



The Aldershot and North Camp Anchor

Issue 51: Sunday 27th June 2021



Dear Friends,

Love it or loathe it, I guess that it's difficult to escape the fact that there is an international football competition going on at the moment. The Euro 20 competition (played, of course, a year later than its name suggests) is filling our television screens for many hours a day. At the time of writing, it's not clear if the England fans' chant of 'Football's coming home' will turn out to be a false hope. We will have to wait and see.

In 1966, when I was nine years old, I can remember watching the first half of the World Cup final with my father. At some point during the match, I decided that it would be more fun to go outside and kick a ball around in the garden. My nine-year old logic said that this was a good choice as I would have plenty of future opportunities to watch England win the World Cup! How wrong can you be? Over 50 years later I am still waiting to see if, this time, football is actually 'coming home'.

The image of 'coming home' is an important one. We all need a place where we can feel safe and secure. Home should be a place where we can know we are accepted and loved and a place where we can 'be ourselves'. When such a place of safety and acceptance is not part of our experience, we have lost something very precious.

This practical truth about our lives gives us a glimpse into a spiritual truth. As well as a physical home, we also have a natural longing for a spiritual home. In Luke chapter 15 we can read the story that Jesus tells about the Prodigal Son. This young man left home for a distant place and, having made a number of unwise choices, he found himself distressed and physically hungry. In the story that Jesus tells, it was at this point that

the young man 'came to his senses' (Luke 15 v 17) and decided to return home. He was longing not only for physical food at his father's table, but also the experience of healed and renewed relationships. The young man doesn't know what sort of reception he will get from his father. He journeys home anxiously rehearsing what he will say – only to find his father running towards him and greeting him so warmly that the young man doesn't have time to say all that he has prepared.

Jesus tells the story because is it a story about coming home not just physically but also spiritually. We may be anxious about our relationship with God, aware that our lives have not always been lived as they should have been – but whenever we turn back towards God, ready to ask for His forgiveness, we will find a loving, welcoming and accepting Father.

Football may or may not be coming home – but the invitation to 'come home to God' is offered to each one of us with each new day.

Yours in His service

Worship Reflection

Praise the Lord. Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love endures for ever. (Palm 106 v 2)

Hymn (StF 564 v 1 and 2)

O thou who camest from above
the fire celestial to impart,
kindle a flame of sacred love
on the mean altar of my heart!



There let it for thy glory burn
with inextinguishable blaze,
and trembling to its source return
in humble prayer and fervent praise.

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, draw close to us and help us to draw closer to you, so that we may know and love you better and follow more faithfully as your disciples. Amen

Bible Reading (John 20 v 19-29)

¹⁹ When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the

Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." ²² When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

Reflection

This Sunday is known within the British Methodist Church as 'Conference Sunday'. It is the Sunday which falls during the meeting of the annual Conference, and it marks the day when ordination services are held for Methodist Ministers – both Presbyters and Deacons. The Gosepl reading above is the one used in the ordination service for Presbyters. Last year's ordination services were delayed by Covid restrictions, but this year's ordinations are due to go ahead on Sunday in a socially distanced way.

When I was ordained in 1987, the pattern for Conference was different. I was ordained on a Tuesday evening. I sometimes say that I was ordained overseas, and this is true - as long as the Ferry trip to the in the Isle of Wight is counted as a sea voyage! When I was ordained, I was serving in a circuit on the Eastern edge of London in the Barking and Dagenham area. There were two of us from the Circuit being ordained in Ryde that year and the circuit organised a coach trip of members from the churches to the service. They enjoyed their day out and, having got off the passenger ferry that ran at the time, they shared fish and chips on Ryde beach before walking into Ryde for the ordination service.



In the ordination service, the President (or a former President) of the Methodist Conference prays for each ordinand, saying, "Father, send the Holy Spirit upon [Name of ordinand] for the office and work of a Presbyter in your Church". This prayer links with the words of the risen Jesus in our Bible reading when Jesus says to his disciples "Receive the Holy Spirit".

It is a special moment for the ordinand and their family, but it is also a reminder that each one of us needs to receive the power of the Holy Spirit if we are to be able to respond to the call of God upon our lives.

As we look ahead to exploring what lies beyond the lockdown, each one of us is challenged to be open to God's call on our life and to pray for the power of the Holy Spirit so that we can respond to that call.

What is God calling you to do in this new stage of the life of the church and of our world?

Prayers of Intercession

This week let us pray especially:

- For the people of Brazil where the Covid virus is spreading rapidly
- For the Methodist Conference meeting both on-line and face to face.

Gracious God, we ask these prayers through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord and Saviour. Amen

Hymn (StF 564 v 3 and 4)

Jesus, confirm my heart's desire
to work, and speak, and think for thee;
still let me guard the holy fire,
and still stir up the gift in me.



Ready for all thy perfect will,
my acts of faith and love repeat;
till death thy endless mercies seal,
and make the sacrifice complete

Final Prayer: May the grace of God always surround us, enriching our lives seasoning our words and shaping our actions, and so may we live always to his praise and glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Circuit Service.

An open-air Circuit Service is being planned for Monday 19th July to say farewell to Chris and Joy Blake and to celebrate the achievement of five newly accredited Local Preachers. Assuming that Covid restrictions are lifted the previous day, we plan to gather to sing and without numbers being limited. The service will be held at 'Little Oakley', Boundary Road, Dockenfield, GU10 4EU (not far from Alice Holt Forest). The service is due to start at 7.00 p.m. and the garden will be open from 5.30 p.m. – do bring a picnic and meet others before the service. If the weather is wet, the service will take place at North Camp Methodist Church. Tickets are not required, but, to help planning, please let one of the Church Stewards know if you are expecting to be at the service.

Bible Readings: © Biblica 2011. Some prayers taken from "2000 prayers for public worship" by Nick Fawcett. CCLI No 000295.