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| ALLERTON  CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH |



June 2020 Newsletter

Dear Friends

On the 23rd March 2020 this country was placed into lockdown in response to the threat posed by the Covid-19 coronavirus. Much has changed, and as I write this almost seven weeks later some aspects of lockdown have begun to be eased in England. Sadly over 30,000 people in the UK alone have died from this virus and complications arising from it, and many others have had the virus and suffered with it. Clearly we are living through tough times, and at this stage it is impossible to predict with any certainty when restrictions will be fully lifted.

At present we have made the decision to cancel services and other events until at least the end of July, but it may be for longer than that. We will continue to follow Government advice, and the recommendations of both church denominations and healthcare professionals so as not to put people at unnecessary risk through meeting together too soon. Like many of you I would love to be meeting with you in person for worship and fellowship, but we need to follow the advice. At this time it is important for us to look to God, and to His Word for He alone is the sure foundation for our lives.

Some in the church are talking about a ‘new normal’ and undoubtedly there will be practical considerations for us to implement when we are able to meet together again. However, regardless of our situation or what is going on in the world around us we have a sure and certain Hope in Jesus Christ. In this edition I would like to share with you some thoughts based upon Exodus chapter 14 that tells of God leading his people Israel up out of Egypt, demonstrating that He alone is truly God through His victory over Pharaoh and the Egyptian army. Perhaps before reading on it would be good to read the whole chapter in your Bible.

God told Moses to take the Israelites to a specific location, bordering the Red Sea (verse 2). What we need to understand here is that the position God directs the Israelites to is one that appears to trap them in by the sea. When Pharaoh hears about this he clearly thinks that it would be easy to defeat them. The people of Israel seem to be in a very bad position, but God knew exactly what He was doing, and had a purpose in all this.

Note how God hardened Pharaoh’s heart (verse 8), as He had done on several occasions during Moses’ protracted negotiations with him about the release of the Israelites. Throughout the Scriptures there are a number of examples of God giving individuals several opportunities to repent, before allowing them to reap what they had been sowing for some time. This is exactly what is happening here; Pharaoh could have repented much earlier and acknowledged that the Lord alone is truly God, but he didn’t, and he reaped the appropriate reward for himself and his army.

As Pharaoh and the Egyptian army advance on the Israelites the people look up and realise that they are in danger. They are terrified and start complaining to Moses, as they continue to do throughout the book of Exodus, not having learnt the important lesson that they can completely trust in God, however bad things might seem to be. At this point Moses makes this remarkable statement to them, “Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.” (verses 13 & 14) Logic might have dictated to them that they needed to flee or surrender, but instead God tells them not to fear and stay still.

In those two verses I believe there is a wonderful lesson for us too. First, though, we need to recognise that this is the account of an historical event. In other words God rescued His people Israel from the hands of the Egyptians and showed Pharaoh decisively that He alone is God. This is also a foreshadowing of what is to come over a thousand years later through the actions of God’s Son, Jesus Christ. Salvation is something that God brings about, and it is not reliant on anything that human beings actually do, or even could do.

Salvation is found in Jesus Christ alone. God’s salvation plan was already established well before he saved his people Israel out of Egypt. God brought about his salvation in an event that looked like weakness and failure (the cross of Christ), but instead brought about victory over the twin enemies of sin and death as he raised him back to life on the third day. If we are in Christ then we have nothing to fear, for he has bought salvation for us.

Let’s finally return to the instructions God gave the Israelites, “Fear not, stand firm, and… be silent.” Today as we face the ongoing challenge of lockdown, social distancing, etc., these instructions are ones that we too can follow and rely upon. They don’t provide us with a guarantee that we will not catch the virus or suffer, but they do point us towards the certain hope of salvation in Jesus Christ. God is in control, and is working for His people today. He demonstrates His love for us in Jesus Christ. He cares for us, comforts us and will never leave us nor forsake us. What a wonderful God we follow! So let’s not fear, but rather let’s stand firm in Jesus and be still and know for certain that He alone is God (Psalm 46:10).

Yours, Fred.

Secretary's notes

It is with sadness I report the death of Joyce Bullock on Monday 27th April. I am sure some of you will remember Joyce. Her grandson, Luke Britton rang to let us know the news and asked if the information could go in the next newsletter.

As I understand it, Joyce was a member of the Arnott family who have a long family connection with our Church.

Stay safe. Janet.

Treasurer's notes

Since the beginning of the new Church financial year, following my appeals, a total of £680 has been received from some of our members for which I am extremely grateful at this very difficult time. As we are not sure when we will be resuming our services, if there are any of you who are still considering making your offerings through your bank, the details are as follows: Lloyds Bank sort code 30.91.12. account Allerton Congregational Church, account no. 00229351.

Many thanks. David.

Condolences

Molly Hastings (nee Fisher) passed away peacefully with her sons Ian and Alistair by her side. Molly has been connected with the church for over 80 years and will be sadly missed by all who knew her. Ian, Marion and the family would like to thank you all for your kind messages, cards, thoughts and prayers. We intend to hold a memorial service at church when it is possible to do so.

## Website: allertoncongregationalchurch.org.uk

** facebook.com/allertoncongregationalchurch**

Greetings from Cullingworth with some Allerton Memories

At the beginning of lockdown Rodney was sent a letter from the Drs to say he was on the to stay in list. So with all this lovely weather we have been in the garden (glad we have one), but l am pleased to report this week he has another letter to say he can go for a walk.

So yesterday April 25th we went for a walk on the Cycle Track (over Hewenden Viaduct), standing at the side so we could let a family through on their Bikes. The gentleman looked and said is it Pauline, l said yes. l had to ask him who he was and he said Richard Olby. l think it must be 16yrs since l last saw him, so we had a chat (keeping at a safe distance).

He knew l had got married and lived in Cullingworth. l introduced Rodney by saying Richard’s Mum used to deliver milk with her Father coming round Allerton with a horse and cart, bringing a churn of milk to the door for the milk to be ladeled out in pints to your jug on the door step, snow or sun (those were the days).

Richard reminded me that The Illingworth Family Farm was on the left hand side of Hill Top Lane just behind Ashworths as it was then,

Richard’s Mum was Elsie Olby nee Illingworth.

So for the older friends at Allerton Congs, l cannot have changed so much!! Richard recognised me!

He asked me about Donald Roberts so l told him l had heard this week he had had a heart attack before the virus, (Richard lives in Donald’s old house in Prune Park Lane)

We have all enjoyed the sunshine, the sound of the birds singing, and the fresh air,Just saying Hello to strangers, putting a smile on people’s faces while passing them enjoying their walk,

Rodney enjoys seeing all the dogs again having their walkies, as well,

Let us all think of the people who are working hard in the NHS looking after all these very ill people not being able to enjoy the sunshine,

I think the Lord has helped us get through these first few weeks of the virus with all the lovely weather we have been having to enable us to go into the garden (and do some work if we wish to,) or just sit and enjoy it, or to go for a short walk.

To you all Keep Well and Safe,

Pauline and Rodney,

Every Sunday Services suspended for time being

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