

Dear Friends,

As ever, you can keep in touch through the church websites

www.hemc.org.uk,

www.hayesmethodistchurch.co.uk,

www.northillingdonmethodistchurch.org

and Facebook:

- facebook.com/hayesendmethodistchurch
- facebook.com/hayesmethodistchurch
- facebook.com/northillingdonmethodistchurch

Each church also has a WhatsApp group. Let me know if you want more details.

Take care, stay safe
and God bless

Rev Ken

Here are the usual two videos again this week:

A Methodist minister's retelling of the Gospel reading for today (John 14:1-14)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E5v5RmoZioc&t=0s>

And arising out of that passage, my reflection and a prayer for the week

<https://youtu.be/kxWBQB0dX2A>

(You can also read a version of it below.)

Is there space for me?

It wasn't quite what I wanted to read this week, Jesus saying that 'in my Father's house there are many dwelling-places and I am going to prepare a place for you'. Not another room! I'd far rather prefer something outside like green pastures or still waters!

But sometimes we fall into the danger of reading the Bible too literally. And we need to look a little deeper and read a little slower.

Jesus starts this week's passage (John 14:1-14) by saying "Don't let your hearts be troubled." Using 'hearts', rather than 'heart', means that Jesus is talking about all our emotions – anxiety, anger, upset, grief, confusion. And the word 'troubled' is the same word that John's Gospel uses to describe Jesus when he is grieving for his dear friend Lazarus (John 11). So Jesus is talking about big feelings and huge waves of emotion. And it is out of this deep and loving concern for us, that he goes on to say what he does.

Different versions of the Bible translate the word 'dwelling-places' in various ways. Some use 'rooms' or even 'mansions'. But the word John uses doesn't have an easy translation into English. It is linked to the word abide. So this place that Jesus has prepared is one where we can abide. It's a place where we can find rest, a place where we can find comfort, a place where Jesus welcomes us.

You may recognise this Bible passage because it's often read at funerals. It is assuring to hear that Jesus has gone ahead to prepare the way and a place for us. That is good to know for the future. But it is also good to know for the here and now. Because Jesus prepares a place for us today wherever we are and whatever we are feeling.

Many of us admit to having as we cope with all the self-distancing, self-isolating and everything being locked down. It's hard not to be free to go and see people, especially family, when we want and where we want. Or to escape from situations that are difficult. And some of us, because of who we are, will find it even more difficult than others.

The thing is "It's OK, not be OK". And even more, that's OK for God too. Whatever you are feeling Jesus has prepared a place for you. Somewhere where you can find rest, somewhere where you can find comfort, somewhere where you can find the strength to carry on. Because Jesus loves you, not for what you've done, not for the way you are feeling, but for who you are.

Jesus knows how we are feeling and what we need at a particular point. There's a wonderful story at the beginning of the book of Deuteronomy, when the Israelites are about to enter the Promised Land after a 40-year journey in and through the wilderness. Despite their lack of trust, God still goes ahead to find a suitable place for them to camp, and to show them the way to go by day and by night (Deuteronomy 1:33). God acts as a scout, hunting out the right thing each of us needs, when we need it. It is not some casual preparation, it takes time, thought and effort. That's how much God loves and cares for us.

The dwelling place (or room or mansion) is where we can be with God and God will be with us. "Don't let your hearts be troubled," Jesus says,

"In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told that I go to prepare a place for you." Yes, there is room for you and me, room for each one of us.

A prayer for this week

God, you know our every thought,

(point to head)

every feeling in our heart,

(place hands on heart)

every passion in our soul,

(spiral hands forward)

every burden that we carry;

(place both hands out in front)

thank you for being our way-maker

and for welcoming and loving us

just as we are. Amen.

(actions are optional)

Using a labyrinth to pray

This Sunday's Gospel reading includes Jesus' words "I am the way, the truth and the life". For centuries Christians have used labyrinths as a way of praying (some ancient Cathedrals such as Chartres in France, even have labyrinth mosaics on their floor). I included a [picture of a labyrinth](#) and a [leaflet about how we can use labyrinths](#) in our prayer life and there is a little more information below.

Labyrinths have been used as a way of praying for centuries. They are not like a maze, as there is only one route. But Christians use them to reflect on their life's journey, either at set points or when they turn a corner.

Here are a couple of ways to use this labyrinth, tracing your journey with your finger or a pen:

- *Travelling in:* Give thanks for people who have nurtured your faith.
At the centre: God loves you.
Travelling out: Pray for others you know.
- *Travelling in:* Lay your burdens down or offer to God your weaknesses.
At the centre: God welcomes you.
Travelling out: Remind yourselves of Bible passages or hymns that you find strengthen and support you.

Sunday on the BBC

(Every Sunday BBC Radio London (94.9FM) has an act of worship between 8.00am and 9.00am)

8.10am Radio 4 (93.5FM)
Sunday Service – Rowan Williams invokes the spirit of VE
as he considers the challenges of COVID-19.

10.45am BBC1
Sunday Worship with the Bishop of Dover from Hereford Cathedral

1.15pm BBC1
Songs of Praise – Katherine Jenkins marks VE Day

Sunday Services on the Web

- Contemporary worship from Swan Bank Methodist Church: www.youtube.com/user/SwanBank
- Worship from the ministers at Westminster Central Hall, London: youtube.com/user/MCHWevents/videos
- Worship from Wesley's Chapel, London (also has daily prayer at 10.00am and 12.45pm): 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

Dial a prayer (plus)

A *FREE* phone service to hear a prayer and Methodist Church news has been launched.

Listen to a prayer: 0808 281 2514

Listen to news: 0808 281 2478

(Content is updated every Thursday evening.)

I listened last week and thought it was excellent.

17 May readings: John 14:15-21; Acts 17:22-31
