

A Mini Messenger



Market Drayton Methodist Circuit

Circuit magazine

Spring 2020

Message from Ruth

I've been spending a lot of time pondering the pastoral theology of Jenga recently. That game of towering wooden blocks where the aim is to remove a block and replace it on the top without toppling the tower. It's a great game of skill and nerve and a favourite of families in many places.

Whilst Jenga is a game where many sides compete, it could also be played alone. Of course, the strategies would be quite different, for alone, you would only ever move blocks that ensure the continued stability of the tower, the blocks you are happy to move. However, we generally do not do life, certainly within the church, alone. Thus, others may begin to move blocks that we would not choose, and so our fear of it collapsing on our turn increases.

So, it is when things begin to prod and poke at our lives and beliefs and understandings: we fear collapse. For many who have been brought up with one belief, we would like to keep those foundational blocks intact and not move them. However, another's belief means that it is tested, if not removed. Of course we can talk about this in terms of faith, but the analogy expands out into our lives and how we understand and engage with the world around us. If life were all competitive, then we could assume that everyone is out to topple our belief structures or the foundational understandings in our lives. But, ever the optimist, I believe we play Jenga in life terms, as a cooperative game. Where we might work together to help one another to understand why we have moved a block which they might not have chosen for themselves.

Within the Methodist Church of Great Britain, this is as pertinent an idea as ever, as we are challenged to look at our understanding of Marriage, a topic which I'm sure you can imagine raises huge questions about what

we believe and how we believe and practice it. The report is called “God in love unites us”. This title is no mistake and firmly plants in us the idea of unity – a cooperative task rather than a challenge to topple the tower. The challenge we have is to prod and poke at the blocks of faith and understanding whilst allowing God’s love to be the thing that offers stability to the tower.

We could expand this analogy out to many things; Brexit, immigration, all manner of political hot topics, but equally, we can use this in our own lives in understanding why others might get het up about things which we don’t see as so important. Yet we must all work out what it is that holds our tower together, whether that is God, or love for family or...

I pray for a world where we share the things which challenge us, not only with those who agree, but with those who disagree, that we might understand more fully and love more fully.

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ruth', with a small flourish underneath.

Date for your diary:

Circuit Marriage and Relationships conversation – 22nd March – 6pm @MDMC

A New Year, A New Messenger

You may have noticed a missed edition of the Messenger at the end of last year. Well, we're back with a slightly altered format. We will be featuring 3 regular sections in each issue moving forward, alongside the type of content you will have seen in previous messengers. The aim of this 'mini messenger' is to give you an idea of what to expect, and a chance to decide what you might like to contribute to. Ruth will also be using the Messenger to write a piece or two about her sabbatical plans.

Who doesn't love a good story?! MDMC invites its members on Sunday mornings to share their testimonies. In-keeping with this we will be inviting our Local Preachers to share testimony with you over the coming issues of the Messenger. Mike Shingler will be starting us off in the Summer issue.

Hearing and reading testimony can be both uplifting and challenging. Be encouraged by the testimonies you read in the coming issues of the Messenger and hear at MDMC on Sunday mornings; be challenged and remember that your story matters – yours might just be the testimony someone needs to hear. So be bold... tell it!

Getting to know the characters! What good is a story without some strong characters? The bible stories are no exception. Each edition of the Messenger we will feature a short biography of a person in the bible. Some you may already know more about than others, but either way, it might give a different point of view for you to consider. You are encouraged to ponder the questions posed and read the passages relating to the featured person. We will begin with Aaron, which can be found on page 6 of this issue.

Over to you! Hearing from our Local Preachers and about a person in the bible is great but we would also like to hear from you, as part of our church family. Do you have a favourite hymn, bible verse or prayer that really speaks to you? Have you written a poem or a prayer that you would be willing to share with us? It would be lovely to receive a contribution from a different member of the church family each issue. If you would like to be one of our first contributors, please email Aimee with your poem/prayer/hymn/bible verse.

Alongside these sections, there will be space for write-ups of events, sharing of information and other articles, so if there is something specific that you would like to see in the messenger (or better yet, contribute a one-off article yourself), please let us know.

As ever, please send any questions or suggestions to Aimee at circuitadmin@mdmc.org.uk



BRIEF BIBLE BIOGRAPHIES

AARON

Rev. Paul Clapham

It isn't just in our society that it is possible to be privileged or deprived on the basis of family or birth.

In the account of the formation of the nation of Israel, the tribe into which you were born dictated your position. If your ancestor had been either the brother Reuben, Simeon, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, Benjamin, Dan, Asher, Gad or Naphtali, then you were allocated land to farm, given somewhere to live and expected to take your role in society. You fought for the defense of the whole nation; you kept the law; you paid for the upkeep of the Tabernacle (later the Temple); you supported the king. In addition, you worked to provide for yourself and your own family. If, however, your ancestor had been the other brother, Levi, you didn't have to do

any physical work, your needs were provided by the others. Your work was all related to the worship of God.

Even here though, some of the descendants were more equal than others. Those who were from the clans Kohath, Gershon or Merari acted as servants to those who were from the family of Amram (which, surprise, surprise, just happened to be the family which Moses and Aaron came from). Moses, remember, had been given the vision of the burning bush and the interview with God which resulted in him getting the job of freeing the Israelites from Egypt. Because Moses was reluctant, Aaron got the job as spokesman. It was natural then that in the wilderness, while Moses became the leader, Aaron should be the priest of the people.

Aaron, however, didn't totally realise what the role involved. He felt that he was responsible **to** the people rather than **for** the people. When they demanded, he acceded; when they couldn't understand, he changed the patterns to make it easier. So, as a result there was the incident of the golden calf and then the tragedy of his two eldest sons. Suddenly for Aaron, this priesthood was not the

easy ride and privilege that it had promised to be, but a responsibility that weighed heavily on his shoulders.

Aaron was a priest on account of his birth. That though meant that like our Royal Family, he could not call his life his own. In some ways he had life easy; but in other ways he couldn't do right for doing wrong.

The question is:

Was Aaron a priest for God, or a priest for the people?

How did the way he saw his position affect how he carried out his role?

Read:

Exodus 4: 14 –31

Exodus 32

Leviticus 10

Numbers 17

Dates for your diary

EASTER EVENTS

Lent Prayers @ MDMC, 6am, 11am, & 8pm every Wednesday of Lent beginning on Ash Wednesday (26th Feb)

7th - 9th April - 'Journey of the Cross': A prayer journey

7th & 8th: 11am – 2pm & 7.30 – 9pm @ Ashley

9th: 11am – 2pm @ Ashley

Maundy Thursday (9th April)

7pm – Circuit Reflective Service @ Ashley

Good Friday (10th April)

10am, Service @ St Mary's MD, followed by Walk of Witness

12pm, Service @ Ashley

7pm, Reading of Mark's Gospel @ MDMC

Easter Sunday (12th April)

8.30am, Early Communion service

followed by a shared breakfast @ MDMC

ASHLEY METHODIST CHURCH

23rd February – CAP Service – 10.30am

24th February – Church Council – 7.30pm

MARKET DRAYTON METHODIST CHURCH

22nd March – Marriage & Relationships Circuit Conversation – 6pm

26th April – Circuit Service / Easter Offering – 10.30am

5th July – Circuit Service with Rev. Ashley Cooper – 10.30am



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