

THE MESSENGER

The magazine of Petts Wood Methodist Church



Harvest Festival

Vol 64. No1., September to November 2020

The Church in Queensway

Minister: Revd. Duncan MacBean

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THE MESSENGER

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QUOTE

We must give more in order to get more. It is the generous giving of ourselves that produces the generous harvest.

Orison Swett Marden

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OUR MINISTER'S LETTER:

by Revd. Duncan MacBean



Musings on my Sabbatical

Dear Friends,

I am finally back from sabbatical and it was an odd experience, to say the least. I considered postponing the start of the sabbatical and I could have done so, but in the end I only delayed the start by 2 weeks. From the time I began sabbatical, I was in lockdown at home like everyone else. Annoyingly, I found it really hard to relax because we have a house-full (6 adults and a 10-year-old child) all going slightly stir crazy from having been in isolation since the middle of March. After a few weeks of this, I realised that I was suffering from a lack of solitude. For me, it has been in silent retreats and in times of solitude that I have had my most significant times of spiritual growth. A particularly meaningful scripture for me is from Isaiah 30:15,

This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says:

“In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it.”

This serves as a solemn reminder to me to do what Jesus so frequently did and, when the pressure of people around me grows so intense that I cannot discern the voice of God, I should make time to be alone and reflect on my relationship with God.

I also came across this quote from the actor Jim Carrey, “Solitude is dangerous. It’s very addictive. It becomes a habit after you realise how calm and peaceful it is. It’s like you don’t want to deal with people anymore because they drain your energy.” I’m certainly not accusing anyone (least of all my family) of draining my energy, but it is true that constant exposure to people and the issues that they face or create can be very draining. Anyone who has gone through a protracted family crisis knows this all too well. You come out of the other side of it worn out, unsure about what ‘normal’ is going to look like after all your deeply-felt pain and lovingly-expended effort.

Sabbatical is not just about recuperation. It is referred to as a ‘gift’ by the Church and it certainly is that. It can allow the minister to reflect on their spiritual journey, to dip into solitude if that is their wont, to spend time on their pain and their journey. I didn’t have the easiest sabbatical and all the plans I had made fell by the wayside, but I have come out of it with clear goals, some of which relate to me alone and others which relate to my work in the Church. I was reminded of an old Jewish

saying: "If you want to hear God laugh, tell Him your plans". My prayer throughout my sabbatical was "Loving God, you know what I need. Please help me to get what I need". My prayer may not have been answered the way I wanted, but I do think it was answered.

Thank you to all the people who kept things running, who continued the work of Church and allowed me to withdraw for a season. I truly appreciate your gift of sabbatical to me.

Shalom,

Duncan

MESSENGER PUBLICATION SCHEDULE FOR 2020

Deadline for Contributions
5th November 2020

Publish:
Sunday

Covering
Dec to Mar 2020

We welcome articles of interest for the Messenger,
please contact the Editor to contribute

WE GATHER TO OFFER WORSHIP TO THE GLORY & PRAISE OF GOD

Our Church was opened for Sunday Worship again from Sunday 16th August at 10.30am, with a service led by Church members, followed by a service on Sunday 23rd August which will be led by Deacon Maureen Spinks.

There will be no service at Church on Sunday 30th August which was planned as a Circuit Service but the video and printed service will be available as usual. It is hoped that Sunday Services at Church will continue from September.

Due to the virus and regulations, our numbers will be limited to 30 at present. In order to do this, we are instigating a booking system. If you would like to attend please phone Ann on 01689 600215 (answerphone available to leave message) during the week before, from.

If numbers are exceeded, we will let you know and you will be placed at the top of the list for the following week's service.

Social distancing will be observed with chairs spaced, but if you are with family we can arrange the chairs appropriately. There will be no singing of hymns but words and tunes will be displayed and Harvey has agreed to play the organ or piano.

Face coverings should be worn.

Sadly, we will not be able to congregate after the service so tea and coffee will not be served in the Welcome area at present.

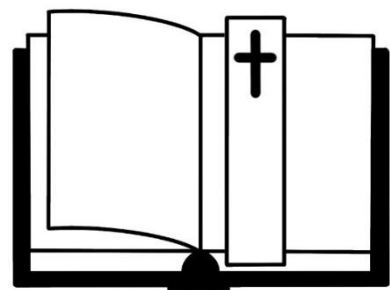
Video and printed services will be available for the foreseeable future.

Video links (via Vimeo) for Sunday services are available on the PWMC website:

<http://www.pwmc.org.uk/home-service-videos/>

The church is open for private prayer on Saturdays from 10-12 noon. Please enter through the front glass doors. However, we do hope that, despite these restrictions, you will feel you can join us and very much look forward to worshipping together again.

God bless you all, The Church Stewards



THANK YOU:

- **Thanks from Elizabeth and David**

Elizabeth and David Gloin send their thanks to all those people who made their Golden Wedding day very special.

- **Thanks from All We Can (Previously known as Methodist Relief and Development Fund)**

Dear Mr Doddrell,

It was so wonderful to receive your recent gift of £1,000.00, which you sent on behalf of Petts Wood Methodist. Please pass on our thanks to everyone who generously gave towards this gift.

Your generosity is making a significant difference for people like Urge from Cherkos in Ethiopia. The effects of climate change are very real, very present and very painful for Urge and his family. In the past Urge struggled to grow enough crops to feed his family due to the change in climate and damaged soil, his family often went hungry. "If someone were to say that there is no climate change, I could not accept this," said Urge.

With support from All We Can, Urge and his community in Cherkos were able to receive potato seeds and potato farming training; the community are now able to plant and grow potatoes throughout the year to feed their families. It is important for Urge to work together and share with his community, "to work together is love, if I do one thing alone, it may take a month. If we work together, it may only take one day," said Urge. We cannot thank you enough for making change possible for people like Urge and the community of Cherkos.

In these unprecedented times, All We Can's vital work continues - we remain committed to the vulnerable communities we serve as well as to you and Petts Wood Methodist Church, our valued supporters. If you have any questions, concerns or just want a chat please do get in touch and reach out to us as it is important we stay connected and together during these times. You can get in touch with the All We Can team on 0207 467 5132 or by emailing info@allwecan.org.uk.

With heartfelt thanks,

Graeme Hodge, Chief Executive

Donation Reference: 159582

Waiting expectantly and unseen footprints, *by Ruth Gee*

In the Methodist Conference in 2013 I introduced the theme that was the focus for my year of service as President of the Conference, “Waiting expectantly for glimpses of glory.” I believed then and believe now that the expectation that God is with them in every part of life and death is distinctive and foundational for followers of Jesus. Such an expectation can only exist when a person knows God so well that, in the best of times and in the worst of times, the presence of God can be discerned or sometimes is simply believed. This knowledge of God is rooted and grounded in scripture, tradition, reason and experience and is nourished through worship, prayer, bible study and fellowship.

It was my intention to unpack this theme through the year so that, by the opening of the Conference in 2014, we would have explored the deepest dimensions of waiting expectantly and glimpsing glory in the most unexpected places. There was some opportunity to explore this dimension as I reflected on walls in Jerusalem and Belfast, met people in the districts and overseas and challenged injustice. However, the presidential year is not linear and it is difficult to develop a theme when every encounter is new.

I now find myself drawn back to the theme of expectant waiting as we live through pandemic and face the acute question, where now do I glimpse the glory of God?

I am writing this whilst on leave and separated from my library so I am drawing on memory, lived experience and two books published as an immediate response to the pandemic: *Virus and Summons to Faith* (Walter Brueggemann), *God and the Pandemic* (Tom Wright).

Brueggemann points to Psalm 77 and identifies the progression of the psalmist from self-concern (vv1-9) through recognition of new questions (v10) to dependence on God (vv11-20). In the final verses of the psalm we are reminded of the ways in which God has been known in the past and of the inscrutability of God. I reflected further on the penultimate verse in which the psalmist declares,

Your way was through the sea,
your path through the mighty waters:
yet your footprint was unseen. (v.19)

The waters and the storm represent the chaos that threatens to overwhelm and annihilate, the void before God’s presence and creative work (Gen 1:1), even here the psalmist affirms that God is present, though unseen.

In Mark's account of Jesus walking on the water (Mark 6:45-51) Jesus walked through the mighty waters of the storm and curiously "intended to pass them by" (Mk 6:48). They were struggling against an adverse wind, they were in danger from the storm, but the real danger was that they would fail to recognise that God was with them, would fail to glimpse the glory of God as Jesus passed by^[1]. The disciples needed to realise that God was with them even in the storm and even when it was difficult to recognise God.

In this time of pandemic, this time of mourning, fear and righteous anger, the glory of God is passing by, God is with us and can be seen in the glimpses of glory. Those glimpses though are not necessarily what we or those in our community can be tempted to expect. Divine intervention to dramatically end the pandemic so that it disappears one day like a miracle (as implied by Donald Trump) is unlikely not only because our reason and experience suggests this but because those who know Christ know that this is not the way in which God works.

God does not intervene from afar, picking times for dramatic effect. God moves among us and in and through us. God weeps with us as Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus and in Gethsemane. Both Brueggemann and Wright remind us of the theme of groaning with particular reference to texts from Romans chapters 6 and 8. To summarise briefly and inadequately and offering my own reflection, groaning and travail is inescapable and cannot be explained away or glossed over with clichés about good that results from disaster. Pain and disaster are painful and disastrous, and this has to be recognised. We who follow Jesus are sent as he was sent (John 20:21). We are sent to suffer alongside, to be with others and in that suffering, sharing and companionship to be living examples of the love of God in Christ so that the world may glimpse the glory of God as it passes by. We are called to be alongside and we are called to challenge the many injustices that have become even more clear at this time. This is how God works, by being among us and with us, and through us working for all things to hold together for good.

I glimpse the glory of God in the midst of the pandemic in the prayers of others for me in my bereavement, in the daily lives of Christians working in their community, in those who weep with others and hold their hands, in those who challenge injustice because in all these things and others God comforts, consoles, weeps and challenges.

Sometimes the footprints are unseen but we can wait expectantly and with confidence for those glimpses of glory.

[1] One reference to the Glory of God passing by as an indication of the real presence of God is found in Exodus 33:17-23

Source: www.theologyeverywhere.org

HARVEST POEM: I Give You Thanks

I Give You Thanks

By: Marie Williams

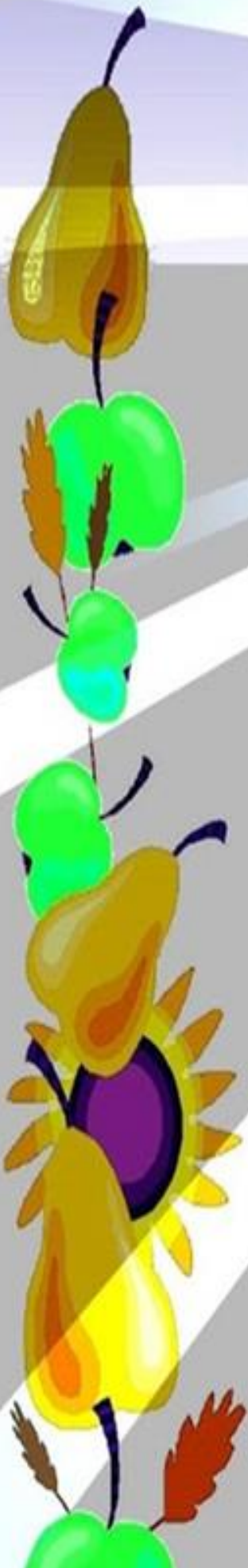
*For harvest moon
And leaves of gold
For autumn beauty
I behold
I give You thanks*

*For dreams fulfilled
For peace and hope
Abundant grace
You've bestowed
I give You thanks*

*For gentle rains
For sunny days
For misty mornings
For fields of hay
I give You thanks*

*For answered prayer
And tears You wiped
For restful sleep
All through the night
I give You thanks*

*For seeds to sow
And open doors
For all of these
And so much more
I give You thanks*



FOR THE YOUNG AT HEART:

Then said He unto His disciples, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few;" ~Matthew 9:37



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Rescuing the sacred texts

Author: Karen Armstrong

Publisher: Bodley Head

ISBN: 9781847924315

This is the subtitle of a book by Karen Armstrong entitled *The Lost Art of Scripture* published by Bodley Head last year.

Christians are used to experts analysing the Holy Bible and telling us when bits were written and by whom and for whom and to brief extracts being explained and applied to our modern life during services. Some will have committed to more detailed studies in groups and using commentaries.

Karen Armstrong looks at a range of sacred texts, not just that of Christians, and considers how they came about and more significantly how they were used. She is concerned that in our post-enlightenment western society we see the scripture as closed whereas in the early days of many religions it was a spring board to fresh thinking and the texts (or oral traditions) were “work in progress”.

Writing and printing ossified the scripture and gave free rein to the so-called fundamentalists in some faiths. Originally the texts were memorised and recited usually within some act of worship and that gave them a different significance and relevance from the cerebral western approach.

The book is a challenge but well worth the effort and gives many insights into our own and other scriptures and religious practice.

Karen Armstrong was for 7 years a nun, taught at James Allen Girls School, Dulwich and is a world-renowned writer on religion. She is the author of over a dozen books including *The Case for God*.

David Gloin

Saying Yes to Life

Author: Ruth Valerio

Publisher: SPCK

ISBN: 9780281083770

*Praise to our God in majestic divinity, seeding the heavens with numberless stars,
forming our dust and our dreams of infinity,
God of our lives and judge of our wars**

I am not an expert on our Hymn book 'Singing the Faith', but it seems to me that although there are plenty of hymns there praising God and thanking God for His glorious creation there are few, if any, direct references to what we might call our 'Duty of Care' for the world. 'Saying Yes to Life' was recommended to Lent study groups this year by the Archbishop of Canterbury to remind Christians that we are all responsible for the preservation of this wonderful world.

We all share this 'Duty of Care'. Through the courtesy of Father Stephen Niechcial, your reviewer was privileged to join the group of St Francis church, Petts Wood. It was a good experience for me working with comparative strangers. We managed to complete our efforts despite lockdown using electronic means, but not until the end of July!

The author of 'Saying Yes to Life', Dr. Ruth Valerio, is the Canon Theologian at Rochester Cathedral, an active environmentalist, a director of Tearfund and an established author in her field.

The primary aim of her book is to enable individuals and groups to think, reflect, pray and be challenged, together and separately, about our need to reconcile ourselves with God's creation. She does this through an exploration of the story related in first chapter of Genesis. There are therefore six main chapters, each based on one day of that week. The chapter's deal in turn with Light; Water; Vegetation; The Heavenly bodies; Animal life and, lastly, Humankind.

Each chapter follows a similar pattern. The relevant biblical account is examined in detail and its theological underpinning is explored. The author adds interesting accounts of nature in action and her own encounters with it as well as those of other people. She writes convincingly of the dangers to us all if we fail to nurture and sustain the complex life sustaining forces at work. Practical ideas and activities follow which challenge us to 'do our bit'. Each chapter ends with discussion topics and suitable prayers.

The book closes with an extensive set of notes upon the text, suggested further reading and a guide to useful websites. Sadly, there is no index.

Ruth Valerio is passionate about her subject and has strong views concerning our

Christian duty to manage God's created world efficiently. She is an engaging writer, mostly easy to follow and consistently thought provoking. Our own study group concluded with each of us being asked what things we are going to do about aiding the survival of God's creation. Pledges included a tree planting project; efforts by three members of the group to eat more sustainable produce, eating less altogether or consuming less red meat; restoring a garden pond; and investigations towards a more energy efficient church heating system.

'Saying Yes to life' is well worth reading if only to remind every one of us that we do indeed have a Christian duty to care for this extraordinary and complex world. Although being in a group always generates more thought and, arguably, provokes more action, one would certainly benefit from it reading it solo. 'Saying Yes to Life' is promoted by the SPCK. In paperback it costs less than £10.

Roger May

*Praise to the Sprit who daily addresses us,
lives in our sciences, nature and arts;
moving through all of creation and blessing us,
guiding our minds and engaging our hearts.**

** Singing the Faith number 13, slightly modified.*

HARVEST

It is hoped that we can hold a harvest themed service on Sunday 20th September.

In view of the situation at present we have decided to ask for donations of cash or cheques only for Whitechapel Mission. Please put them in an envelope marked "Whitechapel".

Donations can be made any time between 20th September and 11th October. When all donations are in, they will be given to Whitechapel so that they can purchase the supplies they need. Their needs will probably be all the greater this year as they rely a lot on gifts from Church harvest festivals.

Thank you



"But did they plough the fields
and scatter at a safe distance?"

PHOENIX DRAMA GROUP:

The Phoenix Drama Group have decided that in the interests of safety for their audience and members, the next scheduled play will be spring 2021. The performance dates will be 12th to 15th April 2021.

We had originally hoped to perform our postponed spring 2020 production of 'A Fete Worse than Death', in October. Sadly, with the ongoing situation with the coronavirus, and theatres still unsure when they can open, we thought this would be the safest course of action.

For those of you that had already bought tickets, but carried them over to October 2020, you can either carry them over again to April 2021, or you can have a refund. Please contact the Box Office on 01689 833366.

If you are a member or patron and paid your annual subscription for 2020, then this will be carried over to 2021.

Hopefully, we will be able to resume our usual activities next year, and finally, be able to perform 'A Fete Worse than Death' - 12th to 15th April 2021.

We hope everyone keeps safe and we look forward to seeing you next year.

If you have any questions, please contact Deborah Kelledy on 020 82497162.

CHURCH FLOWER DONATIONS:

Over the last five months many of us had kindly volunteered donations towards the flowers in Church, either in memory of someone or to mark a celebration.

Due to COVID-19 there will be no harvest food contribution this year. This means, as far as our Church is concerned, the Whitechapel Mission will dearly miss our huge food contribution which they have relied on for several years. If anyone who was going to donate flowers for the Church between April and August feels they would still like to mark the occasion they were remembering, a donation to the Whitechapel Mission instead may be a way of marking that occasion. I will pass on any donations received on to the Stewards for them to forward to the Whitechapel Mission.

Angela Wilks (828879)

COVID-19 QUIZ: Part 2 (Has your brain gone stale in this pandemic?)

- (1) What has a face and two hands, but no arms or legs?
- (2) What travels the world while stuck in one spot?
- (3) A farmer had 17 goats. All but six died. How many survived?
- (4) A cashier at a butcher shop is 5'9", wears size 8 shoes, and is 32 years old. What does she weigh?
- (5) What never asks a question but often gets answered?
- (6) A girl fell off a 50-foot ladder but didn't get hurt. How come?
- (7) A cowboy rode into town on Friday. He stayed in town for three days and rode out on Friday. How is that possible?
- (8) Thanks to me, you can see straight through a wall. What am I?
- (9) What's full of holes but can still hold liquid?
- (10) I have one head, one foot, and four legs. What am I?

Answers on page 17

MISCELLANEOUS:

- **Private prayer**

The church is open for private prayer on Saturdays from 10-12 noon.
Please enter through the front glass doors.

- **Orders for Traidcraft**

I am organising orders for Traidcraft from Mark, so if anyone is missing their supply of Traidcraft items, then please either drop me an email (lizsewell56@btinternet.com) or leave a message on my answerphone (020 8467 2568) and I will order the items for you.

Thanks,
Liz Sewell

- **To a poet a thousand years hence**, *contributed by David Gloin*

A poet addresses another and in verse 3 writes:

Or in some plastic paradise
Of pointless gadgets, if you dwell,
And finding all your wants supplied
Do not suspect it may be Hell.

John Heath-Stubbs wrote "To a poet a thousand years hence" in 1978; it happened sooner than he thought!

- **The Methodist Conference has voted to adopt a new strategy for Evangelism and Growth**

The Methodist Conference has voted overwhelmingly to implement a new Church-wide strategy for Evangelism and Growth. The God for All strategy commits the Church theologically, culturally, and financially to deepen its mission to be a growing, evangelistic, justice-seeking, and inclusive Church.

The strategy is the result of a year-long consultation across the Connexion involving more than one hundred large groups and thousands of individual conversations with leaders, practitioners, and ecumenical partners.

In the context of declining Methodist Church membership numbers, God for All prioritises helping new people become disciples of Jesus, starting hundreds of new churches, and raising up new lay and ordained leaders to join God in engaging diverse rural, urban, estate, and suburban communities across Britain.

The strategy also focuses significant energy and resources on developing the role of young evangelists, serving communities experiencing marginalisation, expanding the Church's digital presence, and helping Methodists live out their faith in everyday life.

God for All will launch in September with a focused Year of Prayer that will offer the Church's work to God.

Trey Hall, Director of Evangelism and Growth, commented: "I am delighted that the Methodist Church has so emphatically affirmed this strategy and has recognised that its bold, missional commitments are absolutely crucial, especially in the context of the pandemic."

"We want every aspect of our commitment to evangelism to flow from God's amazing grace. Of course, we must also have an intelligent understanding of changing demographics, cultural and social shifts, and the patterns of younger

generations: and our mission strategy must engage these factors in relevant, practical, and compelling ways.”

“This strategy is not built on any quick fixes. It signals a direction of travel for deep gospel transformation not only for the next five years, but also for the long-term future of our mission and whole life together. I pray that it might be joy for the Church and the world alike.”

- **Not everything is cancelled**

Not everything is cancelled...

Sun is not cancelled

Spring is not cancelled

Relationships are not cancelled

Love is not cancelled

Reading is not cancelled

Devotion is not cancelled

Music is not cancelled

Imagination is not cancelled

Kindness is not cancelled

Conversations are not cancelled

Hope is not cancelled

And God’s love for HIS people is never cancelled.

ANSWERS TO QUIZ ON PAGE 15:

1. **A clock**
2. **A stamp**
3. **Six survived**
4. **Meat**
5. **A phone or a doorbell**
6. **She fell off the bottom rung**
7. **Friday is the name of the horse**
8. **A window**
9. **A sponge**
10. **A bed**



A Pilgrimage To The Holy Land

With the Chairs of the London District

Tuesday 16th – Tuesday 23rd March 2021 | 8 Days Based in Jerusalem & Galilee | Cost: £1,795 (shared) and £2,220 (single). Cost includes return flights, full board and en suite accommodation except travel insurance

You are invited to join the London District as part of Woven, its theme for 2019 – 2021 to discover for yourselves the setting of some of the most important events in the life and ministry of our Lord, Jesus Christ: in Jerusalem, the surrounding area and further north in Galilee.

To make a reservation, visit methodistlondon.org.uk/pilgrimage or contact Fola Oyeleye on **020 7654 3845**.

In the event of cancellation due to Foreign Office advice, our group will be offered an alternative date to travel or the opportunity for a full refund.

DIARY DATES SELECTION:

August

Sunday 23rd 10:30 am Church service*

September

Sunday 6th 10:30 am Church service*
Sunday 13th 10:30 am Maureen Spinks*
Sunday 20th 10:30 am Duncan MacBean HC*
Sunday 27th 10:30 am Church service*

October

Sunday 4th 10:30 am Sue Cope*
Sunday 11th 10:30 am Church service*
Sunday 18th 10:30 am Duncan MacBean HC*
Sunday 25th 10:30 am Deborah Spinks*

November

Sunday 1st 10:30 am Church service*
Thursday 5th ***Deadline for contributions for Dec-Mar Messenger***
Sunday 8th 10:30 am Joan Mayes*
Sunday 15th 10:30 am Duncan MacBean HC*
Sunday 22nd 10:30 am Deborah Spinks*
Sunday 29th 10:30 am Terry Wright*

*There would no church service on 30th September, please refer to page 4 for further details on church services

TAILPIECE

Measure not God's love and favour by your own feeling. The sun shines as clearly in the darkest day as it does in the brightest. The difference is not in the sun, but in some clouds which hinder the manifestation of the light thereof.
Richard Sibbes