

Tonbridge Methodist Church Newsletter



5th June '20

It's good to be back with you 'officially' after my sabbatical. Much has changed, including the Manse garden which seems to be overrun with children's toys! There's still room for the rabbit run though so I am a happy bunny! (sorry!). This beautiful yellow rose in the garden makes me smile as it is solitary and brings me joy. It stands out.



I hope you have found much to bring you joy during this time.

Thanks so much to Rev Gill for standing in whilst I have been....well, what have I been doing?! Similar to maybe many of you I've taken the opportunity recently to read more –theology books mainly, especially related to fostering and also to Bible engagement. I've produced an assignment for the latter after a week-long course at Cliff College. It's currently awaiting marking but to be honest whether it gets a 10% or a 70% I am hoping it will be

practically useful to us as it is based around engagement with the Bible at TMC. Once it's been tweaked I'll ask Dean to put it on the website and I'll have some paper copies so you can take a look if you'd like to.

As time moves on and lockdown eases for some, the leadership team will be sending round some questions for your thoughts and views on a 'return' of some kind to using the church building as and when permissible and appropriate for us. I know from being in touch with our pastoral team that you have been supporting one another in many ways and we, of course, continue to 'be' church. I hope over the next few weeks to have contact with many of you to catch up, as well as planning for the church into the future. I've missed you all!

'The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace'
(Numbers 6: 24-26).

Love Sharon



Books I've read during the Covid 19 lockdown

Sharon encouraged us some time ago to share books we had enjoyed, that had lifted our spirits, with our friends at church.

So here are three reviews of books I can recommend:-

"The Boy Who Harnessed The Wind" by William Kamkwamba and Bryan Mealer A memoir and true story of a young boy who lived in Malawi, a country where magic ruled, modern science was a mystery, hunger and drought were a daily reality and hope and opportunity were hard to find. William's family could not afford to send him to secondary school, but fascinated by electricity, William was allowed access to the school's library. He taught himself to rig up electric light in his grass-roofed mud house, so he could study in the evenings after working all day on the family land.

"An African Love Story" by Daphne Sheldrick An autobiography - Daphne grew up in Africa and had a love for all its animals and their conservation. Joanna Lumley said "Africa has never been more vividly described. I read it straight through and it nearly broke my heart".

"A Vision of Eden" The Life and Work of Marianne North published in collaboration with The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Marianne was born in 1830 and became an artist and plant collector extraordinaire. Travelling alone all around the world to paint pictures of flowers and plants in their natural habitat. She paid for her own art gallery to be built in Kew Gardens so that visitors to the gardens would have somewhere to rest and have a bite to eat!

Daphne Arden



Ps. This is a photo of something I made to keep myself occupied during lockdown.

As lockdown begins to ease slowly, I know like me you will be looking forward to seeing family and friends properly even if it will be with certain restrictions still in place. But as we anticipate our new limited freedom I wonder what we have done to strengthen and encourage us in our discipleship during this time. Have you tried different prayer methods? Found yourself singing songs and hymns around the house, read a new devotional book or listened to inspiring podcasts or sermons other than ours at TMC which I know you have all thoroughly appreciated.

I have been following a devotional book about the 40 days between Easter and Pentecost to prepare for our next festival when we celebrate the church's birthday as the Holy Spirit filled the disciples and empowered them, equipped them and enthused them to preach the gospel.

There is much we can learn from the disciples during the time between the resurrection and Pentecost. They were trying to get over the fact Jesus had gone ... again. Just before the ascension they were charged with the great commission but they did not receive the power from on high until Pentecost and I am sure they must have spent time together

wondering, waiting, not sure what would happen next and how they would get used to this new normal. Sound familiar! Then the day of Pentecost arrives and they break forth and and the church begins.

They seize the opportunities they are given and the church grows as we read in the book of Acts. We as the church are having to adjust and prepare for the new normal but along with it come new opportunities for evangelism and like the Spirit-filled disciples so we are equipped by the Spirit to rise to the challenge and seize this opportunity to grow the Kingdom of God. Please pray for Sharon and the leadership team as they grapple with adhering to the rules whilst seeking God's wisdom and being obedient to His vision for the future.

Love and prayers

Rev Gill



I would like to say a huge thank you to all the people who have used their technical expertise to enable us to have the services Sunday by Sunday via our screens. We have been able to meet as a virtual congregation in fellowship and it has been a great help to me during lockdown.

I have been doing a lot of reading of all sorts and one book I would like to recommend is **"Knowing Anna"** by Sarah Meyrick. Published by Marylebone House books. It combines the themes of pilgrimage, and grief and loss. Because of the themes parts of it are sad but it is also a very uplifting book as well. Try walking the Pilgrims' Way through this book.

Lynne Taylor

Getting to Know You

Everyone has a story to tell and every Christian has a unique faith journey. Each quarter we are hoping to be reading about one of our church members and friends. This encourages us to pray for them and also inspires us in our own faith journey. Please do let Sharon know if you can be one of those whose stories we can share.

This quarter we hear from Phil Leese:

Where were you brought up and what is your church background (if any)

Born in China - the son of medical missionaries. They were evicted, if that's the right word, by the communists and went through some horrific times. Dad eventually went into practice in Bury, Lancs. I was brought up there in one of the local Methodist churches. Dad was very involved in the Methodist Conference and we had many church 'names' visit our house over the years.

How long have you been a part of Tonbridge Methodist Church and what/who drew you to it? Transferred my membership almost a year ago after Southborough Methodist church closed.

Who/what have been the greatest Christian influences on your faith journey?

One of the greatest was Geoffrey Stone, our university Chaplain. He later became Chair of Bolton & Rochdale District. He was a very caring guardian of Methsoc and guided many through their faith. At the last toll we had 4 or 5 ministers, (including 2 chairs one of whom became President) and 6 or 7 Local preachers. I still remember and use some of the principles he taught us in his classes for potential preachers.

Did you have a Conversion experience or gradual awakening to God?

Bit of both really. I can point to a couple of times I had a definite awareness of God in my life but that awareness has grown and grown over the years.

Do you have a favourite hymn/song or/and Bible verse(s)

Many of Wesley's hymns are great and so singable. I like too many to point to anyone as a favourite. If I had to choose it would be 'Captain of Israel's Host'. In the same way, I haven't got a particular bible text I would call my favourite. A theme I find very inspiring would be the 'name of God'. All these, hymns and texts, vary with the seasons but all have equal meaning at particular times.

Tell us a little about you, your hobbies and interests; your work; your involvement in Church and community.

Although I've had to give them up I was a member of at least two choirs. I've sung all my life from being in school. I'm interested in films - hence running the Southborough film club which is still going.

I enjoy travel and indeed have worked overseas on two occasions - in Jamaica

and Japan.

I do have a collection - of sets of the 'three wise monkeys. Partly inspired by my time in Japan. Have got around 30 different sets to date. I have one or two other collections of mainly Japanese things.

I love pictures and paintings but have almost run out of space to put them.

Work-wise I taught Maths at Secondary School level. My last post was at Sevenoaks School and was there for 22 years. Before that, I taught in 5 other schools over the years. I had numerous experiences and roles in them all - too many to even start going through.

I have been a Local Preacher for over 40 years and derive great value from this - whether others do from my preaching is a different question!

Do you have any words of encouragement for others?

All I would say is to stress the importance of being involved. Whether it be in a job or church or club. There is much to learn and share.

Thanks, Phil for sharing with us all.

A number of friends will remember John Turner who was a member of the Higham Wood Church in the 70's to 90's. Sadly John died early in May following a short illness.

John contributed much to the life of the church in Tonbridge serving in many ways not least as Church Steward, Sunday School Teacher and Local Preacher.

For the past few years John and Margaret enjoyed living in a retirement apartment run by MHA in Auchlochan Garden Village, in Scotland. He mentioned often the beautiful surroundings and especially the view of the lake from the apartment. The staff and friends have been very supportive of the family particularly during the recent difficult days.

We remember in our prayers John's wife Margaret and his children, Christine and David and Margaret's children Jane and Karen.

Malcolm Copnell

I am a great fan of Winnie the Pooh! So many of the things which he says (well AA Milne actually) can be applied to us and our situations.

This particular quote was given to me after Geoff died 18 months ago, and I treasure it.

I was reading it again the other day and I believe that it can also apply to us today when we are desperately missing our friends and family. Even though we are apart they are still never far from our minds. Although we may not always feel it, we do have the bravery and strength for these difficult times.

Carol Redfern

If ever there is tomorrow
when we're not together...
there is something
you must always remember.
You are braver than you believe,
stronger than you seem, and
smarter than you think.



But the most important
thing is even if we are apart,
I'll always be with you.

Dear Friends,

Thank-you to you all for the wonderful welcome and hand of friendship you have extended to myself and the children over the last few months. I am sorry it has been in strange times and had hoped to get to know more of you better, but circumstances have rather got in the way! I will continue to pray for you all as you begin to come out of lockdown and seek to do church in the new normal. I will be living in this circuit but no longer working in it but I am sure I will see some of you around and hope and pray you all stay well.

With Love and prayers,
Rev Gill.

Pat and Ray Steer would like to thank friends at Tonbridge Methodist Church for their good wishes on their 90th Birthdays recently, and for the many phone calls, all of which were much appreciated.

We would also like to say how grateful we are to those of you who compile and send printed copies of the service each week, which are a source of comfort and encouragement.

God bless you all
Margaret Pool

GOING FOR A SONG?

The lockdown has provided me with an opportunity to sort out my filing cabinet, a job that has been waiting to be done for some considerable time. Going through a drawer the other day I came across a load of music manuscript paper. I have no plans to write a symphony or an oratorio. If you or anybody you know would like some music manuscript paper, please get in touch with me. My email address is peter.overton1@btinternet.com
Peter Overton