



Welcome to the 'virtual' Stoneleigh Methodist Church

Sunday 18 October 2020

10:30am: Morning Worship
6:30pm: Evening Worship with Judy Quaife

Prayers

Please pray for Emma, our Stewards and Jeananne; for others within the Church and beyond, and for the continued health of our key workers and all the National Health Service, on whom we depend so much now, and at all times.

Please pray also for those of our Church family who are unwell or finding their mobility limited and consider whether they might welcome a call from friends.

"And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him." Matthew 6:7-8

Notices

Planned Services for November. Our first Service in Church was planned for the 1st November, Communion, at 10:30am with Emma. However, latest advice from the London District is that we should not re-open at this time. We will, of course, continue with the written Services for now, and keep you informed when we hear more. *Robin*

Next week we will circulate details of the 'jobs' that need to be covered when we do reopen, so that you all have time to read through and consider which you might like to volunteer for. *Robin*

Covid Alert Level – Epsom & Ewell (including Stoneleigh) remain in 'medium' (the lowest level) Thus no changes in the existing Government restrictions locally for the time being. *Robin*

Contact Details

Contact: Jeananne (07729 028850) - contact@stoneleighmethodist.church

All items for future NewsSheets – to news@stoneleighmethodist.church or phone 020 8393 2155

Donations of clothing etc for Whitechapel – please leave in porch of 198 Stoneleigh Park Road

Online Services etc

Christ Church with St Philip, 10:00am - facebook.com/christchurchsaintphilip.

Surbiton Hill Methodist Church, 10:30am Sunday at shmc.online.church.

The Ruxley/Stoneleigh Thursday Morning prayer by Zoom and it is open to all. Email to publicity@ruxley-church.org.uk by Tuesday for details and a copy of the liturgy too.

The Methodist Church is offering 'Dial-a Prayer' free of charge, updated every Thursday afternoon, on 0808 281 2514. There's also weekly news, again free, on 0808 281 2478.

Methodist Church Year of Prayer on Tuesdays at 12:45pm – a 15 minute Service on Zoom and Facebook Live – full details on <https://www.methodist.org.uk/yearofprayer/>

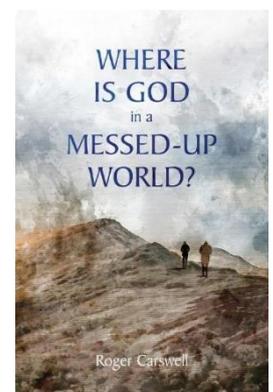
When we (eventually) reopen for Worship there will be a few changes we've had to make in order to meet the latest Government rules – nothing that will be totally new to you, but just to mention what you can expect. There will be people there to help of course, to keep our worshippers safe:

- The church doors will not be opened until 10.00am. Please do not arrive earlier.
- *Please use the main Church entrance (top of the ramp) only.*
- There will be people around to ensure a socially distanced entry and exit. Please do as they ask.
- *Face masks must be worn unless exempt.*
- Everyone will be required to use hand sanitiser as they enter.
- *We will verify the names and contact details of everyone who attends and keep them for 21 days for track and trace purposes. NHS QR codes are available. By coming to Church, you are giving your consent to this.*
- The pews have all been marked by white card to show seating places that are 2 metres apart. Small squares for individuals, rectangles for individuals or family groups (up to 3 persons). Please do not move the cards.
- *Someone will be there to help you find a suitable seat.*
- The kitchen will be closed. If you usually need a drink of water, please bring your own bottle.
- *There will be no congregational singing.*
- Church Bibles cannot be used. If you wish to use one, please bring your own.
- *Please remain in your seat at the end of the service until you are told you may move.*

There will be no coffee after the service – sorry.

Monday Group. In our Monday evening Bible study sessions, we've recently been looking at the book of Ephesians through a series of sermons from Gateway Church Leeds. In the first session of these, the book *Where is God in a messed-up world?* by Roger Carswell was recommended. We have been reading this book individually (at our own pace!) for the past couple of weeks and have found it simple to read but going into a lot of depth using various case studies and his own experience.

I have a number of copies of this book available if you would like a copy – just drop me an email with your address (richie.g@googlemail.com) and I can deliver. *Richard*



Around the Trolley

Barbara is moving (at last!) on 22nd October – we wish all; the best in her new home. Jeananne and Denise have her new contact details if you haven't received a card from her yet. *Robin*

Thanks to Tom for the kind gifts of cake distributed by me to various NewsSheet recipients – all very much appreciated I hear. *Jeananne*

Dog Walking – a local disabled lady is looking for someone to walk her faithful companion 'around the block' in all weathers. If you would like to offer to help, give me a ring and I'll put you in touch. *Robin*

Clocks go back 1 hour next weekend – Sunday 25th October. That's the end of Summertime folks, and an extra hour in bed!

Sunday 18th October 2020 – Morning Worship



This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. If you are well enough why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

Opening Prayer

To You we rise, in You we rest
We stay at home, we go on quest,
Still You are our abode (from H and P 39, v5 alt.)

Hymn: StF 608 All Praise to our redeeming Lord who joins us by His grace

(for an organ version see: <https://youtu.be/VQQwzluYBaw>)

All praise to our redeeming Lord,
who joins us by his grace,
and bids us, each to each restored,
together seek his face.

He bids us build each other up;
and, gathered into one,
to our high calling's glorious hope
we hand in hand go on.

The gift which he on one bestows,
we all delight to prove;
the grace through every vessel flows,
in purest streams of love.

E'en now we think and speak the same,
and cordially agree;
concentred all, through Jesu's name,
in perfect harmony.

We all partake the joy of one,
the common peace we feel,
a peace to sensual minds unknown,
a joy unspeakable.

And if our fellowship below
in Jesus be so sweet,
what heights of rapture shall we know
when round his throne we meet!

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Prayer of Approach

Heart-stirring God,
You know each of us by name
and day by day we discover your favour afresh.
Your love is new every morning.
Your Presence remains with us,
whether we are called to travel or need to stay put.
You are our rest-giver and the source of our peace.

We marvel that you choose to be gracious to us.
We are touched and humbled by the mercy You extend.
We ask You to stir our hearts and teach us Your ways so that we who belong to You may know more of You.
Show us Your glory.
Open our eyes to it, stretching in beauty over the face of the earth,
shining in the face of Christ Jesus and smiling in the faces of every life lighted by Your Spirit,
so that we and all Your people may give You glory and worship You in Spirit and in Truth.

Amen *(prayer inspired by Exodus 33 vv. 12-23)*

Prayer of Confession

(You can begin this prayer with your hands held shut)

Giving and forgiving God, You are rich in mercy and generous to all.
Help us to see clearly the priorities, prejudices and anxieties in our lives.
Help us to face honestly the injustice, greed and exploitation of the society in which we live.
Forgive us when our concerns have been limited and we have behaved as if our lives and resources were ours to use as we wished.
Forgive us when we have failed to let Your big-heartedness open our hearts and hands.
(Open your hands)
Merciful God, give us the grace and courage to open our hearts and hands.
Shape our lives and use us for we belong to You.

Amen

Assurance of Forgiveness

Receive the riches of God's mercy and grace.

Know beyond any doubt that You are loved and forgiven in Jesus

Today's Reading from the Old Testament

Exodus 33 vv. 12-23

Moses and the Glory of the Lord

Moses said to the Lord, "You have been telling me, 'Lead these people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, 'I know you by name and you have found favor with me.' If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people."

The Lord replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

Then Moses said to him, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?"

And the Lord said to Moses, "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name."

Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory."

And the Lord said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."

Then the Lord said, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen."

Today's Epistle Reading

1 Thessalonians 1: 1-10

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

Grace to you and peace.

The Thessalonians' Faith and Example

We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of people we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place where your faith in God has become known, so that we have no need to speak about it. For the people of those regions report about us what kind of welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming.

Today's Gospel Reading

Matthew 22 vv. 15-22

Paying the Imperial Tax to Caesar

Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. "Teacher," they said, "we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are. Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not?"

But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, "You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? Show me the coin used for paying the tax." They brought him a denarius, and he asked them, "Whose image is this? And whose inscription?"

"Caesar's," they replied.

Then he said to them, "So give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."

When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.

Time to Reflect

There have been times in the past months, in those moments between sleeping and waking, where I have 'come to' and then remembered 'yes, we are still here, in the middle of the pandemic'. Like everyone who thought they had 'a settled life', I find myself continually adjusting to new levels of uncertainty, and expectations which have changed so much. Often all we can know is that another day starts and we are still 'here, in the middle' and we do not know how or when this 'new normal' will end.

This is a strangely interim life, fluid and marked by waiting, stuck in what is sometimes described as the 'messy middle'. It may have been like too for the early Christians Paul wrote to at Thessalonica. His letter offers testimony to the extraordinary dynamism of early Christianity. Probably written within twenty years of the Crucifixion it presents a recognisable picture of established church life. But these Christians are keenly conscious that they are living 'in the middle' between God's great act of rescue and their eternal hope. In the midst of persecution and bereavement they may well have felt stretched and disorientated. The Gospel passage gives us the feeling of 'coming in in the middle', as if we had walked into a room in the middle of a conversation or turned on a television or radio in the middle of a drama. Whether it was right to pay taxes to the Romans was a long-running debate on which many took entrenched positions. It is a clever and dangerous 'trick question' because a direct answer lays Jesus open to charges of collaboration or revolution.

Matthew shows us Jesus taking and holding the coin, perhaps turning it over in His hand, studying the image of the Emperor, reading the imperial titles with their grandiose claims. In the hands of Jesus, a new perspective emerges and tense political and ethical question is seen in a new light. The principle is the priority of God, the need to render God what is due. The question of 'what is owed' to Caesar is addressed to the questioners. What new perspectives on entrenched issues and problems might Jesus open for us when we turn them over and put them in His hands?

To those Thessalonians picking their way through the 'messy middle', Paul's words were surely hugely encouraging. He shares how he thanks God for them in his prayers. He observes how their genuine faith and change of priorities was apparent to him and all the churches. When we think about how we support each other as Christians, we often focus on giving kindly advice or practical help. Paul shows us that one of the most affirming and valuable things we can do is to point out signs of God's presence in their lives. Paul is like a field officer, actively searching for and affirming signs that the Spirit is at work in these new churches. Moses told God that he didn't want to go on another step, didn't want to budge, unless assured of continuing God's presence (Exodus 33 vv. 15-16). With joy Paul discovers such signs of God's Presence bringing renewal and change in the lives of his fellow Christians and it brings him to his knees in thankful joy. May God open our eyes and hearts so we like Paul can start our own scavenger hunt for signs of God's presence and offer words of encouragement and affirmation, and prayers of thanks.

Take a time to sit quietly

Think of Jesus giving attention to a tricky situation where you do not know how to speak or act for the best. Pray that as you put this into Jesus's hands you will receive a renewed perspective.

In the 'messy middle' what would it mean to embark on a scavenger hunt for signs of God's Presence? Give thanks for someone in whose life you see God at work. Is there a way you could encourage them by letting them know?

A time of prayer

Patient God

Help us to remember that we can't find the words, You listen to our hearts and Your Spirit pleads for us in sighs too deep to be spoken.

Lover of Justice, we hold before You the peoples of the world. Establish equity and grant wisdom.

Strong God, we hold before You the church through the world and our own churches. Strengthen hearts and renew vision.

Merciful one, we hold before You those we know in need. Reach out with healing and restoration, encircle in comfort and care.

Listening God, refresh our sense of Your Presence and strengthen and guide us day by day, until with all Your beloved people we see You face to face in Your Kingdom.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: Listen to StF 615 Let Love be real <https://youtu.be/SkBxZw5NxU> (Matt Beckingham) or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind

Let love be real, in giving and receiving,
without the need to manage and to own;
a haven free from posing and pretending,
where every weakness may be safely known.
Give me your hand, along the desert pathway,
give me your love wherever we may go.

*As God loves us, so let us love each other:
with no demands, just open hands and space to grow.*

Let love be real, not grasping or confining,
that strange embrace that holds yet sets us free;
that helps us face the risk of truly living,
and makes us brave to be what we might be.
Give me your strength when all my words are weakness;
give me your love in spite of all you know.

*As God loves us, so let us love each other:
with no demands, just open hands and space to grow.*

Let love be real, with no manipulation,
no secret wish to harness or control;
let us accept each other's incompleteness,
and share the joy of learning to be whole.
Give me your hope through dreams and disappointments;
give me your trust when all my failings show.

*As God loves us, so let us love each other:
with no demands, just open hands and space to grow.*

Michael Forster (b. 1946)

A prayer of blessing

May God our Father inspire and strengthen us in our work of faith
May Christ Jesus our brother motivate and sustain us in our labour of love
May the Spirit our helper establish and build in us a steadfast hope.
That our living may be a reason for thanksgiving and bring Glory to God.

Amen.

Original Materials by Miriam Stevenson

All

Hymns reproduced under CCLi 19650

To join the Evening Service go to <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5582729094> and use Meeting ID: 558 272 9094.

On your home phone, dial 0203 481 5240, listen to the announcement and enter the meeting ID, 5582729094 then # (hash); then, after the next announcement, # again. And that's it, you should be connected and just need to listen. Hang up when the service finishes, or when you want to leave.

**Ruxley Church Evening Service via Zoom
18 October 2020**