

BISHOP STREET METHODIST CHURCH

... serving people in Leicester city centre through welcome, worship and mission

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(Reg. charity 1129068)

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Dear Friends,

One person said to me that she'd heard a number of comments from neighbours saying that God was to blame for this virus. God often seems to get the blame for our anger or bewilderment, such as Job says, early on in his misery, "It is all one; therefore I say, the Lord destroys both the blameless and the wicked." (Job 9:22)

But it isn't fair or right to dump the blame on God. According to some analysts, Covid-19 has not come out of the blue but has roots in human greed and international inequalities. The bats who are believed to have transferred the virus to the first humans were being cultivated as luxury, wild food. The transmission from "wild" to "domesticated" is about many things, including our inappropriate human exploitation of God's creation – though that itself may be a result of someone desperate to make money to help their family survive.[1]

God does not 'send' plagues, even if the ancient stories of the book of Exodus suggest that God did send the 10 plagues. These early stories do still contain important messages for us about God's will for our liberation from different kinds of oppression, including disease.

So, where is God in times of pestilence? The question of God's presence has always been asked when human beings have felt powerless before a threat. When the 'Honest to God' theologian, John Robinson, preached a final sermon before his death from cancer in 1983 he declared that "God is to be found in the cancer as in everything else." So is God to be found in the virus? Yes, Robinson would have said, and so should we. But Robinson did not mean that God had singled him out for cancer. He clarified his God-in-the-cancer declaration like this: "I have discovered this experience to be one full of grace and truth. And I cannot say how grateful I am for all the love and kindness and goodness it has disclosed ..." The presence of God was located in the human response to his condition and not in how it came to be.[2]

Where are we finding grace and truth in the midst of the lockdown, aware as we are of much suffering, dying, and struggling for survival? Remember too that the suffering, dying Jesus after three days appeared to his bewildered disciples, full of vigour, while also still bearing his wounds (John 20:27).

Easter Blessings, Rev'd Fran

[1] The origins. Is factory farming behind Covid-19? By Laura Spinney The Guardian Weekly 3.4.20. p.14

[2] With thanks to theologian Rev'd Alan Race for some of his reflections on the Covid-19 crisis in a blog 3.4.20.

Worship Possibilities

Here are a few possibilities of worship resources for this coming Sunday.

<https://bishopstreetmethodistchurchsundaystuff.wordpress.com/>

This site provides material from preachers at Bishop Street Methodist Church who share their reflections and prayers. The service for 19th April is provided by Prof. Clive Marsh.

The Family Friendly Churches Trust

<https://familyfriendlychurches.org.uk/> will help parents and carers of school-aged children to worship with them.

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/seasons-and-themes/worship-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/> Provides Sunday "Worship at Home" sheets, the one for 19th April is copied at the end of this email.

Wesley's Chapel London will live-stream from the chapel on Sundays at 11am

www.youtube.com/channel/UCUAUqhmhevz5sqhh72LIMxA

BBC1 Songs of Praise Sunday 1.15pm

BBC Radio 4 Sunday 8.10am (92.70 FM).

Radio Leicester worship at 8am (104.9 FM).

Giving

Church rental income has come to an abrupt halt, so your giving to the church is needed more than ever. Members and adherents are encouraged to put aside their offering for when it is possible to bring it into church again. You could also post a cheque to the church's gift aid officer, Tony Moore at 46 Holmfield Road LE2 1SA. Alternatively you could make a BACS transfer to Bishop Street Methodist Church, The Cooperative Bank sort code 08-92-99 and account number 65242955. Give your name as a reference. Thank you very much.

All We Can (Methodist Relief and Development Agency) has launched a special appeal for nations and refugee camps struggling to respond to the Corona Virus crisis. The appeal was launched on Easter Sunday by a virtual Methodist choir. It's worth the wait to hear it on the video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iObp_XkT0Zg

<https://www.allwecan.org.uk/emergency-coronavirus-appeal-launch/>

If you can't get to a funeral – a worship sheet has been prepared by the Methodist Church for your use at home, at the time of the funeral, or as close as possible in time to it. Click on this link and scroll down:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/seasons-and-themes/worship-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/>

Bishop Street Diary Dates

Sunday 3rd May 11am General Church Meeting (via Zoom) Please reply to fran.rhys@methodist.org.uk to let Fran know you would like to join this meeting. You will be sent a link to the Zoom meeting. Everyone is welcome to participate but only church members are eligible to vote. You don't need to download Zoom. You simply need to receive the link in an email on your phone or other electronic device and click on it. Turn up, on your screen, at 11am with your cup of coffee! The meeting will finish by 12 noon.

Saturday 13th June 10am – 1.30pm Church Vision Morning in Bushby Village.

Meet at church 9.15am if you would like a lift. We hope the lockdown will be safely lifted in time for all church members and adherents to be able to spend time together seeking God's vision for Bishop Street Methodist Church. We'll be facilitated by former Co-Chair of London District, Rev'd Jenny Impey.