

Dear Friends,

Welcome to July.

On Sunday morning at 11.00am there will be a joint service online for Hayes, Hayes End and North Hillingdon. (We did a trial run last week and over 20 people came together.)

If you would like to join, please contact me and I'll send you the details for next week.

I look forward to sharing in worship with you, if you are able.

- And don't forget you can keep in touch through the church websites
www.hayesmethodistchurch.co.uk,
- www.hemc.org.uk
- www.northhillingdonmethodistchurch.org

and Facebook:

- facebook.com/hayesmethodistchurch
- facebook.com/hayesendmethodistchurch
- facebook.com/northhillingdonmethodistchurch

Each church also has a WhatsApp group. Let me know if you want more details. But you are always able to contact me directly - my phone number and email address are below.

Take care, stay safe
and God bless

Rev Ken

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You can find this week's YouTube reflection at

<https://youtu.be/EOatqDAdIzk>

Or you can read it for yourself below ...

Are you yoking? (Matthew 11:25-30)

We live in a confused world. Covid-19 has turned things upside-down and inside out and the restrictions on life are being carefully relaxed, life is starting to return to normal. Except it is not normal, it is what people are calling a new normal (although no-one seems to know what this is).

A lot of what Jesus said and did turned things upside down (and it wasn't just the tables in the Temple) and this is how he starts off in today's passage. He gives thanks that things have been hidden from the wise and the intelligent. And instead have been given to infants. It's a reminder that revelation is God's decision alone and God's divine preference is for the 'infants'.

But what might Jesus mean when he says 'infants'? He talks about them knowing (verse 27). When Jesus uses the word 'know' he isn't just talking about knowledge or what we might learn. He's also including the idea of choice and intimacy. It's one thing to know a set of facts about something, but it's something very different when you say that you know someone.

And this is what is important about 'infants'. They don't pretend to know anything. They just receive what is given to them. Life can be complicated and we sometimes try to make faith and a relationship with God just as complicated. But no-one has the capacity to fathom the knowledge of God. God is only known as a gift of divine grace. Trying to know God is like trying to catch the wind. You can't. You can only let the wind catch you.

You have to let God be God on God's own terms.

And now hear the terms, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."

Jesus says that his yoke is easy. Easy, here, means suitable and appropriate, just for you. A yoke is a bit like a harness – cows wear them in pairs to help pull a plough. You may have seen old-fashioned pictures of milkmaids wearing one over their shoulders to make it easier to carry pails of milk. (I could do with one to one of those things to help me carry the weekly shop.)

Jesus' followers in biblical times would have been familiar with yokes. And they'd have also known that they were mentioned in the Old Testament. The prophet Isaiah talks about a yoke as an idea of oppression, being harnessed to injustice (Isaiah 58:6). And in the book of Numbers Israel is yoked to the Baal of Peor (a pagan God worshipped on Mount Peor) (Numbers 25:3). Both have negative ideas or connotations. But Jesus takes something negative and turns it into something positive. Rather than being shackled to a yoke that bears down on you, the yoke of Jesus is something that liberates and means you can achieve things greater than you can ever imagine.

What is significant is that the yoke that Jesus offers is tailor-made for us. Jesus knows our strengths and capabilities, your gifts and our limitations, and his call to each of us is specific and just for us. It may stretch us, but it will never break us. You can't wear anyone else's yoke, and no-one can wear yours. It is fashioned by God, and it is given by God for you. Not to be put in a cupboard, not to be brought out for special occasions but to be worn – day in, day out.

Jesus offers his yoke just for you: "Come to me, all you that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Prayer for the week

Jesus says, 'Come to me you who are weary' –
God, grant me the strength to keep going.

Jesus says, 'Come to me
you who are carrying heavy burdens' –

God, grant me the courage
to let go of all my worries.

Jesus says, 'Come to me and learn from me' –
God, grant me the faith to trust in you. Amen.

(from Roots)

Sunday on the BBC

8.10am **Sunday Service** Radio 4 (93.5FM)

Lucy Winkett and Bob Chilcott explore the power of music to speak into troubled times.

1.15pm **Songs of Praise** BBC1

Katherine Jenkins marks the birthday of the NHS and Florence Nightingale's bicentenary.

Methodist Sunday Services on the Web

- Contemporary worship from Swan Bank Methodist Church: [youtube.com/user/SwanBank](https://www.youtube.com/user/SwanBank)
- From Westminster Central Hall, London: [youtube.com/user/MCHWevents/videos](https://www.youtube.com/user/MCHWevents/videos)
- From Wesley's Chapel: [youtube.com/channel/UCUAUqhmhevz5sqhh72LIMxA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUAUqhmhevz5sqhh72LIMxA)
- *Sthie [at home]*– from the Isle of Man, a different style of worship taking place at home: [youtube.com/andyfishburne](https://www.youtube.com/andyfishburne)

News from the Methodist Conference

The Methodist Conference met this week (as it does every year) to consider matters affecting the life of the Church, the nation and the world. Every year there is a President and Vice-President, and the Conference elects ones for the following year. This year, the President is the Revd Richard Teal, the former Chair of the Cumbria District who grew up on a farm, and Carolyn Lawrence, who used to be a primary teacher and a mission partner in Guyana.

Next year's Vice-President (2021/2022) is Barbara Easton, a former secondary school teacher from the West Midlands. And the President will be the Revd Sonia Hicks. At the moment Sonia is the Superintendent of the Thames Valley Circuit and spent some of her ministry in Ireland and Jamaica. She will be the first BME woman to be President of the Methodist Conference and says, "As a Black person born in the UK, it is a great privilege to serve the church family I love in this new way. I will do all I can to honour this choice of the Methodist Conference and enable British Methodism to celebrate our God-given diversity."

You can find out more about the Methodist Conference at www.methodist.org.uk/conference.

Readings for Sunday 12 July

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23; Romans 8:1-11