaining is not against us but against the Lord.’

Then Moses said to Aaron, ‘Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites, “Draw near to the Lord, for he has heard your complaining.” ’ And as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they looked towards the wilderness, and the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. The Lord spoke to Moses and said,  ‘I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, “At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the Lord your God.” ’

 In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp.  When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground.  When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, ‘What is it?’ For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, ‘It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat.

**Today’s Gospel Reading:**

Matthew 20: 1-16

 ‘For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard.  After agreeing with the labourers for the usual daily wage,  he sent them into his vineyard. When he went out about nine o’clock, he saw others standing idle in the market-place; and he said to them, “You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.” So they went. When he went out again about noon and about three o’clock, he did the same.  And about five o’clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, “Why are you standing here idle all day?” They said to him, “Because no one has hired us.” He said to them, “You also go into the vineyard.”

 When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, “Call the labourers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.”  When those hired about five o’clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage.  And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, “These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.”

 But he replied to one of them, “Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?” So the last will be first, and the first will be last.’

**Time to Reflect**

 All Christians talk about grace but it seems to me that as Methodists we talk about grace a lot! This unearned love of God in Jesus Christ freely offered to all people is both the foundation and heart of our worship, the sacraments and our new life in Christ. It is this grace that is expressed in God’s saving action toward us and nothing of our faith can ever be outside a response to God’s grace.

 In turning to Matthew 20 we reach Jesus’ parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard. The New Testament scholar Charles B. Cousar suggests that the best response a preacher can make to this text is to simply get out of the way of this challenging, perhaps even annoying picture of God’s grace. Why annoying? This story is told to Jesus’ disciples who have as Peter says “…left everything and followed *[*Jesus*]*” (Mt. 11:27).

 It is to these that Jesus tells his story of workers who queue for their wage after a whole day toiling in the scorching sun. We can imagine their eyes popping when the latecomers receive a full day’s wage for but one hour’s work. If they have stumbled upon such generosity, what then will be *their* reward? Imagine then the knot in their stomachs as they receive nothing but the exact same coin as their colleagues who had hardly broken sweat. What employer would be so foolish as to alienate such faithful workers?

 This, then, is Jesus’ answer to his faithful follower’s enquiry about their reward. Confronted by the reality of God’s grace all legalistic religion, all bargaining with God finds its end. The reward is the work itself for it is carried out in the presence of the master.

 As we are confronted by this grace, so it poses a question. Is it enough for us to know that we labour in the presence and purpose of the God who loves us? As our story stands on the threshold of Holy Week in Matthew 21, are we content that we shall gather with last minute arrivals so that even a thief, in the last minutes of his life, finds a gracious promise of paradise?

 In our frustration, may we recall with humility the grace first shown to us.

Grace and peace.

**A time of prayer**

Loving God, I pray that the world might know your grace. As I begin to inhabit a “new normal”, I pray for wisdom for the leaders of the world, that powerful nations might respond with that self-giving generosity that you bring to the world.

On this peace Sunday, I pray for all those who respond to your love by making the first move to call an end to conflict. I pray for those caught up in conflict, those who flinch at the sound of explosives or gunshot.

I pray for those slowly returning to collective worship as some places of worship reopen, and for those who feel excluded from that worship.

I ask your blessing on those close to me, that even in these distanced times you will give me the opportunity to reflect that grace first shown to me.

I ask these prayers in the only way that I can: in the power of your Holy Spirit and in the name, grace and character of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen**.

**The Lord’s Prayer**

Our Father ……

**Hymn: StF 440 Amazing Grace**

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind but now I see

Twas Grace that taught my heart to fear,
And Grace my fears relieved.
How precious did that Grace appear
The hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils and snares
We have already come.
Twas Grace that brought us safe thus far,
And Grace will lead us home

The Lord has promised good to me,

His word my hope secures,

He will my shield and portion be

As long as life endures.

And when this heart and flesh shall fail

And mortal life shall cease,

I shall possess within the veil

A life of joy and peace

When we’ve been there ten thousand years

Bright shining as the sun

We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise

Than when we first begun

 *John Newton 1725 -1807*

**A prayer of blessing**

God to enfold you,
Christ to uphold you,
Spirit to keep you in heaven's sight;
so may God grace you,
heal and embrace you,
lead you through darkness
into the light.

*John L. Bell (b. 1949)*

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***Broomhall & Sound Chapel***

***“Zoom Service” Sunday 20th 10.30 am***

***Led by Rev Malcolm Lorimer***

***( opens 10.15am)***

***Everyone welcome***

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

Also at Broomhall and Sound:

**Coffee and Cuddles**:

Thursday 24th Sept., 9.30am. Songs, story, craft and prayer. Aimed at pre-school children, but all welcome.

**Lego Church**

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4pm Friday 18 Sept & 2 Oct

Songs, story & Lego challenge

Aimed at primary school children but all welcome**.**

**For details of all the above and Zoom links contact kathryn-davies@hotmail.co.uk**

**Macmillan Cancer support**



**“Drive Through” Cake Sale at**

Broomhall & Sound Chapel

**Saturday 26 Sept 10 am – noon**

(donations of homemade cakes welcome;

drop off at chapel 9.30-10 am)

*All proceeds to Macmillan Cancer*

**Zoom Bedtime Story:**

Monday 28th Sept., 7pm. Bring your Teddy and a cup of hot chocolate and snuggle up for a story and prayers. A perfect end to the day!

**N. M. C. Church Council**

Extraordinary meeting on Monday 21st Sept., 2pm, at the church, to approve the plans to re-open the building. A Zoom link will be sent to those who wish to shield. Full Church Council on Monday 12th Oct., 7pm.

***When it comes to change, churches seem to worry more about members they might lose than strangers they might bless***.

Even the strongest hands can lose their grip, the greatest of minds can become cloudy, and the biggest of hearts can break. So be kind – just always be kind.

***Trying to be perfect in a pandemic is like trying to stay dry in a hurricane. Be gentle with yourself and with others.***

**\* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \***

You don’t need a parachute to go sky diving. You need a parachute to go sky diving twice.

I sold my vacuum the other day. All it was doing was collecting [dust](https://www.rd.com/funny/bad-jokes-cant-help-laugh-at/).

To whoever stole my copy of Microsoft Office,

I will find you. You have my [Word](https://bestlifeonline.com/dad-jokes-so-bad-theyre-actually-hilarious/)!

**Q: What do you call a fish with no eyes?**

**A:** *A fsh.*

**Q**: What do you call a fly with no wings?

**A:** *A Walk.*

**Q**: How do vampires start letters?

**A**: *Tomb it may concern*…

**Q**: Which school subject was the witch’s [favourite](https://redtri.com/best-jokes-for-kids/slide/3)?

**A:** *Spelling*

**Q: What do you call a parade of rabbits hopping backwards?**

**A: *A receding hare-line.***

**Q**: Why are hairdressers never late for work?

**A**: Because they know all the short cuts!

**Prayer and Church Family News**

 We are very sad to report that Sylvia Rhoden (Hatherton) passed away on Tuesday, after a long illness very bravely and faithfully borne. Our thoughts and prayers are with her family and her friends all across the circuit and community.

 Please also pray for others who mourn: the family and friends of Ron Day and Jane Roberts, whose funerals took place this week, and others known to you.

 At the time of typing, Hugh Parker (NMC) was due to have his pacemaker replaced on Thursday.

 We are glad to report that Vi Wilson (NMC) is home again from hospital. Continue to pray for her, for Alan and Louise Mumford, Stuart Rhodes, and anyone else you know to be recuperating from illness or injury; for those nearing the end of this life.

**FOOD BANK**

From the Trussell Trust (the network which governs our local Food Bank and many others across the UK) …

**\*** a predicted 61% increase in food parcels will be needed in October to December – some 846,000 parcels given out, or 6 every minute.

**\***  at the start of the pandemic, about half of the people who used a food bank had never needed one before.

**\*** families with children have been hardest hit.

**\*** the situation *can be turned around* if this evidence is prioritised and acted upon by the Government in the coming Comprehensive Spending Review and Budget. The raised benefit level and job retention scheme during the pandemic have shown what difference can be achieved.

 If you are concerned, urge your MP to ensure that the necessary support structures are put in place.

 And pray that decision-makers may have the compassion and sense of responsibility and justice to guarantee security and dignity for those who struggle for an acceptable standard of living.

***Almighty God, you search us and know us: may we rely on you in strength and rest on you in weakness, now and in all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.***