

Newington Methodist Church

Church Lane, Newington, Sittingbourne, ME9 7JT

News and views for the week commencing 19th March 2023

*Jesus said: While I am in the world, I
am the light of the world*
(lectionary, NIV, John 9:5)



Notices

- **Fourth Sunday in Lent 19th March, Holy Communion** service led by Robert Zachar.
- **Next Sunday 26th March** we host Joint service with St. Mary's. The service will be led by Methodist Local preacher Mr Ian Watton.
- **Circuit live stream 19th March** will be led by Oscar Siu
<https://www.nkmethodists.org.uk/news/worship-from-home.html>
- The next circuit live stream 26th March will be led by Robin Selmes.

Calendar back and forth

- **Cornerstone Cafe:** 09.00 to 12.00 noon - at St Mary's Church, Newington, every third Thursday of each month
- **Memory Cafe:** This will take place every fourth Monday from 11.00am to 1.00pm at Newington Village Hall.
- **Last Taboo workshop 3rd June.** Workshop about death and dying at Gravesend and Sittingbourne, Booking required, see the link or speak to the minister.
<https://www.nkmethodists.org.uk/news/last-taboo.html>
- **Coffee morning on 1st April.** There will be a raffle. Please contact Mavis if you want to donate prizes and buy tickets. Please note that May coffee morning will be moved to 13th May.
- **Thurs 6 April, 6.30pm** Revd Robert Zachar will lead a Maundy Thursday service with HC at Sittingbourne.

- **Easter sunrise service** 6 am at the View Point Blue Bell Hill Picnic site (ME5 9RG) followed by breakfast at St Alban's church, Upper Robin Hood Lane, (ME5 9QR)
- **Joint services timetable :**
 - April 23rd: at Newington Methodist Church 9.30am; led by Lis Willmet & Teresa Parker (Fellowship) [assuming St Mary's will still be too cold]
 - May 29th: in the Orchard 10.30am: Revs Amanda Lane & Nick Carpenter (The Six Benefice Outdoor Communion)
 - June 25th St Mary's Newington 10.00am: Rev Nick Carpenter leader/Robert Zachar preacher (Family Communion)
 - July 23rd St Mary's Newington 10.00am: Service leader/preacher TBC (from The Six)
 - August 27th St Mary's Newington 10.00am: Service leader/preacher TBC (from The Six)

Reflection

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." *Matthew 23:37-39*

What is your definition of Mothering Sunday?

Recently I learned that historically this was the 4th Sunday in Lent when people should visit the church they were baptised in. That comes from the middle ages and today this would cost quite a lot in travelling expenses. Yet some churches do this and it can take some fresh forms. In fact some traditional churches count their membership by the number of baptised people. We tend to recognise the disproportional gap between those who are baptised and those who actually follow Jesus and come to worship God on Sunday. I know this sounds pessimistic and negative but we cannot deny the facts. As in the ancient times of Exodus many were travelling under the cloud of God's glory and were baptised in the waters of the Red sea, yet only a few entered the Promised Land. Or if we want a more recent voice, that of John the Baptist, telling people off for coming to baptism without any signs of repentance.

What I mean though is the more modern concept of mothering Sunday which comes later and was established to allow servant girls to visit their mums. Not the mother church, mother country or mother academia but simply mum. How do you wake up to this Sunday and this call? Perhaps you have just recently lost your mum and experience grief and sadness. Perhaps you yourself are a mother and know how children can complicate life but would not change anything about it because it is worth every bit. Perhaps you are the mother who lost her child through illness, argument, or even by the authority of social services and feel pain and shame, guilt and anger towards everyone including God. Or perhaps you are a proud mother who sees and delights in her grandchildren and in all of this my writing you realise what a privilege that is.

The Bible often operates in metaphors and the mother's role is often used to bring out the image of a close bond or responsibility and we could imagine and attribute it to the relationship between us and God. There are several scriptures where God describes himself in motherly terms: Hosea

11:3-4; Deuteronomy 32:18; Isaiah 42:14 49:15 and 66:13. I mean he is the motherly role and we are offsprings. Yet it is not uncommon and it is expected that as followers of Christ, we will have spiritual children to whom we will remain spiritual mothers and fathers. Often our own children are drifting away but we still manage to pass our faith on to someone who is just passing by and we are there. How wonderful is that. We also hope that our own children will be passing a stranger who will share Christ's good news to them and they will answer. That is what happened to me. Then I found myself having two mothers and two fathers. Or even three not forgetting one in heaven.

We could also mention what happened in Bethlehem at Jesus' birth. Many mothers were weeping. Matthew 2: 18

A voice is heard in Ramah,
Weeping and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children
And refusing to be comforted,
Because they are no more.

If this world lays evil hands on our children we definitely experience an ultimate sense of terror. More people believe in the Devil than in God that is for sure. It has effective advertising displayed all over.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem. How many times I wanted to gather you as a mother hen. Isn't that a contemporary image of our churches and families when we are distanced, unwilling to be together and too busy to hear the mothers call? Whatever that call means to you the undeniable appeal is the one to gather, to protect, to comfort and to do it all in the authority of the one who gave us life, not just biological but spiritual, emotional intellectual, all in its wholeness.

Prayer

Lord God,
Whose blessed Son our Saviour
Gave his back to those who struck him
And did not hide his face from shame:
Give us grace to endure the sufferings of this present time
with sure confidence in the glory that shall be revealed
through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. **AMEN**
(MWB collects Fourth Sunday of Lent, pg 535)

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.jj