

# PERTH METHODIST CHURCH MESSAGES AND INFO

## FRIDAY 16TH JULY

Our usual news-sheet is renamed Messages and Info and we hope it will be one of the ways we can keep in touch with each other during this strange and difficult time.

Please encourage others to read it and please print a copy for anyone you know who is not on email. Please also send in any items such as personal messages or info that you wish to share with members of the congregation.

### **Nik Wooller's Manse Musings**

In our reading a few weeks ago we heard that Jesus called his 12 apostles and sent them out to do the work they had witnessed in him. He sent them out two by two, and they took with them the authority to cast out demons, to anoint the sick, to cure broken bodies, to teach people about the kingdom of God.

Who knows just how long they were out there, but by the end of their mission and upon their return, when they saw Jesus in the distance, they probably hauled off in a pure sprint to reach him, much like that son who ran into his father's wide open arms, after being away too long.

Their return from their maiden adventure is not documented in any readily available Christian art, and has certainly not been publicized widely in popular culture.

But it could be--and, quite frankly, I think it should be.

With brilliant brush strokes on a large canvas, the scene could be painted for this tender moment. The largest object would be the tree covered in hues of green leaves, that are dancing in the gentle evening sunlight. Collapsed beneath it, bathed in its generous shade, the apostles gather around Jesus, this rag-tag band of former fishermen and freshly formed messengers, exhausted from their recently frantic lives.

The scars of their travels cover their bodies... Without any protection and a lack of traveling food supply, dependent on the kindness of strangers for a simple meal, these men are thinner than before, their ribs exposed through torn clothing, the same garments they departed in.

Most of them have tan lines running across their feet, where their sandals--now removed--once pressed in the soles of them worn thin, evidence of the miles they had covered, and the number of times the sand had been knocked off on an inhospitable doorstep.

These men are reclining next to Jesus, you feel they have been telling him story after story, of how many people they were able to help, of how many lives that have been restored, but all at an expense to their own preservation. They are nestled into the green grass that covers the landscape, staring up into the white clouds dotting a sky, giving birth to a perfect shade of blue.

Just on the left side of the canvas is a lake, still and quiet, yet the remnants of a storm linger far in the distance. Just at the edge of the water is a boat, one that has weathered many storms, but is strong and sturdy, and ready to hold the apostles, and all their cares.

On the front of that boat is a basket overflowing with all different kinds of food, including fruits and meats, and the finest bread hands have ever made.

However, if you look on the other side of that lake, just barely recognizable, there seems to be a crowd of people heading this direction.

Then, on the other side of the canvas, off in the distance, just at the crest of a hill, you can faintly see another crowd coming into view. They know where Jesus and his disciples are, and they will soon be within earshot demanding the attention and compassion of them all.

The artist has painted Jesus as the only one whose face is turned towards the crowds. His expression is one of knowing, without a hint of panic that the disciples could predict.

Besides, most of them are gazing into the sky as they remember their adventures, reflecting on their work, feeling their exhaustion, and one or two are already fast asleep.

Jesus, sensing that his precious children need to rest, knowing they have nothing else to give, yet seeing the crowd approaching, whispers an invitation to his disciples, an offering of all they need: "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while."

If we study this picture long enough, we can probably identify with almost every aspect of it or emotion in it, although some may draw us in closer than others. We can identify with those storm clouds in the distance, the trials we have overcome, the difficult journeys we have been on, the mountains we have climbed.

We can probably name the things that feel like the crowds lingering just over a hill, or around the bend-- pressures to work long hours, to volunteer for something new at church, or the stress of not having work at all.

There are responsibilities for families we love dearly, beautiful grown up children/ grandchildren that seem to still need us constantly, or the pain of a broken connections and dreams that have been shattered.

And on top of all those emotions, we are overwhelmed by the amount of things there are to DO in our lives.... Each day we are pressured by media adverts and our commitments, to give more, produce more, care more, accomplish more. Our lives can be so busy-- the world can make so many demands, and even when they are wonderful things we love, life can still be so busy... physically, emotionally, exhaustingly busy.

I have recently been reading Barbara Brown Taylor's latest book: *An Altar in the World*. It has been the place where I try to slow down, and do something just for myself, spending a little time reflecting on each chapter. But I am currently stuck on one particular part she calls "The Practice of Saying No." As a matter of fact, I have read this chapter at least four times now.

In it she offers insights on just how busy we are, the lost art of hearing Jesus' invitation to us, and giving ourselves permission to rest, to claim the Sabbath time God gives us.

She even has the audacity to accuse me-- in all the busyness of my life-- of trying to earn my own salvation.<sup>1</sup>

In one part, she notes that in China the polite answer to the question of "How are you?" is to say, "I am very busy, thank you."<sup>2</sup>

That is the measure of our success-- an indication of how we run in this world-- and measure of lives, no matter where we live.

And then I think about Jesus' invitation again....

We too could use that cool grass between our toes, the blue sky overhead, the rest underneath a tree, the Jesus who listens to us. And the gift is that we too are on the guest list, and Jesus extends the same invitation to us, in our weary, tired lives, with demands just around the corner. "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while."

The invitation is there, and the painting is not complete... until we can see ourselves as a part of it.

Accepting Jesus' invitation may not be so clean as a boat floating on the open sea, far from all the things we need to escape from. But accepting his invitation is crucial for our lives for us to live the abundant life he intends for us.

We, like the apostles, are not able to give from a place that is empty. We are not able to be present, fully present, to our families, our lives, our work, unless we can-- for however long-- be fully present to Jesus in a place that nourishes our very souls.

Our one task is to put this ahead of all the other things...to open ourselves up to hear his invitation, and respond with the space and the time to listen to his call to take our heavy laden lives, and offer it all to Jesus who will take it from us, even for just a little while.

Listen to his voice, calling us into perfect peace, the kind that only he can give.

"Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while."

**Nik**

**Sunday in-person worship** This is in place now with a joyful sense of being together again to worship God. Compliance with Covid regulations is observed. Everyone is welcome.

**The Morning Service for this Sunday 11th July at 11.00 am** will be led by Jenni Whittle. Whilst it is on the circuit Plan as a digital service, most of it will be delivered live and Jenni certainly plans to be present in person

**The Evening Service at 6.00pm** following our new 'Oasis' approach of quiet devotion, will be based on the evening prayers of the Jewish synagogue and will be led by Gerald Bostock. Please give any requests for prayers for healing to Gerald.

**Circuit Worship.** This Sunday's circuit service will be on the YouTube channel from 9am Sunday. To access the service or any of the earlier services go to [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com) and where it says 'Search' enter: 'Angus, Dundee and Perthshire Methodist Circuit'.

If you know of anyone who would like the service on DVD or a full script, please tell Nick Wooller so it can be posted to them.

**Next Sunday, 25th July.** We hope that after morning worship, and weather permitting, we will be able to serve teas and coffees in the garden at the side of the church. Please feel free to bring your own cup if you prefer to do so.

### **Large print Hymn books**

Anyone who has difficulty reading hymns from the screen is invited to speak to a steward re 'borrowing' a large print hymn book, taking it home each week and bringing it back next time.

### **From the Church Life Group**

**All We Can Smartie Tubes of 20p coins** We are drawing this part of this year's project to a close. Our thanks to all who have played their part, despite using coins less than in pre-pandemic times! If you still wish to contribute, please contact Fiona or Alan (our Treasurer).

**PMC Recipe Books** The first 50 copies have, as reported last week, gone like hot cakes!! We have, therefore, invested in a further 20!! Some members have bought a book for themselves, some for family, some for friends. Every copy sold will support our 2020/21 All We Can project. Please speak to Fiona, Alison R, Sheila L, Pieteke or Eleanore M to reserve your copy(ies). Thank you to all who have already obtained a Recipe Book.

### **Action For Children**

A huge thank you to all our faithful Lantern Box holders. The sum raised this year is £660.75, a magnificent sum. We have already received a thank you from AFC who are delighted with the amount raised. They asked me to pass on their grateful thanks for our on-going support of their valuable work helping vulnerable and disadvantaged children. Chris Parkin

**Sundays at 7.00pm.** Scottish Church leaders encourage us to keep on lighting a candle in a window and offer a prayer on Sunday evening:

Gracious Lord And faithful Shepherd,  
Lead us to the place of your presence And speak to us your word that brings life.  
Lord, in your mercy, *Hear our prayer.*

Gracious Lord And faithful Shepherd,  
Lead us to the place of still waters And restore our troubled souls.  
Lord, in your mercy, *Hear our prayer.*

Gracious Lord And faithful Shepherd,  
Lead us on the paths of righteousness And deliver us from evil.  
Lord, in your mercy, *Hear our prayer.*

Gracious Lord And faithful Shepherd,  
Lead us through the valley of shadows And bring us to the place of safety.  
Lord, in your mercy, *Hear our prayer.*

Gracious Lord And faithful Shepherd,  
Lead us to the place where the table is renewed And the cup overflows for all.  
Lord, in your mercy, *Hear our prayer.*

Gracious Lord And faithful Shepherd,  
Lead us to the place where goodness and mercy abide And to the house of the Lord forever.  
Lord, in your mercy, *Hear our prayer.*

***Scottish Church leaders have issued the following statement:***

*Scottish Christians have been continuing to answer the call to pray at the same time each week, and the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Lord Wallace, is taking part alongside them.*

*“We should always be mindful for the wisdom handed down to us from past generations; much of it learned the hard way, from mistakes made and consequences suffered,” Lord Wallace said.*

*“So, too, we are grateful for the richness that comes to us from living alongside people of other traditions. In our day and generation we must surely allow our minds and hearts to be open so that we can risk getting to know them and learning from them.*

*“In this pandemic, our responsibility is to come together and offer our prayers for all the many diverse expressions of our Christian faith that enrich life, as we have done for many months now.*

*“As we move into a new phase with many restrictions being eased, we call to mind those for whom the restrictions of recent times have been profound and life-changing. We pray that those who are anxious and nervous about change will find reassurance. And in exercising our own personal choices, let us be mindful of the needs and concerns of our neighbours.*

*“A pattern has been set for us, lived out in Jesus Christ, made possible by the Spirit. May we follow in His way, and be guided by the one over-riding rule of love in all that we say and do.”*

**The Messages and Info sheet** is currently being produced by Gerald  
please send items for inclusion to him by 12 midday on Thursday each week.

(His details are in the church directory)