

Newington Methodist Church

Church Lane, Newington, Sittingbourne, ME9 7JT

News and views for the week commencing 20th March 2022

**The Lord is my light and my salvation.
Should I fear anyone?
The Lord is a fortress protecting my life
Psalm 27:1**



Notices

This Sunday is the third Sunday in Lent. It is a local arrangement, the leading steward is Eileen Hill. Reflection will be pre-recorded by Robert Z. Service starts 9:30 am

Next Sunday Worship 27th March is Mothering Sunday and the service will be led by LP Elena Markova.

Sunday 20th March circuit live stream worship 10:30 will be led by Rev Tony Graff.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AHJaWjMD9qs>

The next Sunday circuit live stream, 27th March will be led by Ann Matthews.

Dates and actions for your calendar

- **April Coffee morning** we traditionally do a raffle. If you have some unwanted Christmas presents you can donate them as Raffle prizes. One man's rubbish is another's man treasure" Thank you
- **Church council meeting** discussed the work of God in our church and community. Thank you for being part of this event. We nominated officers for the next year. Jenny G. is taking a break from being senior steward for the time being. We keep her in our prayers for a continuous recovery and strength. We are a small church family but God is blessing us with willing hearts and hands which itself is the work of God and not us. If you feel called to get involved in some area of church life or mission please speak to the minister. We need more people to take up the role of steward.
- **Joint service with St Mary's will be on 4th September**, the proposal is to hold the service in the Orchard. The Pentecost Orchard service will not take place as the Queen's jubilee celebrations are at the same time and we will participate on the event organised by the village council at the green. More details will come soon.

- **Please remember** in your diary special joint services which will take place on firth Sundays as follows: Transport will be organised nearer the time to enable everyone to join these services.
 - May 29th in Sittingbourne, followed by lunch
 - **July 31st at Newington**
 - October 30th at Bearsted Methodist Church

With sadness we let you know that Peter Wood passed away 8th March. Our thoughts and prayers are with Peter's family. The family would like any donations to go to the British heart foundation. A collection plate will be made available after the Sunday service if you wish to support. The funeral will take place at the Garden of England crematorium in Bobbing, 25th March 3pm

- **Maundy Thursday communion service** at Bearsted Methodist church, 14th April, 7pm
- **Lent Bible study on ZOOM.** BECOMING CHURCH, Online Lent Course. This is a lovely and blessed fellowship you can join if you are looking for time to talk and explore scriptures.
Tuesdays 7pm via Zoom
 - 22 March: God's Power At Work — Bart Woodhouse
 - 29 March: A Sense Of Community — Rev Tony Graff
 - 5 April: An Outward-Looking Church — **Rev Naomi Oates**
 Meeting ID: 929 3964 3962 Passcode 578033

<https://zoom.us/j/92939643962?pwd=K2xDU0MzQzNTdVF1cUdlOHBJczNDZz09>

Reflection on God's word

Isaiah 55:1-11; Luke 13:1-9, Psalm 63:1-8; 1Corinthians 10:1-13

An invitation to God

Have you ever been invited to a special event or occasion? I am sure memories come up and hopefully good ones. Perhaps you are just about to go somewhere invited by friends or family and really looking forward to it. Each invitation is a thing to look forward to but it can also be a bit of a worry. If it is just a case of new clothes or rearranging our routine it is all good fun but we have to understand that for many people it takes a great effort to come out of their homes and overcome their anxieties and shyness. Well the invitation we have in Isaiah is certainly out of this world and hard to refuse. It is all free, for everyone. The statement about "for everyone" especially amazes me. How our God pulls people out from the prison of their own lives, minds, worries, fears, selfishness, pride, arrogance, you name it.

So let's look at the text of Isaiah 55 as those who are hosting the event. Isaiah gives us a vision, the call to evangelise. The very call from God who is the only one competent to satisfy the human heart and fill our lives with purpose. If we embrace the understanding that the Church is a body, then it also means that in this body there are different parts working together. There are people gifted to evangelise and there are many other gifts distributed by the Holy Spirit which enables the church to live up to the values and promises one can read in this profound prophecy of Isaiah 55. It is fascinating to see how all this takes place. It is a privilege and honour and the best thing is

being part of that miracle when someone comes out of his prison and gives his life to Christ. We all wish to hear testimonies about changed lives at each of our Sunday services.

In the light of this “all welcoming” invitation to God, the Gospel reading takes us into a battlefield really. We can see how people approached Jesus asking him very difficult questions. They were obviously referring to the real and well known events. They question what was wrong with those people who died in a tragic accident at Siloam and those who were murdered while worshipping God in the temple. Perhaps asking where was God when this was happening.

We live in the days when people have the same difficult questions. People dying in the war over Ukraine, so many lost to Covid. Why are innocent people dying?

Jesus response was not apologetic. He is not here to apologise for what the devil does. It is not God who needs to apologise to us. Remember Job and his friends trying to reason and explain a very similar problem. Yet what really counts is that people do not blame God for what the devil does. If we want to hold God responsible for evil it would first mean giving up our free will and letting him control all our choices. We would not like that. He doesn't want and will not become a dictator. He is more on the rescue side.

What did Jesus say about those people caught in the rubble of the Siloam tower or in the temple court? They are no better or worse than any other people. What really comes out of these kind of tragedies, where undeserved, innocent lives are lost is that there was a chance to repent but not anymore. I know this may sound a bit too religious but the call to reconcile with God is urgent. We live dangerous and unpredictable lives. We may not realise it but we do. Any one of us can be caught up in tragedy, taken by surprise. What really matters is that once you have been caught out like this there is no more time to give your life to God. You lost it. And that is why Jesus came. He is the God of the living and he calls people to life.

That invitation to God that we abide in and are passing around is charged with a great urgency. The key word in the gospel text is the word “perish”(Luke 13:3 NIV), which Jesus strongly opposes. Two biblical texts emphasise how much this really matters:

John 3:16 *God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that, so that everyone who believes in him won't perish but will have eternal life.*

John 10: 27-28 *“no one will snatch them from my hand”*

People and places for prayer

Gracious God, there is no one who goes unnoticed as you tread the road with us.

Bring to our prayers for others your eyes of wisdom and care:

God, who leads us on, may we see the world as you see it. Carry us into deeper waters of concern.

Show us ways of hearing the cries of the people and move us to justice and compassion.

Show us ways of touching the lives of people across our community.

And then, dear God, be our company as we dare to enter our own lives. Invite us to change and grow in fullness of life and grander faith. Make this year's Easter journey one which we enter in

Spirit and in truth. **Amen**

Prayers for people in Eastern Europe. Ukraine, Russia and neighbouring countries as the war conflict develops with all its pains. Pray for the refugees, soldiers on both sides and pray that the diplomacy and communication takes over this conflict and peace can be established.

We continue to hold each other in prayer. Special prayers for Beryl W. and her family in their loss. May the comfort and peace of the Lord guard their hearts.

We pray for the mission of our church as we continue to be the place of worship and witness to the community. We pray for our brothers and sisters in the wider church family as we all worship the Lord together.

We remember those who died and their loved ones. Audrey G, Margaret S.

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.