

## Stockton Road Church News October 2024



### **Mark 12: 30-31**

*“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,  
with all your mind, and with all your strength, and you shall  
love your neighbour as yourself”.*

We are a union of Presbyterian and Congregational churches at the heart of Sunderland city life, growing from a past rich in mission and hospitality. We embrace this heritage utilising the Five Marks of Mission to guide and enable us to take forward current opportunities for mission and service.

## OCTOBER REFLECTION

### **JOB 23: 1-9,16-17**

*Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.*

'Where are you, God?' is the universal cry of the dispossessed, the frightened, the ill, the dying, the victim of violence. In the BBC drama *Ashes to Ashes* the detective Gene Hunt is investigating the murder of a child whose parents were faithful worshippers at a local church. Hunt visits the church as part of his investigations and walks past a crucifix. Looking at the figure of Jesus he asks, 'Where were you when that lad needed you?' Job experienced every form of pain imaginable but his deepest anguish seems to be the thought that God may have abandoned him. Jesus knew that anguish on the cross (Psalm 22.1). Hebrews 4: 14-15 reminds us that Jesus suffers with us. To answer Hunt, Jesus was suffering with the boy, as he also suffers with creation, and works to bring relief, healing and a heaven of justice and peace.

Holy God, we thank you for your living Word,  
which discerns the intentions of our hearts.  
We thank you for your Word incarnate, Jesus,  
who has suffered and been tested as we are.  
Give us the humility to ask for the grace and mercy we need  
in difficult times.

**Amen.**

On each day of the week,  
look for God, and find him:  
in your friends,

in your family,  
in the people you pass by,  
in your quiet times,  
in laughter,  
in the natural world;  
for he is everywhere,  
and look inside yourself  
for he is there!

**Amen.**

## **Lectionary Readings**

### **6 - 12 October - When you don't understand**

Job 1.1; 2.1-10; Psalm 26; Hebrews 1.1-4; 2.5-12; Mark 10.2-16

### **13 - 19 October - Where are you, God?**

Job 23.1-9,16-17; Psalm 22.1-15; Hebrews 4.12-16; Mark 10.17-31

### **20-26 October - Do you know who I am?**

Job 38.1-7, (34-41); Psalm 104.1-9,24,35c; Hebrews 5.1-10; Mark 10.35-45

### **27 October – 2 November - I had heard, but now I see**

Job 42.1-6,10-17; Psalm 34.1-8, (19-22); Hebrews 7.23-28; Mark 10.46-52

## **Church Services October**

**Services at 10.45am in the Sanctuary unless indicated otherwise**

- Oct. 6<sup>th</sup>      Revd Dr David Whiting. Coffee and  
Croissants in the Lower Hall.
- Oct 13<sup>th</sup>      Revd Jane Rowell. Harvest Festival.
- Oct 20<sup>th</sup>      Elisabeth Meikle.
- Oct 27<sup>th</sup>      Barbara Ledger.

## **Weekly Church Activities (all welcome)**

- Bible Study Group              Tuesdays at 10.30am
- Food Cycle Lunch              Tuesdays at 12.30am

## **Diary Dates**

- Elders Meeting              Thursday November 7 at  
10.30am
- Church Meeting              Thursday November 28 at  
10.30am

Alison Dalton, our Church Related Community Worker, has retired. A Service of Thanksgiving and Celebration took place on Sunday 22 September, conducted by the Synod Moderator, when Alison received a specially commissioned piece of glass.

Alison has given a thank-you card to us and this is what she writes –

“To

All at Stockton Road United Reformed Church

I just wanted to thank you all for the amazing leaving gift you have commissioned for me. It has meaning at so many levels and will have pride of place on the walls of our new home, so you and the memories you have given me will always be there.

Thank you too for the lovely service of thanksgiving and celebration, and the subsequent gift of money which we will put towards the cost of curtains in our new home.

I hope I get to visit you sometime in the future.

All my love Alison (and Dave) xx “

--oOo--

Alison Dalton's friend shared this with her as a resource to use after the riots in July.

A story by **Catherine Lomas**, inspired by current events and by Mark 7.24-30

## The official: a Syrian asylum-seeker's tale

I LIVED in a camp in Syria with my husband, two sons, and daughter. When things heated up in Damascus, life changed beyond all recognition. I last saw my youngest son two years ago. He was doing humanitarian work in the camp, and had nothing to do with politics. One night, as he was leaving after prayers, he was shot dead. I have no idea why. [*This part of the story is taken from a BBC interview with Um Bassam, a Syrian Palestinian mother of five who fled Syria for Lebanon, and has been living in Beirut for the past three years.*]

We watched as friends and neighbours lost husbands and sons, killed in front of them, or who simply disappeared in the night. We had no choice but to leave our land, our family home through generations. Such a journey was always risky, but for certain we risked our lives by staying.

We fled via Egypt, paying every last pound to join a fishing vessel to Lampedusa. Words cannot describe the horrors of that journey. For endless days and nights, we breathed only the nauseous air of desperation, surviving on the smallest glimmer of hope.

My husband and son did not survive the journey — their bodies were tossed overboard, drifting away to some unknown shore. Finally, my daughter and I made land, and journeyed through Italy and into France, two of the thousands of Syrians who fled our war-torn country and arrived in Calais this summer. [*Details of the journey taken from an account by Sayed, The Guardian, 21 August.*]

Rumours in the camp were rife: where to get through the fencing, how to cross the Channel, what to do if you ever got there. But one story stood out for me more than the others. There was a man — a man of significant standing, with authority to make the all-important decision affecting our

future. As the rumours had it, he was the one you had to try to see. And you would know him by the gold chain he wore.

Weeks later, it was the gold chain that I noticed first on entering the unassuming building, no more than a house, really. Through all the pain and horror of the past years, it came to this moment: “Excuse me, please, sir; I wonder if you might help me?”

Nothing. I waited. Still nothing. I didn’t know if he had even heard me. But then he looked at me, a shabbily dressed woman, without a husband, screaming daughter in tow, exhausted, the odour of perspiration telling of months spent in travelling hell. He must have been surprised to be addressed so by someone like me.

One of his colleagues shrugged his shoulders as if to say: “Don’t even bother: just a stupid foreign woman.” Another glanced at the newspaper headline lying discarded on the table: “Migrants swarm to Britain,” it read [Daily Express, 29 August].

It was clear that they didn’t want anything to do with me.

Finally, the official broke his silence: “You’re in the wrong place. I only deal with cases that have already been approved. I can’t waste my time on scum like you.”

I saw the approving nods of his colleagues. For some, it might have been embarrassing to hear one’s deepest prejudices verbalised and demonstrated. For some, prejudices can be sincerely held until that moment when they are shown for what they really are, as they are thrown in the face of a desperate, kneeling woman pleading for the sanity of her daughter, for her own life.

Prejudice can be forced to recognise the horror of its very humanity washed up on a beach. But not them. They had all the force of the legal authorities behind them. It’s just what they did — how things were.

But I wouldn't give up. This meeting had been my sole aim for so long, my child's sobs still ringing in my ears from travelling all that time, hoping beyond hope that we would be among the lucky ones. A mother's love for her daughter is stronger than that.

Summoning all the courage within me, I dared to respond: "Even scum like me are grateful for what little time you might have left when your other cases are dealt with."

He raised an eyebrow, scarcely able to contain the wry smile that grew across his face, provoked by the audacity of this desperate woman with such tenacious belief in his power to make a difference.

And then it happened. Beyond my wildest hopes, I watched, speechless, as he reached over, picked up the stamp and with well-practised precision, pressed it down on two forms: first for my daughter, then for me.

"You may go," he said, handing me our papers. My whole being was trembling as I made for the door, realising just how precious were the documents now in my possession. For sure, I had sacrificed more than anyone could know; public humiliation was just the final hurdle.

Yet I knew that the life of freedom now ahead of us was worth everything I had, like a pearl of great price. With each step, I dared to hope that the story of my encounter with this official would reach the others; so that they, too, might believe that a new life could be open to them, irrespective of nationality or gender, whatever the story of their past life. They had to have faith.

As I reached the exit, I heard the officer's colleagues taunting him: "If you carry on doing stuff like that, you're going to get yourself into no end of trouble with the powers that be. You know that, don't you?"

And I turned round for one last glimpse of my saviour, only to see a deep sorrow pass across his face, as his hand,



letting the stamp fall to the desk, reached up gently to grasp the gold cross hanging around his neck.

“So be it,” he replied.

*The Revd Catherine Lomas is a priest in the diocese of Peterborough.*

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## **Unity in Community Event Saturday 19 October 11am to 2pm**

A free, family fun day for everyone who loves Sunderland. Come along to Sunderland Minster and celebrate all that's great about Sunderland.

Stalls showcasing work of community groups across the City, activities for children and young people, sports & crafts, food from all sorts of cultures, entertainment and opportunities to win prizes donated by local businesses.

## **Love, Amelia**

Don't forget to check out Love, Amelia's Wishlist and if there is anything you can give from the list it can be left in the box in the church foyer. You may like to check out their website for more information too. [www.loveamelia.org.uk](http://www.loveamelia.org.uk)

# Love, Amelia Wishlist

## Wishlist October 2024



### CLOTHES:

- Girls clothes (winter appropriate) all ages 0-16years
- All age pyjamas
- All age underwear - boys & girls (new only please)
- Winter coats - boys & girls all ages

### PRAMS

- Double Prams
- Travel Systems prams (no car seats please)
- Strollers



### SLEEP

- Cots (60 x 120 / Cot beds (70 x 120)
- Toddler Beds
- Cot & Cotbed sheets

### Other

- Toys 5 years +
- Arts & Crafts
- Changing bags
- changing mats

### HYGIENE / FEEDING

- Nappies - size 0 & 1
- All baby / child toiletries
- All womens toiletries
- Maternity accessories
- Baby bottles (new only please)
- Sterilisers
- Formula - Stage 1



We kindly ask to please only donate items on wishlist as space and resources are very limited



# Thank you for your support

