

THE LINK

The Magazine of Portsmouth Methodist Church



April 2024

Minister : Rev. Ray Goddess

www.portsmouthmethodists.org.uk

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Minister's Desk

As I write this article, I am very aware of the many funerals I have either had to facilitate or attend. This is both in South Africa and sadly in the UK.

There is always a sadness that we feel when someone dies, we seem to forget that there are only two things that are FACT and PURE TRUTH in our lives – first is that we were born and secondly that one day we will die.

It is what happens in between birth and death that forms the mystery, a mystery that we fear because it is an unknown. We get parts wrong, but we get parts right – and that is life.

It is never easy to experience death in our family or friend circle, but what is often asked of me is: how can we prepare.

At our Synod we were introduced to Dr Kathryn Mannix who has specialized in the subject of death and what happens around the time of death. The eye-opener for me was that there are so many people who are sad because of the death of a loved one, not only because of the sadness of missing the person, but often because of what was never done or said. Dr Mannix has one quote that I thought would be helpful to everyone – no matter how young or old we are. I quote: *“By encountering death many thousands of times, I have come to a view that there is usually little to fear and much to prepare for”*.

If we accept Dr Mannix's findings to say that there is little to fear – how best can we prepare?

From my experience one of the consistent issues is that people wished they could have “one more opportunity” to share respect and love with the person who has died. There is always more that we want to say or share but maybe we can prepare a bit better by spending more time in conversation and if possible, visits with our families and friends. I think the one thing that we overlook is the fact that we never know when we are going to die, but what we do know is that we are going to die.

In working on our relationship with God we know where we are going after death, and this brings comfort to ourselves and those left behind. But working on spending more time with family and loved ones should maybe be a higher priority. We are all special to many – live life to the fullest and be blessed in and with your life.

Ray

Preachers for April

<i>Date</i>	<i>Preacher</i>
7th April	Rev Ray Goddess Holy Communion
14th April	Mr S MacFarlane
21st April	Rev Dr Beryl Wright
28th April	Rev Ray Goddess

From Girls' Brigade

Catherine Burt writes:

Leader Steph Davies, 25, from our 8th Portsmouth Girls' Brigade, is registered severely sight impaired, has ME, depression, emotionally unstable personality disorder (EUPD), and a history of anorexia.

For International Women's Day in March, she shared some of her story...

At Girls' Brigade I'm seen as me - not through the lens of my disability



I started Girls' Brigade (GB) when I was around 8 or 9 – it was fun and more like a family because all the age groups were together and so the older girls helped the younger ones. When I went to senior school some of the older GB girls were there too and they helped me when I got lost and would look out for me. I made lots of friends and learnt about God and really enjoyed it... camps were the highlight of my year.

When I was 14, I got ill with ME and was bed-bound; most things in my life dropped away, such as my school friends. But the GB leaders sent me letters and I knew that I was still part of it even though I couldn't attend. When I could attend it really meant a lot to me that the leaders made GB accessible for me by getting a sofa so I could lie down if I needed to. At one church service they even took the sofa into church so I could still attend. I attended GB for a reduced period of time because that was enough for me and, as I had light sensitivity,

because my vision was starting to degrade, the leaders also made one of the rooms dimmer.

Then when I had some mental health problems I had to go to hospital for a few months and I got letters from the leaders and a few visits. My whole life at that time revolved around anorexia and eating so it was really nice to have someone come and talk about something different and treat me like a normal teenager even though I was struggling.

When I became a GB leader, I was really nervous that I had less energy than the others and needed to use a powerchair, plus I was worried it might be boring leading the activities. But I realised at my first camp that it was just as fun helping the girls and young women enjoy themselves as it was to participate yourself. It gives you a purpose empowering the girls to live their best lives and have fun.

I'm seen as a fellow leader not Steph with a disability and, if there is something I can't do, we approach it with a sense of humour. We've made simple adjustments to let me participate such as having the programme on my phone so I can listen to it via voiceover because of my sight impairment or having rest periods when we're at camp because of my ME. I think it's good to show the girls that disabled people are the same as everyone else and can still do things, but we might need some adjustments.

My advice to leaders with children in their group with disabilities is not to let fear take over. A lot of adjustments needed for people to attend are just common-sense and really small but they make a big impact to the person they're for and knowing someone has educated themselves around your needs means the world.

I've made such good friends with the other leaders in my group and they have stood by me through everything. They've seen me at my worst but still shown me love and compassion.

And finally

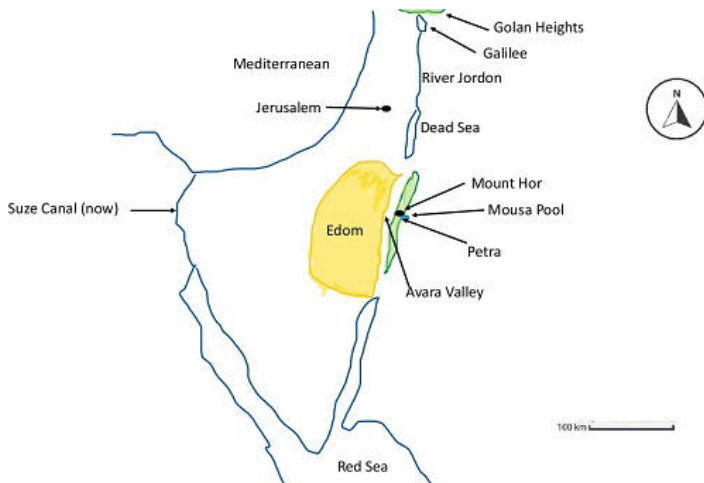
Snakes in the Bible

There are plenty of references to snakes in the bible but have you ever stopped to think about them. They of course first appear in the Garden of Eden but the more illuminative discussion is from Numbers 21, when during the Jewish people's wanderings after they have escaped from Egypt and are wondering in the desert for the 40 years, when they set out from Mount Hor and head around Edom and ⁶*Then the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the*

people, so that many people of Israel died. ⁷So the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned, because we have spoken against the Lord and against you; intercede with the Lord, that He will remove the serpents from us." And Moses interceded for the people. ⁸Then the Lord said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and put it on a flag pole;"

There are two places called Mount Hor in biblical times. From events elsewhere the Mount Hor in Numbers is thought to be *Jebel Nebi Harun* ("Mountain of the Prophet Aaron" in Arabic) or simply *Jebel Harun* (Mount Aaron) There are other options but they are nearby. The other one is in the Golan heights and so a separate mountain range and appears to be a completely different mountain but with the same name. It is not surprising there is more than Hor as it means mountain, so it is the Mountain of Mountains, a bit like River Avon where Avon is the Celtic for River and we get several of those.

Jebel Harun is a logical place to have stopped for a while as below it is Mousa's spring so there is water to drink and feed the animals. When you set out from it though you head into the Avara Valley which is where all but one of the venomous snakes in Israel live.



Map showing the key features (Edom expands to the other side of Mousa Pool but from the Numbers 21 description it seems they are referring to the heart of the country)

All the snakes mentioned in the Bible outside the story of Garden of Eden are venomous. The snake is seen as man's worse enemy and we are told this will be the case until as told in Isaiah 11:8 "*the snake and man will live in harmony once more in the time of the end of days or more accurately and the infant will play near the cobra's den, and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest.*" However, of the 42 types of snakes currently in Israel, only 9 are venomous. But I would not try putting you hand in a viper's nest or playing near a cobra before we live in harmony.

There are several vipers this could be. It could be a Palestinian Viper, which grow to 1.3m long and which causes the most snakebites in Israel, about 300 a year. The only reason these are not now deadly is due to a serum developed by the Israelis and delivered throughout the territories including the West Bank and Gaza. Or it could be an Arabian Horned Viper or an Israeli Mole Viper both of which are not only deadly but have no antivenom. The first buries itself in the sand, with only their eyes sticking out, lurking for their prey, which consists of lizards and other small creatures, the second hides underground. Fortunately, we are too big so they tend to slither away and do not normally bite humans. Or it could be a Horned Desert Viper or a Sahara Sand Viper, or a Painted Carpet viper, all of which ambush their prey waiting in hiding, but we are again too big to target. However, there is only one option for the cobra The Desert Cobra who also grows to 1.3m long and unlike the others already mentioned who have desert markings is black. They are also deadly. These all share another feature; they all live in the Avara Valley and its hills. The only deadly one that does not is the Lebanon Viper which lives only in the north in the Golan Heights.

The many snakes that occupy the rest of Israel such as Jan's Cliff Racer which is a small but speedy snake, or the Diadem snake, the Large Whip Snake, the Red Whip Snake, Forskal sand snake, if they bite you might hurt but they are not poisonous, at least to us and we are far too big for Javelin Sand Boa to be able to constrict to death despite the fact that the Greeks used to fire them at their enemies during naval battles, hence why they are found in lots of areas around the Mediterranean.

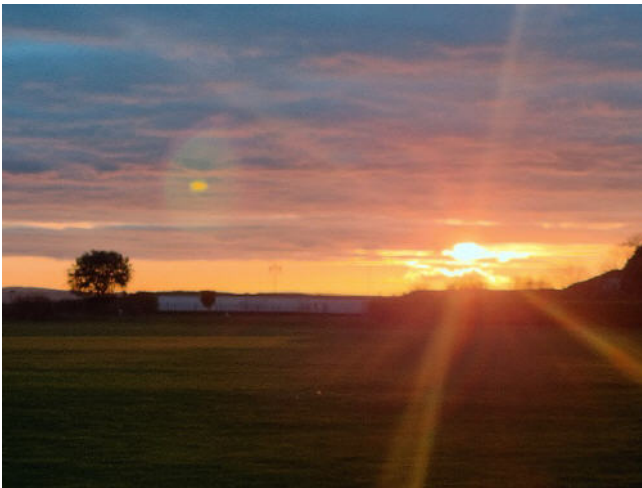
But there is another feature snake venom has. It helps to provide medicine to make us well. The medical conditions they can be used for vary, but they are particularly important in cardiac treatment, helping with high blood pressure, heart failure and heart attacks. Indeed, the angiotensin converting enzyme (usually known as ACE) come from the Jararaca Pit Viper and it is thought that snake species alone has helped save more lives than any other animal in history. Indeed, one of those I have already mentioned the deadly Painted Carpet Viper's venom has been used for centuries for fabricating theriac a medicine used to treat all sorts of poisoning.

So, with snakes you can face death or life from the venom depending on how you receive it. Just as with our faith you are choosing between eternal life or eternal death depending on how you receive it.

Mark Barton

Where in the World?

Last months quiz was a bit of a cheat as it didn't contain any geographical features to help position it, but I just couldn't resist using that picture of young goslings on ... Petersfield Heath Pond, one of our favourite places. Only one couple managed to work it out (after several attempts) so well done Denise and Pete. This time something easier, I hope. This photo was taken in January this year and is somewhere very local. Answers, as usual, to ralph.snelling@googlemail.com



Deadline for May

The deadline for the May issue of the Link is **Sunday 21st April 2024**. Please ensure that any material for publication is with the editor by that date

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When , What and Where

For more information about these activities and other community organised activities, please see the Portsmouth Methodist Church web site www.portsmouthmethodists.org.uk

<i>When</i>	<i>What</i>	<i>Where</i>
Monday		
6:30 p.m.	Girls Brigade	St Joseph's
7:00 p.m.	Bible Study Class 1st and 3rd Monday of each month	Contact markbartonrn@gmail.com or 07766252554
Tuesday		
10:00 a.m.	PMC Under 5s (during term time)	Trinity Building
Wednesday		
12:00 noon	Fellowship Lunch (1st Wednesday of month)	Trinity Building
12:00 noon	Soup and Pud (3rd Wednesday of month)	Trinity Building
2:30 p.m.	Wednesday Social Club	Trinity Building
6:00 p.m.	Zoom Bible Study - ask for details	Online via Zoom
Thursday		
6:00 p.m.	Boys Brigade	St Joseph's
Friday		
9.30 a.m.	Stay and Play Group for Toddlers and Parents	Eastney Halls
Saturday		
10:00 a.m.	Coffee Morning	Trinity Building

We advise that you check with organisers that meetings are taking place before travelling.