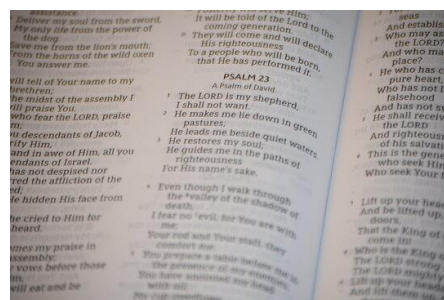


‘The Psalms- a Puzzle and a Privilege’

This little article was prompted by a conversation I had the other day with a lady who had come back to the Church after many years and had recently joined a Bible study group – not without a little trepidation. She told me that they were about to embark upon an exploration of the Psalms, and she was worried because some of them bothered her and left her puzzled. I did my best to reassure her, because I know exactly how she felt.

You see, I started preaching at the tender age of 17 (gulp!), but I was over thirty before I preached on any of the Psalms, apart from Psalm 23 of course! Quite frankly, I didn't like many of them, and felt guilty at having such a disparaging attitude to what, after all, was 'God's word'. Now that I have matured somewhat – it's sixty years since I first ventured into a pulpit – my attitude to the Psalms has changed profoundly.



It was only as I got older and studied the Psalms using some decent commentaries (a process we used to call 'continued preacher development'), that I began to appreciate just how valuable and instructive the Psalms can be. This is not the place to go into questions relating to the **authorship** of the Psalms, suffice it to say that there are more authors than simply David – the references to the Temple of Jerusalem (which was built by Solomon, after David's death) is sufficient proof. This makes the various themes all the more interesting, however. Not only is 'all of life here', as the old advert proclaimed, but one could add 'all of human feelings'. And that's an understatement! In the Psalms we have the whole range of human emotion – from exhilaration to despair, from penitential sorrow to joyful wonder.



But we also have examples of the darker side of our nature, and here come the difficulties. **John Wesley**, who had a deep reverence for Scripture and who insisted that he was 'homo unius libri' ('a man of one book'), issued a revised version of the Book of Common Prayer in 1784, in which he wrote in the preface: 'Many Psalms are left out and many parts of others as highly improper for the mouths of a Christian congregation.' And so Wesley omitted vs. 8 & 9 of Psalm 137, which reads: *Babylon, you will be destroyed. Happy is the man who pays you back for what you have done to us – who takes your babies and smashes them against a rock.*" (!!)

Enough said.

Wesley also cut out vs. 19-22 of Psalm 139, but I'll leave you to look that one up for yourselves. I've always thought if the great man could be discerning in that way when he used Scripture, then I could never be a literalist! My college principal, the Rev Dr David Stacey, who was an Old Testament scholar of considerable ability and renown, used to say about the Old Testament that "there's some nickel amongst the silver" – which is why we

need God's Holy Spirit to help us interpret Scripture and apply its truth and wisdom to our day to day journey of faith.

You can see why I gave this short piece the title 'a puzzle', but I hope you can understand why I added 'a privilege', because the Psalms are *honest*. A commentator has written about Psalms such as 137 that 'perhaps the best that can be said is that in such instances the words of the psalmists show us *real* people responding to their *real* situations and feeling able to share their *real* emotions with their *real* God' (the *italics* are mine).

If they can do it, then so can we. Because of the Psalms, you and I need never fear about expressing our deepest, most personal emotions – our hopes and fears and even anger, as well as our joy and wonder – in the prayers we offer to our heavenly Father.

No wonder many people say that the Psalms are for grown-ups!

A Prayer: Loving God, we thank you for the honesty of those who wrote the Psalms. With the help of your Spirit, may we interpret their verses and apply their truths to our daily living – not with childish literalism, but with the intelligence and humility that will allow us to grow in understanding and love of You, who are the source of all wisdom. Amen.

Every blessing to you all,

Barrie Tabraham

Resources/Good News

NHS Talking Therapies Surrey

NHS Talking Therapies Surrey has a team of dedicated therapists, passionate about providing high-quality mental health services to our community.

They offer one of the shortest waiting times for Assessments and Treatments in Surrey, ensuring timely and effective support for those in need.

Individuals need to be aged 17 and above, who are registered with a GP in Surrey. They can help with conditions such as anxiety, depression, stress, PTSD, social anxiety, phobias and other mental health challenges.

[NHS Talking Therapies in Surrey. | WithYou](#)

The Soul Food Lent resources from the Methodist Church are now available:

[Download from methodist.org.uk/SoulFood](http://methodist.org.uk/SoulFood)

POP-UP PLAY CAFÉ

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Wednesday 19 February 9.30 – 11.30

... call in at
ST. MARY'S
Quarry St
Guildford GU1 3UP

- space to play
- time to relax
- coffee and cake

All ages welcome



REMEMBERING UKRAINE

A service marking the 3rd anniversary of the 24 February invasion

Friday 21 February 2025 at 20.00
St. Mary's, Quarry St, Guildford GU1 3UP

Remembering too
the victims of other conflicts

The service will precede our regular weekly

Vigil for Peace
from 21.00 – 23.00





Addlestone Methodist Church

Coffee mornings every Saturday

From 10am to 12 noon

Enjoy a Coffee/Tea and Cake

for just £2



Coffee morning hosts each Saturday :

Addlestone Methodist Church hosts all coffee

Mornings except for the last of the month

**Last Saturday of the month –
5th Addlestone Scouts**

**1st and 3rd Saturday of every month
starting at 10-30am**

Play Fun Bingo or join Quiz time

Prizes to be won, voluntary

donations to either Sam Beare

Hospice or Open Doors Charity.

Check notice board for any changes



STOUGHTON METHODIST CHURCH

(On the corner of Stoughton Road and Grange Road)

COFFEE CORNER & Warm Space

Tuesdays from 10 am – 12 noon



4th February
11th February
18th February
25th February



Enjoy Coffee & a Chat, Coffee & a Game, or Coffee & a Book
The choice is yours!

Everyone welcome – bring a friend!



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coffee & a chat

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a chat in a
friendly
environment



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looking for
clothes for
yourself,
friends, or
family



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We look forward
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www.knaphill-methodist-church.com/clothes4U

clothes@knaphill-methodist-church.com

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MAKING LIFE WORK WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

THURSDAY

27

FEBRUARY

10.30 – 12.00

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SURREY
COUNTY COUNCIL

Are you working in the community, providing a service for people with dementia?

Join us at the Dementia Experience Exchange (DEXX) forum

Share your wealth of knowledge and experience with others in the dementia day care circle in Surrey.

A space for you to:

- Share your experiences
- Share best practise
- Make new contacts
- Gain support and resources
- Talk about the great things you do

27 February 11.00am – 1230pm via teams

To register your interest in this forum, please rsvp to nicola.haswell@surreycc.gov.uk

Circuit Mission Supper Saturday 8 March 2025

**Trinity Methodist Church Woking
6.00 for 6.30pm**

Fish & Chips (battered sausage/Vegan options available)

Cost £10 – tickets available from church stewards.

Bring your own crockery & cutlery

Speaker - Trey Hall



Trey Hall is a Methodist pioneer, church planting strategist, and evangelist. Since 2000 he has established and led churches in the United Kingdom and the United States, served as Mission Advisor for the Birmingham District of the Methodist Church in Britain, and coached scores of practitioners renewing inherited forms of church or launching fresh expressions of church.

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GODALMING, GU7 2DX**

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