

Dear friends,

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

- 9.30 am **Worship at North Hillingdon** led by the Revd Dr Claire Potter
11.00 am **Harvest Worship at Hayes End** led by the Revd Ken Kingston
Please bring a spare pair of shoes, if you are able.
11.00 am **Worship at Hayes** led by the Revd Dr Leao Neto.

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).

In the face of still high infections, please continue to take care and stay safe.

Rev Ken

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What's the kingdom of God like?

As I'm leading Harvest Festival services, at the moment I wondered whether it might be helpful to try something a bit different ...

Jesus talked a lot about the kingdom of God, and told parables or stories about it. Some of them were as short as a couple of sentences like the mustard seed which grew into a huge tree (Luke 13:18-19). Others were longer like the parable of the great banquet to which all are invited (Luke 14:15-23).

What Jesus says is easy to remember as we can picture it in our heads. But perhaps we need to remember that Jesus was living in an oral/aural age where people spoke and heard about things, rather than wrote and read about them. So, to be effective and keep an audience you had to be memorable.

How do you picture the kingdom of God?

I came across an example of it, when I was on holiday and was least expecting it ...

It was a sunny day and as a family (complete with Grandma) we decided to head for the beach.

The picture was crowded but we managed to find a spot where we could put our bags down and lay out our towels.

It was then that I looked around and I was amazed by what I saw. There were people of all sizes and ages. There was a baby in a pushchair, there was the toddler in tears because they'd had their first taste of sand and it was not to their liking. Other children were building sandcastles, and teenagers were playing with bats and balls (probably because they couldn't get a mobile signal). And adults were enjoying the sun or had even nodded off in the warmth. Grandparents were installed on beach chairs reading the book or the paper.

There were people walking along the shore or in the sea swimming, surfing and jumping the waves. And the adults seemed to be having more fun than the children.

And I looked around and spotted orthodox Jewish families complete with their white shirts and black jackets, trousers or long skirts joining in the fun. And there were families in hijabs and Muslim swimsuits braving the sea too.

And then there was a family who had a beach wheelchair (with wheels the size and shape of giant balloons) wheeling their daughter down to the water's edge where there were people with a specially adapted surfboard ready to take her out on the waves.

Of course, there were tears from children who had dropped their ice cream, or got overtired or some other reason. But I felt that real sense of community, of inclusion and of joy.

And then I thought that's just what the kingdom of God means for me. A place where all are included, where all are welcomed and where all can participate. There are no barriers of age, of gender, of race or religion, of ability/disability.

I glimpsed the kingdom of God that day. I wasn't looking for it, it found me.

Different people will have different images or ideas of God's kingdom. And we'll discover new views of it over time. And that's just brilliant. Because it all adds to our overall understanding and experience of who God is, and what God is about. For some, it will be something about justice, or hospitality or peace. Because it is this the kingdom of God, and it is where and how God's meets us.

So, I've told you my experience. What about you?

- What is your experience of God's kingdom?
- How would you describe the kingdom of God to someone else (either another Christian, a person from another faith or someone who says they don't believe in God)?
- Do you have an idea or a wish or a dream of how we can be the kingdom of God where we live, where we work, where we shop, in and beyond the church?

Prayer for the Week

Jesus,
thank you for what you have taught us and shown us about the kingdom of God. And thank you for the different experiences and glimpses we see of your kingdom. Help us to share our experiences of you, your kingdom and what you mean to us so that others will know that they are welcomed and that they have a place. Amen.

A Church for the 21st century

Next month there will be a series of meetings across the circuit. These will explore and discuss how the Methodist Church can best 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=TIIGSmhwKzJQNvNmZXZyZXJ0VWx6dz09>

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.

Please come with open minds, and with questions and suggestions. Together we can listen to God and each other to discover how we can shape the future of the church and the circuit to become the people God wants us to be.

Sundays on the BBC

8.10 am Sunday Worship **BBC Radio 4**
Harvest from Holy Trinity, Westbury on Trym, Bristol.

1.15 pm Songs of Praise **BBC 1**
Where Songs of Praise began – highlights from the last 60 years. Aled Jones looks at how it's been a part of national events, sharing in the joy of some memorable occasions. And the Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, reflects on how *Songs of Praise* has been there at times of national crisis and loss.

Blessings – Quiet Day

Methodist Women in Britain are holding a quiet day, at Ruislip Methodist Church (HA4 7BZ) next Saturday 2 October 2021.

Starting at 9.45am, the theme of the day is 'Blessings'. It's led by Sister Denise Creed (who used to be a deacon in the Harrow Circuit).

To book, email gillianoxman@googlemail.com.

Cost: £10, which includes lunch

Last day for booking: Monday 27 September.