

Dear friends,

You can find details of our Sunday services below, including North Hillingdon's Harvest Service.

Sunday 3 October

- 9.30 am **Harvest Worship at North Hillingdon** led by the Revd Ken Kingston
Please bring a spare pair of shoes, if you are able.
- 11.00 am **Praise and Worship at Hayes End** led by Angela Lount
- 11.00 am **Worship at Hayes** led by Richard Reid

Sunday 10 October

- 9.30 am **Worship at North Hillingdon (with Holy Communion)** led by the Revd Ken Kingston
- 11.00 am **Worship at Hayes End (with Holy Communion)** led by the Revd Ken Kingston
- 11.00 am **Worship at Hayes** led by Professor Samuel Kow Arthur

For those still unsure about returning to 'face-to-face' worship, you can join Ruislip Manor who stream their service (www.youtube.com/channel/UCjLbCitLuwAJL2wYdzK57EQ) and Christ Church as they share their service on Facebook (www.facebook.com/christchurchuxbridge).

Please continue to take care and stay safe.

Rev Ken

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What matters?

From time to time I get a phone call which goes something like this = "I am wondering if I could come and talk to you, or whether you could come and see me ... but don't worry if you can't because I know that you are probably really busy." And those phone calls upset me. Yes, I may be busy, but I hope I am never too busy to meet with people. And I worry if I may give that impression. Because I have said to different people – for me, ministry is nothing if it is not about people.

And in the Mark 10:2-16, Jesus is concerned about people too.

The pharisees come up to Jesus with a question about divorce. But on second glance, is it actually about divorce or about the law? As they ask, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" The pharisees already seem to have a clear idea about what is right and what God wants from people. Because they understood the relationship between God and people/creation was fixed by law. And this law had been explained and discussed, interpreted and re-interpreted.

But in responding to the pharisees, Jesus goes right back to creation - to before the law and asks what God wants for men and women. For Jesus, and I hope for us marriage is a gift of God's good creation. A gift that is available to some, not necessarily to all. By taking the discussion back to creation, it is a reminder that it is about a relationship. A relationship between people and also a relationship between God and people, where each matters and each is valued. (But within the creation story, there is also the acknowledgement of sin and brokenness, where marriage too can break and fall apart.)

Alongside the discussion about divorce, Mark gives an account of people bringing young children to Jesus to bless them. And the disciples preventing them.

In biblical times and right up to the 19th century (in western Europe at least), children had no power, no rights and no status and no place without the power structures of society. This only happened when they were old enough and able to work.

But by placing a child in the centre, Jesus is changing and challenging understanding. Usually, God was spoken about in terms of power and might. But now, Jesus offers a different perspective.

It is not a case of what matters, but who matters. That sheer but simple act of receiving and welcoming children, Jesus is saying that no-one is unimportant to God.

And then Jesus speaks: "Let the children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs."

Jesus sticks a needle into the values of society that grades and recognises people according to their ability, and bursts its bubble. Surely the only way to assess a society is to look at the way it treats and values the weakest and least powerful. It is not what matters, but who matters. That is what the kingdom of God is about.

Jesus' final words, here, are "'Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a child will never enter it.' And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them."

Jesus challenges those around him not to be self-reliant, not to be falsely confident about who they are. And he invites them any and every one to come to him, to be touched and blessed by God. It's not a case of 'what matters'; it's not even a case of 'who matters. Jesus says, "You matter."

And he takes us up in his arms, lays his hand on us and blesses us.

Sundays on the BBC

8.10 am Sunday Worship BBC Radio 4
Renewed and eternal hope - From Croydon Seventh Day Adventist Church, the act of worship explores how Christ's gospel provides us with the resilience and peace we need to overcome — as Jesus did.

2.45 pm Songs of Praise BBC 1
60th Anniversary – Westminster Abbey hosts this 60th birthday edition of Songs of Praise with special guests and favourite hymns. Aled Jones is joined by fellow presenters from the past and present, including Katherine Jenkins, Sally Magnusson and David Grant. And there's a special performance from Westminster Abbey Choir, plus a message from HM the Queen who applauds the series for showing Christianity as "a living faith".

Prayer for the Week

Lord Jesus,
thank you that you look at everyone
not for what they are, but for who they are.
You welcome all with open arms and bless them
because they matter to you.
Which means you welcome and bless us too.
Help us to do likewise, to value any and everyone,
not for what they can do, the power they have,
or the influence they can wield.
But simply, because they are like us
– a child of God. Amen.,

'To serve the present age'

Over 250 years ago, Charles Wesley wrote in his hymn "A charge to keep I have", these words:



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

This remains as true today as it has ever done.

This month there will be a series of meetings across the circuit, to explore and discuss how our Methodist churches and the circuit together can "serve the present age" – how we can best and most effectively share God's love and serve the people in our boroughs of Hillingdon and Harrow.

They begin at 7.30pm and last for about two hours.

Monday 11 October at North Harrow (HA2 6EQ)

Tuesday 12 October at Eastcote (HA5 2QU)

Wednesday 13 October on Zoom

<https://zoom.us/j/94982197752?pwd=TIIGSmhwKzJQNmZlZyZXJlOVVx6dz09>

Thursday 14 October at North Hillingdon (UB10 9FB)

Obviously, the meeting nearest to us is at North Hillingdon, but you are welcome to any of them.

If you come to one church meeting this year, please make it this one. And together we can listen to God and each other to discover how we can shape the future of the circuit and churches to become what God wants us to be.
people God wants us to be.

To start you thinking, there is a booklet giving some ideas and examples.