

Newington Methodist Church

Church Lane, Newington, Sittingbourne, ME9 7JT

News and views for the week commencing 9 August

The church building at Newington remains closed but as a congregation we remain united through prayer.



While Robert is on holiday, if you have any concerns or prayer requests please do not hesitate to contact Rev. Tony Graff or your pastoral visitor.

Notices

- **Sunday service at 10:30am** – will be led by Roger Byard, a local preacher from Bearsted, and can be found on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T3Z3sAfTsUg&feature=youtu.be>
Or join by telephone: 020 3481 5237 (charged at the standard national rate); when requested enter meeting ID 742 958 8134 followed by #; press # again when asked for a participant ID
- You're also invited to join in the **Newington social catch-up before the service at 9am** online using Zoom at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4628098433> (or use meeting ID 462 809 8433)
Or join by telephone: 020 3481 5237 (charged at the standard national rate); when requested enter meeting ID 462 809 8433 followed by #; press # again when asked for a participant ID
- **Next Sunday's service**, on 16 August, will be led by the Rev Tony Graff.
- **When are we opening our church?** The Church Council will meet on **17 August at 2pm** using Zoom to discuss and approve a risk assessment and date(s) for the reopening of the building and resumption of Sunday worship on site. A copy of the risk assessment has been circulated with these notices for you to consider.
- **Bring your chair and Bible** every Sunday from 3 to 3:30pm in the front garden at Sittingbourne Methodist Church. Martin Smith is leading the gathering on the 9th; and Rev Robert Zachar on the 16th.
- **Rev Tony Graff's reflections** are available to read on the circuit website. The latest, entitled "When Jacob Met Esau" can be downloaded at <https://www.nkmethodists.org.uk/news/tony-graff-staying-in-touch.html> along with earlier posts should you want to read more.

Reflection

This week, Gillian Collins provides a personal reflection on a famous verse from the Psalms.

I will lift up my eyes to the hills (Psalm 121:1)

What have you most missed during the unending months of limitations to our freedom imposed by Covid19? For many, it's been regular face to face meetings with family and friends, the everyday social contact we always took for granted but which now seems a distant memory. My own family are scattered and real life meetings have always been rare, so in fact we've enjoyed even more contact than usual using phone, email, Facebook and this newcomer on the scene, Zoom, which seemed to come from nowhere and become a household word almost overnight.

I know that what I've missed more than anything is the freedom to come and go – to board a train, book a long weekend or an overnight stay, hear a live concert, join a singing day, attend a conference or a gathering of people sharing my interests...and most of all to take a trip to the highlands of Scotland, my favourite destination. As soon as the train crosses the Forth Bridge and the distant mountains begin to appear in view, my heart is lifted – I'm back! Don't remind me it's often wet and windy in the far north, and that those little terrors the midges are out to get me. Whatever the drawbacks, Scotland is beautiful and I love it!

When the Psalmist wrote "**I will lift up my eyes to the hills**" (*Ps 121:1*) he was not thinking of the hills as a tourist destination. It's a relatively modern concept that being among the mountains is romantic or thrilling, and that they are there for climbing, hiking, or just enjoying the beautiful scenery. When mountains are mentioned in the Bible, we often get a sense that people feared and avoided them where possible, since they were the haunts of robbers and wild beasts. They also evoked a sense of awe – since ancient times, people had believed that they were the habitation of gods and spirits, many of them not benign, and you were better off not venturing into their domain.

In the early historical part of the Bible story, we find a developing belief that Yahweh, the One True God of Israel, all-seeing but invisible to mere human beings, "in light inaccessible hid from our eyes" (*StF 55*), must surely have his dwelling-place in the high mountains. We read how Moses was summoned to meet with God on **Mount Sinai** to receive the tablets of the Law (*Exodus 19:18ff*). What a fearful experience it was – the whole mountain shaking with thunder and lightning, a veil of smoke concealing the presence of the Living God! These were the mountains to which the Psalmist lifts his gaze, as he ponders, "**From whence comes my help? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.**" (*Ps 121:2*)

Later, several of the major events of the life of Jesus took place on mountain tops: he climbed **Mount Tabor** with two of his closest disciples, there to be transfigured with the inner radiance of the glory of God (*Mark 9:2-9*). On the **Mount of Olives (Olivet)**, Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsemane on the night before his arrest (*Matt 26:36-46*) and by tradition it was from the same mountain that he ascended to be with his Father (*Luke 24:50-53*).

Many people today, whether or not they have faith, find that mountains offer a place to reflect on the deeper realities, somewhere to lose ourselves in the wonder of a sunset or

sunrise, to rest by the side of a lake and let our cares lift and soar away like a bird. During the lockdown period, while I was lamenting the lost opportunities this year to refresh my spirit in the Highlands, I came across a YouTube live feed from an osprey nest at Loch Arkaig, an area protected by the Woodland Trust near Lochaber. In the nest were two parent birds and three eggs, so from time to time I checked to see what was happening, and eventually the young ones hatched. As the weeks passed the chicks grew, flexing their wing muscles to prepare for flight, while the parents continued to supply them with fish. In the end, I was checking back several times a day to see what progress had been made, as first one, then another and finally the third chick took its first flight away from the safety of the nest. www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/osprey-cam/

I thought of *Isaiah 40:31*, "**But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles...**" In the same way we can safely rely on God to renew our strength and sustain us through these challenging times. May the ospreys soar freely above the Scottish mountains and fly safely when in time they embark upon the long and perilous migratory journey to their winter home in East Africa. May God bless us and keep us all safe in his loving care!

Gillian

People and places for prayer

- Beryl and Peter, Margaret N, Peter and Ian, Heather and Stephen, Elena
- All those shielding from Covid-19, people in places facing renewed lockdown measures and all those who are suffering from the virus and the medical staff who care for them
- The people of Beirut and all those who are in mourning or who have lost their homes in last week's explosion
- The unaccompanied migrant children who have arrived on the shores of Kent this last week and are now in care
- We remember those who have died and their loved ones: Audrey, Margaret S.

Puzzlers

The titles of three parables of Jesus are jumbled together in the row of letters below, but each one is in the right order. Can you unscramble them? (by Hanwell Methodist Church)

P S O G R O W O O D E D I G S A R A M A R L I S T O A N N

Answer to last week's puzzler: *Hopefully you found all these words in the grid!* 1. Sixteen. 2. Pentagon. 3. Summer. 4. Slug. 5. Butterfly. 6. Ant. 7. Germinate. 8. Tomb. 9. Jonah. 10. Nile. 11. Long. 12. False. 13. Beowulf. 14. Football. 15. Ghost. 16. Jam. 17. Oats. 18. Dots.

Please send news and prayer requests for inclusion in the weekly newsletter to musicandcomedy@hotmail.com (for 16 August); robert.zachar@gmail.com (thereafter)