

# February

# 2021

Cheadle Hulme Methodist Church  
*Magazine*



*Our Mission*

*Living With Christ*

*Living For Christ*

*Living to Make Christ Known*

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**Assistant Minister**

Rev'd Louise Gough

**Children and Schools Worker**

Mrs Pauline Moore

**Children and Families  
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Mrs Helen Deaville

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via the Church Office

**Magazine Editor** Mrs Margaret Gulson

Articles for the March Magazine by **7<sup>th</sup> February** please

If you include your personal contact details in your article then it will be assumed that you are giving consent for these to be included in the paper copy of the magazine which will be available publicly.

Dear friends

Friday nights are flute nights in the manse. It's my rest day, so I make sure I have a really long play. I usually end up feeling happy and fulfilled because I've been able to spend extra time enjoying my flute and some lovely pieces of music. But not since my teacher suggested I tried to learn Dutilleux's "Sonatine".

Dutilleux's "Sonatine" is regarded as one of the highest quality examples flute repertoire, full of substance and style. It was written in 1943 and was used as one of the test or competition pieces for the Paris Conservatoire.

Therein lies the problem. It's intended for talented players who have dedicated themselves to studying the flute at music college and who have mastered every corner of technique. If you listened to it on you tube or a recording, you would hear professionals ripping through it effortlessly, making it sound lighter than air, apart from all the beefy low notes (so awkward to do!). On the other hand, if you stood outside the manse and strained, you would hear a badly played half-speed version, with phrases dying for lack of air, strangled high notes and terrible articulation on the triple-tongued triplets. Alas – it is too hard for me! I have to keep stopping to get the knots out of my tongue and disentangle my fingers. My suspicion is that Dutilleux asked some treacherous flautist what all the trickiest technical problems are on the flute, and then threw them all into the piece (believe me, they are all there). I've lost count of the times I've wanted to shove the sheet music through the shredder.

My sympathetic bassoonist friend told me not to give up. She suggested I tried breaking it down, playing it slowly, just looking at a few bars per session – and not worrying too much about the bits I can't do. Her advice was to ease up on myself, and take it a lot more gently. Instead of beating myself up because I can't play it all, maybe I should just settle for playing parts of it, and that if I manage that, I'll be getting somewhere – and the rest will probably come with patience and careful work (I'm desperately trying to believe her on that!).

Then I thought, what a great philosophy for life in the Pandemic! I don't know how you're finding it, but some days it's difficult to cope,

and heart-breaking to hear the constant news reports of growing cases and far-reaching consequences. It's brilliant that so many have now received a vaccination (hope you've had yours, or that it's coming), and that we can perhaps dare to look forward again at some point soon. But we're also in the drab months of winter, and feeling that the whole situation has been going on for a very long time.

If we're finding it impossible to function sometimes, if it's more of an effort to fulfil small tasks, if we are tired and more prone to low moods, I definitely think we should apply my friend's advice and ease up on ourselves, go gently. I don't think we can expect the same of ourselves while we're living through entirely new experiences and dealing with so much uncertainty. This isn't a licence to give up completely and remain in the PJs until Boris says it's safe to come out, but if we have some moments when we have to stop, or give ourselves permission not to meet all the demands that are upon us, that's okay. Our well-being matters. Without self-care, the rest crumbles.

Jesus said: "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

Even hearing those words is like a sigh of relief to me! We can take our burdens, our worries, our weariness to Jesus, and place them down. He longs to fill us with peace; he offers us rest in his presence. Jesus knows that living as a faithful, active disciple can be tough, especially in these times – he wants us to be refreshed and replenished. All we have to do is go to him. Just knowing his loving presence is available to us – that is balm – and he offers us so much more.

So, don't worry if everything feels beyond you at the moment. Recognise that life seems to have saved up all its difficult bits for 2020 and 2021, and flung them in. Try and take it in small bites, rather than trying to tackle it all at once. Be gentle with yourself.

Rest when you need to. Celebrate even the smallest achievements. Most of all, keep on going to Jesus; let him carry

the load with you as he walks beside you. Ask him to give you his peace.

May you know the peace and presence of Jesus, today, and in all the days to come.

*Louise*  
*Rev'd Louise Gough, Assistant Minister*



## **Church Magazine Editor**

Our current Church Magazine Editor, Margaret Gulson, has indicated that she will be relinquishing this role. Margaret has very kindly been our Editor for a number of years and has done sterling work, so we need someone to volunteer to take over.

We (the Leadership/Executive team) have been unsuccessful in trying to find a person who will take this role on, so are now asking, via the Notices and Magazine, whether someone is prepared to volunteer.

They need to be computer literate and be able to receive e-mails and be familiar with Word documents.

Please can you let one of the members of the Leadership/Executive team know of your interest as soon as possible because it follows that if we get no volunteers then publication of the magazine will have to cease. Thank you.

Leadership/Executive team

# *Stay and Worship*

We are currently not worshipping in our church premises but are doing so via Zoom. If you would like to join the service, please email the church office ([chmc145@hotmail.com](mailto:chmc145@hotmail.com)) for the Zoom link. The service is recorded and uploaded to the CHMC YouTube channel later on the Sunday, which can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCE2ipuvHMvh-PTpfWuPY9rw>

**Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> February** Spiritual Communion  
10.30am Rev'd Philip Peacock

**Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> February** Mission In Britain Sunday  
10.30am Ms Cassie Jennings/Rev'd Philip Peacock

**Ash Wednesday – 17<sup>th</sup> February**

Service no longer taking place. However, Rev'd Louise Gough will lead some prayers on Zoom at 7pm.

**Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> February**  
10.30am Rev'd Louise Gough

**Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> February**  
10.30am Rev'd Philip Peacock

**Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> March** Church Anniversary  
10.30am Rev'd Gill Newton

## **Zoom**

Margaret and Norman Parker would like to express their thanks to all who are continuing to enable us to worship through zoom week by week. It makes such a difference to be able to join in even when we are not physically present. We appreciate the effort that goes into doing this for us.

# *Announcement*

## **From the Bramhall and Wythenshawe Methodist Circuit January 2021 ANNOUNCEMENT**

We are writing to you on behalf of the Bramhall and Wythenshawe Circuit to inform you of the following: Rev Katy Thomas, currently Circuit Minister with responsibility for Wilmslow, Styal and St Mary's, Handforth, has been appointed as the new Chaplain to Kingswood Methodist School in Bath. This appointment will begin in September 2021. The appointment was originally to begin at Easter but the Circuit Stewards and the Kingswood School Head have agreed that Katy can continue to work here until the end of July but with some weeks spent at the school as induction prior to the September term.

Katy has been very happy in this Circuit and had not been looking to move but upon receiving information about the job she felt a strong sense of call to this ministry bringing together her experience as a teacher and a minister. She will be leaving at the end of 9 years rather than 10.

Unfortunately, due to the timing of the interviews, we were not able to enter the Stationing Process at a prudent time to seek a new minister for September 2021. Please be assured that support will be put in place for Wilmslow, Styal and St Mary's churches whilst a new minister is sought for September 2022. The Circuit Staff and Stewards wish to congratulate Katy on this prestigious appointment.

Circuit Stewards: Judy Ream, Mike Cowling, Nigel Day, Pam Howie, Dave James

Superintendent Minister: Rev Philip Peacock

# *Mission in Britain.*

christians  
against  
poverty

**Mission in Britain Sunday**  
**14<sup>th</sup> February**  
**10:30am - Worship on Zoom**

Come and hear more about the work of CAP – Christian Against Poverty, with Ms Cassie Jennings – lay worker & Debt Centre Manager

The Wythenshawe CAP Debt Centre opened its doors metaphorically on the 1st September 2020. The Debt Centre is run in partnership with The Wythenshawe Methodist Churches and Wythenshawe Oasis.

Christians Against Poverty are a national award-winning charity offering FREE, long term face to face debt counselling provided in client's homes. At the moment, the appointments are over the phone/ via google meet or socially distanced chats – keeping to current govt. restrictions due to COVID. The Wythenshawe Cap Debt Centre provides this service in Wythenshawe M22, M23 and M90 as well as all SK8 Postcodes at the present time. Long term holistic support with volunteer befriending support and practical support such as food shopping, practical tasks, and emotional support is available to all clients.

The service is really in-depth and long term. CAP head office contacts all the creditors on behalf of the client and negotiates with them, working out a way forward for each person. CAP deals with the banks, councils, credit card companies and payday loan companies every day, gaining their respect. We then support clients as they work their way out of debt, or if the amount is too large, offer insolvency options. CAP will help anyone regardless of their age, gender, faith or background.

We have received half of the funding for the next five years but we now need to start raising money directly, to cover the other half of the money the debt centre will need to run. The Centre needs about £20,000 a year which will allow us to pay our Debt Centre Manager who will work with the skilled team at CAP

headquarters in Bradford, as well as many other expenses and outgoings. Our Debt Centre will be able to help 4 new clients a month as well as supporting existing clients until they reach a fully debt free life. That means nearly 50 households a year can get our support to move to having their money under control and be out of debt. Wythenshawe has a terrible combination of deprivation factors of which debt is a huge one. Our community research shows us that locally people see debt as one of the biggest problems so we are doing something about this! If we can find 130 regular donors giving an average of £10 a month, with gift aid, we will be able to run sustainably. More than that and we will be able to help more people. If you would like to donate anything from £1 a month or make a one off payment please can you email Cassie on [Cassiejennings@capuk.org](mailto:Cassiejennings@capuk.org) for a gift aid form and the bank details are below.

For donations our bank account details are:

Account Name: Wythenshawe Oasis

Account Number: 20409979 Sort Code: 60-83-01

Please get in touch with Cassie Jennings at [cassiejennings@capuk.org](mailto:cassiejennings@capuk.org) if you would like to give or know more. We are also looking for volunteers to help in various different ways and if you would like to help in any way please contact Cassie.

(From the December 2020 Circuit magazine)

## *Fairtrade Fortnight*

**22 February to 7 March 2021**



For two weeks each year at the end of February and start of March, thousands of individuals, companies and groups across the UK come together to share the stories of the people who grow our food and drinks and who grow the cotton in our clothes; people who are often exploited and underpaid.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us more than ever how interconnected we are globally.

This interconnection is at the very heart of the Fairtrade message and is where your role begins. You can be part of the Fairtrade movement and you have the power to drive long term change, not only with your shopping choices but with your support in spreading the message. We just have to do this a little differently in 2021!

## **CHOOSE THE WORLD YOU WANT THIS FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT**

In Fairtrade Fortnight 2021, we will highlight the growing challenges that climate change brings to farmers and workers in the communities Fairtrade works with. The facts are straightforward. Farmers and workers in the global south, who have done the least to contribute to climate change, are disproportionately affected. They have told us that:

- Climate change is one of their biggest challenges right now.
- Low prices for their crops mean that they are struggling to fight back.
- With more money through Fairtrade they feel more equipped to meet their everyday needs and deal with the challenges posed by climate change.

The climate crisis is an immediate and ever-increasing threat and those in climate vulnerable countries are already seeing its impacts from droughts and crop disease to floods, heatwaves and shrinking harvests.

*Adapted from Fairtrade website: <https://www.fairtrade.org.uk/Get-Involved/Current-campaigns/Fairtrade-Fortnight/>*

At church we often have a Fairtrade stall after a morning service, which is very well supported. We can't do that this year but would ask you to consider supporting Fairtrade when you can. You might also like to join in the fund-raising quiz – details below.

*Adapted from Fairtrade website: <https://www.fairtrade.org.uk/Get-Involved/Current-campaigns/Fairtrade-Fortnight/>*

THE CHMC  
**Fairtrade Fortnight**  
**BIG QUIZ**  
**NIGHT**  
*CHMC on Zoom*

*Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> February*  
*7pm-8.30pm on Zoom*

To register for the quiz and  
receive the Zoom link:  
chmc145@hotmail.com  
**Come as a team\***  
or on your own



**SIX** rounds of questions for all ages  
wide-ranging categories

Pick your moment and play your  
*Joker*

*Only £5 per team, £2 per individual*

Payment on the night via JustGiving  
(we'll help if you're unsure about  
this)

**All in aid of Traidcraft**

Great fun for a great cause

Includes a short film about the  
amazing work of Traidcraft

*Register by the 21<sup>st</sup> February*  
*to receive cake!*

*\*If your team is in separate houses, ask how to stay  
in touch during the quiz!*

## *Action for Children*

During the year of 2020, charities have struggled through lack of donations but I'm happy to report that our League of Light boxes for Action For Children have resulted in the great amount of £449.36.

Thank you to all you who collected over the year in your box. If anyone would like to have a League of Light box, I would be happy to provide you with one - after the lockdown when I can deliver it!!

As we were unable to bring gifts for A.F.C at the toy service in December, I was asked if I would encourage folk to be a " Secret Santa" instead, and a lot of you embraced the idea.

I was given £145-00 from folk at church, and I know some of you donated directly to A.F.C. web site.

So, a big thanks to you all.

I know the Secret Santa campaign reached over a million pounds, nationally, a great achievement and a great boost to A. F.C.

No matter what our world is experiencing right now, we must protect and care for our vulnerable children.

Thank you, Ann Booth.

## *Church Family*

### **From Pauline- Children & Schools Worker**

You don't need me to tell you that 2021 hasn't got off to the new start we were all hoping for! With schools open only for key workers' families and vulnerable children, the option of virtual assembly is all we can offer at present and this has been welcomed by Greenbank and Lane End.

I am still on furlough, apart from 3 hours per week; allowing me to write reports, attend meetings/training sessions and maintain contact with families associated with Young Church and Tiddlywinks. 8 sets of Nativity colouring cards were sent out along with greetings and messages about the 'In Search of Christmas' trail.

In view of the current lockdown, Susie is using Zoom to facilitate Babychat, as this is the preferred option for all concerned. Susie received a delightful mounted poster and several tokens of appreciation from many grateful mums who clearly highly value her support. It is great that CHMC is committed to this important work.

Hope I will be able to share more positive news in the near future!

## **Share our experiences**

As it is nearly a year since we began this strange life, wouldn't it be good if we shared our experiences? If you would like to tell us of hobbies or activities that you have been able to develop or begin during this time, it would be so appreciated. Just tell us what it is, but a short explanation of how it happened or what it meant to you would be lovely too. My details are on the magazine inside cover for you to send it to. Looking forward to hearing from you.

Margaret Gulson

## **Thanks**

I would like to thank you for a lovely afternoon, with the Praise Tea having been brought to me. I really did appreciate it and thank all the ladies for all their hard work. Cath Armstrong

## **Thanks**

Margaret and Norman Parker would like to express our huge gratitude for the splendid afternoon tea which was delivered to us on the Sunday before Christmas. Thank you very much to Gill Smith and team for organising it and Lesley Peacock for delivering it. We really appreciated the kindness.

And thank you to Val Pickwell for the Cameo gift for Norman. It was good to be remembered after all these months when Cameo has not been able to meet. Thank you very much.

## **In our prayers**

We remember in our prayers those who have been in hospital recently, those who are very poorly, and those who have been bereaved.

## *For Your Diary*

At the moment, most activities and groups have been suspended until further notice. Please see the notices for some things which are continuing online or in a different way.

### **Virtual Coffee Morning**

Rev'd Philip Peacock will host a Virtual Coffee Morning via Zoom on **Thursday February 11<sup>th</sup> from 10.30am to 11.30am**. If you would like to come to this, please let Philip know so that he can invite you. As usual, please bring your own refreshments.

### **Gift Day**

The Leadership Team agreed, a few months ago, that an annual Gift Day would be held for the church.

At the moment, the details of how this day will be held are unknown as well as what the money raised on the Gift Day will be used for. So, at this point all we can ask you to do is make a note of the date.

The Annual Gift Day will be held on **Saturday 24th April 2021**. More details when we have them, but it goes without saying that because of the pandemic, our finances have taken a serious hit, so there will certainly be a need for financial support in this year.

# *News and Information*

Bramhall Methodist Church, Stockport  
Bramhall and Wythenshawe Circuit

## **Church Administrator**

An exciting opportunity to be part of the life of a large and well-established church in the heart of Bramhall with a clear mission to reach out to people in our community.

We are looking for someone with great administration and people skills to support the smooth day to day running of our Church. The role will require you to work independently as well as comfortably with a wide range of people. You should be an outstanding communicator and competent in the use of IT including office 365 and social media.

This role is a 12-month fixed term contract and will be for 20 hours per week with some hours to be worked flexibly at a rate of £10.50 per hour. Current circumstances require this role to be home based but the usual place of work will be at the Church.

Please download the application pack from  
<https://bmethods.link/recruitment>

For an informal conversation about the role please contact  
Rev Sarah Parkin – 0161 400 1142

*Closing date: 11<sup>th</sup> February 2021*

*Interviews will be held via Zoom on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021*

*We welcome applications from all suitably qualified persons.*

## **Steve and Rosalind's News**

Ros is continuing to learn more about NetSuite at work. She is very thankful to work with Tom who has a strong background in banking and computing. He is a patient teacher and Ros's notes are multiplying.

Steve's team has continued working on the Translate This app. It has had a little "beta testing" and is usable to a certain degree. However, this is just the first phase and it will certainly need changes. There is a partner organisation in Asia that is hoping to benefit from it. Their feedback has been positive so far and helps us with app's design.

Speakers in the Pinyin language, displaced by an ongoing socio-political crisis in the country, say they have found new joy in the Pinyin New Testament.

The annual Scripture Celebrations at JAARS were very different this year in that we displayed and showed videos of translations completed during the previous 12 months. The entire Bible had been translated into 8 languages and the New Testament into another 20 languages.

Please pray for: continued good health and safety,

Ros continuing her learning

Steve and his team's work on Translate

# *Highland Cathedral*

**by Ros Brown.**

Last October, I was fortunate to spend a fortnight in Sutherland – my second home. I started my journey up north feeling thoroughly depressed and miserable. I came back feeling cheerful, relaxed and that I could face whatever covid and the winter might throw at me. Now, some weeks later, I still feel the same. This is an attempt to explain why.

The drive up was easy as there was little or no traffic. It started to rain, north of Glasgow and continued, almost non-stop, for the rest of the holiday.

When I got into the Highlands the autumnal colours were magnificent. The rain was a tremendous bonus in that it helped to create spectacular waterfalls.

After Dingwall, my route follows one of the old cattle drovers' roads, until it reaches what is considered one of the finest views in Britain – The Struie Hill.

When I got there, as usual, I parked in the layby, switched off the engine and opened the window. There was no traffic. I was alone. I looked down to the Dornoch Firth with the mountains majestically rising into the mist on the far horizon where land and sky meet.

The silence was so intense that I could almost feel it. There were no birds or animals to be seen or heard. I openly admit that I have been thrilled by similar scenes before, but this had a profound effect on me. Seeing some of the oldest mountains in Britain, if not in the world, in that compelling silence brought to mind the Psalmist's words "What is man and the son of man that thou art mindful of him?". This and similar views are what the Scots mean by the phrase "Highland Cathedral" and not the magnificent building in Dornoch.

After another 17 miles I reached my destination – “my” hotel in Lairg. What bliss! Somebody else would be doing the cleaning and cooking the meals!

On the first Sunday I went as usual to morning service in Dornoch cathedral. As in Cheadle Hulme, we had to wear masks, sanitize and follow a one-way system and be seated socially distanced in the order in which we arrived and not in our usual places. The doors remained wide open. It was very cold and I was glad that I was wearing my fleece.

The minister, Rev. Susan Brown, suitably distanced, greeted us individually as we arrived from either the central crossing or the central aisle.

I know her quite well as, by a truly remarkable coincidence, her nephew attended a local school when I was the head teacher. He had the most beautiful soprano voice and sang the solo first verse of the carol “Once in Royal David’s City” at one of our carol services.

Whenever we meet, she tells me she will phone her nephew and tell him she’s had a conversation with his former headteacher. He now has a very successful career. We had this usual conversation when I arrived.

She wears a red gown to denote that she’s one of a group of clergy who are chaplains to the Queen when Her Majesty is in residence in Scotland. They take turns to spend a week staying with the Queen, wherever she is residing, and preaching at the church in which she worships at the weekend.

Two or three years ago Rev. Brown became Moderator of the Church of Scotland. I think it is the equivalent of our President of the Conference. The badge of office that year is the church’s ceremonial shepherd’s crook.

She conducted the service I attended in October. It started with us all standing to wave and greet each other. We then watched a film on a screen which hung above the pulpit. It showed a fairly normal service conducted by Rev. Brown. She sat at the front and watched it with us. Apart from no hymns, there were the usual prayers, readings and a sermon. The lectionary Psalm for that day was Psalm 23 and was set for the first time since Rev. Brown

had been Moderator. She changed the New Testament reading to the concluding verses of Romans chapter 8. This assures us of God's love for us and that nothing can or ever will separate us from it.

The sermon, which she said she had wanted to preach ever since she had been Moderator with a shepherd's crook, described each verse of Psalm 23 in turn. This showed how tenderly the shepherd looked after his flock. This equates to God's continuous love and care for each one of us.

When the film was over, she moved to the central aisle to speak to us before the dismissal. She said she wanted to set us all some homework to do each day before next Sunday, starting tomorrow, Monday. We were to read the pages from Romans once each day. We were then to take in order each verse of the psalm each day, memorize it and try to think about it at various times during that day. By next Sunday we would have covered the whole Psalm.

When I left and had my usual chat with her, she said "My nephew will chuckle when I tell him I've had the temerity to set you some homework. Will you do it?" I assured her I would and we parted with broad grins on our faces.

When we met the next Sunday, I assured her that I'd "done my homework" and found it most helpful. She told me that that day's sermon would include further tasks and finished by saying "I implore you to carry out these instructions". I said I would try to do so.

This sermon concentrated on how covid was affecting and challenging our attitudes to many issues concerning God, faith and worship. She fired off a long list of things to consider, which I gathered would be the subjects of future sermons. The following list includes some of these:

- a) The loneliness of self-isolation should not blind us to God's ever-present care and love for us.
- b) We should remember that formal corporate liturgical worship does not make individual, informal prayer or conversations inferior. We should not ignore either form of worship.

- c) Prayer is more than making requests to ease pain or get us out of trouble
- d) Are we concentrating on the majesty of God to the exclusion of the love of God or vice versa?
- e) Have we chosen to ignore the commandment to love our neighbour as ourself, or failed to realise what that means?

She asked us to think about each of these topics particularly section (e). She said that in order to love our neighbour, we had a duty to tell as many people as possible about those things which helped us to face up to COVID-19 and to encourage them to do the same.

I came back feeling so much more able to accept whatever might come. I truly feel so much better mentally and physically, so I'm obeying this commandment by writing this article. I thank God for Susan Brown, Philip, Louise and all other clergy for their efforts to steer us through this difficult time.

# *Heroes of the Faith*



## **John Bunyan**

Written and given permission to publish by J. John Reverend Canon [www.canonjohn.com](http://www.canonjohn.com) Philo Trust:  
<mailto:connect@canonjohn.com>

John Bunyan is one of the most influential Christians of all time. Although he wrote nearly 60 books, his influence rests on one: *The Pilgrim's Progress*. It has sold more copies than any book other than the Bible and has helped countless numbers of people on the road to heaven. John Bunyan came from the most unpromising background and lived in troubled times. Born in 1628 to a poor Bedfordshire tinker, a man who made a living repairing pots and kettles, the young Bunyan had the minimum of

schooling. At the age of 16 he found himself on the Parliamentary side in the English Civil War, returning after three years to pick up his father's trade. Bunyan had grown up without any Christian

influence and as a young man was wild and lawless. Nevertheless, in the 1650s a variety of factors brought him to faith in Christ. It was not a straightforward conversion and a long, agonising struggle was to take place before Bunyan felt confident that he was indeed forgiven and saved. Joining a Baptist church, Bunyan soon became widely recognised as one of the most powerful Puritan preachers of his day, attracting crowds of over a thousand. When King Charles II heard that John Owen, the leading Puritan theologian of his day and Vice Chancellor of Oxford University, had been to listen to Bunyan preach, the king asked him why he had been to hear a 'mere tinker'. The great man replied, 'May it please your Majesty, if I could possess that tinker's abilities to grip men's hearts, I would gladly give up all my learning.' With the memory of the Civil War still fresh, the government of Charles II was anxious to suppress any form of dissent and England became an unwelcome place for those who, like Bunyan, were church leaders outside the national Anglican Church. In 1661 Bunyan found himself thrown in jail for his faith and ended up being imprisoned for 12 years. Bunyan had to live with the possibility that he might be sentenced to death, and his separation from his wife, family and church were a bitter pain to him. Locked away in jail, Bunyan began to write books. In 1672 Bunyan was released and pastored a Baptist church in Bedford until his death in 1688. *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a work published in two parts in 1678 and 1684, is a remarkable book. At one level it is a novel of journeys in which various characters face enemies and dangers as they make their way to their destination of the Celestial City. Interwoven with this is insightful teaching on entering and living the Christian life. It is a skilfully told story that is creatively engaging. As preacher, pastor and writer Bunyan knew he was someone entrusted by God with a message to proclaim. How he delivered that message inspires me. First, Bunyan was committed to God's message. He knew he had been called and gifted by God to proclaim the gospel of Christ. Faced with prison, Bunyan was offered a real-life 'get-out-of-jail-free' card; he could gain his freedom if he promised not to preach. He

refused: he had to preach. It's easy to talk about 'opposition' to the Christian gospel today, but Bunyan knew real opposition and he stood firm. It's a great encouragement that the attempt to silence Bunyan by imprisoning him backfired in allowing him the opportunity to write. Bunyan's commitment to share the good news of Jesus whatever it costs is much needed today. Second, Bunyan communicated the message effectively and powerfully through *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Bunyan wrote in the language of everyday men and women and about ordinary people: his characters are individuals who we can all identify with. Bunyan wanted people to see themselves in his story and we do. Bunyan's book is a masterwork on how to communicate the gospel and his skills are still needed. Third, Bunyan was comprehensive in his message. One reason for the lasting success of *The Pilgrim's Progress* is that it is not simply about how people should come to Christ but a guide to how they should live afterwards. Here conversion is not depicted as the end of the story but as the first step on what may be a long and challenging road. In *The Pilgrim's Progress* Bunyan writes something that has not just depth but breadth; he shows us the Christian life with all its delights and temptations, joys and challenges, struggles and victories. Bunyan was an evangelist to those outside the Christian faith and an encourager to those within it. There is a godly wisdom for us all. Finally, Bunyan was caring in his message. Bunyan was a pastor and had that essential gift for caring for people. He told the truth in love and for all the solemn warnings in *The Pilgrim's Progress* it is filled with empathy and concern. In particular there is comfort and encouragement to those who are finding the journey of faith a struggle. Jesus was described as the one who 'will not crush the weakest reed or put out a flickering candle' (Matthew 12:20 NLT). Bunyan imitated him and we should too. Bunyan was a man who had indeed the ability 'to grip men's hearts'. He shared God's wisdom with an impact that few have equalled. If ever an age needed men and women like him, then it is ours.

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