

## Weekly Newsletter (55)

for the Christ Church and Pagham URC Families

21<sup>st</sup> March 2021

### Musings from the Manse

Dear Friends,

You could say that it's been 'a bit of a week' this week. There has been good news and sad news – good news of illness being turned into recovery, of hospital treatment not being as bad as expected – but, then, the sad news of the inevitability of death.

By the time you read this, Beryl English (of Pagham URC) will have been commended and committed to the Lord at her Funeral and preparations will be afoot after the deaths of Christ Church's Sigrid Disley, and another lady - unknown to many but whom I had the privilege to be with in her last days - Gillian Skinner.

Sigrid had declined quite rapidly in recent days and she passed away early on the morning of the 18<sup>th</sup> March – I'm sure that funeral details will be forthcoming in due course. Gillian Skinner was a lady I was asked to visit on Tuesday, 16<sup>th</sup> March, at St. Richard's Hospital. She was in the final days of her life and also passed away within hours of Sigrid. Her family will also be in my thoughts and prayers at this difficult time.

All this, of course, was happening around a list of other tasks I needed to get done. The switch from my 'resting' face to my 'on-camera' face, (when recording the service or attending a zoom meeting), has been particularly hard in the last few days, but no harder than many of you who also face life's difficulties with varying degrees of success. I can just hear my Dad saying, 'Come on, you should be full of the joys of Spring' – and it is wonderful to see our very own 'host of golden daffodils' in the Manse garden, which do gladden my heart when the sun is able to make an appearance!

Have you ever noticed, when standing by a pond or a lake, how the ripples of the water change colour depending on their reflection of the sky or the muddy darkness beneath? They are a bit like us, reflecting what is going on around them and - as life changes - so our mood or behaviour can change.

Thankfully, we have one constant in our lives - our ever present, ever comforting, ever loving God – and, when we turn our faces to Him, when we allow ourselves to let in the light of Christ His Son, we reflect that light out to others. Sometimes it only takes a conversation, or the glance out of the window at God's creation, to lift our spirits or lighten our mood – and, this week, I thank God for those whom He has brought into my hearing and my seeing.

Yours in Christ, Helen <><

### Word for today John 12: 20-33

'Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those, who hate their life in this world, will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me and, where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour.' (John 12: 24-26)

### Meditation of Andrew

'Hate their life in this world'? What does he mean by that?

It sounds so negative, hardly a great advert for Christianity – as though the main criterion for following Jesus is to be so thoroughly disenchanted that you want to end it all!

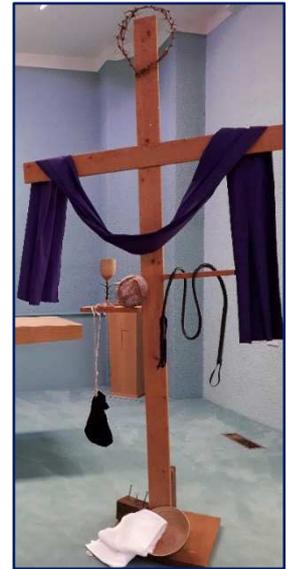
He can't mean that, surely, and I don't think he does, for he's spoken repeatedly of the joy he brings, the blessings he wants to bestow - not just in some distant future - but here and now.

I don't hate life in this world, that's for sure, but I **do** hate certain aspects: those things that wound, damage and destroy, scarring relationships and demeaning people as objects to be used, exploited, ignored and, yes, I hate my own culpability in its hurt and heartache; for none of us are whiter than white - untarnished by such faults.

Is this what Jesus had in mind? That we must renounce this life if it leads us astray? That we must be ready to make sacrifices – even, perhaps, the greatest sacrifice of all - in order to confront what we know to be wrong and make a stand for good?

I can make sense of that - strive towards it. Though I can't help feeling it's an ideal - always out of reach; for who among us would turn their back on self completely for the sake of others, surrendering all for their sake? It would take incredible courage, unparalleled love.

Could anyone, I wonder – even Jesus – show devotion such as that?



## Prayer

God of all,

give us a proper perspective on life.

Help us to celebrate the good things you have given –  
to rejoice in the beauty of this world  
and the blessings you daily shower upon us.

But help us also to grieve over whatever scars your creation,  
denying your love and thwarting your purpose.

Teach us to stand up against such things,  
irrespective of the cost to us,

recognising that true fulfilment and our ultimate destiny  
lie not here on earth but in your eternal kingdom,

where, by your grace, we will savour life indeed  
for evermore.

Amen.

*adapted from 'A most amazing Man' by Nick Fawcett*

## Gathered for Prayer....

Gathered for Prayer meets on Zoom every **Wednesday at 9 am and 7 pm** .... Here's the link....

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5742722693?pwd=R3BEQ3pPV0ZJNndRWVKeWdvd6QT09>

Meeting ID: 574 272 2693 Passcode: xsX5UM

## Lent Study Group on Zoom

The sixth and final part in the series 'Holy Habits – Following Jesus' will be tomorrow evening (**Monday 22nd March**).

After this a daily session can be followed for the days of Holy Week.

I will be opening the meeting **from 7:15 pm so that we can make a prompt start at 7:30 pm**.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82079214648?pwd=NXpMTVNkRnRQitlenVWK1FINVR1QT09>

Meeting ID: 820 7921 4648 Passcode: 167580

## Holy Week Resources

In addition to the Lent Study Resource we have been using, which goes on to include each day of Holy Week, there are two other resources we can tune into.

'Voices of the Witnesses' is a reflective evening worship on **Zoom at 7:30 pm Monday-Friday of Holy Week**, and is being brought to us by the *Bognor, Felpham and Westergate Methodist Churches*.

For an invitation to join via phone or zoom, you will need to **email: [bogfelwest@gmail.com](mailto:bogfelwest@gmail.com)** - after which you will receive a link.

The other resource comes from the *Havant Passion Play* – which, under normal circumstances, would be in Havant Park – but this year is anything but normal! So, they are presenting '*The Road to Easter – A journey from hope to despair, to fulfilment and joy*', which can be watched **online in daily instalments from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday**. Details can be found on *YouTube – HPP-Telling the Stories of Jesus* or on *Facebook (havantpassionplay)* or through their website [www.havantpassionplay.org.uk](http://www.havantpassionplay.org.uk)

## Sabeel-Kairos – Taking action for Palestine

In the Newsletter, for the 28<sup>th</sup> February, I included a message from Penny Thomas which talked about the URC Commitment for Life initiative and a sub-group called Sabeel-Kairos. You may wish to find out more about this group by registering for an event which is to be on the **Thursday, 25<sup>th</sup> March at 10 am** (British Time).

The event, '*Palestine during the Pandemic*', will have three speakers from Palestine – Deacon Anglena Kaiser, Dr Zoughbi Zoughbi, and Dr Bassam Abu Hamad, who have been asked to describe what life has been like for them during the Pandemic - followed by an interactive Q&A session.

To register your attendance, you will need to go to

[https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJErcO6uqTliE9KqTiLjyOTsrA3toSPIkL\\_X](https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJErcO6uqTliE9KqTiLjyOTsrA3toSPIkL_X)

or for more information contact, [john\\_d\\_howard@hotmail.com](mailto:john_d_howard@hotmail.com)