

LINK PLUS++++

February 2021

*What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,
all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!*

*Have we trials and temptations, is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged: take it to the Lord in prayer,
can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness: take it to the Lord in prayer.*

*Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Saviour, still our refuge - take it to the Lord in prayer!
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee? take it to the Lord in prayer;
In his arms he'll take and shield thee, thou wilt find a solace there.*

Joseph Medlicott Scriven (1819-86)

Dear Friends

I don't know if you are aware of the story behind the words of this hymn. It was written by Joseph Scriven who was born in Ireland and educated at Trinity College Dublin, before becoming a teacher. His life was good and going to plan. But unfortunately all this was to dramatically change. The day before he was due to get married his fiancée drowned. In his grief he moved to Canada where he started to rebuild his life. He even found a new woman to share his life with, Eliza Rice.

Unbelievably, Eliza became ill and died from her illness before they could marry. Joseph was only 25 years old. He was distraught, yet through his heartache he felt called by God to help the poor and

handicapped in Canada. He took a vow of poverty himself and worked for the next ten years alongside those in need. He found comfort and a life purpose for himself in this work.

When his mother became sick, Joseph did not have the money to help her out, nor to visit her in Ireland. He wrote this poem as a comfort for her. It has provided comfort and encouragement for many since.

Each day I am reminded that there has been much sadness and loss during the pandemic. We cannot have been immune to all that has been going on. Every family will have their own story to tell of this time. Perhaps ours will be about the friend, Jesus, who we have found anew in these last 12 months.

Steve

P.S. On 31st January in our evening service we started a 12 week look at the commitments contained in the Methodist Way of Life. Each session stands on its own so please join us on Zoom even if you cannot make them all.

Brean

<http://www.breanmethodistchurch.org.uk>

Well, Christmas is long past, and I wonder what we missed most. Was it the general razzamatazz, or the gathering of family and friends? Or was it our familiar style of worship with its carols and readings. Or did we really miss anything at all, very much? Was our simpler form of worship, with less decoration, less junketing, and instead, a quieter life at home, more to our liking, I wonder? Perhaps the answer is 'a bit of everything'.

At Brean we missed not being able to share in Christmas events and worship, both our own and those of other churches and communities. We especially missed our own Christmas Eve informal Carol Service. We have been celebrating with this style at 4pm on Christmas Eve for 25 years or so now, and it certainly seemed odd not to have it as a prelude to Christmas Day.

But we are into a new year now and a new year of hope. Not that all the Covid troubles will be over of course, and we must not forget that our vaccinations don't give us 100% guarantees, so we must continue to be careful and continue to be vigilant; but at least we have a significant level of reassurance from our jabs and we must be thankful for that. Our front line services have done a magnificent job and our scientists have done sterling work in getting us effective vaccines so quickly.

I see from my calendar that February is Church Council month. Chance for more Zoom I guess. I can't imagine what there is to talk about except perhaps for elections to various posts, and as you can imagine there will be a host of nominations for them!! We might though get round to talking about when shall we open for worship. We are closed through February, but could we open for March? Well possibly not but, who knows, perhaps a target of Easter might be reasonable. What a symbol that would be. Resurrection day, April 4th.

That leads us to ask what sort of return? We have spent a lot of money over the winter making repairs and renovations, many of them occasioned by the latest Quinquennial report. The flat roof over the entrance lobby has been resealed, we have a new back door and surrounds and the tall window behind the organ and a couple of windows by the front door have all been replaced. All windows are now double glazed which is a good thing to have done. Three cheers to our stewards.

But do we now simply go back to a form of church activity that we have known before, with an hour's worship each week and a few other things going on? That question of a couple of years ago perhaps needs to be asked again; where do you see your church in five years time? I've nursed a secret wish for some years that, if we could afford it, we improve our technology; but until you have it you often can't see the possibilities. But now that we are becoming familiar with Zoom and other means of communication, more possibilities open up before us. And with the visitor potential that we have, am I too much of a dreamer?

And finally if you are looking for a book to read and which might make use of those little grey cells, can I commend Bill Bryson's 'The Body: a guide for occupants.' Curiously informative, I would say, and it even includes a footnote about Covid.

I couldn't get to grips with science at school. I managed to get through it at O level but it was the barest of passes, and my worst science subject was biology. No wonder I was glad to drop it from my studies at the first opportunity.

Which is a shame because I now feel that science can give us valuable insights into the nature of God's creation. The work over the last hundred years that has gone into opening up knowledge of the quantum world around us, coupled with our faith that God is within every tiny little part (the estimate is of 37 trillion cells in our bodies and if that wasn't small enough what about the particles, enzymes and all the rest). To observe all this and consider how the different systems within us all relate to one another, is awe-inspiring.

Did you know for example, that including all the little capillaries that take our blood to the remotest of regions, there are 25,000 miles of blood vessels within each one of us. Bryson, writing in his usual humorous fashion, takes our bodies apart and opens them to our astonished reception.

The book is full of minutiae like that and how they were revealed; and of how cures for ill were discovered, often by accident. I can thoroughly recommend it.

Harvey Allen

Brent Knoll

I must admit I'm finding this third lockdown far more difficult than the previous two. And speaking to friends around the community, I know I'm not alone. During the first lock down, there was very much a sense of unity and camaraderie, despite our being forced to spend time apart. A real sense of "we're all in this together". It also helped that the weather turned warm and the days were noticeably longer. This third

lockdown continued in that most miserable month of January when the weather was grim, daylight was scarce and after Christmas and New Year, there seemed precious little to look forward to. It's no surprise that according to articles in various national newspapers that anxiety and stress are on the rise because, because of our spending more time indoors, we have more time to think and ruminate over all that is happening in our country at the moment.

As Christians, we will be entering the period of Lent this month. A time where meditation, contemplation and thought are part of our journey through this most special of times. It is a time for us to focus on Christ's journey to the cross and one of the most solemn periods in our church calendar.

But despite our eyes being fixed on Jesus and his ultimate sacrifice, as Christians we are all aware of the great joy of Easter Sunday that followed the despair of that first Good Friday. We have the benefit of hindsight. We know the happy ending, if you like!

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could have that benefit now? If we could peek into the future, say 6 months to a year from now, and found that things had gone back to "normal". Hugs with family and friends were back on the agenda, we could meet with as many friends as we like and, for us here at Brent Knoll Methodist Church (as at all churches within our Circuit), we could attend worship without worrying about maximum numbers and social distancing. Of course, we don't have the gift of hindsight, but we do have that wonderful gift of hope. When I popped out for a walk just before writing this article, I saw groups of snowdrops popping up - and didn't they make me smile! Snowdrops defy all logic. They look tiny and fragile, but they are so strong. They defy the worst of the weather and a real sign that Spring is really not too far ahead. A symbol of new life after the bleakness of winter. They are truly a symbol of hope - of triumph over adversity.

During these uncertain times, we continue to hold each other and everyone within our Circuit, towns, and villages in our prayers. At the time of writing, all churches in our Circuit are currently closed for

worship but we are still looking to the possibility of opening our chapel for an Easter Sunday service. This may or may not be possible but talking to members of our congregation we are all hopeful that the church will open again. I will, of course, keep you updated with any news.

In the meantime, from all of us here at the Brent Knoll, keep safe, keep warm. And enjoy looking at those first signs that Spring is on the way in this beautiful area of the country in which we are so blessed to live.

God bless.

Rosemary Krull

Burnham

O what a year it has been. Normally I would be writing about all the things we have lined up for our church in Burnham but, like all of us, there is nothing in the diary! Fortunately, the infection rates seem to be falling slowly and we must all put our hopes for a better future into the vaccination programme.

I found the following verse on the Internet and thought it summed up the situation we are all in:

A Meditative Poem for the Pandemic

..... And the people – by Kitty O’Meara

“And the people stayed home. And read books, and listened, and rested, and exercised, and made art, and played games, and learned new ways of being, and were still. And listened more deeply. Some meditated, some prayed, some danced. And the people began to think differently, and the people healed. And, in the absence of people living in ignorant, dangerous, mindless, and heartless ways, the earth began to heal.”

And when the danger passed, and the people joined together again, they grieved their losses, and made new choices, and dreamed new images, and created new ways to live and heal the earth fully, as they had been healed.”

Best wishes to you all from the Burnham Stewarding Team, and here's hoping for a much better 2021.

Joan Wilkins

East Brent

East Brent was the only Church this end of the circuit to open in November and December. It was a joy to be able to meet together again. Some people say that you can pray and read the bible at home but it's not the same as being together in Church and sharing the time together. We look forward to opening again soon.

As we were not supposed to have any decorations in the Church last Christmas, it was suggested that we put a Christmas tree outside the front door. Lots of people walking past told us how much they appreciated the tree being there, chocolates were hung on the branches and a box of tin food etc., with a notice to help yourself. It looks as if we shall have to purchase two trees next year!!!

The Church family was sent lots of Christmas cards thanking us for the welcome that the senders received and sending their love and best wishes for the New Year.

Quite a few members had Birthdays in January, two were memorable ones, our organist Evelyn was 90yrs old and Joan Hicks was 99yrs old. We send our congratulations to both of them.

Jill Legg

PLUS +++
POEMS, PRAYERS and OTHER
MESSAGES

The Darkling Thrush (Thomas Hardy)
from Judy Allen

I leant upon a coppice gate
When frost was spectre grey,
And winter's dregs made desolate
The weakening eye of day.
The tangled bind stems scored the sky
Like strings of broken lyres,
And all mankind that haunted nigh
Had sought their household fires.

At once a voice arose among
The bleak twigs overhead
In a full hearted evensong
Of joy illimited;
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small
In blast beruffled plume,
Had chosen thus to fling his soul
Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carollings
Of such ecstatic sound
Was written on terrestrial things
Afar and nigh around,
That I could think there trembled through
His happy good-night air
Some blessed hope, whereof he knew
And I was unaware.

LENT COURSES & RESOURCES

Action for Children

I have received a "Count Your Blessings" sheet from Action for Children to be used during "Lent". If anyone would be interested in having details, please contact me on 01278 784204.

Dorothy May

All We Can

The All We Can Lent booklet is called Change Begins and costs £3 which covers postage and printing. It can also be accessed online free of charge either to download or view online at

<https://www.allwecan.org.uk/resources/>

All We Can will help with the process if people find it daunting.

Celia Dewfall

Tearfund

I have also had an email. from Tearfund about a Climate Emergency Toolkit they have put together for churches or organisations to help them respond to the climate emergency as part of their discipleship and worship, it can be accessed at

<https://www.climateemergencytoolkit.com>

Celia Dewfall

A Book Recommendation

I have just finished reading a really good book written by RICHARD OSMAN of Pointless, House of Games fame. It is his first novel, and as he himself says, his best novel, so far!

The title of the book is THE THURSDAY MURDER CLUB. In a peaceful retirement, four unlikely friends meet up once a week to investigate unsolved murders. But when a killing takes place on their very

doorstep, the Thursday Murder Club find themselves in the middle of their very first live case.

Elizabeth, Joyce, Ibrahim and Ron may be pushing eighty, but they still have a few tricks up their sleeves. Can the unorthodox but feisty gang catch the killer before it's too late??

It may not be everyone's choice, but I loved it. How Mr Osman gets into the mindset of the four main characters is a joy and the details he uses to develop their own differing personalities brings the intricate plot to life. I don't often get really drawn into a book, but I did with this one. It was so engrossing that I didn't even take a peek at the last page to find out 'who dunn it' (which I have a habit of doing if I am finding a novel a bit slow reading). It is also funny and deeply compassionate.

Give it a go and see what you think! It's the current no. 1 best seller!

Ann Hall

Burnham & Highbridge Choral Society

New members are very welcome.

During the Covid-19 restrictions we are unable to meet in person. Instead, we are holding virtual rehearsals online every Thursday evening at 7.30pm lasting for an hour. These are fun events, still with our professional Musical Director and live accompanist. We are aiming to hold a concert during the summer, as long as Covid - 19 restrictions allow.

The Burnham & Highbridge Choral Society (BHCS) is a friendly, non-auditioned choir based in Burnham-on-Sea in Somerset and has currently 50 - 60 members with differing levels of musical ability and experience. We rehearse on Thursday evenings from 7.30 to 9.30pm at the Burnham Methodist Church Hall in College Street. Traditionally there have been two performances each year, one in December,

usually held in the town's Catholic church, and the other in March/April usually held in St Andrew's Church. The Spring Concert usually features an orchestral ensemble and guest soloists. In the summer term, a few of us get together to have an informal Summer Sing. Occasional requests to perform at local events are considered by the Committee. The choir works with a professional accompanist for rehearsals and performances and has generally performed a repertoire of sacred, secular, classical, and stage music.

If you would like to join us on Thursday evenings, you would be most welcome. You can get further details from our secretary at jane.lee36@btinternet.com or on 01278 783511.

Rev Beth Bridges

At the Coffee morning this week the subject of Women Ministers in the Methodist Church came up. Rev. Beth Bridges who retired to Burnham in 1988, and known by many still in the Circuit, was in the very first group of women to be Ordained in the in Methodist Church.

Beth had written her "Memoirs" If you are interested, I can e-mail a copy to you.

Cedric May

(cedric.may@btinternet.com or phone 01278 784204)

What have they done to our words?

The world of computers has taken away many of our familiar, everyday words and given them completely different meanings.

A DISC used to be something that slipped when you hurt your back.

A WEB was what a spider made.

A NET was for fishing or maybe to hold your hair in place.

A MOUSE was a furry little creature with whiskers.

CHIPS went with fish.

A HACKER was someone with a bad cough.

A CURSOR was someone with bad language.

A LOAD went on a lorry and A BOOT went on your foot.

You found builders and caravans on A SITE and you parked your car on A DRIVE.

You hung your washing ON LINE and A DESKTOP was where you sat and did your writing.

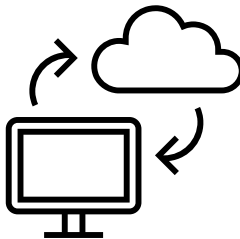
A SERVER worked in a restaurant and a religious artefact was AN ICON

WALLPAPER brightened up a room and A MOTHERBOARD was mum when she was fed up.

WHATEVER NEXT??

With apologies to H. Lloyd Jones for the slight alterations to his/her original words, printed on the tea towel I am currently using to dry my morning's washing up!!

Ann Hall



**Finally, please note....
the deadline for the March Link Plus
is 25th February.**