



Dear friends

I wonder what kinds of spaces you have found yourself in over these past few months. We have thought a lot together about where we have encountered God during these months ...so you might like to recall now where those places have been for you, and give thanks to God for them.

As many of us think about returning to our church buildings, I invite you now to imagine the church building where you feel most at home. What kinds of rooms and spaces does it have? And which of those spaces implicitly, or explicitly, invite people to encounter God and one another? How are the sizes of those spaces balanced, and which are most used? Where would people choose to be for significant events in the life of the community? Does it vary according to the event?

I think this past season is teaching us that church buildings are both not essential, and at the same time really important for us, as we seek to encounter God and build community with one another. I have appreciated a book called 'Seven Sacred Spaces', as I have been reflecting on places and spaces during the past few months. In it, the author George Lings introduces us to a series of spaces which he says can be identified in ancient and modern monastic buildings, and suggests that each space allows us to do something important as Christians seeking God, and in community with one another:

- Cell – this is the place where we are alone with God
- Chapel – the place where we worship with other Christians
- Chapter – where we discuss with one another, and make decisions (a place for good Methodist conferring?)
- Cloister – the places where we meet one another, often unexpectedly – a quick word as we pass in the corridor?
- Garden – in this pattern, this is a place of work, where the work done builds up the community in some way
- Refectory – food and hospitality are enjoyed here
- Library/Scriptorium – where we learn, and pass on knowledge

I wonder if you can spot any of these spaces in your church building? Some may be obvious; others might be hiding in plain sight! Some may not be there at all. Some spaces might be used for more than one purpose. If any are not present, I wonder what might change in your community if they were there? If any are under- or over-used, are there ways of rebalancing things?

George Lings goes on to suggest that, just as all the spaces are probably needed physically in one way or another for a Christian community to thrive, so they also suggest ways of being which we can carry and cultivate within us, in community or individually. Coming back to the next phase of our life together, he also gently wonders whether the space for worship together has had a disproportionate importance in our buildings and communities. I hear of a lot of conversations which wonder whether the experience of pandemic is showing us that we don't need our buildings. I wonder instead how we might rebalance our use of physical space, inhabiting buildings differently to enable people to thrive, to flourish within the love of God.

My prayer is that this season of Ordinary Time may be a 'green and growing time' for us all.

Peace, Jo

Bible Month

The Gospel of Mark

During **Sunday worship**, and in our **written worship**, we hope will be reading the whole book of Mark together over the month of June.

If your local church is meeting fortnightly during this period, we would like to encourage you to use the written worship at some point during the alternate week, so that you don't miss any of the story!

Week 1	Mark 1:1-3:35
Week 2	Mark 4:1-8:21
Week 3	Mark 8:22-10:52
Week 4	Mark 11:1-16:8

We know that some of us will really appreciate time to hear an extended reading of the gospel, while for others of us this may be very challenging. It's good to remember that we are each unique, and come to worship in different ways. We invite you to think about how you listen best, and to consider:

- reading the set portion of the gospel aloud to yourself either before or after the service
- coming with a notebook, something to doodle on, or maybe even something else to occupy your hands as you listen, if you think this might be helpful. Preachers are aware that people might choose to do this!

Our **Podcasts** will also focus on Mark's gospel, with an opportunity to 'go deeper' with a particular passage.

In addition, there will be **small groups** meeting. These will use the small group resources published nationally for Bible Month, with a different approach to reading a short passage each week. These groups will meet on Zoom.

To join a group please contact the office or the named member of staff:

Tuesdays 8 th , 15 th , 22 nd and 29 th ; 7.30pm	Revd Jo
Wednesdays 9 th , 16 th , 23 rd and 30 th ; 7pm	Revd Rach
Thursdays 10 th , 17 th , 24 th and 1 st July; 2pm	Revd Keith
Thursdays 10 th , 17 th , 24 th and 1 st July; 7.30pm	Deacon Guy

Week 1	Mark 2:1-12	An Ignatian approach
Week 2	Mark 6:45-56	Martin Luther's approach
Week 3	Mark 9:2-13	The big idea
Week 4	Mark 14:12-26	Retelling the story