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The Vine



We have ahead of us a time of hope...

Over the past year I am sure we have all faced dark times of despair, dread, fear and doubt. Psalm 22 is a Psalm that reflects something of this past year for me. Being cut off from face to face fellowship with you and our churches. Not being able to sing with God's people, and instead viewing them through a laptop screen, or over the phone.

But we are entering a period of hope. Just as spring bursts into life around us, and birds sing their hearts out. Psalm 22:25-31 *"From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly; before those who fear you, I will fulfil my vows. ... future generations will be told about the Lord. They will proclaim his righteousness declaring to a people yet unborn..."*

John 15:1-8 *"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener."* Pruning is a brutal job, cutting back dead wood, and redundant branches. But there is a reason! Seedpods are collected and dried, seemingly of all their life. But there is a reason! The gardeners know their craft. We are

told that our Loving Heavenly Father in John 15 is like a gardener.

This past year I am sure for many businesses, workers, and high streets it felt like a brutal time of pruning and cutting back. Many have lost businesses, jobs and loved ones.

We as Churches are facing a time of uncertainty, and trepidation as we consider how we move forward and start a fresh. There is much hope in this passage, hope of new life and new fruit. Life and Fruit that flow from Christ.

v4 *"Remain in me, as I also remain in you."* v5 continues *"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit;"* and in v8 *"This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."*

Where have we been planted and why? God has grafted us into Christ, that His eternal resources may flow through us to produce much fruit and bring glory to God. We've had a year-long winter, that felt like a dormant hibernation, and like the secateurs of the gardener have been at work. BUT we have been planted where we are for a reason. Our churches set in communities to bring glory to God and produce much fruit. We have neighbours, family and friends, that need to hear and see the Good News of the Gospel and the life-giving love that comes from Christ.

Pastor Andy Wilcock



WHERE ARE THEY NOW



Rev David Allcock

In the nineteen sixties and seventies, Wellingborough in Northamptonshire became an overspill for London and many families from London moved into the area. Consequently, many new houses needed to be built and also provision was made for new schools, shops and places of worship. The W.R.U. was offered an area on a proposed new estate and built a new Church called "The Nest Farm Church" and the Rev David Allcock and his family moved to a house nearby, to build up a group of believers prior to the church being completed. They met in David's house for many months and

in 1971 the new church was opened. It was a very exciting time. Friends came from all around the Union and everyone prayed that the Lord would bless this new project.

Sadly, the area plans were altered, meaning that the planned houses were not built in that area, leaving the Church out on a limb. David faithfully continued there for some time, before he moved back to Norfolk.

Where do you live now?

Norwich

Are you still involved in the Union?

Still involved in the WRU but mostly limited to preaching and advising at Swanton Abbot.

For how many years have you been involved in the Union?

Approximately 55 years

Where do you currently worship?

St Catherine's (Anglican) Church in Norwich

Describe your current church.

Evangelical with open worship

Which of the following do you prefer and why?

- **Organ, piano or music group?**
No preference – happy with either
- **Pews or chairs**
Chairs – more comfortable
- **Lectern or pulpit?**
Depends on suitability within the building.
- **Refreshments before, during or after the service?**
After the service – definitely not during as becoming a trend.

Who would you most like to have supper with (dead or alive, actual or fictional)?

Archbishop Desmond Tutu

What is your favourite Bible verse?

2 Corinthians 5:17

What is your favourite hymn or song?

And can it be....

What is your favourite memory of your time in the Union?

My time as Home Missions evangelist (1961...)

THE PRODIGAL PROPHET

By Tim Keller

Jonah and the Mystery of God's Mercy is a valuable book that will lead you through Jonah's stormy journey. As you can see by the title, Timothy Keller compares the story of Jonah with that of Jesus' parable of the Prodigal son. The first two chapters tell us of Jonah running away from God, like the younger Prodigal Son running from his loving Father, but the second two chapters conclude with Jonah, outside the city, sulking, as he 'looks down' on the people repenting and receiving God's mercy. This is the elder son, who walks away in anger from the celebrations...

Luke 15:28

"The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!"

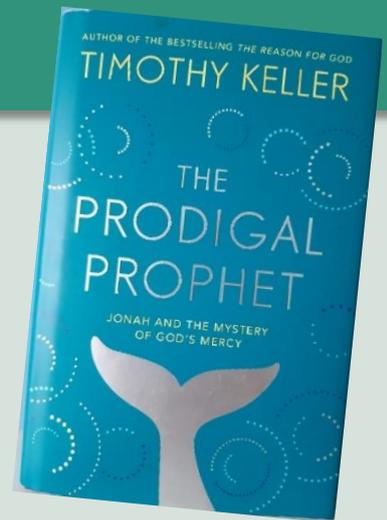
Tim Keller also shows how Jonah is twice confronted by people who he would have called the 'heathen', yet in both cases they prove to be more devout than him. On the boat the captain understands the storm is from God, tells Jonah to

pray, and the sailors refuse to throw Jonah into the sea for fear of God's judgment. Jonah on the other hand refuses to pray or submit to God's command. In Nineveh, we see the people repent with real sorrow, believing God's judgment is coming, while Jonah still refuses to accept God's will, and is even angry at God, for showing mercy.

Chapters in the book include "Who is my Neighbour", "Embracing the other" and "The Pattern of Love" and are very practical and helpful, challenging prejudice and showing us how as the church, we are to reach them.

I was so grateful to Dave Tuckett who bought me and himself a copy of this book, so that we could read it together at the same time. I would highly recommend it to anyone wanting to explore the Story of Jonah or that of the Prodigal Son.

Pastor Andy Wilcock



BROCCOLI, BRAEBURN AND BRAZIL SALAD



- Half a large head of broccoli, broken into small sprigs
- 1 large Braeburn eating apple
- Juice and zest of one lemon
- Half a red or orange pepper, finely sliced
- 50g (2oz) chopped Brazil nuts
- 3 tablespoons low-fat mayonnaise
- Seasoning to taste

1. Cook the broccoli in boiling, salted water for just 3 minutes. Drain and cool under running water. Dry on kitchen paper.
2. Core and finely chop apples leaving skin on. Toss in lemon juice to prevent browning.
3. Mix broccoli, apples, red pepper and Brazil nuts with rest of lemon juice, zest and mayonnaise. Season to taste.

Served with poached salmon or cold chicken, this makes a healthy, substantial meal.

You may have much more willpower than me, but if not, then now is the time, as we gradually come out of lockdown, to forget the stodgy foods and life of a couch potato and start getting a bit fitter!

All the fresh ingredients in the salad are 'superfoods', not only delicious to eat, but super-good for us.

In God's beautiful, ideal world, we would be eating healthily all the time, but processed, comforting foods are often what we crave in difficult times. All things in moderation is a good idea though.

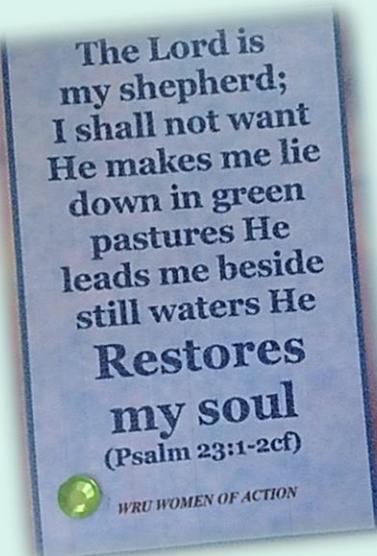
As we think of *All Things Bright and Beautiful*, let's remember the farmers and other producers, especially those benefitting from Fair Trade principles, who bring us God's good bounty and be especially grateful for the plentiful choice of life-enhancing things we can enjoy.

You will have plenty to eat, until you are full, and you will praise the name of the Lord your God, who has worked wonders for you. Joel 2:26

Sue Over



WOMEN OF ACTION AGM



We held our Women of Action AGM on Saturday April 24th and thought you would be encouraged to have a report on our work during the past year, & our plans for the coming months

WA has not been "on hold" during the pandemic! We realised it would be Advent when we came out of the second lockdown, so that was a good time to contact ladies in our own areas to help them feel encouraged and cared for. Lindsey Hedley emailed some lovely cards for the team to print off and distribute, & they were really well received

by the ladies. Lindsey has also produced some smaller cards for us to use in our current work, which is based on Psalm 23 verse 3 "**He restores my soul**" The ladies who have been attending our Zoom meetings have each been contacting several WRU churches to offer the ladies there some encouragement & hopefully lead to a better connection to the union. **We are planning to hold physical meetings from the autumn, & we are encouraged by the way that God is taking our "little" and making it grow.**



NEHEMIAH 1:11

'I was the king's cupbearer.'

Recommended Reading: Esther 4

I want to consider an important aspect of the life of a man who inspired, challenged and encouraged me during my time with Day One Christian Ministries. His name is Nehemiah.

Let us turn our thoughts to God's providential care over the life of God's servant.

Nehemiah lives around 450 years before our Lord Jesus Christ. It was a time when the Persian monarchy was flourishing with great pomp and power. It was also the time when Greece and Rome were beginning to figure in the history books.

The account begins in Persia, whose Empire was vast, extending eastwards towards India and westwards to Greece.

We are told in 1:1 that Nehemiah resided in Susa which was the capital, and verse 11 informs us that **he was cupbearer to the king.**

This was a very important task which held great responsibility. In the past kings had been poisoned by their enemies, so Nehemiah's task was to protect the life of the king.

The responsibility was not given to a Persian, which may have been the natural thing to do, but it was given to a Hebrew who was in captivity along with his fellow Israelites. **This showed just how much Nehemiah was trusted.**

God had placed him in the right place, at the right time, to do the right job.

There are many other examples, such as **Joseph** who was brought to Egypt (Genesis 39:1); **Esther** who was also in Susa (Esther 1:2) and **Moses** who

was brought up in the court of Pharaoh (Exodus 2:10).

I cannot fail to also mention our **Lord Jesus Christ**, who came to earth at the right time (Galatians 4:4) to be obedient to His Father's will.

But what about you and me? Does God's providential care cover us? Our life was all planned out in the courts of eternity. The place of our birth, the time of our birth and even the place where we worship is under God's control. **There is nothing left to chance for the Christian; God has it all in hand.**

Charles Wesley wrote, 'To serve the present age my calling to fulfil; O may it all my powers engage to do my Master's will.'

We were chosen and called to serve Him in this present age.

Nehemiah did not serve in the Persian court by accident, but by God's providential design. He could, therefore, be sure that his God would care for him and meet all his needs.

God will always have His people in the right place at the right time, and will keep His eye constantly upon them.

So always be sure you are exactly where God wants you to be and never forget that He orders our steps as well as our steps.

With kind permission of Day One Publications who in the Summer of 2021 hope to publish a book of 365 daily readings entitled 'Thoughts for the Day' by John Roberts



ONCE A CHORISTER



Dad became Deputy Organist at Sheffield Cathedral in 1947 so in 1948 I became a probationer chorister, taking my place in the Choir stalls at Harvest, a special time for me.

Chorister's weeks were busy. There were many rehearsals and several different services taking place, sometimes till 9.00pm at night. Imagine an eight year old returning home alone by tram after dark. It was normal for me!

A Treble is lucky to sing for six years. Towards the end of my time, the choir were rehearsing for the 'premier' performance of Arthur Honnegar's 'Christmas Cantata' in the City Hall with The Sheffield Philharmonic Choir, and Halle Orchestra with John Barbarolli conducting. As he listened to us at rehearsal one Friday evening, the Choirmaster walked along the front of the pew where I was singing, putting his ear close to each boy's mouth. He did not go any further than me. **He heard something in my voice. It was breaking. My days as a Chorister were over.**

Soon after that I met Pauline, now my wife of fifty years. She had met Bill Porton in town. **We came to Hampden View, and with our boys adding to the number of children in his Sunday school, that gave him leverage for the building of the present Hampden View Church.**

Learning that it would be possible for me to accompany a service, I was invited to go on a rota, and play one evening a month. It seems that since then, except for illness and holidays (more of the latter I'm pleased to say), I have usually sat on the organ stool. It was an American Organ when I started, which I was quite used to, as my grandparents had one. The one at Hampden View accompanied us into the new building. **My Dad was invited to play it at the Dedication service, and my son, David, used the hand pump, to allow Dad to use the crescendo paddles on each side, with his knees.** At one point where he needed more volume, instead of pushing his knees apart, he pressed down hard on a bellows pedal, which is how it is done on pipe organs. There was a loud report as the strap snapped. And ... the next evening I had to accompany the hymns furiously pumping just the

one pedal! It was a tiring evening service for my left leg!

One evening as I played, a small wedge holding the organ bench together dropped out, and soon I was sliding towards the congregation. Julia dashed to save me. She seemed more upset than I was!

Eventually we obtained the current Hammond Organ. It has such a light touch on the keyboard, and although not a pipe organ, it can produce some lovely sounds (and some not so lovely ones as well) and quite a volume when necessary.

Unlike Anne-Marie, who sings as she plays the piano, (I do envy her for that). I just follow the music and try, sometimes unsuccessfully, to play all the right keys at the right time! (The Two Ronnie's with Andre Previn!). **And so, fifty years on and I am still at the keyboard. What a privilege and pleasure it has been.**

Melvin Stafford



WRU ANNUAL CONFERENCE at The Hayes (2nd - 4th August 2021)

We are so looking forward to welcoming everyone at The Hayes Conference Centre this year.

We had to move the date slightly to accommodate the availability and to ensure that the Pandemic restrictions have minimum interference with our Conferenced.

All being well, bookings should be ready to complete online towards the end of May.

Further details on bookings will be sent to Church/Circuit secretaries by email.

Thank you for your patience and support. Looking forwards to seeing you all soon.

Alina Taylor (Admin Manager)



RAF CHAPLAINCY

Padre 888

At school, my career advisor would appeal to us all to join one of the military forces as an officer at every given opportunity. This always appealed to me with regards to joining the RAF. Should I have wanted to fly as a pilot, I'm too tall for a jet, so I left the dreaming and went on to university to learn physics instead. It seems that the RAF though, would still form a huge part of my adulthood. When I met my wife, my father-in-law and my brother-in-law were very proud to have served within the RAF themselves.

It is so evident to me of how God has a plan for each of our lives. Here I am now, a husband, father, minister and a padre for a squadron of young adults with the RAF cadets. So, it seems that the Lord was leading me into the forces after all, albeit by a slightly different route.

In today's society we have become more aware of the negative reputation that our young people have, and we can all too easily view them collectively as being "yobbish, entitled, thuggish, disrespectful, and intimidating". However, groups such as the cadets have worked so tirelessly to change public opinion and guide those within it.

I am extremely proud of the young people with whom I work. The stigmas of society are seemingly out of place within squadron and all are equal. Respect and honour are something that they teach and adhere to and take pride in.



I have never hidden the exuberance of my own faith, and they all know that I am a local minister and that I am, within my role as their padre, always available and accessible should they have need of any pastoral care. The squadron sees many faiths, yet no prejudice lies with any individual.

I wanted to involve myself as much as I could.



I didn't want to be a padre that simply appeared once or twice a year, so I take regular classes with them in various aspects of cadet life. I use my faith to teach them morality and interweave the Christian message without being abrasive to the mixed faiths that are in the classroom. I use teaching tools that maybe unconventional to some, but appeal to the way in which younger people now seemingly communicate and can relate to one another and the world in which we live. I use movie clips, book quotes and utilise my own hobbies as illustrations to a given topic. All is received well and has produced many conversations pertaining to personal conduct and faith.

They affectionately refer to me as their "geeky padre" due to my love of all things sci-fi and anything board game related, also going on their expeditions and adventures so that they can see that I am always present, even if I am covered in mud with blisters on my feet. I continue to find joy in it all.

I am able to open up the church to the cadets to conduct their enrolment services as well as the celebration of ATC Sunday (air training core) and during these times all staff, cadets and parents fall under the sound of the gospel. Then we all share in food and drink together and I have an opportunity to interact with the families.



The coming together of both squadron and the church have been of mutual benefit. The cadets are hugely respectful to all our congregational members and refer to them as Ma'am and Sir. They help with community events, such as Remembrance Sunday and more recently, teaching the community with free courses in heart start first aid classes. The willingness to do this with their own time, is due to the respect they have for me as their padre and the relationship that we now share with them as a church body. I take great pride in this.



I find myself watching the newer intakes as they grow and flourish through their cadet career, growing both in knowledge and confidence. So often the quieter cadet will find their place and soar, due to all of the opportunities that are made available to them. I am proud to be just one part of their journey.

In all honesty, I could write a book on all the instances of challenge, difficulties as well as unbridled joy and pride that I have seen and been a part of so far through my work as a padre. There is just so many. I am grateful to God for his plan and pray that he leads me on within it.

Mark Parsons



REFLECTION ON THE HYMN: Dear Lord and Father of Mankind

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
Forgive our foolish ways;
Reclothe us in our rightful mind,
In purer lives Thy service find,
In deeper rev'rence, praise.

O Sabbath rest by Galilee,
O calm of hills above,
Where Jesus knelt to share with Thee
The silence of eternity,
Interpreted by love!

Drop Thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of Thy peace.

Breathe through the heats of our desire
Thy coolness and Thy balm;
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still, small Voice of calm.

In simple trust like theirs who heard
Beside the Syrian sea
The gracious calling of the Lord,
Let us, like them, without a word,
Rise up and follow Thee.

John Greenleaf Whittier

This hymn has for a long time been one of my favourite hymns (especially sung to the tune Repton). Whilst it is probably sung less frequently now, I invite you to pause as you read the words and consider how God might be speaking to you through the imagery of this hymn.

We read that regularly. Jesus took himself apart to pray.

- *where do you share 'the silence of eternity, interpreted by love'?*
- *amidst all the clamour that frequently causes us strain and stress, how are you able to experience the beauty of God's peace?*
- *are you able to break through the barriers and take time to hear the 'still small voice of calm'?*
- *as you hear God's call, do you respond promptly and simply (without asking too many questions) and trust like the first disciples did?*

As you talk to God and wait on Him may you continue to know his guidance in your life.

Muriel Stonehewer

OBITUARIES

"To live is Christ, to die is gain."

Those of you who support "Caring for Life" will already have heard that

PETER PARKINSON,

one of the founders, went to be with the Lord in the early hours of April 10th. In a tribute to his father, Jonathan, the CEO of the organisation wrote in their latest magazine **"my father was a Master when preaching on Heaven. He marvelled at what God had in store for us, and we too rejoice and marvel in the truth that, for him, his faith has now been made sight, as he sees his blessed Redeemer face to face."**

All members of the WRU send the Parkinson family their love and prayers.



REVD DR KEITH HARRIS St James Wesleyan Reform Church Old Hill

Our community of St James WR Old Hill sadly lost a pillar on Monday 19th April 2021, when our Minister, the Revd. Dr. Keith Harris left us for Glory after a period of illness. His health suddenly and unexpectedly

deteriorated, and he passed peacefully away with his son and daughter-in-law at his bedside. Keith is survived by his three sons, Dave, Steve and the Revd Canon Phil Harris. Keith joins his beloved wife, Doreen whom he married in April 1953.

Keith was born in Tipton, West Midlands on 21st February 1932, and his journey on his ministry path led him to various places - Elim Bible College; Elim Church in Wales, Northern Ireland and England; The Evangelical Free Church in Loughborough; Nottingham University; RE Department at the Britannia High School in Blackheath. During his time at Britannia his beloved wife Doreen became ill, and Keith nursed her until her passing in April 2018.

As a young girl Doreen came to faith at St James Church, and following the service for Doreen at St James, Keith was found in the sanctuary where he said that he felt there was work he could do. He continued to worship at St James, whilst also ministering on the Sedgley and Gornal Methodist Circuit. In June 2019 he was inducted as the Minister of St James. During his induction, the congregation were honoured to see him awarded his Doctorate of Divinity from Aidan University, Florida USA.

He leaves behind a legacy in the hearts and minds of everyone he interacted with, both as a minister and friend. His knowledge of theology and music will be sadly missed, together with the affinity he had for welcoming all to come to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Keith was a rich blessing to all he came into contact with.

Keith will be sorely missed, not only by St James, but the wider Church. He was truly created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for him to do.

He preached Christ and Him crucified...

