

Newington Methodist Church

Church Lane, Newington, Sittingbourne, ME9 7JT

**News and views for the week
commencing 12th September 2021**

All things are possible to God
Mark 10:27



Notices

- **Sunday service on 19th September**, there will be led by Margaret Bowerman. The service starts at 09.30 am.
Next Sunday service 26th September with Holy Communion will be led by Rev Robert Zachar.
- **Sunday 19th September circuit live stream service 10:30** will be led by Rev Robin Selmes. Follow the link: https://youtu.be/9SMyg_GZ3Fk
- *The next Sunday circuit live stream, 26th September, will be led by Rev Robert Zachar*

Looking back with thanks:

- **Church council met on Wednesday, 15th Sept.** 2pm at the church premises. This was our first trustees meeting in person. We had a cup of tea and the agenda which consumed 2 hours to go through. Thank you all for your reports and inputs to the discussions. The minutes will be available soon. Perhaps just a brief digest from our conversations here:
 - We are looking for volunteers to take care for cleaning and gardening. Treasurer will look for possibility to budget finances and we will advertise this ASAP. Watch the space.
 - Christmas season in Newington Church
 - 28th November, 1st Advent Sunday, Covenant service
 - 19th Dec. Sunday service in a Christmas spirit.
 - 24th Dec. Friday Christmas Eve – no service
 - 25th Dec. Saturday, Christmas Day – no service
 - 26th Dec. Sunday after Christmas – no service or joined to St. Mary
 - **Coffee mornings** will continue first Saturdays of the month 10 -12 am. With regret we are not able to promise bacon sandwiches, but *Birck&Brack* in place and weather permitting we will have some tables at the car park. We are aware this should not take too much space so we could still use the car park, drop in if possible.

Dates for your Diary:

- Here 18th September 10.30am – 4pm on **Saturday, 18 September 2021** at Offington Park Methodist Church, Worthing and also via Zoom. (*Apology for incorrect info about the Synod in the previous notices*).
- 19th September Sunday 4 pm sectional stewards meeting at Hope Street
- 22 September Plan Dates/Grapevine articles due
- 28 September Safeguarding training 7.30 Robb/Skipp
- 30 September Safeguarding training 7.30 Robb/Skipp

Reflection on Mark 9:30-37 for Sunday 19 September, by Gillian Collins

"Who is the greatest?"

As Jesus and his disciples are travelling through Galilee, he begins to teach and prepare them for what is to come: "The Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of the people, and they will kill him. And after he is killed, he will rise on the third day." But they didn't understand his meaning and they were afraid to ask for an explanation.

On the way, he overhears a heated conversation among some of the disciples, and when they arrive at Capernaum he asks them, "What was it you were arguing about along the way?" They look down at the floor and won't answer, because they've been arguing about who was the greatest of Jesus's disciples. Perhaps it's only natural for them to wonder which of them will be his right-hand man. Even the three disciples who have just witnessed God's glory revealed in Jesus at the Transfiguration cannot resist the appeal of honour and status. After all, who has a better claim than they do to being the greatest of his disciples?

Jesus didn't get an answer to his question, only the shamefaced silence of having been caught out. But he seems already to have known or sensed what they were arguing about. He's not gathering information for himself but inviting the disciples' self-reflection on what it means to be truly great. He's presenting them with an image of their better selves, and he's doing it for us too.

Jesus is not saying that we should not or cannot be "great". Rather, he's asking them and us to reframe our understanding of greatness. *What does it mean for you and me to be great in today's world?* Jesus answers the question by taking a small child in his arms and saying to the disciples, "Whoever welcomes a child like this in my name welcomes me, and whoever does so welcomes not me, but the One who sent me."

We should be careful here – Jesus isn't saying that greatness is confined to children. Neither does he say here that greatness lies in being childlike (though in another incident, you'll know the one, often portrayed in sentimental images with the title "Suffer the little children to come unto me...", he is making a different point. Mt 19:14). Here, he says that greatness lies in **the act itself of welcoming the child in his name**. That doesn't sound too difficult or challenging. Who wouldn't welcome a little child? But Jesus isn't talking about children in general, or this one in particular.

Today we live with a culture which seems either to elevate childhood and children to a position close to the centre of universe, or regards and treats them as objects of our pity and charity, so it can be difficult to understand the point Jesus is making. He's talking about what the child, any child, represents. In Jesus' day, a child had no rights, no status, no economic value. In the eyes of

society, until it was capable of contributing to the family income, a child was a consumer and not a producer. The child is a symbol of vulnerability, powerlessness, and dependency. Greatness, Jesus says, lies in welcoming and receiving into our arms someone like this, someone who has no value, is effectively worthless. Greatness, he implies, is found not in what we have accomplished or in honour and status accorded to us for those achievements, but in what we have done and given to "the least of these" (Mt. 25:40), the hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, and imprisoned; the symbolic "children" in the world.

But we might counter this argument: surely we all need role models to emulate, to inspire us with their achievements and set a target for others to match or exceed? If no-one aspired to be "the greatest", the world would be full of humble servant goodness and faithfulness, but wouldn't it lack that spark of brilliance which evokes our awe and admiration? Are these two kinds of greatness in conflict then?

To answer this, let's return to the argument between the disciples. They were not talking about being role models for others to emulate or be inspired by; they were seeking confirmation of pre-eminent status for themselves – often called one-up-manship. But true greatness never seeks a position of superiority over another. It's not about me; my nation, my tribe, my people, my religion, my politics, my bank balance, my house, my job, my accomplishments, my reputation, my education. Our greatness is revealed in how we treat others regardless of their ability or willingness to return the favour. When Jesus talked about loving others even when they don't love you (Lk. 6:32), doing good to those who do not do good to you (Lk. 6:33), lending without expectation of repayment (Lk. 6:34), and inviting to supper those who cannot invite you back (Lk. 14:12), he was describing a kind of 'servant' greatness of which he himself became the supreme example.

Perhaps greatness is best viewed not as a status but as a gift – one which we can choose to share through our actions and attitudes. When we choose to forgive someone (although we cannot always forget the hurt); when we refuse to carry bitterness or envy towards another; when we respond to others' needs, when we refuse to harbour thoughts and actions of hatred or prejudice; when we refuse to join in jokes about minorities or foreigners or anyone who is "other" to us; when we overcome fear, break down barriers, and make room for everyone at the table of humanity, then we are showing and sharing small traces of greatness.

What the disciples needed to learn was that true greatness is not something to which anyone is entitled. It's a quality that arises within us when our lives are in balance and we step into our better selves, and it's there in the simple, ordinary, and mundane. It often goes unnoticed and unnamed, but it's there always, as a choice we can make.

Jesus sets the pattern of true greatness. "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all, and servant of all." Amen.

People and places for prayer, *prepared by Chris Chare*

God our Father grant us the help of your Holy Spirit in our prayers as we come together in faith.

We pray for the people of the world for those in war torn or violent areas, especially we think of those in Syria, Africa, and the Middle East, We pray for the situation in Afghanistan with the change in control of the Country for its leaders. For those who fear for their lives.

We pray for the leaders of the nations and those in authority that they may seek justice, freedom and peace for all.

Pause

We pray for the church throughout the world. . We pray for the Churches in the Circuit for those taking on new roles and starting new phases in their lives in God's World.

For this church and all its members for Robert our minister and all local preachers and those involved in worship in the circuit that they may continue to promote your gospel to all hearers.

That in faith and unity we may be constantly be renewed by your Holy Spirit for service and mission.

Pause

We pray for those among whom we live and work, for all our neighbours and friends,

For ourselves. We pray for those who have encountered difficult times and those whose health has deteriorated over recent times. We pray for young people back in School, College or University where things are different as a result of the Covid Situation.

That we may so use your gifts that together we may find joy in your creation.

Pause

We pray for those in sorrow, need, sickness or anxiety. We pray for those in our community especially at this time, for those finding it hard at home and fearful as to how the pandemic is still taking lives and making decisions on their return to Church.

A time of personal reflection, for those we know who need our prayers.

Pause

Comfort and heal all those who suffer give them courage and hope in their troubles.

In you Father we are all one family in earth and heaven we remember those who have died and for their families and friends who have been bereaved at this time.

Help us to follow the example of your saints in light and bring us with them to the fullness of your eternal joy and kingdom.

Accept these our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

We remember on our prayers Val t. Peter and Beryl W., John G., Peter R.,

We remember our friends who have died and their loved ones: Audrey, Margaret S.

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Please send news, prayer requests and any other contributions for inclusion in the weekly newsletter to robert.zachar@gmail.com

Bank details for Offerings: Newington Methodist Church, HSBC Sittingbourne. Sort Code 40 – 42 – 04, Account 70614696. If you prefer to send a cheque contact our church treasurer Chris Ch.