



Heaton Moor United Church

The United Reformed Church and The Methodist Church
working together in partnership



Zoom Services and Meetings

Sunday 23rd August Circuit Service 3.00pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87212246881?pwd=VXpyMzRYV21UZ1ZoYlkc2R4dmV1QT09>

Meeting ID: 872 1224 6881 Password: 974333

Wednesday 26th August Coffee and Prayer 11.00am

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/95327541668?pwd=ekU2QWgzZjVKWtBFTjZsb0tERVQrdz09>

Meeting ID: 953 2754 1668 Password: 794265

Joining by telephone

Step 1)

Dial any of the following numbers. If one doesn't work try another and another until you are able to connect:

0330 088 5830

0131 460 1196

0203 481 5237

0203 481 5240

0208 080 6591

0208 080 6592

Step 2)

Follow the prompts you hear on the phone.

You may be prompted to enter 3 different things:

1 -- Meeting ID followed by hash #

2 -- Password followed by hash #

3 -- Participants ID -- You will not have one of these, don't worry, all you need to do is enter "Hash" #

You should then be entered into the service.

Private Prayer and Reflection Opening Times

Monday 10.00am to 12.00pm

Thursday 6.00pm to 8.00pm

Dear Heaton Moor United Church family,

Grace and peace to you in the name of our liberator Jesus Christ. Hope you are all keeping safe.

As you will know we are planning to re-open our church building for public worship from the 13th of September, and thank you all for your co-operation and support. Thanks to those people who have informed to attend the Sunday worship services. There are few others who are vulnerable and have expressed that they prefer to worship online from their own homes, which is totally understandable, and for whom the online zoom services offered by the circuit will continue to go on.

Herewith I am sending you the reflection and the worship resource for this Sunday. Many thanks to Carol Jack who has written the reflection last Sunday, and to Sharon for the letter, when I was on my annual leave.

I had a good break last week, for we as a family were able to spend some time together, and made two day-trips to the Isle of Anglesey, which was lovely. Thank you for all your love and support to us, for which we are so grateful to you.

Kindly keep praying for our church asking God to lead and guide us in our journey forwards.

Take care of yourself and kindly keep safe during this lock down.

God be with you all.

Regards,

Raj

21st August 2020



Re-Opening for Worship
13th September 10.45

Things we can't do:

No Singing



No Hymn Books/Notice Sheets



No tea/coffee



Things we can do:

Follow Social Distancing



Wear a face covering



Pray



Due to this, the amount of people we can seat is limited.

Worship Together (30 mins Max)

Can you please let me know if you are planning on attending so we can get an idea of figures.

Thank you
Sharon



Who do you say Jesus is today? Towards a courageous and counter-cultural church

Reflecting on Matthew 16: 13-20

Last week during my annual leave, I started watching 'Vicar of Dibley' on the recommendation of my colleagues. When the villagers were waiting for a new vicar at Dibley, to their utter surprise it was a woman Geraldine, who introduces herself as the new vicar of Dibley. Who did they think the vicar would be? Since it has always been men who were vicars, the villagers at Dibley expected a gentleman to be their vicar, based on their theological and historical evidences. Against their expectations, when it was a woman vicar, it took time for them to accept her, and eventually Rev. Geraldine makes a huge difference in the community through her ministry. It was fun watching these episodes, specially Dawn French's performance of Rev. Geraldine, as a female priest in the tiny village of Dibley is exceptional to watch.

In the reading from Matthew 16: 13-20, Jesus asks his disciples about his identity, asking them, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" Like the villagers in Dibley, the people in the district of Caesarea Philippi had their own known theological and historical expectations of Jesus, the Son of Man. For the disciples reported, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets" (14v). Jesus was neither content with their reply nor consented to their reply. Now that John the Baptist was dead, Jesus did not claim that he was the risen John the Baptist. Since Elijah was the greatest prophet of Jewish religion who did not see death, Jesus did not claim that he was Elijah reborn. Jeremiah was a known prophet of yester years, for he was lamenting against exilic powers then, and there was every reason for Jesus to claim that he was Jeremiah born again to lament against the colonial powers of his time. Even though Jesus' mission coincides with the mission engagements of John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah and other prophets, Jesus was not content on taking the identity of others for himself. Jesus has his own unique identity, which he wanted his disciples to explore and recognise based on his work and mission engagements. If we read the question that Jesus posed to his disciples, Jesus was enquiring, 'who do people say that the Son of Man is?' and not as 'who do people say that the Son of Man was?' Jesus was looking for an answer in present tense. Jesus was not content with an answer based on some historical knowledge about himself, he was looking for an answer in present tense.

When his identity was not fully expressed in the answers of the people, Jesus further probed his disciples and asked them, "who do you say I am?" (15v) Jesus would have said to his disciples, let's leave what the people say about me, for they have not seen or known me as much as you have seen and known me, and therefore asked his disciples to say who he was as they have known him. It was a question to all the disciples to answer who Jesus was to them. Simon Peter picked Jesus question and replied, "you are the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (16v). On a closer encounter with Jesus, Peter recognised the Messiah in Jesus, who the Jews have been eagerly awaiting to come and restore their land, and also recognised that Jesus is the Son of the living God. For the Jewish audience of the first century to whom Matthew was writing his gospel, they wouldn't mind calling Jesus as John the Baptist, or Elijah or Jeremiah or another prophet, they would have thought Jesus was continuing their mission. But for Jews then, Peter's declaration of Jesus as a Messiah and the Son of the living God was heretical and profane. For according to their belief, Messiah was a political figure who will come to restore their land, and how can Jesus, a son of a carpenter from Nazareth do that? According to their Jewish faith, how can living God have a son, for God is beyond any human

comprehension for God cannot be compared in human terms of a son. Peter's declaration of Jesus' identity was not only counter-cultural, but was also blasphemous.

Jesus on the contrary, not only appreciates Simon Peter for his bold declaration about Jesus, but also reveals that such a declaration did not come to him from flesh and blood, but has come from his Father in heaven (17v). In a way Jesus accepted that yes, he was the Messiah, who has come to restore people to God and also is the Son of the living God, the Father in heaven. Peter's declaration about Jesus was a recognition of who Jesus is, in its present tense. Peter's declaration about Jesus was contextual, contemporary, creative, and counter-cultural, for they were based on his experiences and encounters with Jesus. Jesus then said to Simon Peter, that on such a rock called Peter he would build his church, and the gates of the hades will not prevail against it (18v).

As we read this text today, two sets of questions come to the fore for our faith journey today. Firstly, who do we say Jesus is for us today? Secondly, what do we say about our church today? We have recognised earlier that Jesus was not content with some historical answers about him, but was seeking a creative, contextual and counter-cultural recognition about Jesus.

Allow me to answer it from my own perspective who do I say Jesus is for me? Jesus for me is God becoming human, who identifies with us, laughs with us, walks with us, weeps with us, like a friend, for he transcends all the barriers among people and builds a just and inclusive communion with God and with one another in this his creation. Jesus for me is the lens to know who God is, and a lens to know how human beings should be. Jesus for me is collaborating with each of us in the creation of God in striving towards a new-creation. Jesus for me is the one who stands for justice and sides with those that are oppressed, offering hope and liberation to them. By making such a declaration about Jesus, the call for us is to live like Jesus and work with Jesus in transforming our world to a just world.

What do we say about church today? Like Peter, the church is built on people who make counter-cultural affirmations about Jesus, offering hope, love, and peace to all in the community with Jesus, for the gates of hades will not prevail against it. Church for me should not be known by its membership, but should be known by its missional engagements for justice. Church for me should not be known by its minister, but should be known by its ministry in the community. Church for me should not be a private place for the saints, but a public place of comfort and care to the wounded and the broken people. Church for me should not be about prosperity and wealth, but should be about sharing good news to the poor, feeding the hungry, healing the wounded, visiting the sick, realising the captives and engaging in transforming this world to become a new creation. For no gates of hades will prevail against such a church, for Jesus is the lead to it, working with people for a new heaven and new earth.

As we return back to our church buildings for worship, let us keep reflecting on the need and relevance of our churches today. I have written previously, what has the community missed with the closing down of church buildings? And now what will the community around our church gain by the opening of our church building for worship? We need to prayerfully wait on God and ask God to help us envision a counter-cultural church, where we can make a

difference in our community. Let us not to be content with the rich historical legacy we have had, let us not always keep singing about the past glory of our churches, rather we are called in humility to recognise that we as a church are called to share and offer hope in Jesus Christ to our communities around us. It calls courage to be counter-cultural as a church, but allowing the Spirit of God to lead us will help us in our movement forward, in fact outward as a church. The gates of the hades will not prevail against the church built on a rock, who are willing to be courageous, counter-cultural and creative in their declarations of faith and engagements of mission today. As a church if we aren't counter-cultural, the gates of contemporary hades will prevail on us.

Let's keep asking this question in our quest for re-imagining the church today, who is Jesus for us today? And what is church for us today? May God lead us and guide us so that we can be bold to be counter-cultural in our declarations of our faith and also in our missional engagements. By the way the Rev. Geraldine, the vicar of Dibley was counter-cultural in many ways and continued her mission engagements.

Rev. Dr. Raj Bharat Patta,
21st August 2020

Sunday 23rd August 2020

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

When we see only trouble **Jesus, be our vision**
When we feel only uncertainty **Jesus, be our rock**

When we hear only bad news **Jesus, be our hope**

In all the circumstances of our lives
Jesus, our Companion, be a light to our path

Hymn: One more step along the world I go (StF 476)

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/hymns/one-more-step-along-the-world-i-go-stf-476/>

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words:

One more step along the world I go,
one more step along the world I go;
from the old things to the new
keep me travelling along with you:
and it's from the old I travel to the new;
keep me travelling along with you.

Round the corners of the world I turn,
more and more about the world I learn;
all the new things that I see
you'll be looking at along with me:

As I travel through the bad and good,
keep me travelling the way I should;
where I see no way to go
you'll be telling me the way, I know:

Give me courage when the world is rough,
keep me loving though the world is tough;
leap and sing in all I do,
keep me travelling along with you:

You are older than the world can be,
you are younger than the life in me;
ever old and ever new,
keep me travelling along with you:

Sydney Carter (1915-2004)

Let us pray together

Gracious God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
mindful, compassionate, constant, thank you
for loving us through every season of our
lives. May we believe that you call us into a
new day, that you call each of us by our name,
that we belong to you. And gathered or
scattered, you hold us together in love.

Generous and merciful God, the only way to
come to you each day is in truth, for you know
us completely and love us as we are. Shine
your gentle light on us so that we can know
ourselves to be real, honest and forgiven.
Thank you in Jesus' name. Amen.

Today's Reading from the Old Testament

Isaiah 51 1-3

Today's Gospel Reading:

John 4 1-14

Time to Reflect

In November, we moved house. It set me thinking how old and new need to exist together. A different house, same old furniture; meeting new people, keeping old friends. Old and new together enrich our lives. And it happens all around us in different ways.

Grandparents and grandchildren bridge the generation gap. In nature in autumn and winter, already buds are on the seemingly bare branches, nurturing life for another spring. In our north east culture, ancient Celtic sites co-exist with new developments. St Peter's Church by the River Wear bears witness to many centuries of Christian life, now surrounded by a modern university. But I suspect the Venerable Bede would have welcomed new ways of learning, exploring, discovering.

What does Jesus say about this? Many are tempted to think Jesus discarded all that was old giving us licence to do the same. Yes, we have his words about new wine and old wineskins that destroy one another when they are put together. But in the wilderness, whenever Jesus was tempted away from love and vulnerability, he found his resistance in words from the scriptures with their timeless wisdom and relevance.

Jesus held within himself the wisdom of the ages, God the Ancient of Days, 'the rock from which we were hewn' with the effortless ease he had of living with his contemporaries in fresh and creatively new ways.

During lockdown, we have learned of necessity to hold familiar songs and prayers with new ways of experiencing and expressing them. To be able to hold old and new is something we need to take into an uncertain future, as we abide in the timelessness of God, 'ever old and ever new' but allowing Jesus continuously to bring new life to birth in us, bubbling up with laughter, love and possibility.

Take a time to sit quietly

A time of prayer

Holy and gracious God, we pray for others, prayers that bring to mind the world's realities. Please teach us not to be afraid, because it is here we find you, sharing this deeply troubled world with us.

Please bless all who are continuing to make a difference: scientists working faster than ever before to find cure or vaccine for covid-19; chefs, volunteers, entertainers, neighbours and countless more. **May they know your laughter and love.**

We ask you to bless all who are there to care for those who are at their lowest, especially in health and care services. **May they know your persevering strength.**

We pray for the hundreds of thousands who are grieving here and across the world: for the loss of loved ones, loss of livelihood, loss of confidence and hope, loss of any sense of wellbeing. **May they know your comfort, strong and everlasting.**

We pray for people who need the world to be a more just and equal place, and for those who have power to make changes. May it happen quickly and peacefully. **May they know your righteousness.**

We pray for all who need the world to remember them: refugees and asylum seekers, all living in poverty and suffering from climate change. **May we remember; may they know your provision through us.**

Thank you for all, profoundly known and loved, who enrich our lives every day.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: God to enfold you (StF 648)

Can be sung to 'Morning has broken'

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/hymns/god-to-enfold-you-stf-648/>

God to enfold you,
Christ to uphold you,
Spirit to keep you in heaven's sight;
so may God grace you,
heal and embrace you,
lead you through darkness
into the light.

John L. Bell (b. 1949)

A prayer of blessing

Generous God, please fill your holy gift of life with grace; please bless your fragile gift of life with joy; please help us always to cherish your precious gift of life. Amen.

Original Materials by Jean Hudson
All Hymns reproduced under CCLi 1144191
Local Churches please insert CCCLi No here

Isaiah 51: 1-3

1 Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness,
you that seek the LORD.
Look to the rock from which you were hewn,
and to the quarry from which you were dug.
2 Look to Abraham your father
and to Sarah who bore you;
for he was but one when I called him,
but I blessed him and made him many.
3 For the Lord will comfort Zion;
he will comfort all her waste places
and will make her wilderness like Eden,
her desert like the garden of the Lord;
joy and gladness will be found in her,
thanksgiving and the voice of song.

John 4: 1-14

¹Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard, 'Jesus is making and baptising more disciples than John' – ²although it was not Jesus himself but his disciples who baptised – ³he left Judaea and started back to

Galilee. ⁴But he had to go through Samaria. ⁵So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

7A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink'. ⁸(His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) ⁹The Samaritan woman said to him, 'How is that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?' (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) ¹⁰Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, "Give me a drink", you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.' ¹¹The woman said to him, 'Sir, you have no bucket and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? ¹²Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?' ¹³Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.'