

# THE LINK

The Magazine of Portsmouth Methodist Church

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Week 22 – August 16<sup>th</sup> 2020

Text: “May the peoples praise you, O God: may all the people’s praise you. May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the people’s justly and guide the nations of the earth” – Psalm 67:3-4

## Information

A reminder that these weekly Links finish at the end of August and we’ll be returning to a monthly Link. However, if you are unable to be at church after that please let us know if you’d like to continue to receive weekly worship materials.

The deadline for the September monthly Link is this Sunday. Please get any articles/stories to Ralph and Christine by then.

If you are coming to Sunday worship please remember to have a face covering (unless exempt) and comply with the directions of the stewards on duty, so that our buildings can be as Covid secure as possible.

August 23<sup>rd</sup> will be a special Sunday. In a busy service at Trinity, Effie and Michael’s daughter Lyra will be baptised and our first post-lockdown communion will take place. Please join us if you can for this joyous celebration, not least to see how we can keep all of that to 40 mins or less!

## **Worship materials for Sunday August 16<sup>th</sup>**

### Opening Prayer

“Be Still and Know that I am God.” Sit back. Breathe deeply. Quieten yourself and listen to the noises around you; birds outside, the fridge humming, cars passing by, the neighbour working outside. Offer these things to God in thanks. Father, I thank you for all there is in our world, natural and man-made. As I come into your presence, I celebrate them and praise you for them. Speak to me through all those things and through your Word today. Amen.

Hymn: And Can it Be (Singing the Faith 345)

Let us pray together

Lord, I come before you and acknowledge that you are King of Kings and Lord of Lords. I bow before you and recognise you as the one who is able to do great things. Help me to trust you and listen to your reply as I call out to you.

### **Today’s Gospel Reading: Matthew 15: 21-28**

The Gospel reading raises a multitude of questions and this reflection is not necessarily able to answer them. Why did Jesus seem to reject the woman – surely his message is for all the world? Why were his disciples apparently so heartless? Why did Jesus heal some people and not others? We say that God always answers our prayers but why are some prayers for healing answered with a ‘no’? That last one is surely more pertinent now than ever. I admit that I don’t know the answer to those. However, the reaction of the woman shows us ways that we can respond when faced with hard questions and difficult situations. Firstly, in the midst of her trouble and desperation, she recognised who Jesus was and that she should turn to him. She recognised him as someone special, as the one with the power to help her.

Secondly, she reacted with boldness. She was not put off by approaching a stranger, by approaching a man or by approaching a foreigner – none of which would have been easy for a woman of her time to do. Her boldness continued as she pressed the matter and argued her case.

She was not put off by Jesus's silence or the disciples' irritation. Finally, she approached with faith – and that is her claim to fame. She argued her case. Her boldness and her faith go hand-in-hand. Her request was not a “well, Lord, if you might, possibly ...” She trusted that Jesus was the one to help her and wouldn't take no for an answer. Are we like that woman? When we approach Jesus, do we truly recognise who he is – the Lord of Lords but the Saviour who can meet our deepest needs? Do we approach with faith, clearly asking, or do we provide God with get-out clauses: “Please heal my friend – or at least make him not quite as bad?” Do we approach with boldness? And, when we don't get the answer we want, does our faith allow us to answer back? God's back is strong enough to take it if we shout and rail back at him – as long as our faith then allows us to respond to his answer.

A time of prayer

Here is the last verse of 'And can it be'. Take time to read it over slowly.

No condemnation now I dread;  
Jesus, and all in him, is mine!  
Alive in him, my living Head,  
and clothed in righteousness divine,  
bold I approach the eternal throne,  
and claim the crown, through Christ, my own.

“Bold I approach the eternal throne ...”

I approach your throne for the people I know personally that need a special touch from you. I picture them as I place them into your

loving hands.

I approach your throne for the people who are shouting out with questions and despair and don't know where to turn. Be their comfort Lord.

I approach your throne for those far from me and give to you their needs, knowing that I can trust you to respond.

## **The Lord's Prayer**

Hymn: Faithful One (Singing the Faith 628)

Faithful One, so unchanging,  
Ageless One, you're my rock of peace.  
Lord of all I depend on you,  
I call out to you again and again.  
I call out to you again and again.  
You are my rock in times of trouble.  
You lift me up when I fall down.  
All through the storm your love is the anchor,  
my hope is in you alone.

Brian Doerksen (b. 1965)

## **A prayer of blessing**

In the joys, may I celebrate with you Lord. In the troubles, may I shout out to you with boldness and listen to you in faith. And in the everyday, may I journey on with you.

Original Materials by Alan Darlington  
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