



Dear friends,

Sunday 14 March is Mothering Sunday, which can be a mixture of emotions to many. For some it is a time for thankfulness, for others it is a time of regret and loss. In some church traditions Mothering Sunday (and all Sundays in Lent) are days when you can break your Lenten Fast. Whatever your experience and feelings about Mothering Sunday, be kind to yourself.

With the infection rate now firmly in double figures, churches are exploring opening again for face-to-face worship. We hope to open our doors again on Easter Sunday, although we will still have to wear masks and can't yet sing etc. We will confirm this with you very soon.

Whilst we wait for that day, we carry on with our sectional Zoom service at 11.00 am. And visiting preacher Ade Benson leads the circuit service which begins 15 minutes earlier at 10:45 am. You can join from your computer, mobile phone or landline by following the instructions overleaf.

Take care and stay safe

Rev Ken

(020 8756 0567) (ken.kingston@methodist.org.uk)

You're more than a number

My purple envelope dropped through the letterbox this week. I don't know whether you've had yours yet, but it has all the information you need to give your responses to the national census. It's a once in a decade activity which collects all sorts of data and numbers about our life in Britain today. It's all about the facts and the figures.

Over the last twelve months, our lives have been driven by facts and figures. Hospital admissions, infection rates, numbers of people who have had the vaccine. These have dictated whether we are in lockdown and how fast or slow the restrictions will or won't be lifted. And the saddest figure of all is the number of people who have died due to COVID. We can become obsessed with all this information, but behind each one is a person, a family and a story to be told. Every death lies a grieving family, every vaccination could be the first time a person has left their house in months and talked to someone face to face. We are more than a number.

And we can see this behind Jesus' meeting and conversation with Nicodemus. Nicodemus was a pharisee, and many Pharisees were hostile to Jesus and his teachings. Yet Nicodemus had questions that he wanted to ask Jesus. So maybe to maintain his reputation, Nicodemus

came to Jesus at night. Likewise, Jesus would have been aware of his relationship with the pharisee. Yet Jesus was prepared to meet with Nicodemus to hear his questions and answer them. For Jesus, he was more than just one of the Pharisees, he was an individual with a story to tell, that Jesus reached out and responded to.

God looks on each one of us as individuals with our own worries, our own concerns and our own life story. This is what makes us who we are. God knows us so well, even knowing the numbers of hairs on our head (Luke 12:7).

But it's not just knowledge, God reaches out and responds to each one of us, as if we were the only person God has to be concerned about. We aren't a number to God, we are the focus of God's attention.

Today's Bible passage contains one of the most well-known verses in Scripture, John 3:16 – "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." We've probably seen that verse on posters or placards in lots of different places inside and outside the church. Maybe, its power has been dulled by its familiarity.

But there is one word in that verse that stands out to me – “whoever”. Jesus was given for us that whoever believes in him shall have eternal life. There are no barriers to jump over, no qualifications to achieve, no thresholds to cross – the gift of eternal life is given to anyone and everyone. In fact, God’s love for each one of us is so great that even if only one of us responds and believes then that is enough for God.

We are more than a number or a statistic! We are loved and treasured so much by God! And that’s why God sent his Son for us. To be light for the world, to be healing for the world, to be love for the world, to be hope for the world. But more importantly to be light, love, healing and hope for you!

Prayer for the Week

Just as God’s Word was sent into the world to heal and redeem,
so God sends you into the world this day to be light and love, healing and hope.
Go now to be light for the world!
And may the grace and peace of God the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Sustainer come upon you this day and remain with you always. Amen.

Zoom Services

To join our 11.00 am zoom service, go to <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84122013845?pwd=Qno3Y2ZzQ0EczbDdCczhrUTBZallSzz09>
Meeting ID: 841 2201 3845 Passcode: 2021

(The Circuit Zoom service starts at 10.45 am. To attend go to <https://us02web.zoom.us/join>.
Meeting ID: 886 0143 3540, Passcode: 611964)

You can also join the service through your phone.

1. Dial 020 3481 5237 or 020 3051 2874.
2. Enter meeting ID (see above) then # key
3. You will be asked to enter your participants ID. Ignore this, and just press the # key
4. Enter the password (see above) then the # key.

The Circuit @ Prayer

Every Thursday at 9.00 am on Zoom.
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84168659990?pwd=NWpOcW1YNIRseldHVU1ialVXWGgwQT09>
Meeting ID: 841 6865 9990 Passcode: 296725

Lent Liturgy (Week Four: Repentance)

We have been born into a world of sin. We try to do the right thing, but at times we fail, and temptation seems to win. At other times, we seem to drown in our failures, believing nothing good can come from us. We forget that God has called us to repent, and that God remembers our sins no more that God can and does make us a new creation.

Light a candle to symbolise our trust in Jesus Christ that our sins are forgiven, when we repent and turn back to God.

Loving God, help us to turn back to you when we stray. As we journey towards the cross this Lent, help us to repent from where we have gone wrong and to be your new creations. Amen.

This week on the BBC

Sunday 14 March

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

How did Jesus reach out to the thirsty at the Wedding in Cana and does how he reach out today.

11.00 am **Sunday Service** BBC 1

‘Lent Worship 4’ – a service for Mothering Sunday from St Cuthbert’s Church in Preston.

1.15 pm **Songs of Praise** BBC 2

Mothering Sunday – Discover how one mum copes with lockdown and visit an affordable Christian supermarket.

Wednesday 17 March

8.45 pm **Lent Talks** Radio 4

‘The Bigger Picture’ – Dr Jason Arday reflects on the health and social barriers he has faced and overcome with a positive and grateful outlook.

Woven and Lent Bible Study Groups

In our weekly Zoom discussions we have dived deep into Scripture to discover what it means for us. I have found it stimulating and a real blessing. Please join us if you can.

Monday evening at 7.30 pm:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86153555930?pwd=dUJYQ0txeG5zdUdQMfNwZW1MV2FTQT09>

Meeting ID: 861 5355 5930 Passcode: 220221

Wednesday evening at 7.30 pm:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83723378719?pwd=bmdiS2g4UnFHZmErekE2VTc5Mklkdz09>

Meeting ID: 837 2337 8719 Passcode: 2400221