

**HANHAM METHODIST  
CHURCH MAGAZINE  
MARCH - APRIL**



# Welcome to the magazine of Hanham Methodist Church, a member of the Bristol and South Gloucestershire Circuit

Our services are open to all, whether or not you are a Church member. Notices and service sheets are available in larger print.

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Copies of this magazine are held on the Church website and therefore all articles can be viewed through the internet. Submissions of all articles should therefore highlight any information you wish to be removed from the online version.

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## Minister's Message: Lent

Our world seems divided and torn. When writing this article, I saw in the news the other day that the metaphorical doomsday clock was the closest to Armageddon that it's ever been.

There seems at present such a need to dwell on what it means to love, be tolerant, and the reconciling power of God.

A young man called on the famous Chinese Christian Watchman Nee, distressed that he might be losing his salvation. *"I pray and pray to be faithful to Christ"* he cried, *"Yet, I continue to do the most displeasing things"*.

Watchman Nee said *"See that dog lying at my feet? He is the most obedient pet you'll ever see, he seldom barks, he always behaves, he's happy all the time; he demands little and loves much. In the other room is my baby son. He cries all the time, is often sick and cries some more. Right now, he demands a lot and seems to love little yet who do you think will inherit my estate; My dog or my son?"*

The response seems like a no-brainer, yet how many people do you know who struggle with living within the Christian family?

Every disciple of Jesus knows the challenges that come with the commitment to love one another. Human nature knows no geology, sociology, economy, no gender or race. People are people – or should I say, flesh is flesh, the world around.

Most people will never be able to grasp the reality of God's reconciling, healing love until they experience it from you and me.

Do I offer sincere forgiveness when it's requested?

Do I show love toward the one who wrongs me?

How do I respond when my expectations are not met?

There might have been times when Watchman Nee would have preferred playing catch with the dog than changing a dirty nappy, but he knew he was not appointed to raise a dog – He was called to raise a child.

### **How can you and I serve God with unfailing love?**

Jesus says we do it by loving one another, not out of our natural affections, but out of the heart of God. Reconciling, healing love generated out of Jesus. In Him, by Him, through Him. *"Love one another as I have loved you!"* Jesus instructs us.

Love is the first characteristic of the *Fruits of the Spirit*, because without it, all the other fruits spoil and perish.

Jesus demonstrated this Love in the act of self-giving at Calvary. Jesus activated redemption through His forgiving love. Divine Love made possible by the miracle of resurrection.

All that gives us hope comes from the love of God and if you and I find our direction, our inspiration, or our motivation in that love, then we cannot fail in changing lives! Forgiving wrongs and living out that same reconciling, healing love that is found at the heart of God.

The verses of 1 Corinthians 13 give us a vivid contrast between natural reactions and a loving response. It shows us that Words without love are meaningless. Gifts without love are valueless. Offerings without love is worthless.

Too often we see our failure to love bringing controversy and division. God does not fail to accomplish the redemptive work of Calvary! We therefore cannot fail to find reconciliation and healing if we but root our motivations in the deep soil of that same love.

Every other spiritual attribute will fail, cease or disappear, (verse 8) but love - that undeserved, unconditional, unending, selfless, sacrificial and seamless love of God will carry us through every heartache, every headache, every trial and every tear.

This kind of reconciling, healing, love would be impossible if you and I were expected to achieve it through our own ability. But with God's help we can.

When we allow ourselves, through Jesus, to move so close to God's heart that our hearts begin to beat in reconciling rhythm with His, then all things are possible!

As we enter Lent and approach Easter – the crescendo of God's healing love and reconciliation of all things. May we dwell and meditate on what it means to love, what it truly means to be sacrificial so that others may one day receive what we have been give. May we dwell on what it means to be reconciled and be agents of hope and change in our world, our community and through our church.

Every blessing,



Rev. David Willis

# Spring Coffee Morning

In aid of Church funds

In Main Hall

Saturday 7th March

9.00 - 12.00 noon

We would love to see you and have your support.

**DON'T FORGET TO PUT THIS IN YOUR DIARY!**

As you see, we are holding a Spring Coffee Morning on Saturday 7th March which is in aid of Church Funds. Any help you can give would be really appreciated.

We would be grateful for assistance with putting up and taking down tables, helpers to serve, washing up and **please, please** can we have some cakes to sell. This is for the Church and the more members we have involved the easier it is for everyone. If you are able to help in any way please let Pat Webber know.

Many thanks, EVCOG

Mission Committee  
would like to invite  
you to a "Not So  
Simple Lunch" on  
15th March at  
12.15pm, at a cost  
of £8.



# **MOUNTAINS OF THE BIBLE**

## **The Sermon on the Mount Matthew 5,6 and 7**

One Wednesday afternoon in the summer of 1988 a coach set off for London carrying several members of our church along with people from Bridgegate and North Common. We were on our way to support our minister Graham Thompson who was to be ordained that evening as a presbyter within the Methodist Church.

The ordination service is very moving and as part of it there is a charge to the ordinands from the President or a past president of Conference. The Rev Amos Creswell was called to deliver the sermon on this occasion and I still recall bits of it today.

I recount this memory because if we follow Matthew's chronology then the 'sermon' on the mount comes immediately after the call of the first disciples and we can look upon it, therefore, as a bit like an ordination address by a president or Bishop to a group of presbyters setting out on a new stage of their ministry. It has been suggested that Jesus took his disciples away into the hill country to pray with them and to teach them away from the crowds. The opening verse of chapter 5 clearly states that Jesus was only addressing his disciples, but if we go to the end of chapter 7 (the end of what is known as the Sermon on the Mount) we read that 'the crowds were astonished at his teaching' which suggests one of two things: either they chased after him and caught up with him as the crowds did on other occasions or more likely the sermon is a composite of various bits of our Lord's teaching. That is why I put the word sermon in inverted commas in the previous paragraph. Indeed, in one sitting the whole passage is too intense to take in.

John Pritchard, one-time Bishop of Oxford, calls the passage 'a representative collection of his talks. To underline the importance of these three chapters in Matthew's gospel we find that thirteen of John Wesley's 44 sermons are based on the Sermon on the Mount.

The sermon opens with 'The Beatitudes' which suggest that God's values are the opposite of the values of the world, for example 'blessed are the meek' (NRSV) or 'gentle (NEB), hardly a word used to describe the powerful and successful of the world. In the more traditional versions the translators use the word 'Blessed' but in the more modern and freer versions 'Happy' is often used which does not for me carry the same impact. Interestingly, in perhaps the most modern of versions 'The Message' the translator uses the phrase "you are blessed".

The beatitudes call us back to a childlike simplicity which our sophisticated, worldly-wise mind-set denies us. The writer Gillian Crow tells how she once gave an old monk some strawberries. She says that when he saw them 'his face began to shine; his eyes popped open in wonder, his voice almost squealed with delight'. She goes on to say that anyone witnessing the moment would have thought that she had given him the moon not just a punnet of what were mediocre strawberries. But his heart was open ready to receive from God a simple gift with joy. Blessed are the meek indeed.

The remainder of the 'sermon' finds Jesus teaching on how to live out our lives according to God's will. Ever since the formulation of the Mosaic law the Rabbis have gone into ever greater depth as to what these commandments mean and how to adapt them to everyday living even to the extent of what we should and should not wear

Jesus takes a more radical view, teaching that it isn't just the wrongful action that is a sin but the very thought behind it is the root cause of the action that follows 'You have heard it said' is frequently found in the passage where Jesus quotes one of the commandments e.g. 'do not commit murder or do not commit adultery'. But then he says 'but I say unto you' and then suggests that even to be angry or to cast a lustful glance at someone is equally as sinful.

Mind you some of it is almost laughable to the point of the ridiculous. For example 'if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off (ch.5 v 30) Jesus here clearly demonstrating his sense of humour.

Jesus taught that there were two commandments more important than the others: to love God with all our hearts minds and souls and to love our neighbour as we love ourselves. (Mark 12:28-31) and this teaching is amplified throughout the sermon. In this age when we are being made aware of sustainability in our choices of food, clothing, energy use and travel it is noticeable that the teaching in the sermon so often points towards a simpler way of living than the way that the world follows. For example our Lord says (ch. 6: v 19) do not store up for yourself treasure on earth.....but store up treasure in heaven. And again (v25) do not be anxious about food and drink.

It is in the sermon that we find Jesus giving the disciples the Lord's Prayer which is the template for all our prayers. Whether we are meant to say it at every time of worship is open to debate but its inclusion in the sermon does emphasise the importance to the faithful of an active prayer life whether corporately or privately.

The sermon ends with the well-known parable about two men who built themselves a house, one on sandy soil the other on rocky ground. Inevitably as the winter storms blow in the one soon collapses while the other stands firm. With all we hear today about building new estates on flood plains one wonders if lessons have been learned.

Jesus here is reminding his listeners that although it is important to listen it is just as important to do. *'Whoever hears these words of mine and does not act upon them is like the foolish man who built his house upon the sand'* (Ch.7 v 26). This, as one commentator suggests summarises the whole of the sermon, a reminder that it is how we live out our lives within our family, our church and our community seeking to bring the upside down values of God's kingdom into being.

If we try our best to do that then we can read again the opening 12 verses of the sermon and feel that we are truly blessed

*Blest are the pure in heart  
For they shall see our God:  
The secret of the Lord is theirs;  
Their soul is Christ's abode*

TJL

## **Casual Church - Hanham Methodist Church and Summerhill**

Join us for these DVD presentations with discussion:



Hanham Methodist Church on March 15<sup>th</sup> and May 17<sup>th</sup> at 6pm: "If you want to walk on water, you have to get out of the boat."

Summerhill Methodist Church on March 8<sup>th</sup> and May 10<sup>th</sup> at 6pm: "Creating a Culture of Invitation"



*The Y's Men's Club of Hanham*

*Invite you to a concert*

*by*

# **Dodington Parish Brass Band**

**Saturday 21st March**

**Hanham Methodist Church  
7.30 pm**

**£7.50 to include light  
refreshments**



**Charities for the year:**

**Mary's Meals**

**Sight Savers**

**Sparks - Children's Medical Research**

## Signpost

What a mixed-up world! Floods, wind, frost and snow, not to mention coronavirus and the spread in China and now in Italy and Europe.



Meanwhile my Granddaughter, husband Richard and Evie, Poppy and Matilda went by train to Disneyland Paris and returned still excited, wonderful for them. In Shaftesbury hundreds of snowdrops. Spring beginning to show. In the garden primroses, cherry tree showing white blossom, daffodils and croci. Just about as confused as I am. How wonderful to know that God is with us in creation and Resurrection as we approach Easter.

ACW

## Table Tennis Club Seeks New Players

The table tennis club meets on a Monday evening from 7.30 until 9pm. We play doubles table tennis in a friendly and non-competitive atmosphere. We are looking for new players, all abilities welcome. Subs £1 a week, why not come and give it a go?

## Toilet Twinning

For several months we have been collecting for a toilet block in a developing country. The magic number is £240 this will enable a block of toilets to be constructed. We should like to have one last push to achieve this amount, at the moment we have approximately £140. Can you help?

Thank you

*Pam B*

**TOILETS, TAPS AND TRAINING – A LIFESAVING TRIO**  
**WE ARE FLUSHING AWAY POVERTY, ONE TOILET AT A TIME.**

## Random Thoughts: The Reality of Faith

(It may prove helpful to re-read the previous article)

Tillich, Robinson (and later Spong) among other radical mid-20<sup>th</sup> century theologians, sought to redefine the mono-theistic image of God located out-there in a somewhere heaven. Tillich in particular suggested our spiritual awareness and godlikeness resides at 'the core of our being' and not as a separate 'god entity', - a theological concept with far reaching implications and perhaps it is not surprising, that it was not embraced by the established Anglican Church which of course retains its theistic image of God. But this is something of an 'aside' and perhaps a topic for another day. Some people lose their Faith when God does not grant their requests in the desired manner, or not at all, especially where such requests are considered to be 'morally and humanly justified, for example, when a loved one is not physically healed. The Bible states that God did not physically heal Paul, but it is likely that Paul received 'spiritually healing' because he proclaims that God's grace is sufficient - notwithstanding his continuing sickness.

People can experience 'religious conversion' after apparently being cured when previously thought to be incurable. This type of conversion is often accompanied by the belief that God does physically intervene (what other explanation is there?) and does so with a specific task or commitment that healed person is expected to undertake. The circumstances of claimed miracle-cures are rarely spelt-out but the atheist would of course argue that such claims of a God-like intervention cannot be proved (or disproved) and there must be another if currently unknowable, non-supernatural explanation. It follows that these differing opinions held by the believer and atheist nevertheless represent what is 'reality and truth' for them.

Historically of course, people believed, in some weird and wonderful cures for sickness and in medieval times a cure for whopping-cough was to pass the child under the belly of a piebald horse. What sustained credibility in such cures and their associated religious practices, was that some people did recover and a few cures were

subsequently shown to actually work. Sorcerers of the Mentawai Islands of Surmarata directed sick islanders to lick the ground at a certain cliff top location. Those who suffered from diarrhea were cured by the Kaolin found in the soil. It is of course hard to credit that anyone even 6-7 centuries ago could believe in the medieval cure for whopping-cough any yet until recent times many believed (and so still do) that personal and collective misfortune is inflicted by God as a judgement on serious misbehaviour - the Bible abounds in God's judgement and forgiveness.

It seems that fundamental belief or disbelief in all these matters represent an act of Faith derived from the available circumstantial evidence and subconsciously subjected to our largely inflexible physiological/spiritual capacity. This physiological capacity contains for example our instinctive need to receive from and demonstrate love and compassion to others often involving personal sacrificial, and to consciously mitigate those undesirable emotions of hatred, jealousy, envy, fear... and the actions these generate when in the ascendancy. Even, if the supernatural aspects of religion were to be further downgraded, by for example, a shift in the balance of scientific knowledge, there would remain for all humankind the moral coded and behavior patterns derived from, for example, the teachings of Jesus which have significantly influenced our society and its behaviour patterns. These are unlikely to significantly change at least immediately but will of course gradually become reshaped and substituted for as long as our society endures.

What is important is that where opposing beliefs and opinions genuinely represents a person's 'reality and truth' then both person and beliefs should be respected. All parties of whatever persuasion must set aside their differences in order to work together in love and compassion for the common good, namely for social, economic and religious justice where there is this need,- which is in all societies.

So is this our objective Reality of Faith?            ARG1

## THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM FOR BUSY PEOPLE

The Lord is my pacesetter, I shall not rush.

He makes me stop and rest for quiet intervals.

He provides me with images of stillness,  
which restores my serenity.

He leads me in the ways of efficiency  
through calmness of mind.

His guidance is peace.

Even though I have a great many things to accomplish each day,  
I will not fret.

For his presence is here, his timelessness, his all importance  
will keep me in balance.

He prepares refreshment and renewal in the midst of my activity  
by anointing my mind with oils of tranquillity.

My cup of joyous energy overflows.

Such harmony and effectiveness shall be the fruits of my hours.

For I shall walk in the peace of the Lord  
and dwell in his house for ever.

Amen?

*A translation from a work by a Japanese Christian*



## Flower Rota:

<b>Mar</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>	<b>8<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>15<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>22<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>29<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Ch</b>	Messy Church	Audrey Dayer	Margaret Stoodley	Free	Pat Webber
<b>WM</b>	Messy Church	Pat Saunders	Free	Free	Free
<b>Apr</b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>12<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>19<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>26<sup>th</sup></b>	
<b>Ch</b>	Messy Church	Easter	Richard Needs	Hilary Lansdown	
<b>WM</b>	Messy Church	Easter	Richard Needs	Free	

## Doors and Books Rota:

<b>Mar</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>	<b>8<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>15<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>22<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>29<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Morn</b>	J Green P Blackmore	M Wilby M Sagar	P Webber W Stamford	H Teague B Jones	K Cowie I Cowie
<b>Apr</b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>12<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>19<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>26<sup>th</sup></b>	
<b>Morn</b>	M Golding P Webber	G Roberts M Stoodley	J Angell P Kirby	J Green P Blackmore	

## For Your Diary

Mar 7 <sup>th</sup>	Spring Coffee Morning
Mar 15 <sup>th</sup>	10.45am United Service with Summerhill at HMC 12.15pm Not So Simple Lunch
Mar 21 <sup>st</sup>	7.30pm Dodington Parish Brass Band
Apr 5 <sup>th</sup>	10.45am Palm Sunday 4.00pm Messy Church 'Celebrate Easter' - all invited
Apr 10 <sup>th</sup>	9.45am Worship led by Aboseh followed by Walk of Witness
Apr 12 <sup>th</sup>	Easter Day 8.00am Holy Communion 10.45am All Age Worship led by Vron Jackson

Holy Week: Various events at Cluster Churches (see notices)