

Facebook Posts – March 2022

1st March – Rev Jacqui Horton

No Thought for the Day from me this morning except to say that not being able to see properly (very painful left eye) as well as developing covid symptoms (tested positive this morning) has left me quite debilitated in what is a reasonably rare experience for me. However, these things pale into utter insignificance when compared with the international situation and what is happening in Ukraine. As I am not now able to lead an Ash Wednesday zoom service tomorrow morning (as planned), I would like to suggest that as many of us as possible tune in to an international prayer service at 4 o'clock tomorrow. The World Methodist Council is involved in organising this and people are able to register at <https://worldmethodistcouncil.org/.../ukraine-christian-world...>

2nd March – Sam Parfitt



Today is Ash Wednesday, the day in the Christian Calendar when it is traditional to hold a service for the imposition of ashes. It is a poignant and fragile thing, I think, to be reminded during the service that we are made of ash, and to ash we will return. A gap in which our own mortality is laid bare before us and sometimes I find that difficult, even though I am confident in my faith. 'Being ashed' at the beginning of Lent, for me, signifies a period of introspection and reflection on the journey I am making with Jesus and looking to the past and the present in the same space. Traditionally the ashes are made from burning the palm crosses from the previous year, which is no mean feat (and offers a good deal of funny ministerial anecdotes!) I like to think that in this we are reminded that Jesus travels with us during Lent, and will lead us on a triumphal journey of the heart, fully one with the pain of the crucifixion (and the pain of our lives) and the glory of the resurrection (and our living in Jesus).

3rd March – Rev Cliff Shanganya

[Jesus said,] "Listen to me! You can pray for anything, and if you believe, you will have it. But when you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too." Mark 11:24-25

God's Word reveals what is necessary for effective prayer, and these verses point to the key of forgiveness. Although it is contrary to the world's pattern, it is at the heart of the life Jesus calls us to. Christ explained that holding grudges proves detrimental to our oneness with the Father, hinders our prayers, and causes God to withhold forgiveness from us.

Our fellowship with God is restored through our own repentance and confession. Jesus provided for this through his finished work on the cross. He died so that we would be pardoned and restored to the Father. When we come to Jesus, he forgives our sins of the past and all the sins we will ever commit. But we who are forgiven much must love and forgive others much! Do you need to forgive someone today? What relationship needs restoration? Ask the Holy Spirit to show you any areas where you need to practice forgiveness.

God is ready to provide the grace to enable us to forgive and to experience being fully forgiven ourselves. Then we will know the joy God gives as we move from grudges to grace and are ready for prayer.

OH, FATHER, help us to have a forgiving heart. We need to learn how to receive your forgiveness and how to forgive those who have wronged us. We don't want to cause your presence in our life to be quenched because of unforgiveness. Create in us a free and forgiving spirit that sees others as you do, responds to them with your heart, and prays for them with your love.

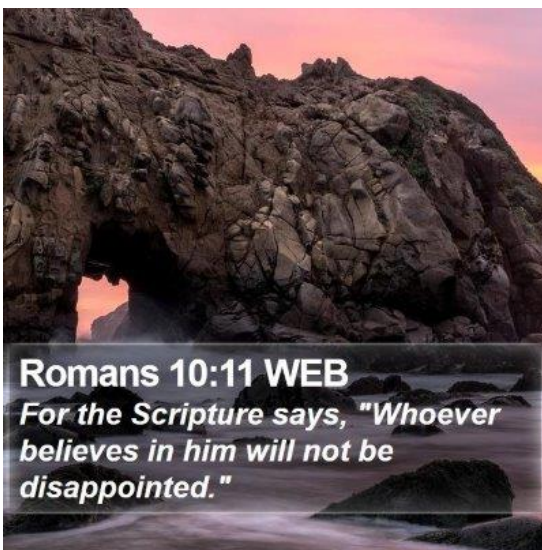
Have a blessed lent journey!



4th March



7th March



Romans 10:11 WEB

For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes in him will not be disappointed."

8th March

Deacon Jen writes the 3rd of her previous Sabbatical Reflections: One day in my last Sabbatical I was putting something into the dustbin quite early in the morning. As I turned round the sun's rays shone on some nails in the wall that I hadn't noticed before. 'How strange', I thought, 'they are so obvious but I haven't seen them. Never mind at least it hasn't done any harm'. I obviously said that last sentence out loud because then a response came back "Oh, yes they have". I turned round and saw the window cleaner had arrived. He explained that as the nails were on the corner of the house, where there wasn't much room, he had sometimes scratched himself when manoeuvring the hose to the back of the house. Suffice to say I took those nails out as quickly as I could!

On reflection I felt quite challenged as I reflected that we can live with something along time without noticing that it may be difficult or cause harm to others. Equally there may well be parts of ourselves, that we are not aware of, that may be difficult and cause harm others. We can so readily see imperfections in other people, but what about recognising our own first?

In Luke's Gospel there is a section about not judging others which includes this verse: You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. Luke 6:41.

Of all the reflections I made during my Sabbatical I found this the most challenging. It has certainly stayed with me and continues to challenge me now.



9th March

Our Circuit website now has a dedicated tab 'War in Ukraine' with Methodist statements and prayers as well as other information, recordings and suggestions of ways to help. <https://centralnorfolkmethodistcircuit.org.uk>



10th March – Rev Anne Richardson

Broken, but not defeated

A lot of trees fell during the recent storms. Some caused damage to cars, homes and people. On a walk last year, I spotted the tree in the photos. It had fallen at some time in the past. Part of it was dead and broken. But look! There are fresh shoots and evidence of life breaking out.

We've been watching pictures of cities being bombarded. People who once had homes to be proud of, where they felt safe, now fleeing to become homeless refugees. We are praying, we are giving – but it feels like a drop in a very large ocean. There is always a temptation to despair. Shall we take a lesson from the broken tree? When all seems lost and dead, when we cry out to God and can't see the answer we seek, let us look for signs of life. Whether it's the resilience of the Ukrainian people, the desire of our community to help, or those who are campaigning for justice – there are always new shoots bringing hope and continued life.

The prophet Habakkuk says:

'Though the fig tree does not bud

and there are no grapes on the vines,

though the olive crop fails

and the fields produce no food,

though there are no sheep in the pen

and no cattle in the stalls,

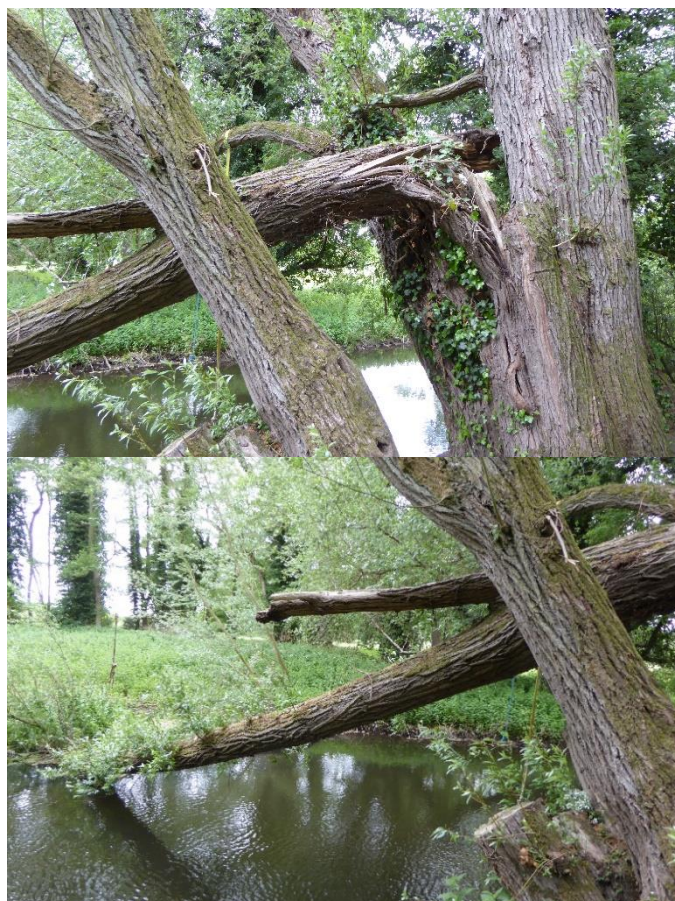
¹⁸ yet I will rejoice in the Lord,

I will be joyful in God my Saviour.

¹⁹ The Sovereign Lord is my strength;

he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,

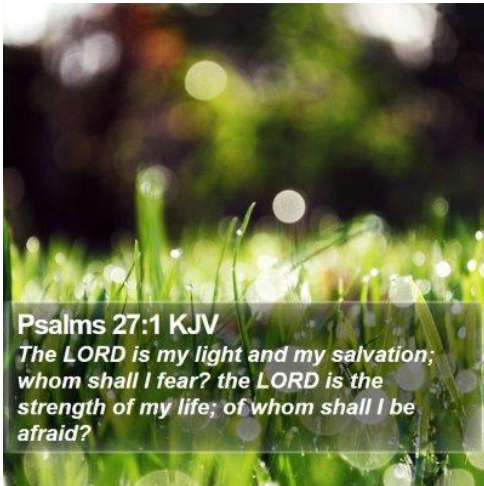
he enables me to tread on the heights.



11th March



14th March



15th March – Rev Jacqui Horton

Are these statements true or false, do you think? A. Jen and I went to a Rock Concert a few weeks ago B. A pyramid of mosaic triangles is going to be built this year in Swaffham town centre C. I was once described as a 'guardian angel' in the Times newspaper. D. I once spent £5,000 of a legacy on a garden bench. What do you think?! It is so difficult to know what is true and what isn't. It is also difficult to believe that other people can believe things that we know to be patently false. 'Fake News' seems to be a big thing nowadays. And then we get to the Bible and, although we want to say that it is the Word of God, it can't all be 'true' because there are contradictions, anachronisms, and things we definitely don't like (about God bringing about war for example). It is all very difficult. But, then, who said life is meant to be easy? At least we have the divine spirit (the Holy Spirit) to guide us and help us. There is a Bible verse that says, "The Spirit of truth ... will guide you into all the truth" (John 16 v 13) - I am sure that is true!

PS A, B, C & D above are all true. Ask me if you want to know more!



16th March – Sam Parfitt

This year I have decided to fast from social media for Lent, so this reflection has been written and sent to Mandy who has posted it onto Facebook, where I will have no idea of how well it is received, whether it will get any tiny thumbs up or smiley faces, which as a naturally curious person I'll find a bit difficult!. Earlier on today I had a conversation with someone about not always knowing the effect of our encounters with people and how sometimes it is the little things that we say or do that can have the most dramatic effect on someone's life. There are lots of accounts in the New Testament involving bystanders to Jesus' Ministry - the sermon on the mount, the woman sentenced to be stoned, the turning over of the tables in the temple and many more besides. But there will also have been all the other, more 'ordinary' times too, people



passing Jesus in the street, serving him food or drink, passing the time of day. I wonder how those people's lives were affected, perhaps they gave up whatever they were doing to follow the way of Jesus having been touched by his presence? I think that the point I am trying to make here is that the most ordinary of our acts of kindness can be the things which have the most impact on someone's life. Perhaps you have been the recipient of a simple act of kindness, or perhaps you are someone who acts kindly in small ways often? Maybe I can encourage you to take a moment after reading this to reflect and give thanks for the loving kindness made known to us through others and through Jesus Christ.

17th March – Rev Cliff Shanganya

I trust in your unfailing love. I will rejoice because you have rescued me. I will sing to the Lord because he has been so good to me. Psalm 13:5-6

In the early verses of Psalm 13, the psalmist called out to God and heard nothing in reply. What could he count on to carry him through that bleak moment? He reached deep within and pulled out memories of the times God had rescued him in the past, times he had his back against the wall and had seen the hand of God move. Times he had felt abandoned and later discovered that God had been working behind the scenes in ways that were miraculous? It was those memories that allowed him to sing of God's goodness in the midst of overwhelming circumstances. The psalmist's experience is much like a soldier crouched behind a barrier, gunshots and fire exploding around him, unaware that the general sits on a higher plain, mapping out the enemy's next move. It is only when the smoke has cleared and the general's plan is revealed that the soldier understands that he was never alone. Sometimes we may wonder where God is when we are in the middle of a battle, but it is the memory of past victories that allows us to sing while we wait for him to rescue us.

Let us pray:

LORD, we can't help but praise you when we remember all the times you have rescued us in the past. There were times when we felt alone and realised only later that you were there all along. We see your handiwork in those valleys as you gently guided us when we stumbled, held our hand, and lifted us to the mountaintops once again. Help us to trust you for what we are facing today. Amen.

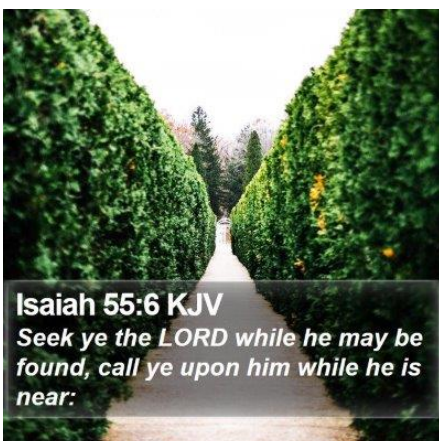


Battle Hymns

18th March



21st March



22nd March -Deacon Jen Woodfin

I felt I must interrupt my series of 'Sabbatical Reflections' with this thought.

What glorious weather the last few days have been. We went to Felbrigg Hall on Saturday where there was a large number of daffodils in groups. They had all come out with the warmth of the sun and was, therefore, giving a bright splash of colour to the scene. When I looked at the photo on my phone I was really struck with the contrast between the daffodils in full bloom and the empty branches of the trees, yet to show their full beauty. I realise that it is all about timing. Everything in creation happens at the right time, to fulfil its own beauty and to give balance to the world. If we try to fit in to God's timing how much more beautiful and balanced would this world be?



23rd March

Something a little different today - a sonnet written by Rev Rachel Parkinson, the Chair of the Wolverhampton & Shrewsbury District;

O Emmanuel

I woke in darkness, climbed with heart held high:

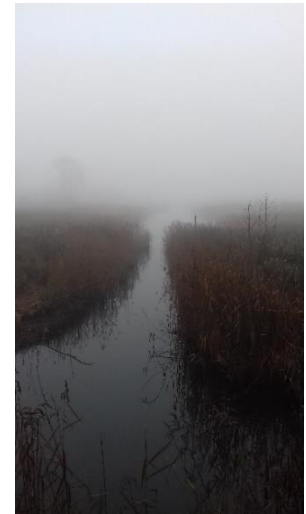
"O Oriens come, illuminate my day!"

Imagined sunrise blessing eastern sky;
a benediction of my chosen way.

But fog hung blankly curbing distant sight;
a whited sepulchre for my desire;
a seeping not a bursting of the light;
no shining mist, no non-consuming fire.

And yet the muffled stillness drew me in
and opened sense to humbler, smaller things;
to coppered bracken, mushroom's creamy skin,
a rearrangement of a grouse's wings

O come Emmanuel in tight wound band
and help me focus on what's close at hand.



24th March – Rev Anne Richardson

A month ago, on 24 February 2022, the Government removed the legal requirement to self-isolate following a positive test among other changes. The Coronavirus Act had 40 temporary provisions of which 20 have expired and another 16 expire today, 24 March, leaving just 4 relating to innovations in public service to expire in 6 months.

Everywhere you go people are wisely saying, 'well, we just have to learn to live with it, like with the flu'.

The Prime Minister, speaking in parliament on 21 Feb, said "So those who would wait for a total end to this



war before lifting the remaining regulations, would be restricting the liberties of the British people for a long time to come. This government does not believe that is right or necessary."

Whether we agree or not, it makes little difference!

As Christians, we rejoice in the freedom we receive from Christ Jesus. We also acknowledge our responsibility to care for one another. There is still a fear of Covid and people isolating themselves because of it. As a Church, may we always seek to be inclusive, to find ways to enable everyone to play their part and to value those who see the world differently.

Galatians 5:13-14 says: "You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh, rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbour as yourself."

25th March

♥♥

PHIL. 6:7

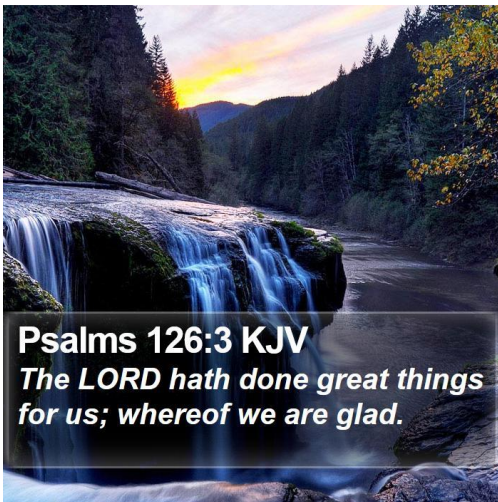
IN EVERY SITUATION, BY PRAYER
AND PETITION, WITH THANKSGIVING,
PRESENT YOUR REQUESTS TO GOD.

AND THE PEACE OF GOD, WHICH
TRANSCENDS ALL UNDERSTANDING,
WILL GUARD YOUR HEARTS AND
YOUR MINDS IN CHRIST JESUS.

☩

♥♥

28th March



29TH March – Rev Jacqui Horton

Instead of a Thought today, I want to tell you that Christian Aid - in conjunction with Churches Together in Britain and Ireland - is organising a special day of prayer for Ukraine on Sunday. There are ways to join in at <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/news/pray-for-ukraine> but they include using a specially written prayer (on the website) in church services and joining in with international prayer at 2 pm. I have joined in with previous international prayer in real time and found it very powerful. After all, I guess that IS a thought for today....



30th March – Sam Parfitt

A friend recently sent me a video of John Rutter talking about his response to the war in Ukraine as a composer and musician. It was followed by a performance of a piece that he wrote rather urgently, then was fortunate to have 300 people keen to perform it in Clare College Chapel. Listening to it, I realised that I had no idea what the words were, but actually I still found it very moving as the music conveyed emotion without the need for understanding what was being sung. It reminded me of the popular saying “Preach the Gospel at all times. Use words if necessary” Of course this may present us with great challenges from the pulpit, but I think it is a good and timely reminder that we share the Gospel through our whole selves. You can listen to and watch the video it for yourself here; [A Ukrainian Prayer, John Rutter](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U13KvWl2-U)

