

THE ENGLESEA EXTRA

SECOND EDITION

PRICE: 8 SHEETS OF TOILET ROLL OR A TIN OF BEANS

The context of public health

STRANGE TIMES

Hello again friends and welcome to our second edition of the Englesea Extra. We hope that this weekly bulletin reflects something of the fellowship we all so enjoy at Englesea Brook and is keeping you connected. Thank you so much for the contributions already received – do keep them coming!

We posted an old smart phone to my mum last week, together with a 16 page 'Guide' put together by Ned, full of photos of screens, explanations of how to 'swipe', and what the various symbols mean. Our first ever video call brought tears to my eyes because I thought I wouldn't be able to see her for 12 weeks... but it also made us howl with laughter when we realised we were looking down her ear!!!

I had my first ever 'virtual' housegroup last Wednesday. I'm sure many of you are having experiences with technology that you hoped you might avoid in a previous life but are now wondering how you managed without it! The session looked at 'Courageous Contentment', so very pertinent in the disorientating world we find ourselves in... when we can discover that contentment can be courageously embraced in our brokenness, and great treasures unearthed in the depths of who God is. May we keep being surprised by our Great Big God.

Every blessing Ruth

Hello from Tim

[A contagious growth - the rapid spread of the Primitive Methodist movement 200 years ago – some thoughts in an age of anxiety](#)

Writing in the midst of coping with the effects of a global pandemic of COVID-19, I am struck by the parallels between the growth of early Primitive Methodism and our present situation, with the very important distinction that the result of PM growth was to bring the possibility of new life in Christ through the spreading of the gospel news rather than the possibility of death and disruption to communities.

Remember that these were communities 200 years ago whose mortality rates, especially for infants, was very high and death was a weekly occurrence in most families.

Remember too that, although 150 years had passed since the Great Plague of London, there were still many diseases for which there was no known cure. Greater public health through clean water and sanitation were yet to be achieved. The first cholera pandemic dated from 1817 originating in India from Calcutta the Headquarters of the East India Company, the first of three pandemics there that may have resulted in 15 million deaths. Another 23 million died in further global pandemics up to 1917.

Most of these spread through the trade routes and movements of people. The second pandemic particularly affected Britain in 1832 where in London and the rest of Britain that year 55,000 persons died, over 6,000 people in London alone. It was particularly prevalent in the urban areas where the lack of social distancing and bad sanitation practices hastened the onset and spread of the disease. The 19th century, despite all the advances of public health, continued to be an age of anxiety.

So what was the role of religion in all this?

By the miracle of the internet, I was able to find an interesting article by Richard J Janet on "Providence, Prayer and Cholera; the English General Fast of 1832". It gave me

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fascinating insights into the tensions between different strands of Christianity in British society as they struggled to come to terms with the wave of disease that hit the nations in the 1830s. As now, these outbreaks were legitimate crises and threats to society and its psychological well-being. In this context churches had a part to play, especially through the Church of England as the Established Church of the day. So five general fast and prayer days were called in the earlier part of the 19th century in times of national crisis; in 1832 during the cholera epidemic, in 1847 during the Irish potato famine, in 1854 and 1855 during the Crimean War, and finally in 1857 during the Indian Mutiny.

Remember also that fear of disease coupled with political anxieties meant an additional threat to public order. The Church was the focus for governments to try to rally the nation round at a time when political reform was in the air. That's why the Bishop's Palace in Bristol was attacked by reforming mobs in the desire for more democratic forms of government. The Church was seen to be a willing tool of government and defender of the status quo. Nonconformity felt increasingly confident after 1832 to challenge such attitudes and assumptions.

Evangelical Christians in the early 19th century had advanced their cause and got into positions of authority in church and government. And it was evangelicals in power who proposed a general fast in 1832, on account of the distress in Britain. The epidemic only confirmed them in their belief that an unrepentant Britain which had turned away from God and the Church would be visited by his divine judgement. Reformers and Radicals were opposed to the use of the Church as an instrument of social control in government. Evangelicals regarded such persons as godless sinners upturning the social order given and ordained by God

(including the poor knowing their place in society). Reformers saw their response to the epidemic as diverting the government from the urgent need to make sweeping reforms. In the end the traditionalists and religious evangelicals (all Anglican) won the day in debates in Parliament and a General Fast was declared for 21st March 1832. But the opposition engendered there spelt the beginning of the end for support for an interventionist and overtly religious response to such a medical crisis.

The Fast Day serves as a forum for the religious expression of an evangelicalism wedded to a providential view of the cholera outbreak but also as a tool for promotion of social solidarity at a time of potentially volatile social tensions. The call for national repentance and prayer included in the service these words: "Deliver us from the noisome pestilence ... preserve us from all the terrors of the night ..."

Before rehearsing a litany of ways in which sinful humanity had fallen short of God's ordinances. Appropriate prayers were offered up for the victims and for those who were assisting those in need. Collections were taken up for the relief of the sick and the poor. The Fast Day gave the opportunity to express spiritual feelings and make for social cohesion in a time of crisis.

The 1832 Fast Day raised all sorts of issues

- Of theology: what did the view of an interventionist God say about why the epidemic had occurred? Does God let bad things happen for a purpose? Or are they the result of human sinfulness?
- Of reason: what did Christians make of the counterclaims of rationalists who offered views from the realms of science?

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- Of Society: what was the place of religion in society? Was it the opium of the people as Marx and other socialists were beginning to say? Should it be a tool of the government and the social order or should Christians be more critical?

The 1832 debate started to open up the cracks in the façade of the evangelicals' view of an unrepentant Britain. In the words of one of the critical journals published that year:

“We want no Fast, but radical reform. This alone will check the threatening storm”

Another task will be to see whether the Primitive Methodists lined up with more establishment evangelicals or whether their voices too were more challenging and more on the side of the poor. That will have to wait for when I can return to Englesea Brook!

I will leave you today with a beautiful prayer written by an Italian priest who is self-isolating at the moment and very sadly lost his own brother a few days ago to Covid-19...:

Tim

I'm staying at Home, Lord! I'm staying at home, Lord! And today, I realize, you taught me this, remaining obedient to the Father, for thirty years in the house of Nazareth, waiting for the great mission.

I stay at home, Lord, and in Joseph's studio, your keeper and mine, I learn to work, to obey, to round the corners of my life and prepare you a work of art.

I'm staying at home, Lord! And I know that I am not alone because Mary, like any mother, is in the next room, doing chores and preparing lunch for all of us, God's family.

I'm staying at home, Lord! And I do it responsibly for my own good, for the health of my city, for my loved ones, and for the good of my brother, whom you have put beside me, asking me to take care of him in the garden of life.

I'm staying at home, Lord! And in the silence of Nazareth, I pledge to pray, to read, study, meditate, be useful for small jobs, in order to make our home more beautiful and more welcoming.

I'm staying at home, Lord! And in the morning, I thank you for the new day you give me, trying not to spoil it and welcome it with wonder, as a gift and an Easter surprise.

I'm staying at home, Lord! And at noon I will receive the greeting of the angel, I will make myself useful for love, in communion with you who have made you flesh to live among us; and, tired of the journey, thirsty, I will meet you at Jacob's well, and thirsty for love on the Cross.

I'm staying at home, Lord! And if the evening takes me melancholy, I will invoke you like the disciples of Emmaus: stay with us, the evening has arrived and the sun sets.

I'm staying at home, Lord! And in the night, in communion of prayer with the many sick, the lonely and all the caregivers, I will wait for the dawn to sing your mercy again and tell everyone that, in the storms, you have been my refuge.

I'm staying at home, Lord! And I don't feel alone and abandoned, because you told me: I'm with you every day. Yes, and especially in these days of confusion, O Lord, in which, if my presence is not necessary, I will reach everyone, only with the wings of prayer.

Amen

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From Margaret:

Mindful of all those teachers trying to support parents who have suddenly been thrust into the role of parent AND teacher, here is the second fun activity, which shows just how hard life would have been especially for women:

VICTORIAN WASHDAY FLOW CHART

Here are some of the jobs that would have to be done on washday in Victorian times. Put the jobs in the correct order and make a flow chart. The first two have been done for you.

Collect the sticks, coal to make a fire under the copper

Collect the water from the well in the yard by means of the pump

Fill the copper with water and light the fire to heat the water in the copper

Iron clothes

Peg the clothes on the line to dry

Repeat this until the clothes are free of soap

Sort the white washing from the coloured washing

Scrub shirt collars with carbolic soap and laundry brush

Pay special attention to clothes that are stained & scrub them well

Use a bucket to fill the Dolly tub with hot water from the copper

Re-fill Dolly tub from well with clean water and add Dolly blue

Transfer washed white clothes to the copper to boil to whiten

Rinse clothes thoroughly using a posser or Dolly peg

Air the clothes in-front of the fire

Plunge and spin the clothes in the tub with the Dolly Peg

Mix Colman's cold water starch

Put the clothes through the mangle to squeeze out the water

Dip pillowcases and cuffs and collars in Starch for crisp appearance

Sort the clothes according to how dirty they are

Transfer clothes from the copper to the Dolly tub

Heat the flat irons on the fire

Put a blanket on the scrubbed table ready for ironing

Use the water left over in the copper to clean the floor

Look out for the answers and an explanation of some of the processes and why they were necessary.

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THE PERCIVAL'S THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

God often visits us, but most of the time we
are not at home.

French proverb

A Picture Quiz from Jane:

Last weeks was a 'shot firing key' as used by
the donor Fred Grace a miner over 70 years
ago. Fred had a Primitive Methodist
background becoming a post-union local
preacher in 1938. He was also involved with the
Trade unions. My favourite response on
Facebook was 'is it an abstinence corkscrew'!!



Who knew that Englesea Brook were hiding a
prototype Dalek in its collection!
Or is it something less sinister?

(And huge thanks to Jane for helping put
together this edition while Ned was in hospital)

RANDLE GIVES US AN INSIGHT TO HIS OWN FAMILY HISTORY: OF MIXED ANCESTRY

My father's father was Anglican. One of his
ancestors was, in the 18th century, Vicar of
Milwich, the village between Stone and
Uttoxeter, where I still live. My father's mother
was Wesleyan, both her parents were christened
at the small chapel at Garshall Green where I was
christened, and where my nephew was
christened in 1976, becoming the fifth generation
to be christened there. Unfortunately my
grandmother didn't live to see the united
congregation we have here now, she would have
welcomed it. Once when I was driving her to a
service at the chapel she said 'Isn't it silly that we
drive a mile to a half empty chapel when we have
a half empty church on our doorstep.' My
mother's mother was born on September 27th,
her mother died on the 28th and her father on the
29th, so she was an orphan before she was two
days old. For the first 14 years of her life she was
raised by her Anglican grandparents, and she
sang in the choir at Milwich Church. At the age of
14 she went to work for a Wesleyan family and
with them attended Garshall Green Chapel. My
two grandmothers grew up as best friends, and I
have always regretted that I found out too late to
tell them that they did have a common ancestor
living in Milwich in the 18th century. They are
both on the picture of the stone-laying of
Dodsleigh PM chapel on the MYPRIMS website,
dressed in white on the extreme right-hand side.
My mother's father was, like his father, a PM
local preacher – both are mentioned on the
Ramsor PM plans which the Museum acquired
some months back. My grandfather's parents
played a leading part in the erection of Dodsleigh

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PM Chapel in 1908. After 14 years of marriage my maternal grandparents moved from Dodsleigh to the house in Milwich where she had worked as a maid, and my mother helped to drive the cattle the four miles between the two, much to the annoyance of her brother, who wanted to help, but was told he had to go to school!

My maternal grandmother spent 14 years attending an Anglican church, 14 years at a Wesleyan chapel and 14 years at a PM Chapel, before returning to the Wesleyan chapel only five years before Methodist Union, so it is perhaps appropriate that I now attend Milwich church, which has a united Anglican / Methodist congregation.

However, this is neither the beginning nor the end of the mix. In the 19th century one man was churchwarden at Milwich for 40 years, and for six of them he was also a steward of the Stafford Wesleyan Circuit. Another churchwarden here was raised as a Baptist, and one of our present wardens has served for six years as the Stafford Circuit property steward. However, the ultimate symbol of how mixed up we are at Milwich, not just ecumenically, but also internationally, is the baptism of my niece which took place here in 1982, only a few months after we became a joint congregation – it was the baptism of the Venezuelan daughter of an English Methodist mother, a Spanish Roman Catholic father, conducted in an Anglican church by a lady URC minister, using the Methodist service book!

Brilliant, thank you Randle!

PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCAST:

Social Distance like a Wesley

Avoid all the people you can,
by all the means you can,
in all the ways you can,
in all the places you can,
at all the times you can,
as long as ever you can

Friday Prayers at Noon

For those of you with a mobile phone and familiar with WhatsApp, Jane has set up a WhatsApp prayer group so we can send out a reminder at 12 noon each Friday and connect together wherever we are. Send me your mobile number and we'll add you. In addition, for those of you with email addresses, I will send out an email at 12 noon calling us together.

**Our closing prayer, again from Barbara Glasson,
President of Conference:**

You made the earth out of chaos
and brought us out of the Deep
and so, Creator God
help me to discover
who I really am
from the chaos of my disordered life
from the depths of my insecurities
in the on-going creativity
of this day

Amen