

ST. ANDREWS UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Upper Hanover Street, Sheffield, S3 7RQ

MESSENGER

Price £1.25

September 2022



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CALENDAR for September 2022

Sun	28 Aug	10.45 am	Mr Chris Limb
Sun	4 Sept	10.45 am	Worship Group
Mon	5 Sept	4 pm	Asylum seekers meeting
Tues	6 Sept	10am	Community Choir
Sun	11 Sept	10.45 am	Mrs Jenny Carpenter
Tues	13 Sept	10 am	Community Choir
Thurs	15 Sept	10 am	Management Team meeting
Sun	18 Sept	10.45 am	Special Bible Readings
Mon	19 Sept	4 pm	Asylum seekers meeting
Tues	20 Sept	10 am	Community Choir
Sun	25 Sept	10.45 am	Rev Graham Wassell
Mon	26 Sept	7 pm	Elders meeting
Tues	27 Sept	10 am	Community Choir
Wed	28 Sept	7 pm	Trustees meeting
Sun	2 Oct	10.45 am	Mrs Jenny Carpenter and Rev Dr David Stec - COMMUNION

FLOWERS

The flower rota for 2022 is on the noticeboard in the hall ready to be filled. Please sign up on a convenient date. Providing flowers for Sunday worship can be a fitting way to mark an anniversary or remember someone you love. As well as beautifying the church, the flowers give pleasure to the people who receive them afterwards. If you wish, you could tell us what you are commemorating.

SERVICE SHEET

If you have any notices to go in the service sheet, please send them to the person who is preparing them for that month:

Judith Adam:	January, May and September
Sheila Cooke:	February, June and October
Jean Dickson:	March, July and November
Monica Hanna:	April, August and December

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Luke's version of the Lord's prayer is at Ch.11, vv1-4 and a slightly longer version in Matthew's Sermon on the Mount. Like me you probably learnt the Lord's Prayer in Sunday school or primary school; maybe you cannot remember when and how, but it still tumbles out of your mouth when asked to join in saying it. Until perhaps twenty or thirty years ago, most people of most ages could probably remember it. The prayer is recited in Christian weddings and funerals, on many a public occasion and in most Sunday services. All versions are translations from the Greek New Testament, and scholars differ over certain words such as trespasses or debts. In Protestantism, the doxology was added in Elizabethan times to distinguish the church from the catholic church.

It is both the strangest of prayers and Christianity's greatest prayer. Strange? It is prayed by all Christians but never mentions Christ. It is prayed in all churches but never mentions church. It is called the Lord's Prayer but never mentions Lord. It is prayed by fundamentalist Christians but never mentions the bible, the virgin birth, the miracles, the resurrection. It is prayed by evangelical Christians but never mentions gospel, good news. It is prayed by pentecostalist Christians but never mentions the Holy Spirit. It is prayed by Christians of all denominations - but never mentions congregations, priests, popes, bishops.

You could say, of course, that this is because it is a Jewish prayer from a Jewish Jesus. But it remains strange even then, since there is no mention of Temple or Torah, covenant or law. But this apparent strangeness might also, I suggest, be its glory and its significance. For here is a prayer which unites all Christians despite the doxology, and more significantly despite their differences over doctrine, church practice or cultural context. It is a prayer for all. What then is its significance and its greatness?

Many people refer to the Lord's Prayer as the kingdom prayer and there I believe is the core of its message, its strength and its challenge. We are instructed to pray that God's kingdom come on earth as in heaven (and that last phrase 'as in heaven' comes from the Matthean version).

We begin with the prayer addressing God as father, reminding us of its Jewish and patriarchal setting. Jesus refers to God as Abba, and throughout the scriptures God is envisaged as a good parent, a householder who looks after the well-being of the family, the animals, the land, the neighbours, the greater family. The hallowing of God's name is to accept and recognise that God's very nature as a heavenly parent is the love and care expressed for humanity.

And then straightaway we pray to this householder God that God's kingdom come on earth. There can be no doubt that the message and passion of Jesus was to do with the kingdom of God. The earliest gospel, Mark, has Jesus beginning his ministry proclaiming that the kingdom of God was at hand. The kingdom of God is the subject of Jesus's parables and teachings. Sometimes the phrase points to the power of God active in Jesus's work as healer and exorcist. It can refer to a community, a kingdom-like society either now or at the end of time.

But the kingdom phrase also had a political meaning, not lost to Jesus's hearers. They knew what life was like for them living under the kingdom of Herod and the greater kingdom of Caesar. They knew about harsh taxation, about appropriation of land, of fishing. They knew about the cruelty of the Roman occupiers. And so in a sentence, the kingdom of God would be a different world if God and not Caesar was in charge.

Now this kingdom is not about heaven, it's for the earth, that is the force of the Lord's Prayer. For the next petition is asking for daily bread. Bread is always a peasant issue. Currently in our war torn and climate stricken world, grain for bread is still a major issue and concern. At the time of Jesus, adequate sustenance was becoming even more desperate for his hearers. Look at the real life context in Jesus's day. Herod Antipas' capital city was Sepphoris in Galilee, looking out on to hillsides fertile with cereals, olives and grapes. But he couldn't increase his tax base from peasants there, who were living at subsistence level. So he created a new capital city on the mid western shore of Lake Galilee and named it Tiberias in honour of the new Emperor. Why? Now he can commercialise the Sea and use the export of dried and salted fish to increase his wealth. Suddenly there would be taxes for every stage of fishing, having a boat, fishing with dragnets. You might have to sell your catch to Antipas's warehouses.

Give us our daily bread. Remember in the gospels the story of the multiplication of bread and fishes, how when the resources of life pass through God's hands, that is, when Jesus blesses the food, no one goes hungry, there is a fair distribution. This is distributive justice. So the kingdom movement of Jesus is about taking back the lake for God who owns the earth, the land, the sea. It is God who is the good householder, God who is justice personified. This phrase in the Lord's prayer needs to be unpacked not only in the reality of first century Galilee but in the reality of our twenty first century world. If the Lord's Prayer points us to a desire to build the kingdom of God, on earth, there is much work to do to make our world, our country, a more just and equitable place for all its citizens.

The earthly message, the challenge, continues in the next petition about forgiveness. Forgive us our sins (or trespasses or debts, depending on different English translations of the gospel texts). For Luke there is in this Lord's Prayer a clear and pressing alignment between God's abundant mercy and forgiveness and our willingness to also forgive others. For us to live in a God kingdom world, for God's will to be done on earth as in heaven, we need to be godly in our dealings with each other. It's as simple and as challenging as that.

And let's remember how debt, then and now, could be the primary issue in the life of working people. The Jewish scriptures have much to say about debt slavery and laws to release people from such servitude. In the book of Deuteronomy there is a decree that every seventh year the people of the covenant are to grant remission of debts. This was about creating a society which reflected the justice and fairness of its Creator, the Householder God. It is about our indebtedness to God – we owe it to God to run our world responsibly, to be good stewards, to ensure there is enough food and not too much debt in God's well-run Household. We owe it to God that such evils as an unjust world do not prevail.

Again it is not too difficult to contextualise the Lord's Prayer in our contemporary setting. Those who aspire to leadership, be it as Prime Minister, as chief executives of companies or in any walk of life, can be asked how will they contribute to the kingdom of God on earth? Will there be righteousness in the form of distributive justice, a community where there is equality, respect, kindness and mercy. How will we deal with rising levels of debt as people are forced to pay on credit as prices rise and wages fall below inflation?

For Christians, the Lord's Prayer, then, is the greatest prayer for it mandates us to collaborate with God in hallowing God's name, in establishing God's kingdom, and in doing God's will. We owe it to God to cease focusing on heaven so that we can focus on our earth. And for the majority of our fellow citizens who might not these days call themselves Christians but who nevertheless remember the Lord's Prayer, may it be understood that this prayer is an injunction to live in a moral community, to see the 'summum bonum' of Jesus's teaching as loving our neighbour as we love ourselves.

Canon Adrian Alker

FAMILY NEWS

Congratulations and our very best wishes to **Isabel and Alan Sandland** who celebrate their Diamond Wedding Anniversary on 8 September. It coincides within the space of about two months with their daughters' Silver Wedding and 30th anniversaries, so there was a grand family celebration in North Yorkshire. They spent a glorious week in the grounds of Fountains Abbey and the adjacent deer-park. There was space in the National Trust House for all the family, including grandchildren.



Dorothy Adam turned 95 on 1st September and enjoyed visits from friends to celebrate with her and Anne. Dorothy sends her best wishes to everyone at St Andrew's.

Mixed news about **Jean Dickson**. She had a most unfortunate fall the day before she was to go off on her regular holiday to Loch Melfort and broke her right arm. She was most frustrated and in considerable discomfort, but is coping remarkably well in her usual practical way. The family have been marvellous and she has two excellent helpers from the organisation S10, who make her porridge every morning and get her evening meal out of the oven. The latest news, however, is that she will move to her new flat at Hallam Towers on 13th September, and is very excited about it.

Sad news about our former member **David Hill**. He is seriously ill in the Hallamshire Hospital and awaiting a place for suitable care. He can have visits; late morning is the best time. 6

Robert Beard also sends his love to all. See his latest update about the NHS 111 on page 10.

The organ pipes were somewhat damaged when they were completely removed for the re-painting of the church. However, they have been repaired by a specialist firm in Leeds and are now back in place, looking great.

WAR DIET

Theo Wheat did a three-day "war diet" for the charity War Child In August.

I am going on a diet named The Winter Turnip Diet. The diet was used by the Germans in the winters of WW1, when food was rare and scarce. I have decided to donate to War Child because I want to commemorate old wars to help save the people of modern wars. In these mournful times, the children are the most vulnerable. As a child myself, I have decided to help them.

It's a WW1 soldier's diet - based largely on bread and turnips.

Breakfast: two slices of bread (no butter), one cup of coffee with a spoonful of sugar but no milk.

Lunch: Soup with meat and turnip chopped in, peas and beans added.

Cup of coffee, two slices of bread.

Supper: Cheese, two slices of bread, water.

Snacks: Nuts and berries

War Child is striving for a world in which no child's life is torn apart by war. They protect, educate and stand up for the rights of children living in war zones. By making a donation, you will be making a difference to thousands of children whose lives have been turned upside-down by conflict. You'll help War Child provide the emergency care and support they need to overcome the emotional and physical toll of conflict, as well as access to services to catch up on lost education that will help to transform their futures for the better.

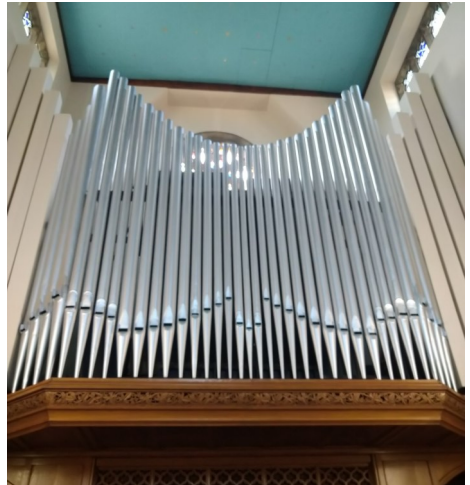
Donations can be made through JustGiving.

Theo Wheat

HARVEST SERVICE

Our Harvest Service will be on Sunday 9 October. Please bring contributions for the Food Bank. The most urgent needs are for:

Long life fruit juice, tinned fruit, tinned rice pudding, washing machine tablets, washing up liquid, biscuits, toiletries, tinned veg, chocolate and treats, UHT milk, nappies (size 6 and above).



THE WIDER CHURCH JUBILEE

On 1st October the URC celebrates the 50 years Jubilee of its inauguration. From 10am-12.30pm at United Reformed Church House, a free Open Church House event will be held, with dozens of activities and crafts related to the jubilee. Then, there will be a Walk to Westminster between Church House and Methodist Central Hall, where the Uniting Assembly took place in October 1972. The Service of Thanksgiving and Celebration for the five decades of the URC begins at Westminster Central Hall at 2.30pm. A special choir is being gathered for a wonderful variety of voices to lead the worship together. Two thousand free tickets have been issued for the Service and the Open Church House Event.

ECO-CHURCH

The URC is happy to reveal that all 13 Synods have divested from fossil fuels. This achievement comes after North Western and East Midlands Synods joined 35 faith institutions from seven countries in announcing their divestment from fossil fuel companies on 5 July. This latest divestment announcement includes faith institutions in Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Ireland, the UK and the US.

LUNCH CLUB

Food Cycle are going to run a weekly lunch club at the Broomhall Centre, starting on Wednesday 29th September, for the benefit of elderly and lonely people. They are looking for guests and volunteers, who could be cooks or hosts.

THINKING SCIENCE, THINKING FAITH

This was to be a conference hosted by Progressive Christianity Network Britain in 2020 but it had to be postponed and eventually cancelled. However, the idea persisted and has been reborn into a series of online lectures.

Wednesday 19th October @ 19.30 (BST)

Progressive Christianity & Climate change led by Dr. Richard Baker

Wednesday 26th October @ 19.30 (BST) Current Issues in Medical Ethics led by Emeritus Professor Ian Cooke (Sheffield)

Wednesday 2nd November @ 19.30 (GMT) Thinking Science, Thinking Faith led by Professor Andrew Steane, Professor of Physics (Oxford)

You can now register for this webinar series at <https://www.pcnbritain.org.uk/events/detail/science-faith>

THE LORDS PRAYER HYMN VERSION

Douglas composed this version to the tune Aurelia by Samuel Sebastian Wesley, which we usually use for 'The Church's one foundation'. We have sung it several times in our service.

O God our loving Father,
Who reigns in heaven supreme,
We praise your name all-holy
In this our joyful theme.
So bring to earth your Kingdom,
Inspire us from above,
That we may feel your presence,
Your healing power and love.

Endue us, Lord, with wisdom,
That we your will may know,
And guide our faithful footsteps
To follow you, and grow
More humble and obedient,
And pray to you as one,
That, Lord, just as in heaven
On earth your will be done.

With living bread sustain us
Both now and every day,
And treat us, Lord, with mercy,
If we should go astray.
Help us forgive each other
And keep our conscience true,
That we may love our neighbour
As you would have us do.

Should evil thoughts surround us,
Or if we tend to harm,
Deliver us from evil,
And keep our spirits calm.
Your kingdom stands for ever,
As we our voices raise
In joyful acclamation
All glory, power and praise!

Douglas Jones
19th January 2022

THE END OF THE LINE-3

At 07.00 on Thursday 4 August, Advanced, a private company providing digital services to NHS 111, spotted a cyber attack on its servers across the whole of the UK. Those of us arriving at work that morning found ourselves suddenly unable to use the internet for sending prescription referrals, sending information to A&E departments or walk-in centres, making GP or out-of-hours appointments or dispatching emergency ambulances.

It was two days before the Secretary of State for Health, Steve Barclay, responded to the attack with a tweet stating only that “NHS England has contingency plans in place in areas affected, and disruption to the service is minimal.” Meanwhile, a spokesperson for Advanced admitted that the problem “might not be resolved until next week.”

As I write this, on the morning of Thursday 25 August, our call centre, which covers Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, and North East and South East London, is still operating our contingency plans. Where we used to have just 20 seconds between calls, long minutes are now spent laboriously completing “action sheets” in pen and ink, which are then printed off, stapled to printed reports of the telephone consultation, and sorted into one of six labelled trays. These are then picked up either by one of our clinicians who will phone the patient to offer expert medical advice, or by another member of staff who will phone the appropriate service to respond to the patient’s need.

Once a case is closed, I or one of my colleagues will check that the completed paper record matches an electronically saved or scanned record, and the hard copy is filed according to the date of the call, and the patient’s name and locality. When normality is eventually restored, all those thousands of records will have to be entered manually onto the NHS 111 system and uploaded to the national servers so that they can be added to our patients’ medical records. More than one person has commented that “It’s like being back in the Dark Ages,” by which they probably meant the 1990s.

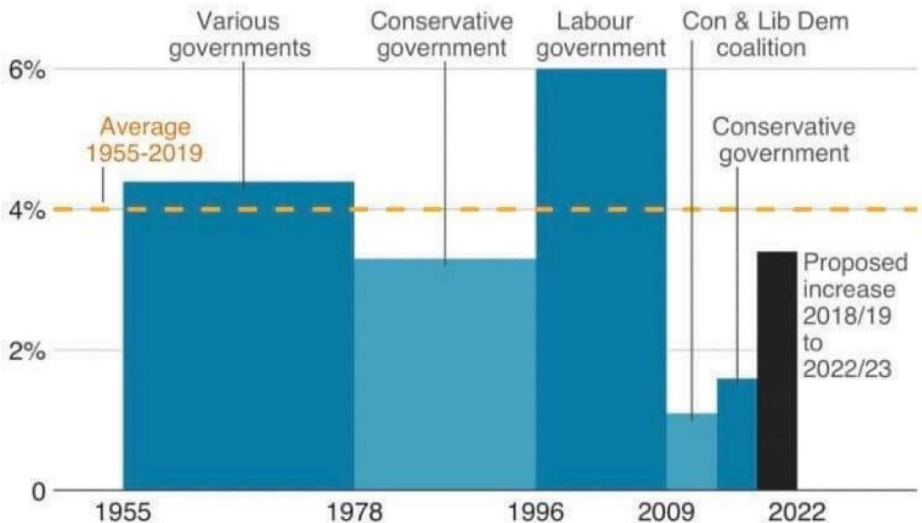
We hope that disruption to the patient’s side of the service is indeed, as Mr Barclay stated, “minimal” – we are certainly doing our utmost to keep it that way – but the disruption to our side is undeniably significant. Call waiting times have become noticeably longer, shift managers seem hardly ever to go home, mountains of carefully filed paperwork are piling up, and we are all very, very tired.

On the other hand, the spirit of comradeship and cooperation in our call centre has never been higher. I know far more of my colleagues' names than I did before the attack, and professional friendships have been greatly strengthened. Seemingly out of thin air, general offerings of crisps, chocolate biscuits and even pizza appear from time to time on the central table, while every so often the air will fill with the aroma of someone's discreetly ordered take-away.

Whatever may be going on in government, or in the senior echelons of NHS management, I will not hear a word against the frontline staff: those who interact directly with our patients, whether on the phone or face-to-face. I leave you to ponder this bar-chart...

Robert Beard

Average annual increase in government spending on health, based on 2019/20 prices



Source: IFS

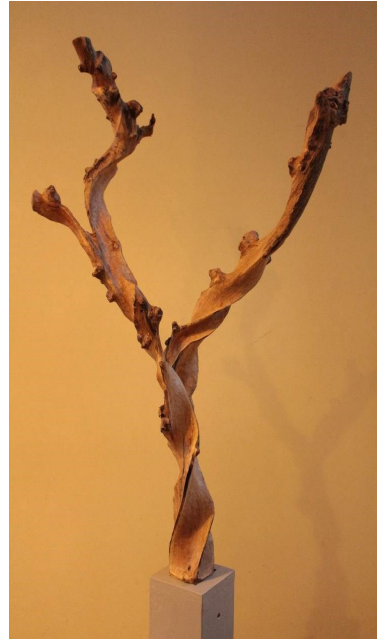
BBC

**HOPE, ART & SANCTUARY –
An Exhibition in aid of Assist Sheffield**

6 – 8 September

The exhibition will be held in Highfield Trinity Methodist Church on London Road close to Highfield Library. It will be open from 11 am to 5 pm on **Thursday 6 and Friday 7 October. On Saturday 8 October** it will be open again from 11 am culminating in an auction at 6:30 pm of the items which have not been sold already.

This sculpture is where the idea for this exhibition started. The attractive contorted willow tree in our garden died in the bitterly cold January of 2010. I kept the remains of the tree because the shapes were fascinating. I found this piece especially fascinating and spent about two or three years working on it. I then realised that it looked a lot better if it was mounted. However, by the time it was mounted it stood about 7 foot high and was too large to go anywhere in our house.



This developed into the idea of an exhibition of my carvings over the past 40 years. The whole venture received a major boost when my friend and neighbour Kevin Bonnett accepted my invitation to show some of his superb photographs. It became evident that there is a creative overlap in the approach each of us take to our work. Kevin says of his work: “My primary aspiration is towards creative work where the visual individuality of the image stands for **itself** and stimulates some (implicit) dialogue with the viewer. Where elements of abstraction or ambiguity dominate the image, this aims to provoke a creative response from the viewer in terms of their own emotion or imagination, which may or may not coincide with my own motivation for creating the picture”.

Most of my work is abstract. I find that what I am doing is exploring what seems to be emerging from the wood itself. I probably spend as much time looking and wondering what to do as I do in the actual carving. You will notice that the titles I have given to the pieces are generally designed to make it easy for the viewer to put their own interpretation on it. For example the big carving illustrated at the head of this article is called “Ascending Willow”. It was the first carving I made from the remains of the contorted willow and people can and do put very different interpretations on it. I think the exhibition will be richer for having the contrasting media combined with some similarity in our approach.

You can view up the items which will be on display in the exhibition on our website – hopeartsanctuary.co.uk

We hope that this will be more than just an opportunity to look at and perhaps buy some interesting photographs and carvings. Art has the great advantage that it does not have to use words. It can give expression to our innermost and often incoherent fears, hopes, desires, aspirations. We live in an age which is anxious, with good reason, with the climate and refugees being close to the top of that list. Yet human beings continue obstinately to hope for and work for better days and a more just world. This is reflected in the title of the exhibition starting with Hope, finishing with Sanctuary.

This is what led us to decide that all the profits from the exhibition should go to Assist Sheffield. ASSIST Sheffield works with people who are seeking sanctuary and who have been refused asylum. They provide accommodation, information and other support. They are a charity and rely on volunteers, grants and the generosity of the people of Sheffield and the surrounding area. People who are refused asylum and, as a result, are made destitute feel dehumanised and degraded by the experience. ASSIST aims to give them the resources, support and dignity they deserve.

The need for their help only increases as events in Ukraine remind us so agonizingly. There will be the opportunity to learn more about the work of Assist at the exhibition. More information about Assist can be found at assistsheffield.org.uk. I'm sure you will feel that this is an organisation which deserves our generous support.

Michael Bayley



MEET THE NEIGHBOURS - Street Party 2022

It all began when some of us on Cemetery Road said what a shame we didn't know the people who lived in Pearl Street behind. Should we run a street party to get to know them? While some of us have lived here for over 40 years, those in the modern Pearl Street houses belonging to South Yorkshire Housing Association have come much more recently and from many countries.

We ran the scheme past other neighbours, who were equally enthusiastic, and so we began to share ideas for food and entertainment. There would be hand made bunting across the street, gazebos and sunshades. Counts were made of the number of chairs and tables needed, and we did a house to house call on all the properties in Pearl Street to gauge the uptake. We met only friendly people, who were keen on a celebration and that encouraged us to go ahead.

Enthusiasm and excitement grew: large scale catering took place and fiendish quizzes and children's activities were devised. Our local Tesco and Sheffield United kindly offered prizes and the Housing Association made a generous donation towards the party.

The day turned out blazing hot and sunshades and gazebos were essential, not to mention a paddling pool for the little ones. Jim Dimond brought his band to play. It seemed that everyone had made food to share so there were authentic pakoras, samosas and Jamaican fried chicken, as well as mouth watering puddings and cakes of all kinds. Some neighbours came briefly, some stayed all afternoon. The event was such a huge success that we're already planning next year's party.

Monica Hanna



FAVOURITE HYMNS

On Sunday 14 August we held another service of well loved hymns and people generously responded and told us why these hymns meant so much to them.

Angel Voices

This hymn expresses how important the element of music is in our worship, especially here at St Andrew's. We appreciate very much our music and the work of Douglas and the choir. Not only in church, music is uplifting to the spirits and the soul and can perfectly capture, or create, a transcendent moment.

Music has always been a part of my life, including hymns - from learning simple children's hymns and carols (like *Away in a Manger*), and morning assembly in primary school - and I find it hard to understand any form of faith that thinks music is unholy.

At St Andrew's we do like hymns with meaningful words as well as good tunes, and the words and the music here combine to enhance each other. I like the way that in v 3 it refers to all forms of art, which reminds us that God can be found and expressed and worshipped in many different ways. [This same hymn started the Radio 4 service this morning from Edinburgh at Festival time.]

These words humbly express to God our praise, wonder and gratitude. We may or may not have angelic voices but let us raise them now in praise.

Elizabeth Draper

Love Divine All Loves Excelling

Being brought up in the Methodist Church, often attending three sessions on a Sunday, I was exposed to hymns by Charles Wesley from an early age. When we were deciding which hymns to have for our wedding, *Love Divine* is one of the ones we chose. Since 1976 it has been continually chosen for special family occasions, both happy and sad.

Elizabeth Cousley

Be still for the presence of the Lord

It's difficult to choose one special hymn since there are so many that I could pick for all sorts of reasons. When posed with this question the one which popped into my head happened to be "*Be still for the presence of the lord*". I usually take ages to make decisions about anything but this time I decided that this was the one and I'd stick with it!!

On reflection I couldn't remember any specific time when this contemporary hymn was particularly special to me, rather it was the feeling that it evokes whenever I hear it or just think of it. There is no doubt that it has a powerful, calming effect on me. It often comes to mind when I'm alone - often in the countryside and usually when I most need it. It is very lovely. I hope you will enjoy singing it here with me today.

Barbara MacMillan

By Cool Siloam's Shady Rill

This hymn often comes into my head. As with most hymns, I remember the tune but only the first two lines of the verse.

I had no idea what or where Siloam was. I have discovered that it was a large holy pool, one of several, cut out of rock. It is situated to the south east outside the walls of the old city of Jerusalem. Some archaeologists think that it was the original site of the old city. Siloam was known as the Lower Pool, and was originally fed by a spring to which the word rill may refer. In John chapter 9 in the New Testament Jesus heals the blind man at Siloam. The pool of Siloam was destroyed in the first Jewish-Roman war, and was completely covered up. It was accidentally rediscovered in 2004 during excavation work on a sewer, and has been partly exposed.

This hymn being soothing and gentle is often chosen for baptisms.

Isabel Sandland

Hushed was the evening hymn

As a favourite hymn this goes back to my being in Junior School. My favourite teacher was retiring and we sang her favourite hymn in assembly. The hymn has stuck with me ever since and it was sung at my children's christenings.

I think the main message here is that we don't have to be powerful, rich and famous, because it is much more important to listen, learn and take up the challenge of life. Children and young people can often have a clearer vision of the way forward as they are not weighed down by the various baggages that people acquire as they go through life.

On researching this hymn, I discovered that it was written by James Drummond Burns, who was born in Edinburgh in 1823. He graduated from Edinburgh University to become a Presbyterian Minister and he wrote various hymns and poems, of which this is the most well-known.

Linda Callear

And can it be that I should gain?

The hymn Kathleen and I have chosen for this morning's service is one by Charles Wesley. Along with very many people who watch 'Songs of Praise' on the BBC, it is one of our favourite hymns. There is a very interesting story attached to the writing of this hymn which I would like to share with you.

Charles Wesley was born in the village of Epworth between Doncaster and Scunthorpe, one of 18 children to the rector of the parish church! He was home educated by his mother and was able to speak Latin and understand Greek and French before going to Westminster School and Christ Church College, Oxford and then becoming a parish priest in the Church of England. Later in life Charles helped his brother John to create Methodism, although Charles remained in the Church of England all his life.

In the early part of his ministry Charles struggled with the form of his Christian beliefs. This struggle came to a head in 1738 while in London at Aldersgate. He was attending meetings when he felt, as he said later, “my heart strangely warmed”. It was after this experience in these meetings that everything to do with his Christian beliefs started to take a new direction and become amazingly clear to him. Although he had always been a firm believer in Christianity, he now saw that he was **Justified** before God by his **Faith** in Christianity alone, and not by anything else. He felt this was the vital key that had been missing in his earlier beliefs and this to him was a “personal” conversion to Christianity. Shortly afterwards he wrote this hymn to tell of his new understanding. It is a particular type of hymn in that Charles poses, at a very personal level, a series of rhetorical questions and answers to his new-found belief.

In verse 1, his astonishment at his new understanding becomes vividly clear:

“Amazing love! How can it be / That thou, my God, shouldst die for me?”

However, it is his new confidence shown in verse 4 that many mention, time and again, as having been a great help to them:

I woke, the dungeon flamed with light, / my chains fell off, my heart was free,

I rose, went forth, and followed thee.

and he finishes the hymn with a mighty flourish:

Bold I approach the eternal throne / and claim the crown, through Christ, my own.

This hymn by Charles Wesley has travelled well from a time long past and continues to inspire many people today.

Raymond and Kathleen Smyth

O God of Love, to Thee we bow

Next month, Isabel and I will have been married for 60 years. Our wedding was in Erskine Church, Burntisland, Fife and the two hymns we chose were “The Lord’s my Shepherd” and “O God of Love, to Thee we bow”. The former is in Rejoice and Sing and we certainly know it very well, but the latter is not so well-known. It is contained in the marriage section of The Church Hymnary of 1927 and is a lovely hymn by William Vaughan Jenkins. The tune, “Erskine”, which is not in R&S either, was, I am told by Douglas, written by William Henry Gladstone, the son of the former Prime Minister, and it was obviously a favourite at Erskine Church.

After the service I said to my new wife “You sang beautifully, Darling”, and she said “Yes, I heard you singing too”.

Alan Sandland

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah

This is probably the most popular Welsh hymn, written by William Williams and later translated by Peter, William and John Williams.

When published in 1762 it consisted of six verses and its original title, when translated into English, was 'Prayer for strength to pass through life's wilderness.' Various versions followed, combining elements of some of the verses, and to-day we have the three-verse version with which we are so familiar. It powerfully reflects the biblical theme of 'exodus' as a metaphor for our pilgrimage through life and death to the promised land.

The tune Cwm Rhondda, which means Rhondda Valley, was composed by John Hughes for the annual Baptist Singing Festival at Pontypridd in 1905. It immediately became very popular and it is said that by 1930 it had been sung at 5,000 such festivals. However, the composer guarded the copyright jealously so the hymn did not appear in British hymn books in his lifetime. Happily, it is now available to us, and the strong conviction in the words combined with a stirring tune makes it a fine, uplifting sing.

Bill Smyllie

Ye holy angels bright

I grew up in the small Worcestershire town of Stourport-on-Severn, which is about 4 miles from the somewhat larger town of Kidderminster. Whenever I went to Kidderminster, as I often did, and walked past the town hall, my attention was inevitably drawn to the rather imposing statue of Richard Baxter which stood right outside it.

Richard Baxter (1615-1691) was a puritan divine, who lived through some turbulent times in English political and ecclesiastical history. He was ordained in 1638 and spent three years teaching at Bridgnorth Grammar School. At that time, the so-called Long Parliament was concerned with reforming the clergy, and appointed a committee to receive complaints against them. Among the complainants were the inhabitants of Kidderminster. The vicar agreed that he would give £60 a year, out of his income of £200, to a preacher who should be chosen by certain trustees. Richard Baxter was invited to preach, and was unanimously elected to the position of curate at St Mary and All Saint's Church in April 1641 at the age of 26. He spent 19 years in the town, and during this time established his reputation as a theological writer, publishing among other works, *The Reformed Pastor*. He is well remembered for the many reforms which he accomplished in Kidderminster and the area around it. The United Reformed Church in the town is known as Baxter Church, as was the Congregational Church which preceded it. Richard Baxter's statue is no longer outside the town hall. During the 1970s the town centre was

redeveloped, and his statue was moved to a new position near the parish church where he ministered. In some ways this is a more appropriate place for it, but it is now outside the town centre and beside a busy dual carriageway, which means that there is less opportunity for the casual passer-by to become acquainted with it.

Apart from what he did in Kidderminster, Richard Baxter spent some time as a chaplain to one of Cromwell's regiments. At the restoration of the monarchy he became chaplain to Charles II, and was offered the Bishopric of Hereford, but declined it. On the passing of the Act of Uniformity, he ceased active ministry in the Church of England, but continued preaching as a Nonconformist minister and gave lectures in London.

A hymn beginning 'Ye holy angels bright' originally appeared in *The Poor Man's Family Book*, published by Baxter in 1674. It has undergone a great deal of change in the version of it which we sing nowadays. Baxter's original hymn had 16 verses. There is no evidence of its having been used as a hymn for public worship until the 19th century. The person most responsible for shortening and adapting what Baxter wrote was John Gurney, and other changes were made by Richard Chope. Our hymn book attributes verse 3 (which does not appear in Baxter's hymn) to Gurney, though there is some doubt about this attribution.

Most hymn books have only the first four verses. I think that the compilers of *Rejoice and Sing* are to be commended for including verse 5. I am often disappointed with the versions of hymns given in our hymn book. But in the case of 'Ye holy angels bright', I think they have done a very fine job.

I particularly like this hymn because of the picture it gives of the whole of creation joining together in the praise of God. Verse 1 begins with the angels in the presence of God, and in the next verse the souls of the departed join with them in praise. Verse 3 then moves to the earthly sphere and summons the faithful to the praise of the heavenly king. In verse 4 the individual worshipper invokes his own soul to praise God for what he has done. The final verse calls upon the whole of creation to join in this praise.

The hymn is sung to a tune written by John Darwall (1731-89) for Psalm 148, which is very appropriate, since Psalm 148 is about the angels together with humans and the whole of the created order joining together in the praise of God.

David Stec

Bookings are now open for this year's **SHEFFIELD WALKING FESTIVAL**, taking place from 9 - 18 September. It offers 34 walks, ranging from 1 mile to 15 miles, covering the whole of the city, from the centre, into the leafy suburbs and out into the Peak District. All the walks can be booked through Eventbrite at <https://www.welcometosheffield.co.uk/walkingfestival>.

Exactly half the walks qualify as suitable for Heritage Open Days, and places can also be booked through the HOD website at <https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk>.

All walks are free to attend, but only assistance dogs are allowed on festival walks.

HERITAGE OPEN DAY is on Saturday 10th September. HOD is England's largest festival of history and culture, when thousands of people come together to celebrate their heritage, community and history. Do have a look on their website to see the great variety of places open in our region for a visit.

STAMP ALERT

The Royal Mail now issues stamps with a bar code on them which can be read by computer and so speed up the sorting operation.

From 31 January 2023 non-bar-coded stamps will not be used, although Christmas stamps without barcodes and special collection stamps could still be used. You may face an extra charge if you try to send mail with the old stamps after the deadline 31 January, and there is a £2 charge for sending a letter without postage.

LECTIONARY READINGS for September 2022

August 28	Proverbs 25 : 6-7; Psalm 112 ; Hebrews 13 : 1-8 , 15-16 ; Luke 14: 1 and 7-14
September 4	Deuteronomy 30 : 15-20; Psalm 1 ; Philemon 1-21; Luke 14 : 25-33
September 11	Exodus 32 : 7-14; Psalm 51 :1-10; 1 Timothy 1 : 12-17; Luke 15 :1-10
September 18	Amos 8 : 4-7; Psalm 113 ; 1 Timothy 2 :1-7; Luke 16 :1-13
September 25	Amos 6 : 1a, 4-7; Psalm 146 ; 1 Timothy 6 : 6-19; Luke 16 : 19-31
October 2	Habakkuk 1 :1-4; 2 :1-4; Psalm 37 : 1-9; 2 Timothy 1 : 1-14; Luke 17 : 5-10