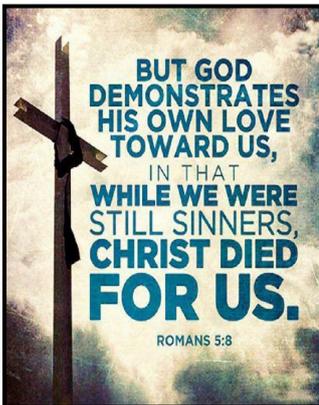
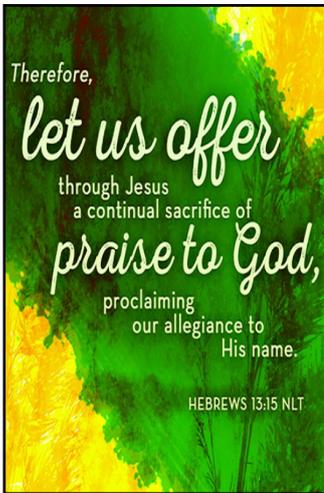


Battle Baptist Church

Being Transformed Together



7th February 2021



'... let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.'

Hebrews 12:1b,2



Confessions of a tree-hugger...

I confess I have a 'thing' about trees, and I know that some of you have too. Around Battle at the moment, some of the trees even have stripey knitted arms hugging them! I love their solid thick sturdy trunks, the bark sometimes rough and gnarly, yet on other trees strangely smooth. If you stand beneath and look up, it comes as no surprise that they are called the lungs of the Earth:



My interest in trees has been developed further whilst reading *Reforesting Faith* by environmental scientist Matthew Sleeth, who tells us why trees (and all things relating) are so very special to our Creator God. In some ways it is so obvious and staring me in the face. In the Bible, trees are at the heart of the first story in Genesis 2-3; the focus of the last chapter of the last book in Revelation 22; the first Psalm (v3), and the first Gospel - where in Matthew 1:3 Tamar, meaning 'palm tree', is specifically mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus. Every major character in the Bible is connected to a tree or shrub in some way - Noah in Genesis 8:11, Abraham in Genesis 18:1, Moses in Exodus 3, Elijah in 1 Kings 19 and others too if I had room here. But Joseph? He seems to be the exception: but then we read in Genesis 49:22 that he *is* a tree!

In the New Testament, it is a tree which enables

Zacchaeus to see Jesus properly in Luke 19, and a blind man sees people as trees in Mark 8:24. Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven is like a tree, and of course Isaiah 11:1 speaks of the coming Branch, who declared himself to be the True Vine in John 15. Indeed, many of Jesus' parables concerned seeds, trees, branches, and vines. The carpenter was nailed to a tree and 'lifted up' on it so that he could 'draw all people to [himself]' (John 12:32).

If you are curious and have a bit of time for some deeper study this coming week, why not have a look at some other significant events in the Bible. Does a tree, branch, fruit, or seed mark it in some way? You may well discover that to be the case. According to Sleeth, apart from God and people, trees are mentioned more than any other living thing in the Bible; Isaiah in particular is full of trees! Let's not forget too that the Bible tells us that, as we are made in God's image, we are like trees: that person [the righteous one] is like a tree planted by streams of water' (Pss 1:2); 'the righteous will flourish like palm trees and grow strong like the cedars of Lebanon' (Pss 92:12); 'they will be called oaks of righteousness' (Isa 61:3). Jesus said that he chose us to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last. Also that, 'my Father is glorified and honoured... when you bear much fruit, and prove yourselves to be my disciples' (John 15). There is something fascinating and fun about studying themes like this that run like a thread through the Bible and I very much recommend reading the book if you are interested. As to whether I actually do hug trees, well that is between me, the tree concerned and Father God!

May God bless you today and this coming week,

Shirley

PRAYER POINTERS

COVID-19

Pray that countries will work collaboratively to vaccinate all those most vulnerable to serious illness. Pray for scientists as they modify vaccines to deal with the new variants that have emerged.

Children and Youth

Pray for Tim and Caroline as they continue to mentor and support our young people albeit electronically. Pray for them as they develop plans for the post-COVID future: may Christ be at the heart all, drawing young people to him.

Dementia

Pray for families where a loved one has dementia and the extra pressures that living in lockdown must bring. For those who are in care homes and their families for whom visiting is complicated. For love and support.

NEWSLETTER

7th February 2021

Battle Baptist Church
Being Transformed Together

Battle Baptist Church is part of Life with Hope Trust; registered charity 1134288, Mount Street, Battle,

East Sussex TN33 0EG.

- Website: www.battlebaptistchurch.org.uk
- Telephone and answerphone (01424) 774825 • Email: office@battlebaptistchurch.org.uk
- Caterpillar Preschool direct telephone line:

Church maintenance issues:
zionpremisesteam@gmail.com



NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

BBC Week of Prayer— feedback: Please get in touch with the office to let us know what God has been saying to you during our week of prayer, whether it be a particular scripture, a picture, or a word.

'For Further Fought...': Go to the church [website](#) to find links to materials for further study and reflection.

Resources on the BBC [YouTube channel](#) have been reorganised: you can now view 'Everyday stories of Faith' independent of recordings of the broadcasts. Here you can also access Ed's 'Navigate' discipleship films, readings of the Psalms, and other reflections. Why not take a look?

Children and Young People: Don't forget to connect with Tim and Caroline online this week! For primary aged children, join Tim for a Zoom chat after the talk in the Sunday broadcast. For secondary aged young

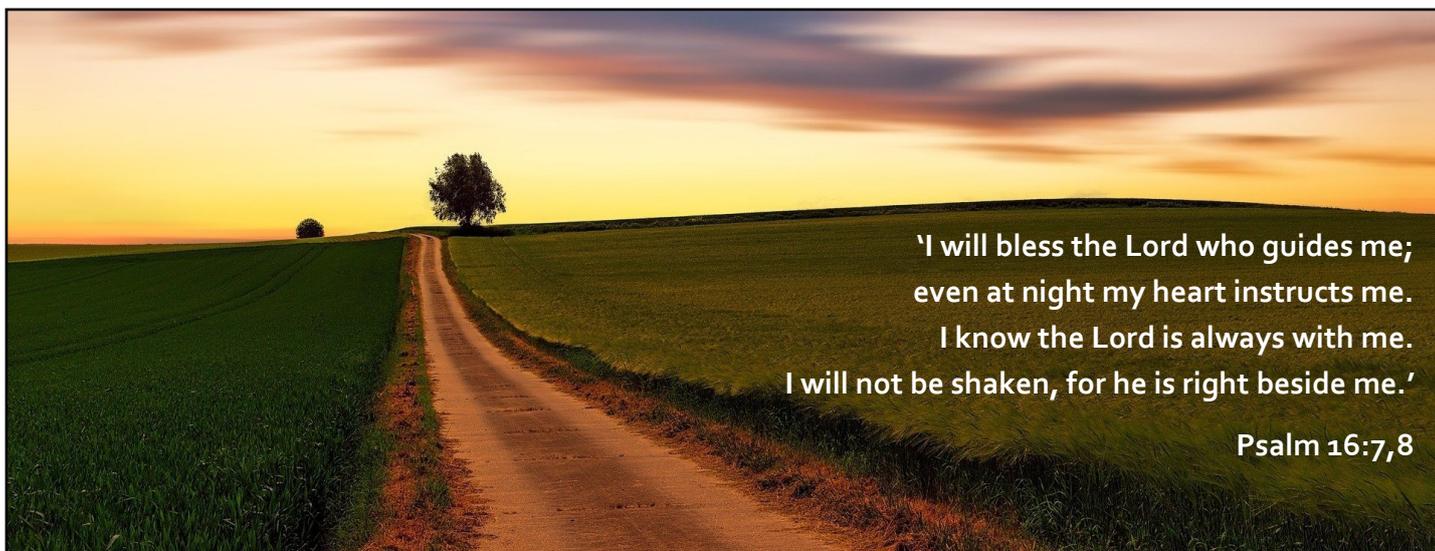
people, 'Sunday Breakout' runs from 5pm, and discipleship groups continue as normal, all via Zoom. Keep an eye on Instagram for details of Friday night social events.

Foodbank: The Foodbank is short of most items at the moment, but would particularly value donations of tins of baked beans, spaghetti, tomatoes and soup: cereal; pasta sauce; UHT milk and jam.

WORLD VIEW

Nepal

Praise God that Clare has been able to have her first COVID-19 jab (the AstraZeneca one) and she has had her work visa renewed. She is now in the middle of a two week field trip. She asks: *"May I especially see each person and family as God sees them, each one deeply loved by Him and worthy of our time and attention. And may they all experience Him through us."*



**'I will bless the Lord who guides me;
even at night my heart instructs me.
I know the Lord is always with me.
I will not be shaken, for he is right beside me.'**

Psalm 16:7,8

While we are not meeting collectively, why not use this guide for your personal devotions?

Pause, be still and invite God to meet you afresh, filling you by His Holy Spirit.

Pray giving thanks for all God's goodness

Worship

If you have a Worship CD, DVD or the means to go online and listen to something why not play a worship song, you don't have to sing along if you're not comfortable doing so or can't: simply listen to the words

Read a Psalm

The Psalms are a great source of hope and help, written in good times and bad. Pick one; read it through slowly. Pause. Read it through again.

What is God saying?

Give space allowing time for God to speak. What is he saying? Is he speaking to you personally or is it a message for the wider church?

Prayers for others

1) Use the prayer on the reverse side of this. It is taken from the Baptist Together website and their call to prayer in response to the Coronavirus. They rightly encourage us to play in being a Beacon of Hope at the moment. They remind us that our neighbours and communities need love, hope, peace and an eternal perspective and we can offer this in abundance, in the name of Jesus (2 Corinthians 4:18).

2) Pray for different ministries of the church, even though they are not meeting at this time. Think of the different people who usually attend and the reasons and aims of the activities.

3) Using the church members' directory take a page a day, and pray through the names.

Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer is a great resource that Jesus gave us.

Grace