Wrenbury & Nantwich Mission Area Methodist Churches 

**Newsletter No 34 15 November 2020**

We’re all having to adjust to another “new norm” of our second lockdown and brace ourselves for the second wave of Covid. For some people it doesn’t feel quite so bad, we’ve already made a number of adjustments to how we go about or daily life. It feels a more targeted approach, curbing social activity whilst trying to enable people to work. Rightly or wrongly schools, colleges and universities have remained open this time. Those in leadership have to make judgment calls and weigh up which is the greater risk, controlling the pandemic and reducing covid deaths against the economy collapsing, jobs being lost, people being forced into poverty, and young and old alike having mental health issues.

Our gospel reading this week is the parable of the talents. A wonderful illustration of how we should all use the talents we are given. We sometimes refer to people as being “very talented” often in terms of art or music. For those who have more talents, more is expected of them. We expect the government and chief scientists to make all the right decisions for us, yet never before has a situation like this had to be dealt with. It’s easy for us to sit back in our homes and criticise the decisions others have made. I can’t begin to imagine the mental pressure people like Chris Witty and Boris are under, they really do have the weight of the world on their shoulders. Instead of criticising we need to hold these people in prayer.

It's good to see how many local businesses are using their talents to adapt to the situation and operate their businesses in different ways. Restaurants and cafes may be shut so they’ve turned to take-aways. Non-essential shops can’t open their doors, but have set up “click and collect” or home delivery service. Local businesses, if they want to survive, can’t bury their head in the sand and do nothing, like the foolish man did in the parable: they have to adjust.

Our church buildings may have had to close their doors again, but the church is not closed. The church is the people, relationship with one another and with God. Who would ever have imagined we’d be zooming services, or live-streaming or using You tube? Reasearch has shown that actually more people are accessing the church since the doors were closed. Whilst it was disappointing last Saturday to be told to close our building again, after many of you had planned services up until Christmas, for me it didn’t feel as bad as the first time because we’ve developed ways of keeping in touch. I never dreamt we’d have got to week 34 of the newsletter, and still likely to have many more to come! I don’t know where Geoff gets his jokes from every week, but thank you, they make me laugh at least !

There are many talented people in and around Nantwich. If you want to contribute something in the newsetter - a story, quiz, poem, prayer - ….. email it to Pat or me.

For some, entering into a second lockdown is harder than the first. Many health care professionals are going into the busiest period of the year already exhausted. They’ve worked through the first wave, many are off with stress or having to self isolate. They have not had the refreshing, relaxing summer break they would normally take in prepation for the long winter. I love the promises found in Isiaiah 40:

*“The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired and weary, and his understanding no-one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall, but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles, they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”*

I know I’m feeling weary at the moment; despite lockdown there appears to be no let-up to things that need doing. I never get to the end of my to-do list any day. My intentions of ringing you up to see how you are doing get pushed to the bottom of the list by other demands. I’m sorry !

Our epistle reading in 1Thes 5 talks about things that happen at night. Some people are afraid of the dark, many of you will not want to venture out into the dark night. This is the time of the year when the nights are so much longer, where you may feel even more isolated in your homes. I’ve aleady seen a number of christmas trees and lights going up in people’s houses to help them find some joy and hope during lock down. I read a lovely message today: *“ You can find hope and happiness in the darkest times if only someone turns on the light.”*

We will be preparing shortly to celebrate the birth of Jesus, the light of the world. As Christians we are called to reflect God’s light and love amongst the people we meet and communities we live in. So let’s be particularly mindful at this time of year of all those who find themselves in dark places. May we shine some hope and happiness into their lives.

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

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Wrenbury & Nantwich Mission Area Methodist Churches 

**Sunday 15 November 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, we come into your awesome presence, from the shadows into your radiance.’

May the light of your presence guide our worship today. Amen.

**Hymn: Be Thou my Vision (StF 545)**

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,

be all else but naught to me, save that thou art;

be thou my best thought in the day and the night,

both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,

be thou ever with me, and I with thee, Lord;

be thou my great Father, thy child let me be;

be thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.

Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;

be thou my whole armour, be thou my true might;

be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong tower:

O raise thou me heavenward, great Power of my power.

Riches I heed not, nor earth's empty praise:

be thou mine inheritance now and always;

be thou and thou only the first in my heart:

O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou art.

High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright Sun,

O grant me its joys after victory is won;

Great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,

still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

*Irish, 8th century*

*translated by Mary Elizabeth Byrne (1880-1931)*

*versified by Eleanor Henrietta Hull (1860-1935) alt.*

**Let us pray together**

**Prayer of Praise and Invocation**

Lord Jesus, Light of the World;

You came to turn our world upside down,

 or rather the right way up.

Word of God made flesh,

You came to show us how to truly live, to love

 and to serve;

how to live out the values of your kingdom here

 on earth.

As we gather to praise you for all that you are

 and all that you bring, we pray:

‘mirrored here, may our lives tell your story’

 today and everyday. Amen.

**Prayer of Confession**

Lord we acknowledge that there have been

Times when we have not shared the riches of

 your kingdom with others.

Times when we have taken the easy route,

 choosing options that require less time, less

 energy, less thought.

Times when we have turned back to the ways

 of the world, that are contrary to the values of

 your kingdom.

And in a moment of quiet we bring into your

 light our own personal confessions.

Lord, we remember you are a God of mercy and

 grace, who forgives us and transforms us, by

 the power of your Spirit, into the people you

 have truly made us to be. Amen.

**Matthew 25: 14-30**

**The Parable of the Talents**

 ‘For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

 After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, “Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.” His master said to him, “Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.”

 And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, “Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.” His master said to him, “Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.”

 Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, “Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.” But his master replied, “You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

**Today’s Epistle Reading:**

**I Thessalonians 5:1-11**

 Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When they say, ‘There is peace and security’, then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness.

 So then, let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

**Time to Reflect**

 *I used to work for a company where every month we were visited by a mystery shopper. There used to be quite a lot of anxiety amongst certain staff around the time this visit may occur. When exactly would they come? How would we be rated? Our boss had us doing lots of extra tasks to prepare. However, I was never that worried, thinking if we were behaving as we should be, we would have nothing to be concerned about.*

 *One of the questions concerning the people in Thessalonica, who Paul is writing to, is ‘when will the day of the Lord come?’*

 *Paul replies, ‘about times and dates we do not need to write to you’, that day ‘will come like a thief in the night’ (1 Thess 5: 1-2).*

 *However, for those who are living in the way God has guided them, ‘this light will not come like a searchlight to reveal the sins done under the cover of darkness’, but like the light of a new day. Howard Marshall, 2011, p1283).*

 The Thessalonians’ focus should not be on trying to predict this day, but living as children of light. In my job the mystery shopper came to assess how we were treating all customers. It wouldn’t have done the company any good if we had only treated the mystery shopper well. It was the many other customers every day that would be speaking to their family and friends and at risk of not returning.

 How we treat all people, how we live our lives on a daily basis, amidst the challenges and competing values of the world, matters.

 The church in Thessalonica was relatively new. Paul had to leave after only three preaching sessions due to mob violence from those who opposed his teachings.

 The new believers were living during a time of persecution. There is the military image of being awake and on watch, but here, ‘peace and security’, a slogan sometimes associated with imperial Roman rule, is not brought about through military might and threat of violence,

which only brings fragile peace. Rather the Thessalonians are to put on the defensive breastplate and helmet of faith, hope and love. They are to live as a contrast society. They are to live the Jesus way.

 Our Gospel reading is also set at a time when the values of God’s kingdom are clashing with the values of the world.

 This parable is told two days before the Passover festival in what we now call Holy Week, where the story reaches its climax and Jesus himself brings about peace, not through violence but through the way of the cross.

 Jesus firstly is offering a challenge to his own day, a time where he is forcing a final confrontation between God’s kingdom and the system that had resisted it.

 The third slave could be seen as representing the Pharisees, who had been given the Law of Moses, the Temple, and the command to share God’s blessing and yet had kept the light to themselves. The other slaves can be seen as those who take the good news of God’s kingdom they have been entrusted with, share it and act to help it grow

**To ponder**

What do we do with the news of God’s kingdom

 that has been entrusted to us?

How do we live each day in light of this news?

As Paul writes to the Thessalonians, how can

 we encourage one another and build ourselves

 up in our faith?

**Take a time to sit quietly**

**A time of prayer**

We pray for places where people face persecution

 for their faith and are not free to worship you,

 and for people who have not yet heard the

Good News of Jesus;

***Lord, help us shine your light and share our faith.***

We pray for those who fear for the future,

 those facing job uncertainty or loss,

 those anxious about the continued impact of the

 Covid pandemic;

***Lord, help us shine your light and share your***

 ***hope.***

We pray for those who are ill, facing loneliness,

 isolation and separation from loved ones;

***Lord, help us shine your light and share your***

 ***love.***

In a moment of quiet we bring before you our personal prayers.

Lord, we remember ‘the light of your love is always shining’ as we offer you these prayers in Jesus’ name. Amen. Amen.

**The Lord’s Prayer**

Our Father ……

**Hymn: StF 407**

**Hear the Call of the Kingdom**

Hear the call of the kingdom,

lift your eyes to the King;

let his song rise within you

as a fragrant offering

of how God, rich in mercy,

came in Christ to redeem

all who trust in his unfailing grace.

Hear the call of the kingdom

to be children of light

with the mercy of heaven,

the humility of Christ;

walking justly before him,

loving all that is right,

that the life of Christ may shine through us.

*King of heaven, we will answer the call.*

*We will follow, bringing hope to the world,*

*filled with passion,*

*filled with power to proclaim*

*salvation in Jesus' name.*

Hear the call of the kingdom

to reach out to the lost

with the Father's compassion

in the wonder of the cross,

bringing peace and forgiveness,

and a hope yet to come:

let the nations put their trust in him.

*King of heaven, we will answer the call* ...

*Keith Getty (b. 1974), Kristyn Getty (b. 1980) and Stuart Townend (b. 1963)*

**A prayer of blessing**

As we are sent out to live as children of light;

May we walk in faith,

be sustained by hope,

and share the all-embracing love of God

with everyone we meet. Amen.

*Original material by Rachel Atkinson*

*All Hymns reproduced under CCLi 155789*

***Broomhall and Sound Chapel***

Sun 15 Nov

10.30 am led by Nick Cutts

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82976672769?pwd=aG9pSjMvR3dzaDJaZlFkcnduSmFTZz09>
Meeting ID: 829 7667 2769
Passcode: 366121

Doors Open 10.15am

**Bedtime story on Zoom**

Pre-school and Primary age

7pm till 7.30ish

23rd November

Come in your Pyjamas and bring a mug of hot chocolate, and join us for

A story from the Bible or a story with a moral

Prayer and reflection time

Short talk from Granddad the puppet

Good Night and God Bless

For more info or the Zoom link please contact

Kathryn-davies@hotmail.co.uk

**Lego Church on Zoom**

Primary aged children

4pm till 5 ish 13th & 27th November



Songs, Bible story in Lego, Lego building

challenge, Prayers

Have your Lego box ready and let your

imagination go wild.

For more information or the zoom link please contact Kathryn-davies@hotmail.co.uk

**Prayer and Church Family News**

Please pray for Margaret Hayman (NMC) and all the family of Godfrey, who passed away last weekend.

We pray for Mary Charlesworth as she goes into hospital this week for surgery. Also for Sheila Evans, whose hip replacement was due to take place on Friday.

Also for anyone else you know who is anxious, in pain, recovering from recent surgery, or awaiting tests or treatment.

Warmest congratulations to Emmie Davies (NMC) who will be 101 years old on Saturday 21st Nov.

David Fox (son of the late Rev. Frank) has left hospital but is still very ill with cancer and dementia. Please pray for him, his wife Ann, and all the family.

Pray for the Present and Future Presidents of the United States and all the American people, that paths of peace and justice may be carved through the present tensions and brokenness of society.

Pray for the Governments and all in power in the United Kingdom, that their decisions and leadership may be founded on compassion and justice for the whole of society and for those of other nations who live among us – *not* a party political statement, but a very sound Biblical policy !!

A landslide caused by the hurricane which recently ripped through Central America has destroyed homes and, businesses and taken 150 lives in Guatemala. The whole country of Honduras is on red alert, with dozens of people lost in floods. Meanwhile, in Cambodia, severe flooding has caused many deaths and affected more than 60,000 families, who are desperate for food and other essential supplies.

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

“The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have too much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.”

*Franklin D. Roosevelt.*

We praise you, O Christ, ceaselessly searching for us when we are lost. We bless you, O Christ, constantly feeding us when we are hungry. We give thanks to you, O Christ, eternally interceding for us when we are in danger. *(Ann Griffiths 1776-1805)*

Some people feel uncomfortable singing the

 hymn “I vow to thee, my country…”.

**Rev. Dr. Andrew Pratt**

 offers alternative words to the same tune**:**

I vow to love my neighbour, whatever race or creed,

To join her in her suffering, to plead with him in need.

This love will always question, will search out right and wrong,

Will give itself for justice, for those who don’t belong.

This love will never falter, till every soul is free,

Till nations held in bondage can sing of liberty.

Through scenes of devastation, through famine, drought and war,

We’ll work in ways of gentleness, work hard till we restore

The vision of the people, the hope of human grace,

Till nations dwell in peacefulness together in this place;

Till all the world together can sing in joyful praise

Till all have found communion together in our days.

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**Nantwich Food Bank**:

Suggested items for the Reverse Advent Calendar *(* give one item each day or as many as you choose*)* are:-

> Tinned gammon, salmon, rice pudding,

 custard, fruit, sponge pudding;

> long-life fruit juice, coffee;

> mince pies (sell by date after Dec. 25th),

> Christmas cake, Christmas pudding; fancy

 biscuits, cheesy snack tub;

> tubes of sweets, small box of chocolates,

 chocolate coins;

> gift for child aged 1-4, 4-8, 8-12 or teenager,

 gift set of toiletries;

> Crackers (to pull);

> Washing powder, washing-up liquid.

In conjunction with Nantwich Food Festival, there is a “Drop-Off & Go” collection at Brine Leas School on Saturday Nov. 28th 11am-1pm. Strict Covid rules will be in force.

They cannot accept dairy, meat or fish, fruit or vegetables, items requiring refrigeration, half-used/open packets, anything past its best before/use by date, anything alcoholic, bleach.

Salvation Army: donations in lieu of the usual toys and gifts are requested by the end of November. You can pay directly into the bank **(**details of the process will be repeated next week)

**The Chester and Stoke-on-Trent District**

… invites you to three EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) evenings during Advent, to be held on Zoom. All sessions 7.30–9 pm on Zoom.

Dec. 3rd: Rev. Dr. Jill Marsh, Northampton Methodist District Mission Enabler, will explore “**What it means to be ‘white’**”, with opportunity to talk with each other through our time together.

Dec. 10th: The Bible and celebrating ethnic diversity.

Dec. 17th: Stories of celebration on the ground. To receive the Zoom link, please email Rob Glassonbury chester.stoke@btconnect.com

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

In a recent quiz, no-one could give the correct name for a Bishop’s hat. I thought at least someone mitre known.

A woman in obvious distress flung herself on me and started to colour my upper arm. I didn’t stop her - I could tell she just needed a shoulder to crayon.

I can’t see the need to polish fruit, but every morning I’m told to ‘raisin shine’!

Recently the inventor of air conditioning died. Thirty of his fans turned up at his funeral.

 Whenever Susan cooked a joint of gammon she cut a small slice off the end before placing it in the pan. When a friend asked why, she replied that her mother always did, so she did.

 One day Susan asked her mother why she cut the end off a gammon joint before cooking it. Her mother replied that her mother always did, so she thought it was the right thing to do.

 Eventually Susan and her mother asked Granny why it was necessary to cut the end off a gammon joint before cooking it. Granny replied that otherwise it didn’t quite fit her pan!

 *[Funny? Silly? But seriously, how often do we perpetuate actions or traditions that no longer serve any purpose … because it has always been done ??]*