

A poem and reflection contributed by Ceinwen Harris

Prayer is about listening.....

But what if prayer were more about listening to God
in the silence of our hearts,
than about bombarding God with our piety?



Imagine a glass of muddy water.
When you look into it, you can see nothing through the cloudiness.
But if you leave the glass alone for a while
and allow the water to become perfectly still,
you will see how the mud settles
and the water becomes crystal clear.

Prayer time and prayer space can be like that water.
If we let ourselves come to rest,
to a state of physical and mental equilibrium,
the ocean within us will become calmer and clearer,
and we will be better able to pick up the still small voice
which is God's whisper in our heart.

I was sent a book (*Margaret Silf on Prayer*) by a friend during lockdown and found this poem really touched a chord. Those sharing the Prayer Course by Pete Greig will find the overlap message of stillness and resting in God's presence a powerful thought—how God wants to speak to us as individuals.

We're being constantly reminded that God wants to do a new thing when the virus has abated. But what is it? I believe it's only by listening to the still small voice that we will discover God's purpose for us, as individuals and as our church. Does He want to draw us closer to Him? How can we experience the deeper fellowship and support of the early Church?

I would like to think that we can use our prayer time, constructively in building a caring, powerful community. Has God revealed anything to you? Why not share it with friends, leadership, or Andy. That we may be ready to offer comfort and healing to our broken damaged world.

A big "thank you" to all contributors this month. Please continue to furnish us with YOUR news, YOUR pictures, YOUR poem, YOUR story, any articles of interest to others. Please give to Susan Bye or Sharon Joddrell at church or post or send by email to susan@msbye.co.uk, to arrive by **15th September** for the October edition.

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CHURCH MAGAZINE—SEPTEMBER 2021



Mansfield Road Baptist Church

A Message for September by Dave Mangan

Listening to Others

Jesus and his disciples were leaving Jericho and were followed by a large crowd. They were passing two blind men on the side of the road who shouted out to Jesus to have mercy on them. The crowd told them to be quiet, but this was the response of Jesus:

Jesus stopped and called them. "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. "Lord," they answered, "we want our sight." Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him.

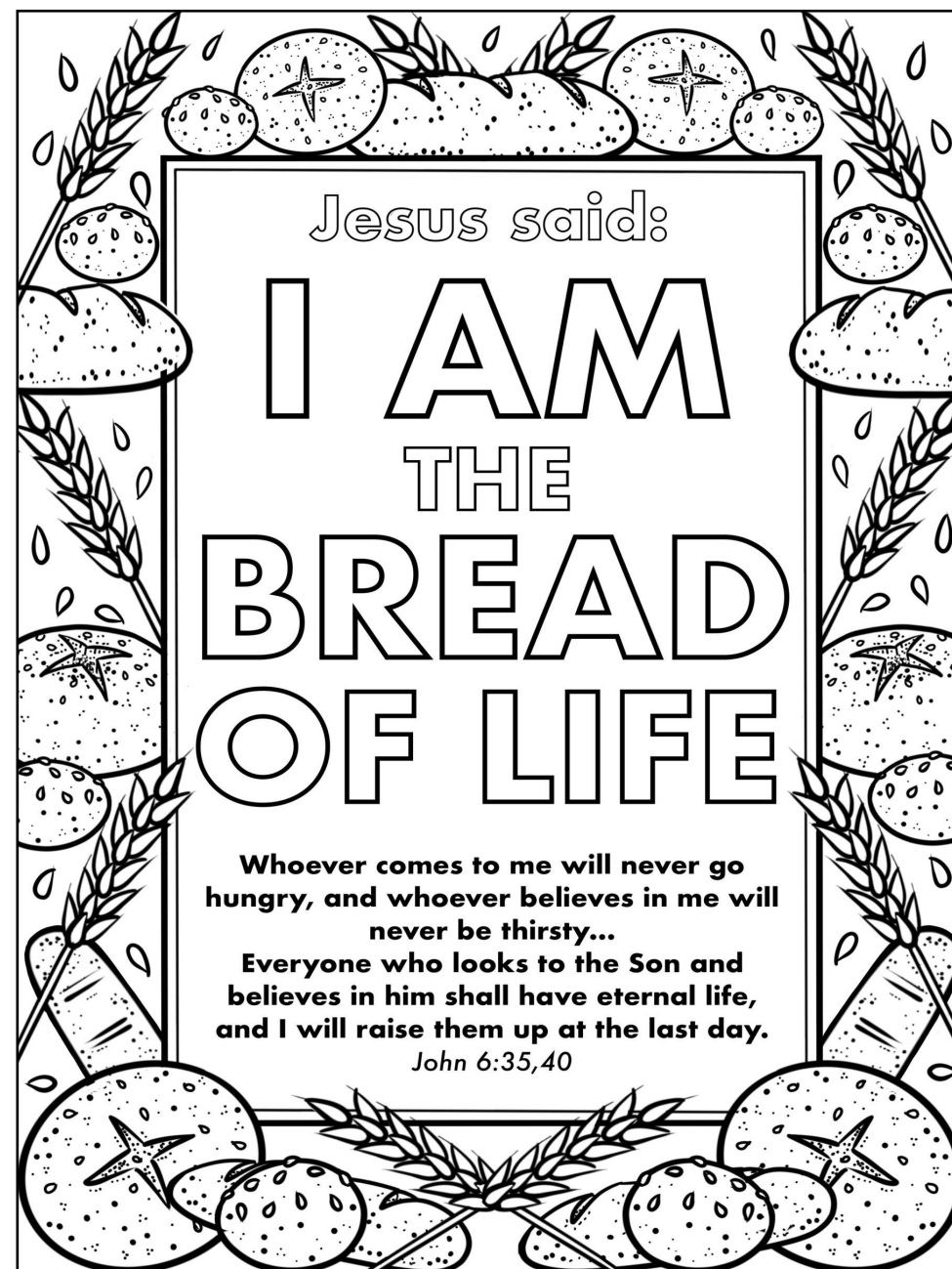
Matthew 20:32-34

Throughout his life Jesus talked with all kinds of people, many times we read that he drew near to people, or they drew near to him. He was close to people and always available to meet their needs. He didn't make assumptions about what they needed but would ask them questions and then listen carefully to their answers. The relationships that he formed not only showed his compassion and love but transformed people's lives, giving them a sense of fullness and purpose.

When we talk with people, we should aim to show them their own talents and gifts and make them reflect positively on their own achievements. As we listen carefully, each word we speak, each question we ask becomes a precious gift to the other person that will encourage them and help them to reach their own potential. As the apostle Paul writes

Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them. *Ephesians 4 :29*

We have an opportunity to have our own lives shaped by God's love and the privilege of passing on that love to allow God to shape the lives of others. In the final analysis it is not the possessions that we acquire; it is not the status that we achieve but God's love and compassion shown to others that we will be remembered for.



Children are invited to have a go at colouring this picture. Then ask someone to take a photo and send it to sharon.joddrell@googlemail.com. Don't forget to include your name! Closing date 15th Sept.

Character—the Key to Success

Character has been defined as what one is. Whether defined by the situations in one's life, or by the deeds one does, a person's character is who someone **really** is, even when no one is watching! It's the very essence of a person.

Our overall character is made up of specific qualities which are positive or negative, determining how we will respond in any given situation. For example, an *alert* person may be a safer driver than one who does not see or recognize the potential dangers around them. A *truthful* person is more likely to give an accurate report than a person characterized by *deceitfulness*. A person with *endurance* will keep on going and not give up, even when the "going gets tough".

What are the qualities that make up a person's character? How are they built into a person's life? Can they be strengthened or minimised? Positive qualities are many, and include honesty, integrity, dependability, loyalty, enthusiasm. These, and others, can be strengthened to enable a better and more successful response to circumstances faced.

The Christian character is the product of the Holy Spirit, who changes the believer's heart from a state of stone-hearted rebellion and unbelief to warm-hearted faith and love (Ezekiel 36:26). It is the Spirit of God dwelling in the believer's heart that produces a love for God and others, as well as a desire to deny sin and self in order to please God (Romans 5:5; Titus 2:11–12). It is the Holy Spirit that produces the fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness, long suffering, and self-control (Galatians 5:22–23). These fruits of the Spirit are what shape the foundation of true Christian character. All this is made possible only through faith in Christ. Without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). To have Christian character is to have a heart aiming to please and glorify God.

Today's world faces many difficult problems. Escalating crime, drug and alcohol abuse, workplace violence, gang activity, vandalism, school dropouts, deteriorating work ethics, domestic violence, juvenile delinquency, racial tensions, broken families ... the list seems endless. **The World Needs People With Better Character!** At the root of all these problems is a lack of or misapplication of good character. To solve the problems we must deal with these roots! We must work to improve our own character, teach good character to our children, and help those around us to improve their character! The Bible says a lot about God's character - God is love, God is compassionate, merciful and never breaks His Promise, etc. His actions show His Character and when we belong to God, we reflect His character. Let us all, as of today, live lives reflecting God's Character.' Then we can truly say: **Character is the Key to Success!**

CHURCH DIARY FOR SEPTEMBER

Sunday Service each week at 10.30am.

A pre-recorded service will be available on the website as well

From **Sunday 5th September** there will be **Sunday Clubs and Youth Group** in the church buildings. The children and young people will go out of the service after the first hymn. (These groups will be upstairs until the beginning of October and then returning downstairs)

Monday 6th & 20th @ 4pm **The Prayer Course**

Thursday 8th & 22nd @ 10am **The Prayer Course**

Wednesday 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd & 29th @ 11am **Prayer Meeting**

Wednesday 15th September @ 7.30pm **Church Leaders Meeting**

Sunday 26th September – Harvest Sunday

The focus this year will be on financial gifts supporting the work of Operation Agri, one of the organisations we regularly support.

DIRECTORY CHANGES

Andy and Mary Wilson moved in the summer and their contact details are

Address: 10 Eaton Avenue, Arnold, Nottingham, NG5 7LG

Telephone: 0115 8442225



NEELAM SIDHU writes:

I would like to share one of the attractions of Devon. It was a lovely view of mountains of rocks standing like soldiers to protect the village from any danger and to hold the water.



This most beautiful view reminded me of God's love. The reflection of sky shows the connection between sea and sky; together they are one and create a wonderful image. I read *Psalms 8* and spoke a blessing there. I prayed for local people and tourists that they find Peace and Joy here.

Chinks of Light in an otherwise dark tunnel—by Tony Peace



When things are at their blackest and storms are raging in life and the darkest of tunnels seems endless, I was recently encouraged and reminded that there can still be evidence of chinks of light in the tunnel. These may take many different forms and which we may not always recognise.



For me, being able to take an hour or so out each day for a quiet walk, usually in Wollaton Park or Bulwell Hall, gives that moment of respite and a chink of light. I enjoy photography and the deer in Wollaton Park get photographed quite frequently with an example above. A moment in the garden just watching the insects being very active on the flowers is another chink of light, and the hover fly here is an example. More recently at church, being able to play either piano or organ in the service has been another chink of light. So it has made me realise that the tunnel is not total darkness, and that there are chinks of light to guide us on the way.

More Chinks of Light?



Ricky's colourful garden



A clump of poppies Susan spotted while walking near Sutton on Sea

An extract from the August prayer letter of Pippa and Toby Vokuhl

The full letter can be found: www.bmsworldmission.org/ptvokuhl

MONSOON MADNESS - AND THE FELLOWSHIP OF LIKE MINDED KIN



In 'The Fellowship of the Ring' by J.R.R. Tolkien, an unlikely band of characters form a 'fellowship' in order to face a challenge that could not be met.

Today I want to flag up the monsoon madness which is currently affecting the people of Nepal. I also want to introduce you to a fellowship of like minded kin who made it their mission to be part of the 'first responder' relief efforts.

Villages in the Manang district have suffered severe flash floods, destroying homes, churches, schools, electricity supplies, internet, and road access. This occurs most years during the monsoon. We all hope that international efforts to reduce the impact of climate change will bear fruit. But how about the families who are without homes and shelter right now?

It was this question that led to the forming of the 'Menang District Disaster Response Collaboration Team', a multi-denominational group of Christians who pooled resources to be part of the emergency relief effort, requiring the hire of helicopters to access the cut-off communities, and connected with local government to see where their contribution was most needed in Nepal.

It is really encouraging to see how local Christians are rallying to put their faith into action. We are reminded of Psalm 133: ¹ *How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!* ² *It is like precious oil poured on the head running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down on the collar of his robe.* ³ *It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life for evermore.*

Beyond Christians living together in unity, how good and pleasant it is for Christians to also ACT in unity. The verse highlights the cultural particularities of biblical times (oil on beards, etc), and we are still puzzled by local practices here sometimes, but the same Spirit of God is evident when God's love and compassion is expressed through action. **Please pray for:**

- monsoon related disaster response efforts and for the church's role in this
- a speedy rollout of C-19 vaccines. At the moment only 5% of the population is vaccinated
- continued progress with Toby's project at the local hospital
- our children, for whom the school year started last week (online only)
- Pippa as she continues to seek a role of her own

With much love,

Pippa and Toby with Jakey, Ella, and Millie