

Dear Friends,

I am writing this letter to you the week after the Methodist Conference met. Conference is made up of the representatives chosen by the churches, circuits and districts around the country to represent the whole of the Methodist Church. With prayerful care they discern the path of the church through matters of theology, living together and what it is to be a Methodist in Britain today. This has been a time of joy for me as during Conference two of my closest friends were ordained as ministers into the Methodist Church. But now the Conference business has ended, as a church we must step up and work through what the decisions mean for us.

You may have seen in the news last week that, as a result of the discussions, the following statement was released by the Methodist Church: "Following prayerful consideration by the whole Church, the Methodist Conference has voted to confirm provisional resolutions on the principles or qualities of good relating, understanding of cohabitation and same sex marriages conducted on Methodist premises or by Methodist office-holders." Our role as the Methodist Church at Oakham is now to work through what this means for us as a church and as individuals.

For some the news has brought great joy, but for others it has brought great pain. Please know that, as your minister, I pray for each of you and I care for each of you and whilst I cannot carry your emotions for you, I would be humbled to walk alongside you in whatever you are experiencing. I thank those of you who have contacted me already and, for others, know that you do not need to be alone.

In response to the decision at Conference, and as a result of requests from Church members, an Extraordinary Church Council meeting is being called for Tuesday, 27th July 2021, at 3pm. The first part of the meeting will be open for any Church member who wishes to attend. The formal notifications will be sent out later this week and I will be personally writing to every member of the church with more detailed information.

Until then I ask that you all pray for discernment, for God's Spirit to speak to us as Church and for us to each find the path that we now need to walk together.

Blessings Rev'd Bekkie Wright

NORTHGATE

The weekly notices of
OAKHAM METHODIST CHURCH
Rev Bekkie Wright - 01572 720721
bekkie.wright@methodist.org.uk
www.oakhammethodistchurch.co.uk

Sunday, 11th July 2021
Oakham Methodist Church Service led by
the Rev Barry Gent



Call to Worship: All-powerful one, we come today to worship you, safe in the knowledge that you are in control. **Amen.**

Prayer of Praise: Mighty God, we adore you. We thank you that we can come to you knowing that you care about each and every one of us, and all our needs, however big or small. You created the heavens and the earth. You put stars into space and filled the mighty seas. Your power and your greatness is all around us – from mountain-tops to the intricacies of a tiny flower. Thank you that your power is limitless. We are so small in comparison, but you love us all the same. We adore you, Creator God. **Amen.**

Prayer of Confession: Powerful God, forgive us when we have not used our power to influence for good, but for our own purposes; when our actions have hurt and excluded others; when we have allowed greed, fear and pride to get in the way. God, forgive us. Let our thoughts, our words and our actions glorify you and reveal your presence and purposes. **Amen.**

Bible Reading: Mark 6:14-29

Reflection: It strikes me how out of control everyone seems to be in this story. Nobody has any aim or long-term goal, they simply live in the moment, responding to what happens around them rather than being proactive and taking control of their lives. As a result, they find their meaning in life through pleasure and leisure activities. So, we have Herodias, a wife who swaps husbands and is now married to her brother-in-law. We have a daughter who dances for the king and earns the promise of receiving anything her heart desires. We have a king who gets carried away in his parties and makes unfulfillable promises on the spur of the moment.

But whilst there may be joy in immediate moments, there is also a hollow feeling to this royal court, things are rotten to the core. A wife who hates the words spoken against her which point out how shallow she is and which threaten her position. A daughter with no control over her own life, who can only live by doing what others tell her to do. A king who cannot rest, he knows there is something in John's words but he cannot quite grasp it. A king who is not in control but is subject to the whims of those around him. A king who sleeps uneasily because he fears the repercussions of having killed John the Baptist, and now wonders whether John has come back to life.

I wonder if the one person who had peace in that court was John the Baptist; imprisoned but still speaking the word of God and challenging the powers of the world. I can't help but think that whilst a

life without God may, on the face of it, appear the easier path to take, it is actually a hollow life. With nobody to fully commit to but yourself, it can be a life which is aimless and at times out of control. Compare this passage to the verses immediately before and after which show the joy and feeling of strength which the disciples gain from committing themselves to God. Where do you want to be standing – in the royal court or on the road with Jesus?

Prayer in Response: Faithful God, you will never look away from us or leave us in our need. Help us to listen for your voice. Help us to look for your direction. Help us to walk each day in your love. **Amen.**

Hymn: 331 Singing the Faith

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| King of kings, Majesty | Your Majesty, I can but bow |
| God of Heaven living in me | I lay my all before You now |
| Gentle Saviour, closest friend | In royal robes I don't deserve |
| Strong Deliverer, beginning and end | I live to serve Your Majesty |
| All within me falls at Your throne | |

Intercessions: The Lord calls us to follow. **We walk in your strength, O Lord.** We pray for situations where we struggle to follow Christ, offering them to God. The Lord calls us to follow. **We walk in your strength, O Lord.** We pray for our country and the places where God seems absent. The Lord calls us to follow. **We walk in your strength, O Lord.** We pray for our church, our home, our neighbourhood, and the struggles we have in centring our lives on the love of God. The Lord calls us to follow. **We walk in your strength, O Lord.** We pray for areas of the world where Christians face persecution; and we pray for ourselves when we face situations where standing up for right is hard and painful. The Lord calls us to follow. **We walk in your strength, O Lord. Amen.**

Sending Out: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ. You have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and you have believed. Go, and live to the praise of his glory.

Prepared by Rev'd Bekkie Wright

Notice from Clare Dobbs: 11th July is Action for Children Sunday. As we were unable to send our customary donation at Christmas you may wish to send a donation now, either online at actionforchildren.org.uk/donate (select 'make a one-off donation'), or by phone 0300 123 2112 to make a card payment or request a giro form to donate at an HSBC branch.