

HIDDEN RIVER CIRCUIT DEVOTIONAL ARTICLES

Edition 12: AUGUST 2025

Please take these articles week by week and read them slowly and reflectively, and may your life be enriched by God and by His Spirit who helps us understand more about God's love and presence

Thank you to all who have contributed to this August edition, especially our new contributor

Rev Denise Yeadon

We take this opportunity to thank **Jem and Wendy** for coming to live alongside us for the past 7 years, we thank them for all they have done for the work of the church and community, and we wish them all the best in their new place.

We also welcome **Richard** in his role of administrator facilitating things for our circuit. Welcome!!

Editor: Karen Drayton (kedrayton1@gmail.com)

Please send any comments and thoughts you may have on any of the articles

Printer and Distributor : Richard Brinck-Johnsen (hiddenrivercircuit@gmail.com)

Contact Details of Hidden River Circuit Staff:

Rev Jem Hawkins – Superintendent Minister 01922 475083 – minister@Stjohnsbloxwich.co.uk

Richard Brinck-Johnsen (Circuit Administrator) 07587 956881 – hiddenrivercircuit@gmail.com

Anne Kelsall (Pastoral lay worker) – hiddenrivercircuit.pastoral1@gmail.com

Rev Nancy Ndoho – 07852 846974 – nancy.ndoho@methodist.org.uk

Deacon Helen Webster - 01922 628723 - helenweb2@gmail.com

Rev Denise Yeadon – 01922 863461– deniseyeadon@btinternet.com

Week 1: 3rd AUGUST 2025

PRAYER PART 2: PRAYER IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

A Reflection by John Worth , Local Preacher in the Hidden River Circuit

Luke 11. 1: “Lord, teach us to pray as John taught his disciples”.

Although the disciples had observed Jesus at prayer on several occasions, their thought was of John the Baptist actually teaching the WAY to pray. It was normal for Jewish teachers, even the strange ones like John, to instruct their followers in the ways of prayer. We don't know what John taught about prayer, except that repentance means acknowledging sin before God, and John's baptism was a token of repentance. Jesus gave them what we call the Lord's Prayer, although I have heard it called “the Disciples' Prayer”. Rather than look at this prayer, let's turn to times when Jesus, Himself, was “at prayer”.

There are very few references to Jesus' actual prayers in a specific situation, particularly in the first part of His ministry. He “gave thanks” over the bread and fishes before the distribution to the crowd. (Have we lost the way of giving thanks to God before a meal?) We have Jesus' prayer when the 72 disciples return from their mission to the villages: “Father, I thank you because you have shown to the unlearned what you have hidden from the wise and learned”.

It was the first few words of that verse 1 that started me thinking: “ONE DAY, JESUS WAS PRAYING”. In Luke's gospel, particularly, we find several occasions when we're told that Jesus prayed, but Luke doesn't tell us WHAT He prayed, or WHY. I like a good mystery story. So I started to look for clues in that gospel – and found questions to ask myself!

Chapter 3: Jesus had just been baptised by John in the river Jordan. “WHILE HE WAS PRAYING, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit came down upon him...like a dove”.

We don't have any words of Jesus. Was He seeking confirmation of His actions? He certainly received it. Or was it part of Jesus' continuing conversation with the Father? Was He saying: “This is the start of my work; now on to the next step”: considering HOW to exercise His ministry. He went from there and was “led by the Spirit into the desert”. Was that God's answer to His prayer? Luke tells us that Jesus was tempted by the Devil for 40 days. Surely, Jesus must have also continued His prayer conversation with the Father.

Chapter 5: As Jesus continued His ministry, the crowds flocked to Him, some to hear Him teach and preach, some to be healed. Luke writes: “But He would go away to lonely places, WHERE HE PRAYED”.

It's exhausting work being a teacher – and preacher – and healer! Jesus needed time to recover physically and mentally. But He also needed to recover spiritually: His work was done in the power of the Spirit, and that power needed to be continually renewed.

Chapter 6: “At that time, Jesus WENT UP A HILL TO PRAY, and spent the whole night there PRAYING TO GOD”.

Why? The clue is in the next verse: “When day came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he termed apostles”. Decisions had to be made. He couldn't teach ALL his followers in the depth that was needed. Who were the ones who would be right? Was it a Pharisee, a Scribe, a farmer, a fisherman, a thinker, a man of quick temper? During the night, I believe Jesus was thinking through the various characters who had begun to follow Him, weighing up the various strengths and weaknesses of each one. Having talked things through with the Father, He made His decision, and chose the twelve, to whom He would reveal so much more of the Father's way.

Chapter 9: “One day, WHEN JESUS WAS PRAYING, the disciples came to him. Jesus questioned (tested?) them: ‘Who do the crowds say I am?’ ‘What about you? Who do you say I am?’”

Was Jesus talking through with the Father, just how much the disciples had understood about Himself? “Is this the right time to see how much they have understood about what I'm saying and doing – to make sure they are not just following a charismatic teacher?”

Chapter 9: About a week later. “Jesus took Peter, John, and James with him and WENT UP A HILL TO PRAY”. And then Luke tells the story of the transfiguration.

This time, in His prayer, in His conversation with the Father, He is not on His own. The conversation is with Moses and Elijah; partly, I believe, as confirmation of Jesus' part in the on-going work of salvation, fulfilling the work of the Law and the Prophets. But also to try to involve those three disciples in that experience. How difficult they found it at that time. And God, Himself, involves the three disciples in this prayer time: “A voice said from the cloud: ‘This is my Son, whom I have chosen – listen to him!’”.

What about our own situations? Do these verses help us in our times of prayer?

There are times when we have taken a decision, hoping it's the right one. Do we look for confirmation?

There are certainly times when we feel under pressure, and need to take time to recover. Sometimes we just relax, but it's also a time to seek God's renewing strength.

Then there are times when important decisions have to be made, and we certainly look for guidance. We may pray for divine inspiration, but we may also pray that God will send the right person or people to help us with good advice.

We may seek confirmation over a decision that's been made, but do we continue to pray that we're continuing on the right path.

If we want to find Jesus' actual words of prayer, perhaps the best place to look is the account in John's gospel of the evening before Jesus' death. His concern now is for the disciples. He offers to God what He has done: "I have finished the work you gave me to do". "I have made you known to those you gave me out of this world". And then He prays particularly for them: "I do not ask you to take them out of the world, but I do ask you to keep them safe from the Evil One". And Jesus goes on – to pray FOR US! "I pray, not only for them, but also for those who believe in me because of their message. I pray that they may all be one".

When we pray for others, is it only for their physical or mental well-being – or do we pray also for their spiritual health as well?

The other three gospels record Jesus' prayer for Himself in the Garden of Gethsemane: Take this cup from me". But He was prepared for God to say "No": "Not my will but Yours". We should also accept that God's plans are not necessarily the same as ours.

One of Jesus last prayers on the cross was: "Father, forgive them". Do we pray for any who we feel have wronged us?

Hymn: Singing the Faith 528:

Pray without ceasing, pray,
Your captain gives the word;
His summons cheerfully obey,
And call upon the Lord:

To God your every want
In instant prayer display;
Pray always; pray and never faint;
Pray, without ceasing, pray!

Charles Wesley

Week 2: 10th AUGUST 2025

WATER INTO WINE

A Reflection by Pete Kelsall , Local Preacher in the Hidden River Circuit

John 2. 1-12

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, 2 and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. 3 When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

4 "Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."

5 His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

6 Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

7 Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.

8 Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."

They did so, 9 and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside 10 and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."

11 What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

12 After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days.

This was a real problem for a young couple and their families. Running out of wine was a potential social disgrace, lots of people would be disappointed and this wedding was going to be remembered for all the wrong things!

Jesus' miracle saved the day for a young couple and their families. John tells us about it to show how Jesus saved the day – but for other reasons too. Yet, let's not lose sight of the reality that Jesus, prompted by his mother, did show care and love for this couple and save their day. Then we can look for the other meanings and lessons Jesus was showing his followers and, ultimately, us and all who would follow him still.

John calls this miracle the first of a series of signs. There's lots of shades to the significance of this first sign.

1) It took place on the 3rd day. Looking back into chapter 1, John relates a flow of events over a series of days. It could also mean the third day of the week. Either way, the "third day" reference ties it to the resurrection.

2) Mary mother of Jesus took the lead. From this point on John introduces us to Mary. Remember he was told by Jesus from the cross to care for Mary and she was told to treat John like her son. John and Mary have had a deep relationship for the remaining years of her life by the time John is writing this. Here John brings Mary into his gospel and she then stays prominent throughout. Mary was there at the first miracle, quite possibly there at the last supper and she was there at the crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and Pentecost. Mary is significant from start to finish.

3) The big jars filled with water were for purification and this ties it to the purification we receive through Christ our High Priest.

4) Wine is at the centre of the story, the first miracle. Wine was also key in the Last Supper and New Covenant. We still hold wine as a high symbol of our faith every time we celebrate Holy Communion.

5) The wine was the best. With Jesus the best is yet to come. What starts as wonderful just gets better.

6) There was plenty of it. By my rough calculation over 720 bottles. There's an echo to Psalm 23, "my cup runs over", and a reflection on being continually filled and refilled with the Holy Spirit. as in filled with the Holy Spirit Ephesians 5:9 (as opposed to getting drunk with wine!)

7) It was a wedding. Right at the beginning Jesus introduces the wedding theme into his ministry by working his first miracle at one. Jesus went on to use parables about wedding feasts to symbolise the relationship between himself and his church.

8), 9), There are more..... Why not go back to the text and see what God reveals to you afresh through this event?

What is needed to make wine? Grapes, grape vines, vine stock, soil, water, sunshine, harvesters, feet, storage, but the main ingredient is TIME. Time is needed for wine. It takes time for grapes to grow and time for wine to mature.

Time changes wine and time changes us. Time changes all sorts of things. But Jesus is the same yesterday today and for ever (Heb.13:8). Jesus is outside of time and Lord of time

You might have hidden behind the settee when the Daleks came on TV whilst watching Doctor Who. That's a made up Timelord but Jesus is THE Time Lord, the Lord over time. Jesus not only creates wine but creates wine that has somehow had time to mature.

This miracle marked the start of something new for people, but Jesus was beginning to reveal who he has always been. Jesus is the 'I am'. Jesus can speak of always being in the present because time is irrelevant to him. The creator of the universe, the Lord of time and space, wants each of us to know him as a friend and as a Saviour, now.

Our picture of God has to be big. Don't limit Jesus to being just a special man. Jesus stood in front of the religious leaders of his day and said to them, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:48-59)

Trying to understand Jesus messes with our idea of time – because Jesus has always been the Son of God.....and Jesus messes with our idea of size – because although Jesus was born as a little baby and lived to be a fully grown man, in Jesus is everything that is God: "I am".

The BBC Timelord's TARDIS is bigger than it looks and can be in any time at any time which is fantasy.

Jesus is a real Time Lord, the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb.13:8)

Jesus always has been God, experienced by people in their time for a time.

Jesus is experienced by us, now, unlimited by time or place, here, there, everywhere. Just as we will experience him and all he is and has for us, for eternity, unending and unchanging.

Jesus understands us as people because he made us and came to live as one of us.

Jesus accepts us as we are; the ordinariness of each of us is welcomed by Jesus.

Jesus will change us, if we let him, to be like him bit by bit, until we get to be fully like him and with him for ever.

Maybe you need to ask Jesus to take you as you are and use you as he wants.

Maybe you've done that before, but the edge has gone off it over time, as time changes things.

So maybe it's time to go for it again. Stepping into relationship with Jesus and being accepted, loved, transformed and used by Jesus.

When Jesus turned ordinary water into wine, it wasn't kept sacred to be looked at and kept safe. People drank it, enjoyed it, shared it and relished it.

When Jesus multiplied bread and fish, it wasn't put on display as evidence of what Jesus can do. People ate it, broke it, shared it, enjoyed it, got their hands greasy and their tunics covered in crumbs.

The wine was poured out for all; the bread and fish were broken and shared.

As God accepts and transforms us, he has a purpose for each of us to make the world a bit better and in that we will be used, even used up. People will derive benefit from our being there. Sometimes it will bring joy and sometimes it will also be a bit messy.

Hymn:

1. O God our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home

2. Before the hills in order stood,
Or earth received her frame
From everlasting Thou art God
To endless years the same

3. A thousand ages in Thy sight
Are like an evening gone
Short as the watch that ends the night
Before the rising sun

4. Time like an ever rolling stream
Bears all its sons away
They fly forgotten , as a dream
Dies at the opening day

5. Like flowery fields the nations
stand
Pleased with the morning light;
The flowers beneath the mowers hand
Lie withering 'ere tis night

6. O God our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come
Be thou our guard while troubles last,
And our eternal home.

Isaac Watts

Prayer: Jesus, you always are. You just, are. The great I am. Always in the present since before time began.

Jesus, time can make me weary, time can change me, time can run out and time can drag on.

Jesus, take my time and use my time to show others your presence.

Jesus, thank you that in time, time will be no more and I will always be present with you.

Amen

Week 3: 17th AUGUST 2025
JESUS' HEALING MINISTRY

A Reflection by John Worth , Local Preacher in the Hidden River Circuit

Reading: Mark 2. 1 – 12

The story of the paralysed man let down through the roof, was always a favourite in Sunday School (and in later years). Early in Jesus' ministry, his compassion led him to heal the sick. There were so many ways in which their need was brought to his attention.

That man was **BROUGHT TO** Jesus by his friends. There were other individuals who were brought to Jesus for healing – a dumb man; a deaf mute; a blind man. And Mark tells us in chapter 1 that, earlier in Capernaum, "That evening, after sunset, the people **BROUGHT TO** Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed.....And Jesus healed many who had various diseases". We remember the hymn: "AT even, ere the sun was set, the sick, O Lord, around Thee lay".

There were also those who **ASKED** Jesus to heal them. Again in the first chapter of Mark's gospel: A leper, "came to Jesus, knelt down and **BEGGED** him for help". Much later, the blind beggar, Bartimaeus, "called out to Jesus as He was passing: 'Take pity on me...I want to see again', and Jesus healed him with a word".

But there were those who didn't approach Jesus and were not brought to Him by their friends. Jesus noticed them, knew what they needed, and **WENT TO** them. There was the woman in the synagogue who had been crippled for 18 years: Jesus says to her: "Woman, you are set free from your infirmity". The man at the Pool of Bethesda, who had been an invalid for 38 years. Jesus went to him and asked: "Do you want to get well?" "Pick up your mat and walk". Or the man born blind: Jesus approached him, smeared mud on his eyes and sent him to wash in the Pool of Siloam. It may be significant that they were people whose problems were of long-standing, and Jesus shows such great compassion for these people.

Then, we remember the story of Jairus, who came to Jesus because his daughter was dying. In the middle of that story a woman came, afraid to ask Jesus for help, but just touching the fringe of his garment, with the thought: "If I only touch his cloak I will be healed". She was a woman who **TOOK** Jesus' healing without asking. Jesus knew what she had done, but there was no condemnation; only compassion and a recognition of her faith.

The people whom Jesus healed were often very poor – if they were unable to work and had no family or friends to help them, they had to beg to support themselves. Some, particularly the lepers, were outcast from society. Some did have people who would help, and there were people who would bring them to Jesus. The paralysed man let down through the roof was brought by four friends. We may see Jesus as the friend of the poor, the weak, and the outcast, but there were also some people of influence that he helped. Jairus was a man of importance – an administrator in the synagogue. But he "came and knelt before" Jesus, seeking help for his dying daughter, showing both faith and humility. A Roman centurion came asking for healing for his servant: "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed". He

interceded to Jesus for his servant. Again showing faith and humility. As did the Phoenician woman wanting healing for her daughter.

But physical healing was not the only healing that Jesus did on earth. The paralysed man let down through the roof needed to be healed from some form of guilt before he could be healed physically. Jesus said to him: "Son, your sins are forgiven", before saying: "Get up, take your mat and walk". The story of Zacchaeus is also one of healing – healing from the guilt he didn't know he had. It may have just been curiosity that made him want to see Jesus, but as soon as he met him face to face, and Jesus made it clear that he accepted him, Zacchaeus knew he needed healing, and he showed that healing in his actions towards other people.

Jesus is not present, physically, today, to lay His hands on people and heal them, but we still seek His healing power. We intercede for those who are ill. There are people who have the Holy Spirit's gift of healing, but we usually think of healing in terms of our medical services. And the knowledge and skill of the doctors is equally a God-given gift. And so we pray for them in their work. Yes, there are many stories in the gospels of Jesus healing people. But we should remember that there were also many people who were sick whom Jesus did NOT heal. And that is still true. We don't know why healing takes place in some cases and not in others. On several occasions Jesus said: "Your faith has healed you". But faith is not the whole answer. We bring our sick friends (and ourselves) to Jesus in prayer, but we have to accept His answer to our prayers. St. Paul prayed three times for a certain "thorn in the flesh" – perhaps a particular infirmity – to be removed, but he was not healed. Instead he was given the strength to bear it. God said to him: "My grace is sufficient for you". Jesus Himself in Gethsemane prayed three times that He might be spared what was to come. But He accepted God's answer to Him. So part of our prayer is that we may be given the grace and peace we need in each situation. Many of us have known, and continue to know the presence of Christ in suffering.

But there is one "healing" we can be sure of, because Jesus died in order that we might experience God's forgiveness. We may not be physically sick – although many of us do have something wrong with us. But we are all in need of the peace that comes from knowing ourselves forgiven. In the first letter of John, he writes that we have "an advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for all our sins". Or in a modern translation: "We have someone who pleads with the Father on our behalf – Jesus Christ, the righteous one. And Christ, Himself is the means by which our sins are forgiven". Christ remains the true healer.

The evening hymn: Hymns and Psalms 142:

1. At even when the sun was set	2. O Saviour Christ our woes dispel
The sick O Lord, around thee lay;	For some are sick and some are sad,
O in what diverse pains they met!	And some have never loved thee well,
O in what joy they went away.	And some have lost the love they had.

3. O Saviour Christ, Thou too art
man
Thou has been troubled, tempted, tried;
Thy kind but searching glance can scan
The very wounds that shame would hide.

4. They touch has still its ancient
power
No word from thee can fruitless fall
Hear, in this solemn evening hour,
And in thy mercy hear us all

Henry Twells

Week 4: 24th AUGUST 2025: A TRILOGY OF VIRTUES
A Reflection by Mike Smith, Local Preacher in the Hidden River Circuit

There are three things that last for ever: faith, hope and love.

1 Corinthians ch 13 v 13

The Second World War was a few months old when the Italians decided to enter the conflict on the side of the Nazis. At the time the Royal Navy had a strategic advantage in the Mediterranean with bases at Gibraltar and Malta; the Italians knew this and proceeded to mount air raids on Malta in June of 1940. The Allies had few aircraft to spare from the Battle of Britain, and Malta found itself defended by only six ancient biplanes, Gloster Gladiator fighters, which were unequal to the conflict with the superior Italian aircraft; nevertheless, the RAF sent them out (three at a time only!) to engage the enemy, and until the eventual arrival of some Hurricanes the old machines were unexpectedly successful in weakening the effect of the raids. The three heroic defenders were christened by observers on the ground as “Faith, Hope and Charity”, and in the courageous hands of their pilots they undoubtedly made things difficult for the Italians and won the hearts of the Maltese people! The choice of names is interesting because they represent the enduring convictions of Christianity, which is in the business of constructing a world view full of *positivity and meaning*: faith, hope and love are qualities often difficult to find in time of war, which is mostly about betrayal, despair and hatred.

In his letter to the church at Corinth St. Paul focuses the attention of his readers on love as “the greatest”. There is also another way of thinking of the three convictions as a trilogy: each impinges on the others, and they form our response to the gifts of God: we have faith because God is faithful, we have hope because of God’s promises, and we love because God first loved the world, and there is a natural progression from one to the other. But we need to explore their meaning from the insights of Scripture: What is faith? What is hope? What is love?

First, faith. The fascinating TV science programmes presented by Professor Brian Cox often reveal him as being not just an observer of the natural universe but as one who celebrates the existence of intelligent life – us – as the phenomenon which gives meaning to the fact that the universe exists at all. He is in good company, for it was Albert Einstein who once remarked that the most significant thing about the universe is that it is “comprehensible” – it “makes sense”! Professor Cox does not mention God as the Great Mind which conceived the meaningful universe, but for most thinking people the idea of the whole amazing show happening “by chance” – surely the biggest fluke in eternity! – is less reasonable than to believe that Someone started it and continues to sustain its activity: “In the beginning, God...” still makes better sense than “a chemical accident”.

Religion takes many forms across the human experience, and because words are not enough to define the indefinable, much of it is myth, legend and superstition; however the underlying truth and positive conviction of the vast majority of humankind is that **God is**. Creation, along with its ongoing development, has placed us human beings in a unique position among the creatures, and religion tells us what that means. Reading the activity of nature as a work of art by the Great Architect is the pathway to knowing, and ultimately worshipping, His Being: the cosmic struggle for the essence of Order, Beauty and Rightness is there, and it is awesome.

Then there is hope. The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews states that “faith convinces us of realities we do not see” (Ch 11 v 1): so there is a recognition of the hand of God in what is here already, but we move on to consider what *may yet be*; faith is also futuristic, and the text includes “gives substance to our hope”. God created a universe; we are entitled to ask “Why?” Are we not able to assume there is a Great Plan set in motion, a Plan which has a grand objective towards which the story is moving? Faith assures us that God keeps his promises; so what has he promised?

To begin with, human beings have a quality which is not shared by the other creatures: call it *imagination* – an ability to visualise mentally a situation which has yet to exist. Animals can create survival techniques such as stalking prey or building shelter from extreme climate, but the best one can say is that, for them, hope means “If we do this and if we are lucky, things may work out to save us from starvation”. People are different: hope does not mean “something might turn up” but “let’s create something to make a reality of what we imagine”: build a house, a ship, plant a field of crops, a dairy farm, construct a load carrier with wheels, an

engine, a flying machine! Even more than that: let's plan a city, a sovereign state, a system of government with enforceable laws. This is where we are uniquely gifted with the image of the Creator within us. And who knows where this will take us in the future? Letter to the Hebrews again: "By faith Abraham obeyed the call to leave his home for a land which he was to receive as a possession; he went away without knowing where he was to go... For he was looking forward to a city with firm foundations whose architect and builder is God". (Ch 11 vv 8 – 10) So hope is faith projected into the future; the New Testament looks to God to bring in a Commonwealth that will grow, like the mustard seed in the parable, into something glorious that will last for ever – and Jesus is a crucial element in that plan! The Book of Revelation, rightly understood, is a triumphant expression of the Christian Hope, assuring all the hard-pressed followers of Jesus that evil will surely pass away, and the foundation of that hope lies in the Resurrection: "Do not be afraid. I am the first and the last; and I am the Living One; I was dead and now I am alive for evermore" "The kingdom of this world is become the Kingdom of our LORD, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever". "I am coming soon, and bringing with me my recompense to repay everyone according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." Modern-day prophets of doom may warn of the destruction of the planet and apocalyptic horror, but hope says that God has not finished his work yet!

And then there is Love. If faith and hope are God's gifts to us through Christ, the question arises of how these glorious promises are to be made a reality in human experience: the answer is, through Love – firstly, the love of God, and then the love which is our opportunity to make a life response. Nor are we talking about a cosy warm feeling towards people we happen to like: writing about Paul's use of the word love, Oxford theologian Rev C. S. C. Williams defines it succinctly as "self-giving"; it has little to do with natural affection, much more a discipline, a discipleship, a challenge – which may bring its own reward more joyfully than any other kind of love! It was love that led Jesus to Jerusalem and to the Cross; yet as his suffering drew towards its end, he was able to say triumphantly "The work is done!" Such love as has energised Christians down the ages really has made a difference to the human condition, and brings the completion of God's Plan a little nearer day by day:

1. Come let us sing of a wonderful	Streaming to me and to you.
love	Wonderful love!
Tender and true	Comes from the heart of the Father
Out of the heart of the Father above,	above

2. Jesus, the Saviour this gospel
to tell
Joyfully came!
Came with the helpless and hopeless
to dwell -
Sharing their sorrow and shame;
Seeking the lost,
Saving redeeming, at measureless
cost.

3. Jesus is seeking the
wanderers yet;
Why do they roam?
Love only waits to forgive and forget;
Home, weary wanderers home!
Wonderful love, dwells in the heart of
the Father above.

4. Come to my heart, O Thou wonderful love
Come and abide,
Lifting my life till it rises above
Envy and falsehood and pride;
Seeking to be
Lowly and humble a learner of thee.

Robert Walmsley

A Prayer

God our Father, you made us to be like yourself, and when through the Adam in us we fell from grace you restored us through our Lord Jesus Christ. We seek now to become his disciples, asking for your grace to become like him as he teaches us through word and example:

his clarity of vision, making sense of the Creation and our place in it;

his certainty of humankind's future, building a commonwealth of joyful peace ;

his entire giving of himself to work for our salvation.

May we find the reality of faith, hope and love as we find the mind of the Lord: may we understand the truth of our good news, rejoice in the unimaginable glory of your promises, and work in loving service towards the day when your Plan is complete.

AMEN

Week 5: 31st AUGUST 2025: The Quiet Revival
A Reflection by Rev Denise Yeadon, Minister in the Hidden River Circuit

**¹⁹ Look at the new thing I am going to do.
It is already happening. Don't you see it?
I will make a road in the desert
and rivers in the dry land.**

We are told that a quiet revival is happening in the UK. Do we see it? It is already happening. Whilst people in some of my churches turn around and say, well it is not happening here, I can assure you it is happening in churches nearby as well as all over the UK. What an encouragement to us all as we continue in our faith. That God is moving and the Kingdom is growing, despite what we may be experiencing. That our prayers are being answered and whether we are housebound or in a small church somewhere, God is moving in ways we may not see but can believe. Alleluia!

When someone is ill or something seems unfair, we are often tempted to ask 'why me?'. 'Why is this happening to me?' or in this case, not happening to my church. One antidote to that is 'Why not me?' So, I invite you to ask yourself that. Why is God not moving in this way in my life or my church?

The first response to this is to say – where are you looking? Are you looking at all the bad news and negative things in life, so prevalent in our media and world and sadly our churches. We can spend more of our days moaning than being thankful and positive. Are our minds set on things below or above? Are we spending time with God in prayer, listening to what God is saying, looking for God's vision and the good things of God? I have recently been told I have cataracts starting and macular degeneration in my eyes. I am unaware of this but a special scan has revealed it. Maybe we need to take some time for a spiritual eye scan to realise what we are failing to see. How our spiritual eyesight is being clouded by other things. How we have lost our central vision of who God is and what God can do. When we fix our eyesight on God and not our churches or problems, then we might begin to see what God is wanting to do in our lives, our churches and our communities, through us.

Once our eyesight is addressed then we might be able to see how God's working is not about how many attend worship on a Sunday, but, as Isaiah 43 shows us, about a road in the desert and a river in dry lands. The revival is happening where people are caring for those in their community and not just focused on Sunday worship and making sure their church survives. It is about

God and others not us. About going to those who find themselves in deserts of need, poverty, abuse, loneliness. About the road, the journey each day of the week and where we go and who we meet, not what happens on a Sunday. About being a river of love, hope, justice and peace in a dry land.

As we start this new Methodist year may we experience a quiet revival in our lives, see new things, join in what is already happening and walk with God each day with our eyes open and be the hidden river that waters the dry land.

Prayer

I quieten my heart and mind Lord.

I look to you and ask for healing for my lack of vision.

I open myself to where you are leading,
to the journey I am already on and where the next step might be.

I let the river of your love soak into the places
where I have become dry and hard.

Renew my Lord

And may your Kingdom come and will be done in my life and my church.

Amen

Have a read or sing of our Circuit Song– 377 in Songs of Fellowship, or listen on
Youtube : **The River of God**

1. Down the mountain the river
flows

And it brings refreshing wherever it
goes

Through the valleys and over the
fields

The river is rushing and the river is
here.

*Chorus: The river of God sets
our feet a dancing*

*The river of God fills our hearts with
cheer*

*The river of God fills our mouths with
laughter*

And we rejoice for the river is here.

2. The river of God is teeming with
life

And all who touch it can be revived
And those who linger on this river's
shore

Will come back thirsting for more of
the Lord.

3. Up to the mountain we love to
go

To find the presence of the Lord

Along the banks of the river, we run

We dance with laughter giving Praise
to the Son.

Andy Park

GOD BLESS!! – Rev Dee

