



ASTCOTE METHODIST CHURCH

News & Notices—October 2016

2nd October

9.15-9.45am Prayer for the Community

10.30am Baptism - Rev Tina Swire

9th October

10.30am Rev Alan Sharp HC

16th October—Harvest Family Celebration

10.30am Rev Romeo Pedro

23rd October

10.30am led by Congregation

30th October

10.30am Mr Ian Harrison

On Duty at 10.30am

Oct—Gulliford/Roz/Sue

Nov— Hysom/Boenke

Eastcote Baptist Chapel

3pm Service on 1st Sunday in the month

www.astcotemethodistchurch.org.uk

Ministers letter from Dcn Richard Beckett

The question that comes up again and again in the course of my ministry is **“If God is love, why is there so much pain and suffering in the world?”** and while I can only scratch the surface in such a short letter I wanted to share a few thoughts that might help us in our conversations and discussion together.

In his little book ‘The Contemplative Minister’, Ian Cowley talks about the importance of perseverance and quotes Evagrius Ponticus (born in 364 and eventually ordained a priest but after a chequered career, lived out his life in the desert) who said

“Don’t refuse to be poor and tried by tribulations; they are the fuel that makes prayer easy”

And while I agree with the sentiments, I struggle with the implication that pain and suffering are present so that our spiritual life might be stronger!

Paul writing in Romans has often been misinterpreted to suggest the same thing:

“...we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.” (Romans 5:3-4)

As always with Bible passages there is the need to look at the context and with this one in particular recognise that Paul was writing from a place of extreme suffering and imprisonment for his beliefs. But again the passage has been misused to suggest quite glibly that pain produces character and indeed in the past there are those who have completely abused positions of trust and inflicted pain and suffering on

and indeed in the past there are those who have completely abused positions of trust and inflicted pain and suffering on themselves and others to that end.

We live a life of opposites – can there be goodness without badness, love without hatred, and joy without sadness?

The well-known passage from Ecclesiastes Chapter 3 touches on this theme:

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance ...”

The writer seems to accept that this is the way it is and other parts of the Bible such as the Psalms and Lamentations also don't attempt to fix the problem but just tell it like it is.

But still this does not answer the question of why pain and suffering at all – we know pain has its uses as a 'need to make a doctor's appointment warning mechanism' but some conditions go beyond this and many people struggle with extreme levels of pain on a daily basis. If God made the world why could it not be created without pain?

Our modern approach is to seek relief from all pain and suffering but there are many who despite this have an approach to life which truly reflects a realism and sense of humour which helps them to cope.

I was privileged recently to conduct the funeral of our dear friend's Mum. Betty's character and faith had a huge influence on me and many other people but she was always one for whom faith was complicated and she had

many questions but reflected that one day she would know the answers and some of what she believed and understood would be confirmed and other issues would surprise her. Latterly Betty suffered from dementia but still maintained a sense of humour and when her son in law called one day, Betty was trying to get up with her Zimmer frame and when asked where she was going, she replied “I have got to get ready for the space rocket; I am going to have a word with God”.

I firmly believe that it is not God’s intention that people should experience pain and suffering but somehow it does seem to be a part of the ‘life of opposites’. The issue is further complicated of course by the fact that so much pain and suffering is caused by people’s inhumanity or oppression or negligence.

I also firmly hold to the truth that through the incarnation, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus God seeks to release all people and all things from suffering, pain and brokenness.

So, as I said, I have barely scratched the surface but would invite you to continue the conversation with me in whatever way you wish: In writing, by phone, by email richard.beckett@methodist.org.uk or via the Circuit Facebook page: ‘Northampton Methodist Churches’.

God Bless,

Deacon Richard Beckett



News & Dates

Baptism Sunday 2nd October

We will welcome Charlotte and Chris with family and friends as their son Jack is baptised (Kate's grandson)

Circuit Service Sunday 2nd October 6pm at Park Avenue Methodist Church

—visit from Rev Dr Val Ogden from the British Methodist Church in Fiji, at Park Avenue Methodist Church in Northampton. Please come along and find out more about the word of the Methodist Church in Fiji. Tea and cake served from 5pm.

Messy Church 8th October date for your diary. Would you be willing to help? Please let Kate, Jackie or Ann know. Meeting for planning Mon 3rd October 7.30pm

Manna & Mercy Bible Study—a 10 week journey from Genesis to Revelation led by Rev Romeo Pedro Tuesday evenings from 11th October 7.30-8.45pm at St Andrews Methodist Church, Harlestone Road. Register with Ann in the Circuit Office—see poster at Chapel

Tuesday evenings : Worship Time Everyone is welcome to join a few of the musicians and other members of the congregation for a time of worship—singing new and old songs as led by the Holy Spirit. We arrive from 7pm, and sing from 7.30pm-8.30pm. We have had friends from other churches join us and we will continue to do this (providing people are available) for the foreseeable future.

Harvest & Family Celebration—
Sunday 16th October



Our celebrations will focus on the work of the Methodist Organisation 'All we Can' and our offering will be for them. Donations for the Towcester Food Bank will also be welcome at the service. Please give generously.

28th October 7.30pm at Astcote ... 'Old Friends' - an evening of songs from Bob Dylan to the Beach Boys. Led by Stephen Beer, Steve Pointer, Dave Tomlin and others. A fun evening in aid of EVE (Nene Valley Christian Family Refuge) - Tickets now available from Ann 830907. Cost is a donation on the night.



A Prayer of Compassion

Loving and compassionate Jesus,
Help us to respond to the things our eyes perceive.
Help us to tend to the people in this world who are in
need.
Help us to be generous with our resources, words and
time.
Help us to follow you as you lead and guide.

Amen

Lunch Club - is for the retired and will usually be held on the 2nd Tuesday each month.

Maureen Corbett can be contacted for more details on 830296.

New members are welcome.

Please give Maureen a ring.

The Well Group - An ecumenical ladies group which offers a time to socialise and share a meal for Christian women or those interested in the Christian faith. Meeting 12-2pm, including a simple lunch.

Contact Alison Brierley if you would like to come along on 830770

29th Sept : Janet Robinson from Uganda

27th October—TBC—see Around Pattishall

Monday Club (Reception, Years 1 & 2)

'Sunday School' after school 3.15-4.15pm ..

Wednesday Bible Club 'Friends & Heroes'
12.30-1pm (yrs 3-6)

For more information please speak to John Atkin on 830907.

Both groups held at Pattishall Primary School

Northampton Methodist Circuit Team Ministry

Superintendent: Rev Tina Swire

Rev John Marriott

Rev Romeo Pedro

Rev. Phil Snelson

Deacon Richard Beckett

Contact point is Circuit Office: 01604 721 908

At Park Avenue Methodist Church

Northampton

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**To book the Chapel rooms** please ring Kate Stretton on  
830115

Please also contact Kate if you would like to place flowers in the  
Chapel in memory of a loved one or to celebrate a birthday,  
anniversary etc.

For items or suggestions for this newsletter  
please contact::

Ann Atkin, Church Secretary on 830907

[ann.atkin51@btinternet.com](mailto:ann.atkin51@btinternet.com)