



Cheltenham United Reformed Church

'The Pew sheet without any Pews'

Bulletin No 22 / 09.08.20

Dear Friends

We are all looking forward to being able to meet again for public worship. At St Andrew's the Elders are working towards the 6th September, as is The Church in Warden Hill, and Prestbury intend to be back in the building for worship on 4th October.

Thank you to everyone who has completed a Questionnaire, Feedback will be given in due course.

This weekly bulletin has worship, news, prayer requests, information about virtual services, plus anything else that might be 'in the notices'.

Please note the appeal for the people of Beirut after the explosion there this week. 'Embrace the Middle East' is the updated name of 'Bible Lands' who publish 'The Bethlehem Carol Sheet'. There will be many calls for donations in the next weeks.

Prayer Requests

- Morag and Bill Notman
- Pat Brooks
- The people of Beirut
- For all of us , as we emerge into the 'new normal'

If you know of anyone who would like to be added to the prayer list, please let us know and they will be included in the next bulletin.

Lectionary Readings

From June to November there is a wider variety of lectionary readings. ROOTS and the URC Handbook use different selections.

Genesis 37 v1-4, 12-28

OR

1 Kings 19 v9-18

Psalm 105 v1-6, 16-22,45b

OR

Psalm 85 v8-13

Matthew 14 v22-33

Romans 10 v5-15

Virtual Services

For a list of virtual services, please visit <http://www.urchic.org.uk/news.aspx>

Coffee and Prayers

Alison Stagg is running the Zoom **Sunday 11.30 am Coffee Chat** from this Sunday.

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/72040188247?pwd=UHZtU1Fkd2RNaW05ZGxMbllUdkVDUT09>

Meeting ID: 720 4018 8247 Passcode: bZ9ze6

Tony Jeans has temporarily taken over the Zoom **8.30pm Monday Prayers**.

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/72562489684?pwd=R3NpWFVIS2JlGhnbFRnem45ZWJodz09>

Meeting ID: 725 6248 9684 Passcode: 6fsZVk

ST ANDREW'S

News from the Elders'

Thank you to everyone who has volunteered to Steward once we return to worship in Church on 6th September. Jean will be in touch with the new role specification.

Many of you have been accessing live streaming of worship during the lockdown. The Elders have listened and organised an upgrade of our Wi-Fi and AV system to include a camera suitable for live streaming, which will be through YouTube. Details of codes etc will be sent out later.

Due to the Coronavirus restrictions we are only able at the moment to accommodate 30 worshippers in church. This means that a seat will need to be booked to attend worship. If numbers are over 30 we shall adopt alternate week attendance.

Services initially will be about half an hour. Bob is leading the first one. There will be no singing, and the screen will be used for all information. If you wish to use a Bible in the service please bring your own. There will be no refreshments after the service. Please wear a face covering unless exempt.

Please decide whether you wish to attend church physically, or would be happier and feel safer using U-Tube at home,- help can be given with this, please talk to your group Elder.

Detailed instructions as per Government guidelines will be in future Bulletins.

Janet



Beirut Appeal from 'Embrace the Middle East'

'Embrace the Middle East' is an ecumenical Christian charity with over 160 years' experience working in the region and almost a hundred years in Lebanon.



Wednesday 5th August 2020

Dear Friends

Thank you to all those who have got in touch to say you are praying for Lebanon and our partners in the aftermath of the massive explosion that ripped through Beirut yesterday. It means so much to our partners to know that people around the world are praying with them.

Embrace works closely with 12 local partner organisations in Lebanon, the majority of whom are based in Beirut. We remain in contact with our partners, all of whom are thankfully physically safe, but understandably in a state of huge shock as the impact of the explosion slowly unfolds.

This devastation couldn't have come at a worse time for Lebanon, which is reeling from the impact of a national economic crisis, as well as struggling to respond to the Coronavirus pandemic. Many people are on the brink, with "ordinary" families now struggling to put food on the table and meet basic needs.

Please pray for those who have lost their homes and loved ones, that they may find comfort and healing.

Please pray for the doctors, nurses and paramedics who are caring for the injured.

Please pray for the rescue teams that are trying to find missing family members and neighbours.

Please pray for the Church, and for all of Embrace's local Christian partners in the coming hours and days, as they seek to comfort and serve the families they work with, as well as work to repair the significant damage to health and education centres, offices and homes.

At times like this, many of us are compelled to reach out and help in whatever way possible. You can donate to the Lebanon crisis here:

<https://www.embraceme.org/news/news-beirut-explosion>

Thank you for your support at this difficult time.

With every blessing, Emma Brown and Sophia Peiris, Embrace the Middle East

Reflection from Dr Tony Jeans

A Book for All Seasons

We have all lived through difficult times these last few months. For some people it has been especially tough with illness, bereavement, loneliness and the impossibility of physical contact with loved ones. Now for many, there is the threat of unemployment and housing difficulties. But in the pandemic, everyone has been marked in some way.

However, the paradox of the lockdown is that there have been good moments which we can celebrate. We have seen acts of kindness, good neighbourliness, support and celebration of key workers, especially in the NHS and sharing in various ways through the power of technology.

Many people have found peace in gardening and enjoying nature without the overlay of noise and pollution. Birdsong has been noticed more, the stars have been brighter and even the murmurings of the earth have been clearer for seismologists without the rumble of traffic.

Against such a mixed picture, the one book of the Bible that presents all aspects of human life and experience – good or ill – is the book of poetry and song of the Hebrew tradition which is the Book of Psalms. David and his successors praise God, they petition, they pour out their anguish, they lament both as individuals and community, they celebrate, they remember their history, they seek wisdom, they complain, they look to the future and sometimes they utter dark thoughts of vengeance and spite.

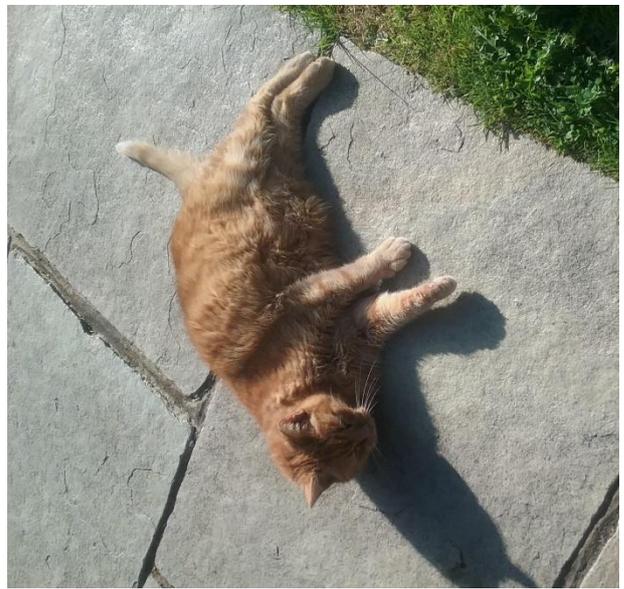
One of the Psalms set for August 9th is Psalm 105 v 1-6, 16-22 & 45b. The Psalm begins with praise and thanksgiving for all that God has done and instructions to tell everyone about it. There is a series of imperatives – sing, glory, seek, remember.

The second section is a very compressed summary of the story of Joseph who suffered but who got through the trials and was able to save his people. And the last words are “Praise the Lord!”.

Thus the Psalmist goes from the general confidence in God’s works to a specific example of His salvation in action. We are encouraged to have faith that we will come through difficult times in God’s strength and to not loose heart.

Wherever we are with the pandemic – hopeful, apprehensive, confident, resigned, determined, angry or whatever, in the Psalms we will find somewhere a kindred spirit. Take the gift of this ancient wisdom which we inherit from the Hebrew scriptures to help us through. Above all, be confident in God. In Psalm 130, the poet begins “Out of the depths I cry to you O Lord” but ends “For with the Lord there is steadfast love and with Him is great power to redeem”. And that’s as true for us as for Israel.

Tony Jeans



For I will consider my Cat Jeoffry.
For he is the servant of the Living God, duly and daily serving him.
For at the first glance of the glory of God in the East he worships in his way.
For is this done by wreathing his body seven times round with elegant quickness.
For then he leaps up to catch the musk, which is the blessing of God upon his prayer.
For he rolls upon prank to work it in.
For having done duty and received blessing he begins to consider himself.
For this he performs in ten degrees.
For first he looks upon his forepaws to see if they are clean.
For secondly he kicks up behind to clear away there.
For thirdly he works it upon stretch with the forepaws extended.
For fourthly he sharpens his paws by wood.
For fifthly he washes himself.
For sixthly he rolls upon wash.
For seventhly he fleas himself, that he may not be interrupted upon the beat.
For eighthly he rubs himself against a post.
For ninthly he looks up for his instructions.
For tenthly he goes in quest of food.

From 'My Cat Jeoffry' by Christopher Smart (1763)

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:
"Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown."
And he replied:
"Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.
That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way."

From 'The Gate of the Year' by Minnie Louise Haskins (1912)

Fiona, Janet and Brian