

Between you and me

: *worship for May 10 with Dave Kitchen*

Between you and me, I don't think we always share what we're thinking and feeling as well as we might. We're probably better than we were 20 or 30 years ago but I suspect we're still not good at it. So this is a short time together where I'll share favourite words, readings, poems, prayers and stories. Because this is sharing, you're very welcome to send me something in return ... but you don't have to! Just if something pops into your head. And talking of things popping into heads, here's the poem that probably started off all the other short poems I use at the start of services

Make me gentle in your love, Lord
Make me kind to every man;
Let me learn that I need others
To be all that I am.

Make me cry when I am stone, Lord;
Make me warm when I am cold;
Make me wise when I am young, Lord,
And young when I am old.

I am yours and you are mine, Lord,
And together we are one,
And, out of that, new life is born
And love again begun.

Let's pray together

Gentleness, Lord – that's what we need
And so often we're angry or frustrated.

We'll never manage kindness or compassion if we're full of our own problems and opinions.

Forgive us.

And, as you forgive us, open our eyes to the extraordinary beauty of your creation that we miss when we're thinking about ourselves.

The sun rises, the blossoms come out, the birds sing – you put these things there because you love all that is beautiful. It's as if you're saying: "Go on. Enjoy this moment for I have put it there with you in mind."

And, though you remember each of us individually, what you give us is not for one or two people alone.

The sun rises for everyone, the birds sing so all can hear, the blossom is glorious to every person who notices it.
Even when we are kept apart, your creation binds us together.
Bless you, Lord.

And we remember the prayer which was a blessing to your first followers

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen

Music?

If we were together now, we'd be singing. So I've included hyperlinks to some music that you can play in if you want to. Play one now. Play it later. The great thing about this sort of worship is that you can enjoy it in any order you wish and even skip the boring bits. Although, if you're like Alison, you'll feel guilty about doing that! But it truly is YOUR choice.

Psalm

One of my choices when I'm reading the bible is the poetry. Don't know why I love poetry so much. Just do! The beautiful Catholic translation of the psalms that became part of their Jerusalem Bible was made at a retreat community called The Grail, just up the road from where we lived. It was about 200 yards from our own church, Pinner Methodist, and the most of the congregation knew almost nothing about the magical community that lived just by them.

We're a bit like that. We miss the beauty that is just around the corner because we don't open our eyes. So take a browse in the Psalms one day and look for the voice that speaks to you. Write out the part that struck you – in your best handwriting, of course!

Here's my take, as a poet, on what Psalm 67 says to me.

May God forgive us, may he love us,
May he see us and still bless us.
May his face shine upon us
So we feel his light within our lives.

In the sunshine of that love, may we spread
His kindness and compassion across the earth
So that all are saved from darkness
And no one left in fear.

May praise rise from every corner
And joy from every house,
As God's way becomes our way
And that way becomes everyone's path.

Then the lands will grow green,
The harvests will be golden
And God, in all his awesome power,
Will come close ... and will bless even us.

A prayer for others

Father God

We pray first for those who are being driven close to the edge by the pressures this situation creates. Give us all the strength we need, a dash of patience, the ability to endure and a dose of good humour to help us get through.

We pray especially for those who keep the wheels of life moving, including the ones who don't make the headlines as they drive the night-time deliveries, clean the sewers and do a thousand and one jobs that we never see.

We pray as well for those who care, both formally and informally for the most vulnerable of us. Bless them, Lord, and keep them safe.

We pray for the scientists, sometimes on double shifts, as they try to find the solutions that will make us safer.

We pray for medical staff across the world as they deal with the crisis that a tiny virus has unleashed. May they make the right decisions at the right moments that make the systems work even when they're looking as if they might fall apart .

And finally we pray for ourselves that we will simply do what we can, where we can with a good heart and a smile on our face

We ask this through Jesus Christ, whose death and life makes all prayers possible and who astonishingly made us his hands and hearts here on earth. Amen

Music?

It's up to you but the talk bit comes next so if you need a breather, this isn't a bad point.

The Question: how on earth did you become a local preacher?

It's a regular sort of afternoon in the summer holidays of 1967. I think to myself that perhaps I'll do what teenagers did in the 1960s ... especially when they had too much time on their hands. So I get the bicycle out of the garage and tell my mum that I'm going to the library. It's the safe thing to say. She never questions me all that much.

The twist in this story is where I'm intending to go. I'm not slipping out to buy cannabis or arrange Peace and Love parties. I am actually cycling to the library. Whatever anybody tells you about me, deep down I'm just a geek. I might have wanted to be the wild child but in fact I was simply the bookish boy with the wild hair. This afternoon, however, I'll not make it to the house of free books.

Les is to blame for that. Eventually he would become the Reverend Lesley Goulden but back then he was just Les. When the youth group went on their Easter trip to the Peak District in 1966, he took the afternoon service at a country chapel called Woodlands. We all hiked there. It was in the middle of a field with a congregation of six and a stray sheep that I shooed out of the toilet! The service was heart-lifting both for the elderly congregation and for us.

Les was a good young local preacher and just before the service, he asked if anyone would do the Easter reading from John's gospel. There was a period of silence while the youth group made a careful study of their walking boots. I felt sorry for him, said I'd do it if no one else wanted to. No one else did.

That was the start of Les and I. He was pleased with how the reading went and asked if I'd like to join him in helping with some services. These days this is commonly called the mentoring of worship leaders and comes with a van load of paperwork. Back then we just did it. For all our current fear of informal arrangements, it worked for many people including me.

None of this is in my mind as I wave to mum and set out for the library. The odd moment comes when I'm half way down Love Lane – a great name for a road with a church on its corner. For no good reason, I think I'm being told to put my name down for Local Preaching. As I'm only 16, this can fairly be described as an extremely odd thought but Les has already commented that I don't seem afraid of anything. My father has said the same but, with him, it's a definite criticism!

The bike slows as I think about what I might be letting myself in for. Cycling slowly down the main street, I can't make a decision. Then the synagogue and the library come into view at the far end of the shops. I make the decision by the synagogue! Picking up the pace on the pedals, I ignore the library and head instead for The Manse.

Probably, you're supposed to make appointments but I'm not sure God works like that. Reverend Bernard Holland opens the door and looks surprised. He invites me in: 'Why on earth have you cycled all this way in the middle of the afternoon?' I look puzzled and he goes on: 'On any other day, I'd be out on my pastoral visits.'

'But you're not!'

He laughs: 'No, I've just had a phone call cancelling a visit. I was actually wondering what to do next.'

So that's what happens. We're both unexpectedly there and we begin making the necessary arrangements. He explains that putting your name forward doesn't oblige you to anything and quite a few people find that it isn't for them after all, That's fine, he explains, because everyone needs to explore. He's making it easier for me to change my mind if I need to. After all, while there's no minimum starting age, I'm fairly young. Back in the sixties, young people were often pilloried for lacking staying power. I probably look like one of the flakier ones.

When I get home, my mother asks me what I got from the library and I explain what's actually happened.

'That's nice, dear,' she says which is her code for *I haven't the faintest idea about what you've just said*. She smiles, though, and gives me a hug because I'm still her boy however strange I may seem. And I feel good about what I've begun.

Bible reading

A bible reading hardly ever comes last – we read the book, we preach to apply what the book says. But that's not the only possibility. My story changes because of one word. It's the astonished one word cry at the end of the bible reading that Les gave to me on that Easter afternoon back in 1966. Suddenly, like Mary, I knew it was real.

John 20, 1-16

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him."

Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in.

Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself.

Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed. As yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet.

They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?"

She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him."

When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus.

Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?"

Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away."

Jesus said to her, "Mary!"

She turned and said to him. in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means Master.)

Blessing

May the light of Jesus shine on you,
May his spirit fill your heart,
May the sense that he will walk with you,
Be there at each day's start.
May the peace of God sit deep in you,
May it calm your every fear.
Today, tomorrow, for all time:
May you know that he is near.

Music ... and coffee ... and chocolate biscuits?

You could play one of the music files now or something that you particularly like. Then you could put the kettle on and make a cuppa with us. Chocolate biscuits are, of course, merely optional but they are rather nice! God bless, Dave.

Links to and notes on the music

Fool's Wisdom: *Malcolm and Alwyn*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0WpFvsQc0qM&list=PLA30057248E341D0C&index=2>

- I opened Malcom & Alwyn's last concert ever which was here in Cardiff so heard the final time they sang this. Unforgettable. A bit of lost treasure.

God of the moon and stars: *Paul Field*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k41L405QXuI>

- Paul played at Christchurch, Fairwater when Daren Middleton was their Minister. A great evening full of Paul's sense that we are all God's children however damaged we have become. He is always still just waiting for us.

In Christ Alone: *Stuart Townend*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ouGuG9712RY>

- We sing this regularly when 10.30am on Sunday allows us to be together. This version features Stuart, his band and a congregation making the hymn come alive just as we try to do in our own way.