

Wilbraham St Ninian's United Reformed Church

*Egerton Rd South, Chorlton-cum-Hardy,
Manchester*

July - August 2016

We thank you, God, for blossom:
its beauty reflects the harvest yet to come.

We thank you, God, for strawberries:
their fullness reminds us of your grace.

We thank you, God, for raspberries:
they are worth the toil to protect them from the
birds.

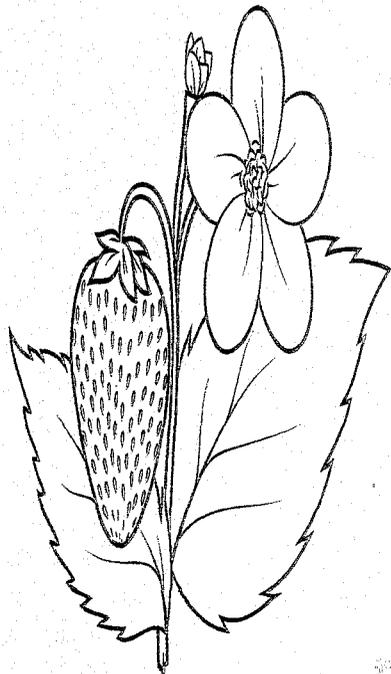
We thank you, God, for bilberries:
so small and delicate, yet in clumps so rich.

We thank you, God, for apples:
so familiar and reliable, like your care for us.

We thank you, God, for blackberries:
not fruit from our labour – but we collect them
anyway.

Thank you, God, for your abundant love.

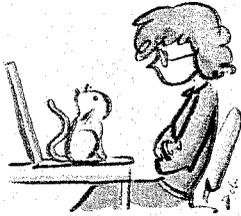
Elizabeth Kime in "Bare Feet and Buttercups", WGRG



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From the Editor



Halfway through 2016 it feels like it has been a year of non-stop momentous events: deaths of famous and beloved people, natural disasters, acts of terror, the rise of the far right in Europe and now “Brexit” and its messy aftermath. It’s enough to make anyone lose hope in the future.

I subscribe to “Daily Devotions” - a Bible reading, reflection and prayer sent to my phone first thing every morning. It’s amazing how often the readings reflect recent events.

The morning after the murder of Jo Cox MP the reading was Isaiah 57:1-13 beginning:

“The righteous perish, and no one takes it to heart;
the devout are taken away, while no one understands.”

Spot on, Isaiah, I thought. And this week, as MPs on all sides were busy betraying friendships and making their bids for power, the reading was Jeremiah 23:16-22, with its bracing warning against false prophets:

“Thus says the Lord of hosts: Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you; they are deluding you. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord. They keep saying to those who despise the word of the Lord, ‘It shall be well with you’; and to all who stubbornly follow their own stubborn hearts, they say, ‘No calamity shall come upon you.’”

Isaiah and Jeremiah are two of the books in the Old Testament that, along with Psalms and Job, contain the frequent occurrences of the word “hope”. Slightly surprising - Job and Jeremiah are usually considered among the most miserable books of the Bible!

In the Hebrew Bible there are about 8 different words that can be translated as “hope” - to make things more complicated they can also be translated as other things! In the Hebrew language Hope is something that binds people together - there is a sense of community, a shared hope (as you might expect from a people in exile or from the ones left behind.)

So the Hebrew concept of “hope” has a number of elements:

Waiting:

Hope has an element of waiting for something:

Psalm 130: verse 5 says “I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope”

Future focus:

Proverbs 23:18: “Surely there is a future and your hope will not be cut off”

Trust

Hope often involves trust; indeed it can be almost synonymous with “trust” or “having faith”

Psalm 71:5: “For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth”

Expectation

Proverbs 10:28: “The hope of the righteous ends in gladness, but the expectation of the wicked comes to nothing”

Active Looking

Above all, hope is an active looking; “hope” is something you DO, not something that is done to you.

In the Old Testament hope is often about looking for relief from some hardship or sorrow - certainly the Psalms, Jeremiah, Lamentations were all written during a period of exile from Jerusalem.

So in these strange times, why should we hope?

We hope and trust because what has happened in the past helps us to trust now. And we read that witness of hope in the Scriptures I have quoted from. They, and others like them, may seem very pessimistic, because they acknowledge and confront the darkness in the world and in human hearts. And yet they have expressions of hope at their very centre. They capture the inner experience of people in times of crisis.

Hope is an act of rebellion, a defiant response in times of crisis

Wishing you all a peaceful and hopeful summer,

Mel

News Round up

Family News

Congratulations are due to **Mario Posada**, who, after many years' residence in the UK, has obtained his UK citizenship. He is putting his new passport to use this July, as he returns to Colombia, where he was born and grew up, to take up a new job bringing the Arts to life in the district around Venecia, where he and **Sue** have a house. This will mean long periods of time away from **Sue**, **Lauren** and **Nadia**; however they are planning an extended visit over the summer. We send our good wishes and prayers to **Mario** and the family as they enter this new phase of their lives.

Those of our young people at University have successfully completed another year and are all working at summer jobs and looking forward to their holidays. **Nadia Posada** has finished her first year at Liverpool John Moores University studying Events Marketing and Management, and working at Anfield Football Club. **Rosa Hall** is working as a Senior Mentor for the National Citizenship Service (NCS), and then has been called up for Jury Service in August! **Rowena Salmon** is using her talent for photography, also for the NCS, and working for Oxfam at various music festivals round the country. **Rosa Pearks** remains in London, working over the summer after a successful first year at Central St Martins' studying textile design and meeting her hero, potter, artist and broadcaster **Grayson Perry**.

Gwenver Salmon is working for an engineering firm down in Bristol, **Lauren Posada** is working for a recruitment agency and **Susan Burton** is working for a travel firm, selling river cruises (anyone interested should contact her mum!). **Adam Burton** recently successfully completed a period of work experience with "One Education" in Manchester. **Alex Hall** has finished her AS level examinations and is currently doing the rounds of universities with her exhausted parents.

We wish all our young people well in whatever they choose to do in the future.

Rev Raj Patta has successfully completed his second year of study for his Doctorate in Theology and Religion at the University of Manchester. Raj is the Honorary Lutheran Chaplain at St. Peter's. He and his wife and sons regularly worship at St. Peter's Church and Chaplaincy.

It was disappointing to have to cancel the trip to the Windermere Centre in September but too few of the morning congregation were able to attend on the dates suggested by Philip and the point of the trip was to allow afternoon and morning congregations to get to know each other better. A big thank you to Philip Jones who took the time and trouble to attempt to organise the venture.

An Update from Andy Braunston:

Between February and May I worked each week in the Sunderland and Bolden Partnership. These four congregations, and a Mission Project, are served by the Revd Dr David Whiting and Church Related Community Worker Helen Stephenson. They are a microcosm of much of the URC set in a town which has changed much over the years and which has more than its fair share of problems. One of the buildings was built as a Presbyterian Cathedral and is quite striking. Each of the congregations is small and I was made very welcome indeed.

Over the Summer I will be undertaking a 10 week placement in Edinburgh in a church which has just gone into vacancy as its minister has received a call to serve our most northerly church in Kirkwall in Orkney. I am looking forward this opportunity to be in Edinburgh for the festival. In addition I will be at General Assembly as the Scottish College Student (as well as helping facilitate the participation of the North Western Synod Reps and I will be at Windermere for a few days to take part in a Summer School for ministerial students from each of the three Colleges.

My final placement, after I have stepped down as Synod Clerk, will be in South Manchester and start in October. I have now completed my personal profile and will be meeting with the Moderators in September prior to seeking an introduction to a pastorate in the autumn. This is an exciting time for us but it still feels odd not to know where the next step of the journey will take us

Dates & Rotas

Sun July 3	Rev Dr Walter Houston
Sun July 10	Rev Raj Patta
Sun July 17	Worship Group: Chris Burton
Sun July 24	Worship Group: Ella Burton
Monday July 25	Elders' Meeting 7:30 at W St N
Sun July 31	Rev Fleur Houston Joint Service with the Methodists at Wilbraham St Ninians
Sun August 7	Worship Group: Melanie Hall
Sun August 14	Rev Dr Adam Scott
Sun August 21	Rev Valerie Davies
Sun August 28	Rev Dr Jack McKelvey
Sun September 4	Worship Group

The church is open every Thursday morning 10.00am – 12.00pm, offering quiet space for prayer and reflection.

We are grateful to those people who are able to offer a hand and a willing ear to visitors.

Please look and listen out in Church for notices of forthcoming events

Readers & Readings

Taken from "Roots: Worship and Learning Resources for the Whole Church"

July 3	Chris Burton	<i>Isaiah 66:10-14; Psalm 66:1-9; Galatians 6:(1-6),7-16; Luke 10:1-11,16-20</i>
July 10	Sue Posada	<i>Deuteronomy 30:9-14; Psalm 25:1-10; Colossians 1:1-14; Luke 10:25-37</i>
July 17	Joyce Henry	<i>Genesis 18:1-10a; Psalm 15; Colossians 1:15-28; Luke 10:38-42</i>
July 24	George Morton	<i>Genesis 18:20-32; Psalm 138; Colossians 2:6-15,(16-19); Luke 11:1-13</i>
July 31	Kevin Meade	<i>Ecclesiastes 1:2,12-14; 2.18-23; Psalm 49:1-12; Colossians 3.1-11; Luke 12:13-21</i>
August 7	Melanie Hall	<i>Genesis 15:1-6; Psalm 33:12-22; Hebrews 11:1-3,8-16; Luke 12:32-40</i>
August 14	Alistair Lyll	<i>Jeremiah 23:23-29; Hebrews 11:29 – 12:2; Psalm 82; Luke 12:49-56</i>
August 21	Ella Burton	<i>Sirach 10:12-18; Proverbs 25:6-7; Psalm 112; Hebrews 13:1-8,15-16; Luke 14:1,7-14</i>
August 28	Brenda Beckett	<i>Deuteronomy 30:15-20; Psalm 1; Philemon 1-21; Luke 14:25-33</i>
September 4	George Morton	<i>Exodus 32:7-14; Psalm 51:1-10; 1 Timothy 1:12-17; Luke 15:1-10</i>

**** Some readings differ from those in the URC Prayer Handbook 2016
"Hidden in Plain Sight"*****

Please check readings with the preacher in good time before the service

Ministerial Deployment Roadshows

The latest Road Shows on Ministerial Deployment have started; 8 meetings are taking place in various parts of the Synod over the next 2 months. The Moderator Andrew Mills wants ideas to come from 'the grass roots'.

Elders from both congregations attended roadshows in Gatley and Hale on 29 June.

At the Hale URC roadshow there was a presentation first; then Elders and Ministers (who had their own group) were divided up into groups of 5 to consider the following questions:-

Discussion 1: Thinking about the situation our Synod and its congregations face.....

1. What are the issues and concerns?
2. How might we cope with this?
3. What might we contribute to this?

Discussion 2:

1. What are your thoughts about future patterns of ministry in the Synod?
2. How are we going to make the offer of sharing existing stipendiary ministers' time with other congregations work? (At the last ministers' summer school it was suggested that over the next 2 years stipendiary ministers in post could offer 25 -30% of their time to help congregations without a minister)

The Moderator wants Elders and the Church Meeting to consider these questions and submit a report before the next Synod Meeting in October. Westminster College also posed the question - 'What do you want us to train Ministers to do?'