



Sunday 20th September 2020 Notices, Reflections,



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Toothill Church website:

www.toothillchurch.org.uk

In Partnership (The Partnership Monthly magazine):

<http://wswinlyd.org.uk/news>

Prayers for today



Do please let us know if there is someone you would like to add to the list for prayer, remembering that we must have the permission of the person for whom we would be praying. Please pray for Paulette, Sarah, Hazel and all those you know who are in need of God's special love, care and healing. We pray for our ministers Clive, Rachael, Trevor and Teresa and all our worship leaders; bless them with wisdom and strength

for the challenges of each day. Please pray for the Partnership and your home congregation that they may be sustained until we can meet together again. We pray for Grace, Peace and a way forward in your Love in these uncertain times in our lives. May we continually thank God for his great Love and Faithfulness.

Services for this Sunday

Local URC Emmanuel Church Rev Gerald England <https://www.emmanuelhaydonwick.org.uk/>

National URC Service on line dailydevotions@urc.org.uk

Bible Study Wednesday

Weekly online Bible Study from: 7.30 – 9.00pm

To join us Phone 020 3321 5238 When asked for a code to access the call: type – 367 633 661#

Everyone is welcome.

Each week we will be looking at parts of the bible which have been chosen by different people and has meaning for them.

Next Toothill Conference all Service: 27th September Harvest

Toothill Church: a conference call service will be led by David Hoar

To join the service telephone: 020 3321 5238

When asked for code: Type – 367 633 661#

Calls open at 10.15 for 10.30 Service. All are welcome to join us.

Service sheets for this service will be sent out on the Friday or Saturday before.

From Rev Capt Clive Deverell "Hidden Stories for Remembrance"



Dear All,

"This year we would really like to introduce the children to some of the often forgotten stories that surround conflict. Can you help us, have you a story about a relative or friend who maybe was a nurse serving with our forces. Also have you relatives who married for instance an Italian or German prisoner of war. Please help

us to tell these stories. If you have a story, please contact Clive or Gayle as soon as possible."

With thanks. Clive

Bible Passage – Luke 18:1-8 -The Parable of the Persistent Widow

18 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. 2 He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. 3 And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’ 4 “For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think, 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually come and attack me!’”

6 And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. 7 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? 8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

Praying with confidence

We come before you, faithful God, heads crowded with thoughts, needs and wants, screaming through our sub consciousness.

Help us to find peace. Still our minds. Calm our hearts.
In the stillness help us to find our voice.

With confidence and without fear we approach you, kneeling in the warm glow of your splendour.
Awesome God show us what to pray.

You have heard us; every fibre of our being knows it. Answer this prayer, faithful God, open our ears to your still small, voice. We go out in peace and joy, knowing that you have heard us.

Bible Passage 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5

14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, 15 and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

4 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: 2 Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. 3 For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. 4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. 5 But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

Prayer Keep me steadfast

In our multi-media world there seems to be no escape:
celebrity, consumerism, gossip, lust –
we are bombarded with information.

Focus my mind on your teachings.
Let me seek what I need to hear from your Word.
Hear my prayers and guide my actions.
Be my first thought in the morning and my last thought at night.
Be my thinking and breathe through my words.
Keep me steadfast to your truth.

Inspire in me a light that shines out, radiating your love, your peace and your challenge, a witness that your way leads to life.

In the last couple of weeks I have tried to go back to the gym a few times a week to reduce some of the effects of all the lockdown baking I'd been doing. From certain parts of the gym you can see one of the large television screens on the wall, and although they have the volume off they put up subtitles. So I've regularly spent 15 or 20 minutes watching the news by reading the subtitles that they seem to add live as the broadcast goes out. There's always a bit of a delay, and sometimes they get the words completely wrong. I've quite enjoyed trying to work out what the news really should be, based on the incorrect words. This week the subtitles told me that they want to get people back into opposites, and it took me a few seconds to realise they meant get people back into offices!

I've had better subtitle experiences over the last few weeks by watching some foreign films with Trin. Part of her homework for A Level Spanish is to immerse herself in Spanish language and culture so we have enjoyed watching some films together, and she has been pleased because increasingly she can understand what the characters are talking about without needing to read the subtitles. In fact we saw a couple of films this week that weren't exclusively in Spanish and Trin was particularly pleased to feel that she's making progress. I generally much prefer foreign language films, and I will always choose to watch them with subtitles. I hate to try and watch a film that has been dubbed! Occasionally if a film is in a language I'm reasonably familiar with, like Italian or French, then I too can understand bits, and it's always interesting to notice how things are not always translated literally, and to watch out for some of the phrases that are clearly idiomatic.

So communication has been on my mind a lot this week, particularly as I started the week by receiving an angry phone call from someone who was complaining that I hadn't emailed them in response to something. Now, I hadn't realised that a response was required to their 'round robin' communication, and even so, I did think that I'd sent an email anyway. Maybe with all the trauma of the previous week it only remained a thought! Even so, I've been thinking about communication and how easily it goes wrong. In fact, I think it's probably the biggest cause of complaints in most organisations. It certainly is in the church! There are a whole lot of factors that contribute to our ability to communicate, and most of those factors don't lie in actual words. Tone of voice, facial expressions, body language and so on all convey a lot more meaning than any meaning that is inherent in words.

I do wonder what we're losing when so much of our so called communication is now typed. I certainly rue the day that churches decided that the primary method of communication should be email. Although there may seem to be an efficiency to it, people also have a tendency to respond hastily or un-lovingly, in ways and often with a rudeness that they would not even begin to consider if they were face to face. And sometimes I feel bombarded with so many emails demanding attention that there are days when I can't even face looking at them at all. That's just how introverts roll, so don't judge me!

Even spoken communication can go wrong though. I've been in many meetings where I've thought that one thing has been decided but afterwards nobody else seems to remember that, or they think another decision was made altogether. And there are times when I've been preaching and then something has been said to me afterwards, or some event has happened within in a few days of a service that completely goes against everything I spoke about, and I wonder to myself, "In what I've been saying, what has everyone else been hearing?"

At the moment I seem to get people saying to me, "I know you're really looking forward to getting back to church!", and I smile while thinking to myself, "No, not yet, and I'm sure I've said plenty about how I don't want to go back to what we had before!" So I'm still asking myself, in what I've been saying, what has everyone else been hearing? Show me what's going to be different about how we do church, and I don't mean hand sanitisation and social distancing. I mean, show me what's going to be fundamentally different about how we live and learn and grow together as disciples, and then I might display more enthusiasm!

This week I've been thinking a lot about communication with God. It's one of the things I get asked about on many occasions. People might ask me, "How do you hear from God?", but actually, more often people tell me that they don't think they are hearing from God and what can they do about it? I think often it's a matter of perception or expectation - people might have a specific idea in mind about how God speaks - and sometimes just a bit of encouragement to broaden their horizons and be open to God communicating through a whole range of different things is enough to help. Sharing stories about times and ways in which I've felt God speaking to me, and even sharing these reflections which are my weekly personal experiences of the things I believe God has been pointing out to me, can be helpful.

In fact the intention of these reflections has been to hopefully encourage everyone who hears or reads them to take notice of the things that happen day by day and to begin to ask the question, "I wonder what God might be saying through this? I wonder what God might be wanting me to learn or understand in a different way?"

The ancient monastic practice of the Examen can be really helpful here - it's the nightly process of reflecting back over the day and bringing to mind the things that have brought you joy and the things that you have struggled with, attending to them and offering them to God. I think that whatever gets stuck in your mind, good or bad, could be one of the ways in which God is trying to get your attention; and reflecting and thinking deeply, especially about the things that you find difficult, is often how God helps us to grow and to change. I firmly believe that the Holy Spirit nudges things to the forefront of our attention, and although you can try and ignore this for a while, generally I think the way to blessing is to choose to put aside our reluctance and open ourselves to see what the Holy Spirit wants to do in us.

What needs to change and be different in the way we live out our lives?

What opinions need to change and adapt?

What understandings do we have of our faith, or of things we read in the Bible that need to develop and grow?

Are there things that we need to put down?

Do we hold opinions or understandings that are so closed down that there is no room for the Holy Spirit to get in?

I'm highly suspicious of any Christian who tells me that they've never changed their mind about anything to do with their faith or their reading of the Bible! If we never change, where is the growth?

And if we're never even prepared to change and admit we might have been wrong, where is the Holy Spirit?

So, just as I often ask myself the question, "In what I've been saying, what has everyone else been hearing?"

I'm beginning to wonder, are there times when God is asking the same question?!

Are there times when God is really throwing everything at it to try and catch my attention and get me to stop and notice and think?

Does God often look at me and sigh, and think, "I've been telling her this repeatedly, but she's not hearing me! I've been showing her this through events that are happening in the world. I've been pointing this out to her through my natural creation. I've really made it obvious through those conversations she's been having. I even threw in those questions that she couldn't get out of her head when she was reading the Bible. When will she get it?!!!!"

The good news is that I know that no matter how long it might take me, God never gives up on me. And God will find more and more ways to try and show me what God wants me to see and learn and understand and change. All I need to do is try and be more attentive, more aware, more intentional about seeking to hear and learn from God in everything that happens day by day. One of the greatest things I've learnt about communicating with God is that for me it usually doesn't involve words at all. It's about an attitude of openness, a desire at the start of each day to seek to align my will with God's will, a habit of searching for God as much as I can, and trying to permit that habit to spread increasingly into my life.

It's about allowing the love of God to fill each part of my life so that the Holy Spirit can enable me to see and know more and more those things that will help me to become more like Jesus in generosity, in love and care, in hospitality, inclusivity and welcome. Every day I feel excited to think that God has something new to show me, and every day I feel a little bit scared too, as I try to be as open as I can to hear from God and to be willing to change.

So although I'm praying that I will become clearer and bolder in all my communication with other people, my greatest desire and prayer is for a deeper communication with God, that will take me from where I am today, to being one step closer to Jesus tomorrow.

From the URC



The
**United
Reformed
Church**

The South Western Synod are seeking a part-time Stepwise coordinator (20%).

The post requires appreciation for all-age learning and an understanding of missional discipleship, together with the ability to encourage others and an administrative capacity.

The post is for one year, reviewed and renewable annually, as the South Western Synod seeks to promote and co-ordinate the Stepwise discipleship development course.

For more details of Stepwise see <https://urc.org.uk/stepwise.html>

For further job details contact Gwen Jennings, synodclerk@urcsouthwest.org.uk to whom a letter of application and CV should be returned by Friday 25th September.

Interviews are planned to be held by Zoom in the week beginning 28th September.

Online Church:

Interest in online church has skyrocketed since the start of the current crisis, with many congregations starting with worship online, but expanding into community outreach, youth groups and other ways of using online technology to live out faith. As things develop, the Walking the Way steering group is interested in the implications of this for whole-of-life discipleship. How can the use of online technology help us Walk the Way of Jesus more closely? How can we ensure safe, healthy, enriching relationships online? How might community accountability in following Jesus work online? Lots of exciting questions and possibilities are arising which the steering group is keen to work with. The group will be spending a significant amount of time in our September (virtual) meeting to discuss what to do next.

Many thanks to all those who have submitted their own thoughts and questions for the group to consider, if you would like to contribute anything to this discussion, please do contact me.

If you need any further information or have stories to share about whole-of-life discipleship where you are, please e-mail wtw@urc.org.uk or call us on 020 7520 2718. We'd love to hear from you!

Peace begins with smile from Jess.



Just watched a documentary on how ships are kept together. Riveting.

I used to have a problem where I couldn't stop naming classic American sitcoms, but I'm over it now. Happy Days.

My wife's working in a bowling alley. Ten pin? No, permanent.

I thought my wife was joking when she said she'd leave me if I didn't stop singing 'I'm A Believer'. Then I saw her face.

How do you approach an angry Welsh cheese? Caerphilly.