

CONTACT



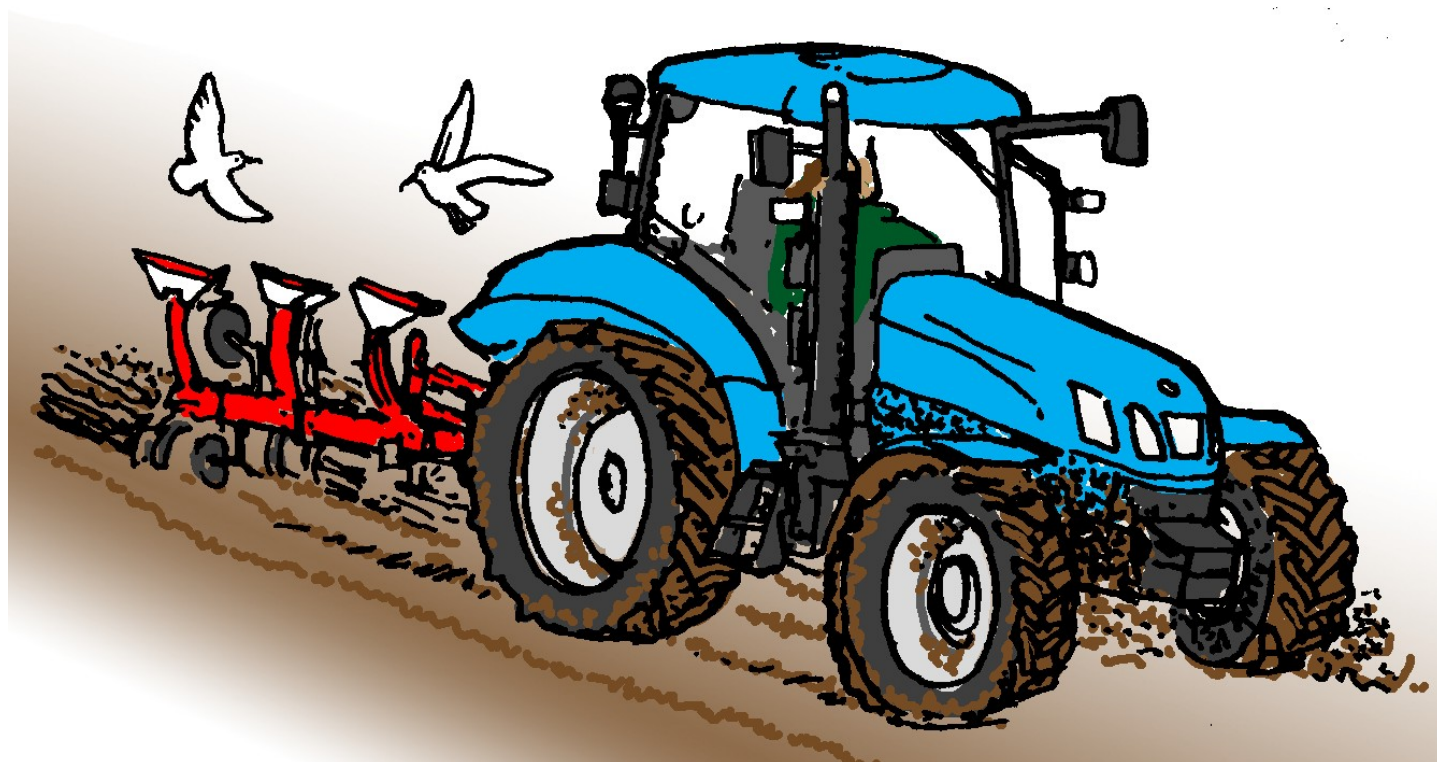
Pentecost -Acts 2

Magazine of Erdington Methodist Church
Station Road - May 2024

GROWING GOD'S KINGDOM IN ERDINGTON, THROUGH WORSHIP,
PRAYER, ACTION AND FRIENDSHIP

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The truth of the Ascension

While He was blessing them, Jesus left them and was taken up into heaven.’ (Luke 24:51).

The Ascension is a hugely neglected festival, which deserves to have a bigger place in our church life. How do we understand it?

The Ascension tells us that Jesus is in control: ‘Jesus has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand’ (1 Peter 3:22). Jesus occupies the top spot in the universe; the control of our world is in the safe, scarred hands of Jesus. We can offer Him our worship and allegiance, knowing that His plans are better than those of any Prime Minister or President.

The Ascension tells us that God is committed to His world: ‘And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus’ (Ephesians 2:6). Jesus did not leave His humanity behind when He ascended, for we are raised with Christ to heaven. Therefore, God is bound to His world and we can trust Him to fulfil His purposes for our lives and world.

The Ascension gives us a job to do: ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations’ (Matthew 28:18,19). God’s way of working in the world is through us. He commissions us for this task at the Ascension and equips us at Pentecost. We are called to make disciples, starting in our workplace, family and community.

‘Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which He looks compassion on this world.

Yours are the feet with which He walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which He blesses all the world.' (Teresa of Avila).

Canon Paul Hardingham from the Parish Pump

Tuesday Club

Please join us at Tuesday Club on 14th May at 2.00 pm for an afternoon of games.

Revival families

After the local mission outreach had concluded, the three ministers were discussing the results with one another. The Methodist minister said, "The mission worked out great for us! We gained four new families."

The Baptist preacher said, "We did better than that! We gained six new families."

The Anglican priest said, "Well, we did even better than that! We got rid of our 10 biggest troublemakers!"



Nkanfoa and me/us

Some of you may have noticed that neither Ian or I were present before and during Holy week. Well we've been back to Nkanfoa, a village in Ghana where from August 2003 until December 2006 we served as Methodist Mission Partners.

Apart from 2007, when there was a new head so we felt it was inappropriate, and 2020/21 (covid), we have returned every year since. I get my hands on a class of up to fifty to teach maths so completely back in my element.

In 2003 classes went from Nursery to BS 5, equivalent to Year 6, with around five hundred pupils, all of whom had to pay fees, even though it was a government school so a number in the very poor village could not attend. In 2005, due to the Millennium development goals, fees were removed from age four to JHS 3, equivalent to Year 10 in the UK.

At this point problems arose as the headteacher (me) was forbidden to exclude any child so class sizes increased but not dramatically.

In 2008 JHS 3 were the first class in the school to take their BECE exams, achieving a 97% pass rate: 65% countrywide. The following year still 97% pass rate, countrywide 60% so now the real problem started. Parents wanted to send their children to this village school. Until then I had managed to have a maximum of 50 children to one teacher but on our return in 2010, one class had 85 children to one teacher with the rest having more than 70.

The Government ruling was one class, one teacher but if it could become a two-stream school then each class would have a teacher but never two teachers to a single class, so it was imperative to try to make it a two-stream school. Neither GES nor the Methodist Church could help with this so Ian, and I decided it was up to us.

From that time Ian and I started fund raising, eventually forming a charity, Nkanfoa Methodist School, and Church Aid; a project Ian and I, with a Board of Trustees have been undertaking ever since.

A 12-classroom block is built but electricity is needed plus lots of equipment, particularly for the newly built science lab.

If you are interested in learning more then we have various presentations we are willing to show for any organisations or maybe you could become a Trustee of the Charity as one has recently left due to moving from the area. In addition, once or twice a month you would be welcome to join us for a Roast lunch with up to three desserts and make a donation for the meal with all donations going directly to the charity, Nkanfoa Methodist School and Church Aid.

If you want to know more speak to Ian or myself or book a presentation, become a trustee; not an onerous task as involves two or three meetings a year and new fundraising ideas are always welcome.

Diana Bosman

Climate change

The other day I was taken by surprise. I offered to take a friend to Gatwick Airport so that they didn't have to pay for parking. It was their response to this offer which I found surprising. "That is four journeys, got to think about the emissions and the environment!" From someone who was flying off for a weekends skiing that was a strange response. It seemed to me that this response demonstrates very clearly our personal confusion over climate change.

I thought of that moment again the other morning as I walked across the footbridge over the A27 en route to Benfield Nature Reserve. There was the amazing noise of cars streaming purposefully past on the road below on their way to somewhere to do something which they think is important. All blithely contributing to Climate Change, as we will, as we plod along the coast road to Padstow in a few days to see our son and family.

It made me stop and think about what I should be doing to improve my climate response and where I am confused. Most of the things which need to happen to mitigate climate change are quite outside my sphere of influence. But in life it is important to start from where you are.

Recently the government published a set of data covering 1990 to 2020 setting out CO₂ emissions for different modes of transport. These figures tell us that all transport modes have lower emissions now than in 1990 except vans which have increased by 40%. Is that because we are each travelling less by doing more online shopping? But it is even more complicated than that. Overall, any decrease in emissions revealed by this survey is cancelled out by

the increase in international aviation, which unfortunately made my friends comments even more problematic.

We are all exhorted to think about ‘food miles’ and thereby encouraged to buy seasonal crops. But how should we deal with frozen foods out of season? Frozen peas are so much nicer than tinned peas, whichever ones you choose. Then it is made even more tricky by advice from the food and health gurus’ which suggest that, to maintain optimum health, we need not only to eat our “five a day”, but also 30 different plant parts every week.

Then a recent announcement by the Scottish Government that they are abandoning their target to reduce carbon emissions by 75% by the end of the decade. At that point I felt like raising my hands in the air and admitting defeat because it is just too complicated.

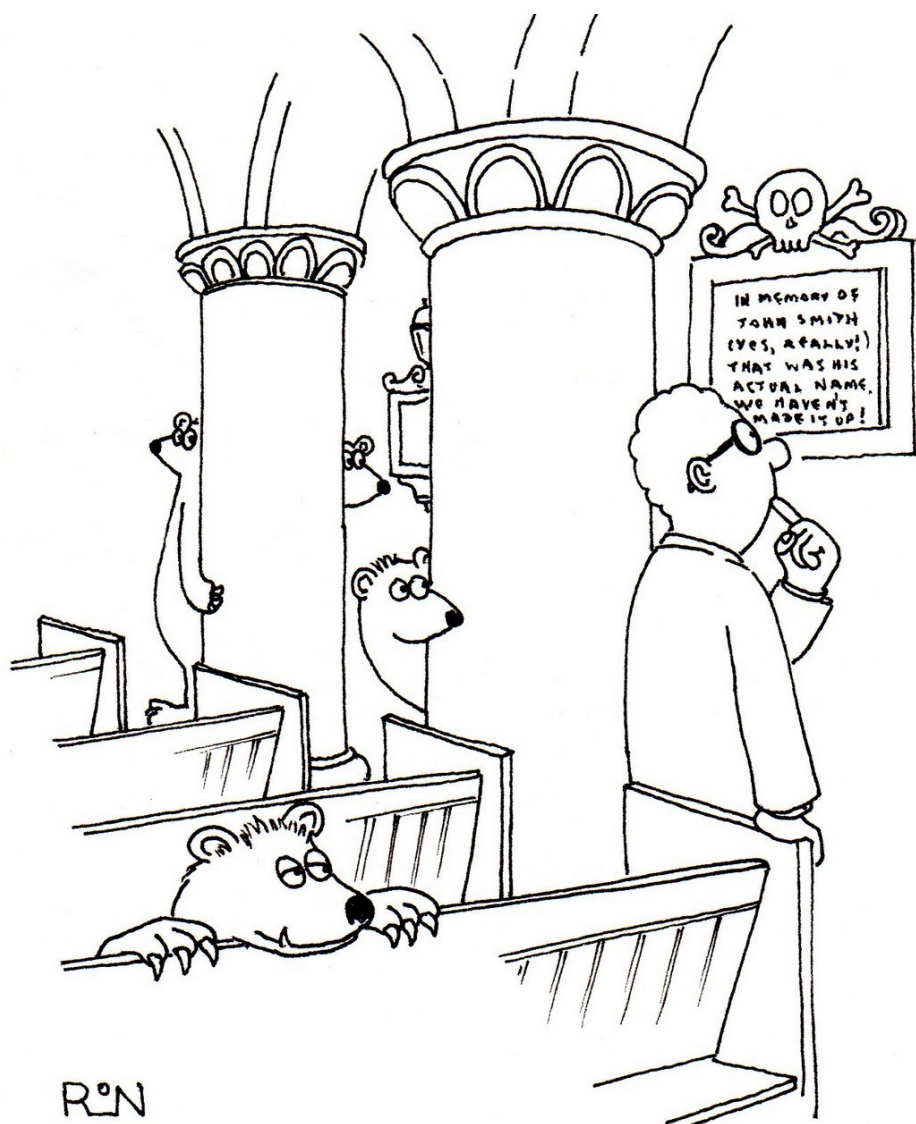
I then remembered a phrase oft quote by a previous minister from Birmingham, *‘to do nothing is to be complicit’*, or the maxim from JFK that *‘all that is needed for evil to succeed is for good people to do nothing’*. At that point I mentally turn over a new leaf and resolve to try harder to pick my way through the Gordian Knot of Climate Change. Climate Change that is with us now and has led to an unprecedented heat wave (48.5C – can you even imagine heat like that) and heat related deaths in the Sahel, since the beginning of April.

As Christians we know all about our inability or unwillingness to do the right things. St Paul warned us *‘for I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing’*. With regard to Climate Change, it is so easy to wash our hands and think

'not me gov' but in the end that is not good enough and we have to keep trying.

If we don't make an effort then what are we saying to our grandchildren about the world we are leaving for them?

Peter Farley



*Dennis spent a long time in church
looking for his forbears*

Common Cause 2024 - UPDATE

Home Leone – Building new, sustainable villages and communities in Sierra Leone

Since the last update in April's 'Contact' we have added £68.00 to the Common Cause which includes the donations for Easter Breakfast and the sale of Rods amazing homemade jam. The grand total now stands at £119.25. We aim to go much further and continue to welcome your ideas for fund raising. As we can see every little bit helps.



On 15th June 2024 Kingstanding Methodist Church are having a Table Top sale and I intend to book a table for our Common Cause. If you have any items which you feel are suitable for this sale then please let me have them.

Books, toiletries, plants, stationary, etc

Also, if anyone can spare an hour or two to pop along, between 11am & 2pm, to help me that would be much appreciated.

More information about Destiny Village taken directly from the 'Homeleone' website.

The Contrast - these are the words of Mr.and Mrs. Akim Kallo

“In the heart of our community lies a stark reality—an existence marked by dire living conditions that stretch the limits of human endurance. Our homes, overburdened with cracked walls, cramped spaces, and leaking roofs, paint a distressing picture of daily struggle, particularly when the rains pour down upon us. The rent we pay for these meagre shelters in Kroo Bay—barely more than temporary structures—is staggeringly high, despite their deplorable state. A single room and a parlour demand an annual fee of Le 5,000,000 (\$250), an exorbitant sum for most, compelling us to share these inadequate spaces with our loved ones just to afford a semblance of shelter. But shelter is only one facet of our struggle. Clean water is a luxury we chase daily, as the very trenches that line our slum are brimming with filth, hosting diseases like typhoid, bilharzia, and cholera. Even basic sources like public taps or protected wells remain financially out of reach, priced beyond what our impoverished pockets can afford. The appalling lack of sanitation is a breeding ground for despair. The ground, littered with refuse, becomes the repository for our waste in the absence of proper toilets. Stagnant water lurks in trenches, emanating a sickening stench that permeates every corner of our existence.

Diseases like Cholera sweep through our community at an alarming pace, constantly threatening our fragile existence. The fear of fire is ever-present, a spectre that haunts us after witnessing numerous homes lost just last October in 2023.

Education, a beacon of hope for many, remains an elusive dream here. Dropout rates among our youth are staggering, with young girls—some no older than thirteen or fourteen—forced out of school due to early pregnancies, despite valiant efforts by NGOs and initiatives like ‘HANDS OFF OUR GIRLS.’

In the face of daily hunger, education becomes a luxury that few can afford, forcing children into menial jobs to help sustain their families. As you walk through our streets, the sight of our little ones peddling bananas, eggs, sweets, and other goods becomes a distressing testament to our plight, a stark reminder of the harsh realities we endure.

Your support isn't just a donation; it's a lifeline—a chance to transform these grim circumstances into a ray of hope. Your generosity could mean clean water, decent shelters, and an opportunity for education for our children. Together, we can rewrite the story of Kroo Bay, transforming despair into a narrative of resilience and possibility.”

The voice of one of those living in the new housing at Destiny Village

LIVING IN DESTINY VILLAGE

The village is a complete opposite of what we use to live in the Kroo Bay.

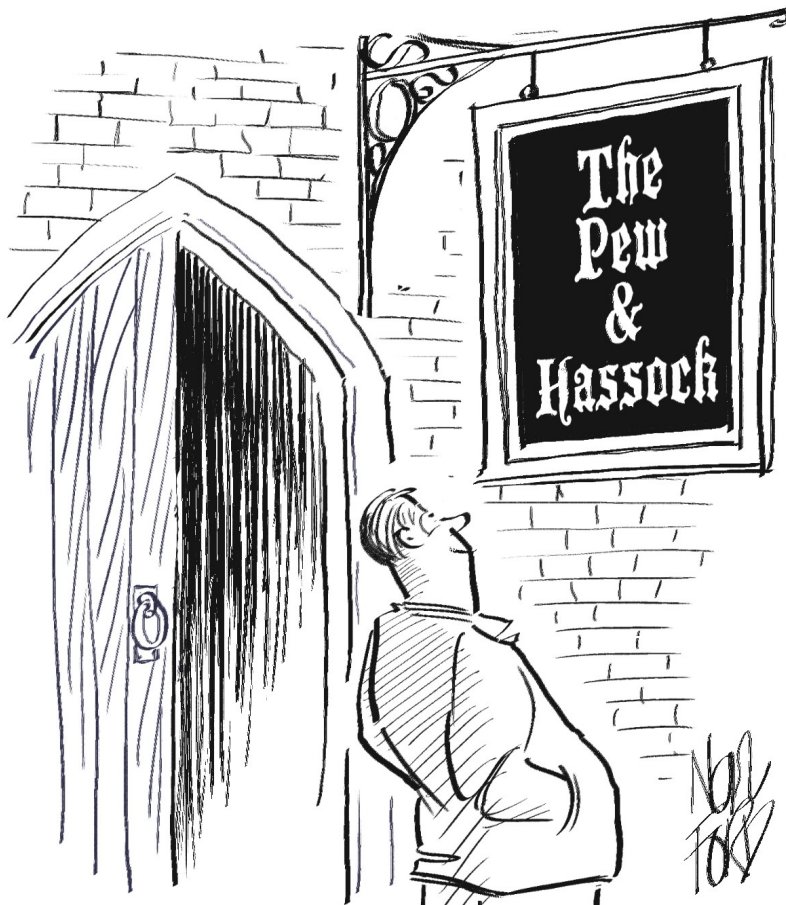
The first thing I noticed is the calmness and safety of our children in Destiny Community. The first time ever my children do not wake very early in the morning to fetch water in jerry cans and

buckets for cooking, washing, drinking, or bathing, for me and my family now wash under a shower which is a very new experience.

The classrooms in Destiny Grace Academy are very spacious and conducive for learning. For the first time my fourteen-year-old daughter is happy to go to school and to study conveniently at night.

Look out next month for updates on 'homeleone' and also read more on their website www.homeleone.org.

Christine Rossiter



Changing the name from 'St Mark's Parish Church', resulted in a big increase in the number of men attending services

Supporting people in trouble

Brothers and sisters, ...Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ. If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. (Galatians 6 1-3)

I am always interfering, in situations where I should not. Sorry, but I do. It is probably because of the job I do, that I want to fix things. Christians naturally want to help others. Churches are loving communities, and we want to do the best for each other.

Sometimes supporting others can be difficult. Some people are easy to help. They know what the problem is and what help they need.

Others are very demanding and always need help. They go from person to person asking for support and do not always follow advice. Then there are those who would never ask for help. They battle on and get exhausted and struggle on their own.

Probably the best helper is the person who can listen and not judge and guide the burdened to find their own answers. Often the person who is best at helping others is the one who has experienced life's ups and downs themselves. We can support others by:

Listening and keeping confidences.

Looking out for someone to make sure they are ok.

Respecting their choices even if we do not agree.

And, best of all, praying to know what to say and when to be quiet.

St Paul reminds us that we should bear each other's burdens, and no-one is expected to carry some things by themselves. The law of Christ that Paul was referring to was the New Commandment Jesus gave... that we love one another.

So, I will carry on trying and sometimes failing to fix things. You never know, I might make things better one day!

David Pickup, a solicitor writes for the Parish Pump

Christian Aid Week - 12th to 18th May 2024

Christian Aid is urging its supporters to 'push back against poverty this Christian Aid Week' by bearing in mind the coming General Election.

The charity says that people hoping to represent us in the next UK Parliament will soon be on our doorsteps, vying for our vote.

Christian Aid says that these would-be MPs will: "be in listening mode, keen to hear what makes the voters in their community tick." And so, urges the charity, Christians can use this opportunity to "show them that your church cares about poverty, and tell them that you expect them to act on poverty too, if they are elected."

This year the charity has launched the '70K Challenge for May', encouraging its supporters to do a sponsored "Move 70km during May. Walk, run, cycle, however you move is up to you."

Details at: <https://fundraise.christianaid.org.uk>

Thy Kingdom Come - 9th to 19th May 2024

This year more than a million Christians worldwide will be joining in long-distance prayer between Ascension Day to Pentecost (9th – 19th May).

What started in 2016 with the Archbishops of Canterbury and York inviting the CofE to pray, has grown into an annual international and ecumenical call to 11 days of specific prayer that more people will come to know Jesus.

According to the organisers of Kingdom Come, the movement is now in nearly 90% of countries worldwide, and spread among 85 different denominations and traditions.

Kingdom Come explains that it encourages: “Every person, household and church to pray that those who have not yet heard the Good News of Jesus Christ and His love for the world, will hear it for themselves and respond and follow Him.

“Specifically, we again invite each Christian to pray that God’s Spirit might work in the lives of 5 people whom they know, who have not responded with their ‘Yes’ to God’s call.”

Whether you have joined in ‘Thy Kingdom Come’ before or not, you are invited to take part this year. Archbishop Justin Welby says: “In praying ‘Thy Kingdom Come’ we all commit to playing our part in the renewal of the nations and the transformation of communities.”

Prayer for May 2024

Dear Lord,

May, the loveliest of months – and this year, as we welcome the blossom and the beauty of late Spring, we also welcome Your Holy Spirit afresh, as we celebrate Pentecost.

May we open our hearts to receive Your Spirit, as Your people did on that first Day of Pentecost. May we be filled and empowered and emboldened to witness to Your goodness and love.

May we be transformed by Him and reflect Your transforming grace to the broken world in which we live. May people who meet us ask, “What does this mean?” May they turn to You and hear You speaking in ways they can understand.

Without Your Holy Spirit we can do nothing. With Him living in us, we can do all things.

Come Holy Spirit, come to us, we pray,

In Jesus’ name.

Amen.

By Daphne Kitching

Finding Expression – and God’s Response – In Lament

The question of suffering comes up regularly in discussions about science and faith. I once visited a school to speak to some of the older teenagers. One of the pupils had sadly passed away from cancer a few weeks before and his classmates asked, “How could God let this happen?” Of course, these young people’s questions about where God was in this situation were important. But the chaplain also gently reminded the class that their friend’s family were Christians, and that they were finding that their experience of loss had brought them even closer to God than before.

One way that grief can bring us near to God is when we share it with Him, telling Him exactly how we feel. The biblical writers had no scruples about expressing themselves to God, giving vent to emotions we often hold back in a church context. As my colleague Roger Abbott has written in his book on ‘Unanswered’ Prayer, “Let us not confuse reverence with spiritual prudishness. Perhaps honesty, the way it feels, is precisely what God is waiting to hear from us.”

About one third of the Psalms express some form of grief. The book of Job is a series of responses to one man’s suffering as he loses his children, property and health in quick succession. Lamentations is also one long outpouring of sadness at what happened to Israel under the Babylonians. Some of the prophets, especially Jeremiah, also express their pain at these sort of events – which reflect something of God’s own feelings at the suffering of His people.

Most of these biblical authors would have had access to Scriptures that encouraged them to turn to God whatever the circumstances. Emboldened by their knowledge of His character and promises, these divinely inspired writers even express their anger to God about the things He lets happen, or complain that He seems to act unfairly or ignore them in their plight. Not only do these people let out all their feelings without fear of reprisal, but they also clearly expect a helpful answer. Some record a resolution to their troubles – often simply because God speaks to and comforts them, enabling them to keep going.

The biblical writers demonstrated that God can handle pretty much anything – anger, blame, bitterness – if we are actively looking to Him for help. As Pete Greig of the 24-7 prayer movement has written, “pain that is not expressed can never be transformed”.

Dr Ruth M Bancewicz, who is Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge

Hearing

A man went into a church and asked the vicar to pray for his hearing. Touched by his faith, the vicar agreed. “Kneel here,” he began in a loud voice. The man knelt, and the vicar placed a hand on each ear and bellowed a prayer. “I hope that will help,” he finally shouted.

“Well, I won’t know for a while,” the man replied. “It isn’t until next month”.

Worship – May 2024

All worship at 10.30 am unless indicated otherwise

5th - Rev Peter Grimwood

12th - Fitzroy Stored

19th - PENTECOST - David Hewitt

26th - HOLY COMMUNION - Rev Emily Young



*Please hand any items for the June CONTACT to me - Nick Riley by
21st May 2024 at the latest please, or alternatively email me:
spligosh@icloud.com with the words 'CONTACT MAG' in the title.*