



**Histon  
Methodist  
Church**

Rev. Alison Walker,

13<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Dear Friends,

Since the beginning of our church closure, there has been a poster on the church noticeboard reading “Best of all, God is with us.” As John Wesley lay dying he said these words faith-filled words not once but twice. It is an inspiring and challenging phrase. It has been chosen as the watchword of the new President (Rev Richard Teal) and Vice-President (Mrs Carolyn Lawrence) of the Methodist Church. The hymn below was sung daily during the Conference (25 June – 2 July), each verse elaborating on the ways that God is with us.

One question that emerges as we read our way through the Book of Ruth is “where is God in this story?” In this short Bible book God does not speak at all. God is invoked to bless people, to affirm religious belonging and God is praised, but all of God’s actions are indirect, via human actions. I wonder if Naomi, Ruth and Orpah would always have been sure that God was with them? Naomi seems to blame God for the deaths of her husband and sons. By blaming God she is also acknowledging God’s presence, because God must be present in order to be blamed, to be argued with, to be prayed to. Naomi’s emptiness in 1:21 is finally transformed when her arms are filled with her grandson (4:16) and now she rejoices in God’s blessing shown to her both by the birth of Obed and also the love of Ruth (4:15).

Where has God been in these days of pandemic, in the weeks of social distancing and isolation? We all know that God is not confined to our church buildings, not even those that occupy special places in our hearts, not even those sacred spaces that invite us to rest all our worries before God. Where have you found God? Where has God found you? I hope that as we have not been able to worship together in church you have found ways to pray, read the Bible, praise and worship at home. You have realised that God is with you. The story in *Ruth* moves home several times, from Bethlehem to Moab, back to Bethlehem again. From scenes set in the house of Ruth and Naomi, to the fields, and back home again. I hope that you have also felt God’s presence on your daily walks (for those who can), in the open playing fields and cycle paths. It is more of a challenge to be aware of God’s presence in the supermarket, or the queue, but if God is with us in house or field, God is with us everywhere, even in the mundane. In the Book of Ruth, God’s presence is intimate, domestic and familial. God is in the house, the sacred space is not the temple but the safe home.

In the tough times, God is with us. Sometimes when life is hardest, we feel God’s loving presence most strongly and reassuringly. Other tough times we may struggle

with the sense of God's absence, with our inability to see God. We might question if we still have faith, or wonder if this time of uncertainty is going to lead to a growing stronger faith or one that feels weak and insubstantial. In those times of uncertain faith it is difficult to accept the reassurances from other Christians that God is always with us, and that if we feel we have lost track of God not to worry because God keeps faith with us. Yet, emerging from such times of questioning and searching, many people testify that their faith has grown, that their trust that God is with us is deeper, but usually also different.

We won't be returning to church worship just yet, maybe from September for some people, but probably not all. This gives us more time to experience God at work where we are at work, God living where we live. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" as John's Gospel teaches us. Jesus, completely at home on our sofa, as easy to chat to as a friend over coffee. Take this opportunity to talk to him every day by praying, thinking, meditating, or just 'hanging out'.

With best wishes, Alison

Best of all is God is with us,  
God will hold and never fail.  
Keep that truth when storms are raging,  
God remains though faith is frail.

Best of all is God is with us,  
hearts are challenged, strangely warmed,  
faith is deepened, courage strengthened,  
grace received and hope reformed.

Best of all is God is with us,  
life goes on and needs are met,  
God is strongest in our weakness.  
Love renews, will not forget.

Best of all is God is with us,  
in our joy and through our pain,  
till that final acclamation:  
'life is Christ, and death is gain.'

Best of all is God is with us  
as we scale eternal heights,  
love grows stronger, undiminished;  
earth grows dim by heaven's lights.

Andrew Pratt (b. 1948) Based on John Wesley's final words. *Singing the Faith* 610 © 2008, Stainer & Bell Ltd

I will be on annual leave 15-25 July. If you need to speak to a Methodist Minister in that time please telephone Rev Colin Smith 01223 361360. Thanks, Alison

### Histon Methodist Church Notices

**Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2020**

**Services that we can all take part in:-**

8.00 am Sunday service on Radio Cambridgeshire.  
8.10am Sunday worship on Radio 4  
BBC 1 Songs of Praise. (check TV guide for times)

*This week we pray for Julia and Judy and all in their pastoral groups.*

### **New Church Recipe Book for 2020.**

A church recipe book was created in the year 2000 and has been used often by many people in the church. Given it is now 20 years since publication it is time for a new one ! We have all been in lockdown over the past few months so will have lots of recipes we have revisited. Sue Watson has agreed to pull together and publish the next version called 'Lockdown Treats' . Please can you send your recipes that you would like included in the book directly to Sue Watson via email (or to Rosemary).

Recipes can be for anything at all, breakfasts, lunches, dinners, cakes and biscuits - the more the merrier so don't be shy if you want to include more than one.

**Our Church Building is currently CLOSED but it is being used to help the village with the food bank.**

### **One Step at a Time.**

As I write this we are all anticipating further restrictions being lifted. I expect like me, even though we are longing to get back to whatever the 'new normal' will be, many of us are nervously anticipating the outcome of emerging from lockdown.

Our telephones and many other forms of modern technology have enabled us to keep in touch, to support one another with a friendly chat.

We have all craved to meet each other face to face, and when allowed to do so it seems so strange to have to keep our distance, with no physical contact.

We long to meet together again for worship, to sing our hearts out whilst Matthew plays our beloved organ.

**HOWEVER**, there are many strict guidelines we must adhere to before we can safely open our building again: risk assessments, deep cleaning, sanitising facilities etc. etc. to ensure the safety of us all. Sadly, at the moment for obvious reasons singing is a 'no go area'

As we begin to plan the way forward for our church and also ourselves, we begin to take stock, rethink what things are the most important in our lives and decide on our

priorities. In the meantime, we can pray wherever we are, and carry on supporting each other.

The words of our hymns offer great comfort, maybe listening to the tune on the organ, quietly reading the words through will give us the opportunity to think about them more, **but it will be hard to resist bursting out in song!**

Whilst looking through hymn books for a few verses to end with it has been hard to choose, as there are so many I love.

The words of a hymn no longer in our current hymn book come to my mind, 513 in MHB and a reduced number of verses in Hymns and Psalms 432. I quote a few of them below, as applicable now as when they were written.

Who fathoms the eternal thought?  
Who talks of scheme and plan?  
The Lord is God! He needeth not,  
The poor device of man.

Yet, in the maddening maze of things,  
And tossed by storm and flood,  
To one fixed stake my spirit clings:  
I know that God is good!

I long for household voices gone,  
For vanished smiles I long;  
But God hath led my dear ones on,  
And He can do no wrong

I know not what the future hath  
Of marvel or surprise,  
Assured alone that life and death  
His mercy underlies.  
John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-92)

### **Rosemary Watson**

This week's saying:

*Do what you have to do until you can do what you want to do.*

Thank you to all our contributors. If anyone would like to write an article for a future issue please let me know.

John (on behalf of the stewards).