

## FOR YOUR INFORMATION

An official document released by the Cabinet says " *it is the government's ambition to open public places (such as places of worship) as part of the third step to recovery*" Robert Jenrick (Communities Secretary) was asked why sporting events have been prioritised over religious services he stated "*the government is committed to reopening churches when the time is right, that moment is not now*" Experts (!) say places of worship can easily become hotspots for spreading the virus because singing can spread droplets similar to a cough and sneezing.

So we must continue as we have been doing. Of course Zoom, Whats App, Facebook are immensely valuable BUT we must reiterate and emphasise there is **no substitute** for the gathered Church of Christ, fellowshipping in the flesh and worshipping together. It is great to send e-mails, church at home leaflets but they are text only. Quote: "*Creation did not spring to life when God wrote words in the dark using a divine sparkler. Creation sprang to life when God spoke "Let there be..."*" The Bible was written for the human voice, not just the eye and the mind so I am longing for the day when we can give spoken exposition. That is why I ask you to read aloud the Scripture passages in each week's Church at Home so you will HEAR the Word of God. "*Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God*"

As ever when we know more we will let you know.

## SOMETHING PERSONAL

This week I have used a psalm from the collection known as the Psalms of Ascents. They were used three times a year as the pilgrims went to worship at Jerusalem. The last one is Psalm 134 (the shortest one). Now they are setting off, probably before sunrise, to their homes in Israel. They think once more of the priests in the Temple "*ye servants of the Lord who stand by night in the house of the Lord*"(v1) At night so no-one would have seen them to acknowledge their work. Then comes the phrase "*lift up your hands and bless the Lord*" (v2). We must do everything possible in this moment of time to encourage one another to press on faithfully. Loneliness is a problem I know BUT God IS WITH YOU.

A question has been raised "Why after 50 years do you still bother ?" My answer is very simple along with Joyce , my wife and my children **YOU** are my family and I care about you and care for you. Amen and Amen!

DPS

## ROCHFORD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Welcome to  
**CHURCH AT HOME**  
Sunday 5th July 2020  
**SURROUNDED**

Read through this outline and join with everyone else at 11 am

### HYMN MP 626 (to read or sing)

Teach me Thy way ,O Lord,  
Teach me Thy way!  
Thy gracious aid afford,  
Teach me Thy way !  
Help me to walk aright  
More by faith, less by sight  
Lead me with heavenly light,  
Teach me Thy way.

When doubts and fears arise,  
Teach me Thy way!  
When storms o'erspread the skies,  
Teach me Thy Way !  
Shine through the cloud and rain,  
Through sorrow, toil and pain;  
Make Thou my pathway plain,  
Teach me Thy way!

Long as my life shall last,  
Teach me Thy way !  
Where'er my lot be cast,  
Teach me Thy way !  
Until the race is run,  
Until the journey's done,  
Until the crown is won,  
Teach me Thy way !

(It would be good if you said this out aloud)

O Lord God our gracious, heavenly Farther  
You alone are worthy to be praised.  
Everything seems to be getting more difficult  
And we wonder when will it all end.  
Thank you that you never change  
Thank You for Jesus He is a wonderful Saviour  
Thank you for what He did for us upon the cross of Calvary.  
Give us the strength. and the faith to trust You  
with the struggles and the upsets  
we are facing right now.  
Thank You that You give us hope joy and peace.  
Lord I ask you to bless and help .....( put a name (s) and meet  
their every need in the Name of Jesus !  
**AMEN**  
You may like to say the Lord's prayer also.

#### BIBLE VERSE FOR THE WEEK

##### Psalm 125

"As the mountains surround Jerusalem so the Lord surrounds His people both now and for evermore" (v2)

#### SURROUNDED

With our thoughts turning to how the lockdown restrictions could be safely lifted and we could possibly get back to church again. We were asking when would ministers ever judge the situation to be safe. This ongoing argument about in protecting the most vulnerable is it worth the cost the rest of society is bearing? And what about the children and their education? Then suddenly the eruption of violent protest and behaviour as the "*Black lives matter*" spilled over all around the world. Did you read the vitriolic full page in the local Echo as the young 25 year old political activist from Hockley as she raged at the MP because he said "*all lives matter*". Her comment that if we say something like that we are using "*outdated language*" Is this not a basic feature of the Gospel that "*all lives matter to God*" ? How sad it has been to see those going to supposedly peaceful protests armed with rockets, missiles, ropes and grappling hooks bent on throwing missiles at horses, tearing down or defacing monuments. **At the same time** parliament passed the second reading of the "*Quickie divorce*" Bill and discussed suspending Sunday trading Laws to boost the economy. Do not be misled if they are suspended they will never come back and all we fought for to "*Keep Sunday Special*" in 2008 will be lost. Overwhelmed ,surrounded by so much made me think how at **one and the same time** we are surrounded by something else so I turned to Psalm 125 to remind myself "*the Lord surrounds His people NOW*".

#### THE SETTING

Sometimes we think the Christian life should be exempt from setbacks, shipwrecks, car crashes, storms, earthquakes, cancer and a whole range of accidents, troubles and illnesses that we experience along with everyone else. The pilgrim was wrestling with issues as he makes his way to Jerusalem. It was tough going. A foreign invader now ruled the land, evil has the upper hand (just read the Psalm again). It was the sixth Psalm of ascent up to Jerusalem so he would be singing it. Do you realise, as he did, what shakes you up will not shake you apart (v1) - God will make you as solid as Mount Zion. Then comes the realisation that nothing can penetrate God's inner ring of protection "as the mountains surround ....". Adversity and sorrow, setbacks and frustrations are nothing but an outer circle . God is close, so very close, there for you and it is a fact more permanent than even the mountains around Jerusalem. True for the pilgrim singing AND the psalm song is true for US in our situation today.

#### THE SEQUENCE

##### We are surrounded by God's PROMISES

"He has given us His very great and precious promises so that through them you may participate in the divine nature" 2 Peter 1:4 (NIV)

Do you recall the Sunday school chorus "*Every promise in the Book is mine*". I cannot validate this but it is reckoned there are more than 365 promises in your Bible -one for every day ! Peter makes such an incredible statement preceding the above text by saying "*His divine power gives us everything we need for life*". What does it all mean? Simply that you have the guarantee of God's presence for anything and everything.

##### We are surrounded by God's PEACE.

"and the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" Philippians 4:7

Probably the most sought after thing in our troubled world yet seemingly so elusive, so difficult to secure, so difficult to find. Why? Peace is not something we earn or deserve. It is a gift from God. The wonderful promise of Jesus is "*My peace I give to you*" (John 14)

##### We are surrounded by God's POWER.

"we are kept by the power of God through faith (1Peter1:5)

God uses ordinary people like us to do extraordinary things and His is the power that enables us to cope, to do, to dare, to be what He wants us to be. In these difficult times just remember **WHO** surrounds you. **DPS**