

RIDGEWAY METHODIST CHURCH



THIS MONTH: SEPTEMBER 2011

Dear Friends

'I am not ashamed of the gospel'

Much of the New Testament consists of the letters that the Apostle Paul wrote to the New Testament churches. He wrote his longest letter to the church at Rome and this is commonly reckoned to be not only the best summary of Christian doctrine but also the most difficult letter to understand. At the beginning the Apostle claims, 'I am not ashamed of the gospel' (Romans 1:17).

We are familiar with using ironic understatement for effect. For example we could say, 'to swim the English Channel is *no small* achievement'. More simply we could say, 'to swim the English Channel is a *great* achievement' but it is not quite so expressive. At the beginning of Romans, Paul writes that he is *not ashamed* of the gospel. Again, this is an expressive way of speaking. He could so easily have written that he was *proud* of the gospel or that he gloried in it. This set me thinking as to why Paul might be ashamed of the gospel?

First and foremost, the gospel is about a person, Jesus. The great claim of the Christian faith is that God has come to us in person, in Jesus. Why would Paul be ashamed of Jesus? At the time of the Roman Empire, Jesus' homeland, Judea, was just a distant province in the empire. People from Judea were not considered anything special. Although he was born in Bethlehem, Jesus was brought up in Nazareth, an unexceptional town from which nothing significant had ever come. Yet, even within his own community, there were those who looked down upon Jesus, perhaps because there had been some scandal as to the circumstances of his birth. If that was not enough, Jesus had been rejected and betrayed by his own people and crucified, a form of death reserved by Rome for criminals who were not Roman citizens and regarded as disgusting by the Jews.

It's easy to see why Paul might have been ashamed of Jesus and the gospel and yet he is not ashamed. He is not ashamed of it because he believes that in the gospel the righteousness of God has been revealed. While each of the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) gives us information about the ministry of Jesus, his teachings, his parables and his miracles, there is little doubt that the main interest of the Gospel-writers is the death of Jesus. Christians believe that God deals with the sin of the world (unbelief, disobedience) by the death of Jesus, who bears our sins in his body on the cross. In Jesus, therefore, we can see the grace and mercy of God in action. In Jesus, God himself is winning us back by the depth of his love. Paul is not ashamed of this message. Furthermore, the story does not end there. The accounts of the resurrection of Jesus, when his disciples and friends saw him alive again, show his victory over sin, death and the grave and bring hope of life to everyone.

The gospel message is a challenge to us all. It calls us to believe in Jesus, the man who is God, and to apply his death and resurrection in our lives. But what does it mean to *apply* his death and resurrection? It is possible to believe that Jesus died on the cross for the sins of the world but not to have acknowledged that he died for you. In the ancient world, when the worshipper offered a sacrifice, the worshipper would place his hand on the sacrifice to show that it was his. By faith, the believer does the same today, reaching out and acknowledging that Jesus is not simply dying for

the world but for me. Do you feel that, by faith, you have knelt at the foot of the cross and prayed, 'thank you Jesus for dying for me'? It is possible to believe that Jesus has risen from the grave and is alive today but not to have acknowledged him as your personal Lord and Saviour. By faith, the believer acknowledges Jesus as Lord and Saviour and is not ashamed. The new way of thinking and the new way of living that results from this does not mean that we never make mistakes and need to ask for forgiveness but it does mean that we are committed to someone else being in ultimate control of our life and destiny. By faith, the believer can receive the Holy Spirit (the presence of God in our lives).

The Apostle Paul lived in a cosmopolitan world with many competing ideas. Yet even in that environment (with so many similarities to our present-day situation), he was not ashamed of the gospel. The message of the love, grace and mercy of God made known in Jesus is relevant to us all. Jesus' death on the cross as a sin-bearer makes being right with God possible, while his triumphant resurrection gives hope of life. If you have never done so before, I would like to invite you to *apply* the death and resurrection of Jesus in your own life. Set aside some time to seek God's presence and to pray. For those of us who have done this before, as a new church year of service begins, there is no harm in recommitting ourselves not just to the message but to the Lord of the message. Now we have to live by that message and prove in word and deed, 'I am not ashamed of the gospel' because I am not ashamed of Jesus.

Back to church Sunday (25 September)

Back to church Sunday is a national initiative and we are sharing in it. Many people say that they would go back to church if they received a personal invitation to do so. While it is possible to invite people to come to church on any of the 52 Sundays in a year, there are some (Christmas, Easter) where there is a special opportunity. However, most people are inevitably busy at the Christian festivals and so Back to Church Sunday gives us an opportunity to invite people to come with us to church on what is effectively 'an ordinary Sunday in September'.

Being a member of the Methodist Church

The Methodist Church began as a society and therefore people expressed their faith and commitment by becoming members. Membership is still an important part of our system and it really helps if everyone expresses their faith and commitment by being a member. If you come regularly and receive Holy Communion with us but are not a member and would be willing to explore the possibility please speak to me, a steward or make contact through the office.

Safeguarding training

If you are a pastoral visitor or do any kind of work with children, young people or vulnerable adults in the life of the church, it is essential that you have a CRB check and attend an evening of Safeguarding training. The next one is on Tuesday 13 September at 7.00 pm at Roborough Methodist Church. Please contact Lynne in the circuit office if you want to book a place 551514office@pdmcircuit.org.uk

Welcome Rae!

We have looked forward to the arrival of our local mission enabler for some time and at the beginning of September Rae Nelson finally takes up her appointment with us. We will formally welcome Rae in our morning service on Sunday 4 September and have opportunity to meet her informally after. We are a big church community and it will take Rae a little while to get to know all that is going on, let alone come to terms with individual names and faces – so please be patient. Also, we must be reasonable in our expectations of what one person can do in a part-time

appointment. The clue is in the name. 'Local' means that the primary sphere of Rae's work is Plympton. 'Mission' means that the main focus of Rae's work is looking outwards. 'Enabler' (which is currently a popular word in Methodism) means that we don't expect Rae to do it all herself but to be alongside us in work that we are doing together.

Minister's Bible study



This term we are looking at the Old Testament 'Writings' (Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Songs, Ruth, Job, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Daniel and Esther). We begin with a time of singing and prayer, move into the study and share afterwards in tea/coffee and a selection of superior biscuits. No prior knowledge is expected or assumed and everyone is welcome. We meet weekly from Monday 19 September at 7.30 pm in the lounge.

God bless

John Haley
Minister

September Diary

Saturday 3:

	PRAYER CAFÉ Saturday 3 September 8.30 - 9.30 am Prayer and breakfast	
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10.00 - 12.00 Oasis Coffee Bar: Outreach (Christine and Lydia)

Sunday 4:

Sunday Services

10.30 am Preacher: Revd John Haley - Holy Communion
7.00 pm Preacher: Mrs Jo Smart

Tuesday 6:

10.00 - 12.00 Patchwork Group
 7.45 pm Ladies' Group: Members Evening (What am I?)

Wednesday 7:

10.00 - 12.30 Coffee followed by Lunches

Thursday 8:

2.30 pm Women's Fellowship: Revd John Haley

Saturday 10:

10.00 - 12.00 Oasis Coffee Bar: Local Mission (Pat and Jane)

Sunday 11:

Sunday Services

10.30 am Preacher: Revd David Hull and Revd John Haley
7.00 pm Preacher: Revd John Haley

Tuesday 13:

10.00 - 12.00 Patchwork Group
 7.45 pm Ladies' Group: Mrs Jean Aldersley (Visiting Nepal)

Wednesday 14:

10.00 - 12.30 Coffee followed by Lunches
7.30 pm Fellowship Café

	FELLOWSHIP CAFÉ Wednesday 14 September 7.30 - 9.00 pm Fellowship preceded by puddings
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Thursday 15: 2.30 pm Women's Fellowship: Mr Philip Skedgell
Saturday 17: 10.00 - 12.00 Oasis Coffee Bar: Boys' Brigade (BB Officers and helpers)

Sunday 18: Sunday Services
10.30 am Preacher: Revd Alen McCulloch
7.00 pm Preacher: Revd John Haley - Holy Communion

Monday 19: 7.30 pm Minister Bible Study (1)

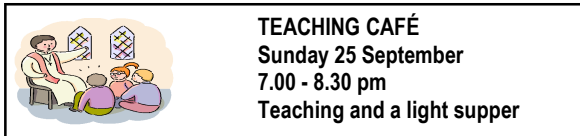
Tuesday 20: 10.00 - 12.00 Patchwork Group
2.15 pm Service at Pocklington Rise (all welcome)
7.30 pm Men's Fellowship: Revd John Haley
7.30 pm Youth Council
7.45 pm Ladies' Group: Mrs Pam Tibbs (Fuchsias and Geraniums)

Wednesday 21: 10.00 - 12.30 Coffee followed by Lunches

Thursday 22: 2.30 pm Women's Fellowship: Mr Colston Swift
7.00 pm Flower Arrangement practice (in the crèche)

Saturday 24: 10.00 - 12.00 Oasis Coffee Bar: Shekinah Mission (Sue and Len)

Sunday 25: Sunday Services: Back to Church Sunday
10.30 am Preacher: Revd John Haley (Includes thanksgiving for the daughter of Rebecca Eves and Colin Palmer)
7.00 pm Preacher: Revd John Haley - Teaching Café



Monday 26: 7.30 pm Minister Bible Study (2)

Tuesday 27: 10.00 - 12.00 Patchwork Group
7.45 pm Ladies' Group: Mr Brian Gerry (Music Time)

Wednesday 28: 10.00 - 12.30 Coffee followed by Lunches

Thursday 29: 2.30 pm Women's Fellowship: TBA

Church office hours Tuesday-Friday 9.30 am - 12.30 pm
Church telephones: 348178 (office only); 331186 (pre-school and hall)

Church Office: admin@ridgewaymethodist.org.uk
Minister: The Revd John M Haley: min@ridgewaymethodist.org.uk

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Please submit Information for October *This Month* to the office by 20 September.