

Travelling in Hope: Some thoughts in lieu of our weekend together: 3rd–5th April 2020: Jill Baker

I am so disappointed not to be sharing with friends old and new at the MWiB weekend over Palm Sunday. I was looking forward to it, and especially to working alongside Fiona Kendall, mission partner in Italy, whom I have met a number of times and who is a very inspiring woman indeed. Fiona is also sharing some thoughts in advance and you will see as you read about her work why we came to the theme ‘**Travelling in Hope**’ for the weekend.



We all now find ourselves on a very different journey, a journey of isolation, anxiety, disorientation as so many of the pillars of daily life are removed; contact with friends and family, church services and meetings, leisure activities, even exercise and shopping severely restricted. How do we find hope amidst this?

I am not including here the notes I had made for the weekend – we hope we might be able to re-visit that theme in 2022, although who knows what the world will look like then? Instead I have reflected a little on some bible passages, songs and ideas which might help us all to travel with hope over the next months. Please use them however you wish, but I have suggested some time slots as it can be a special feeling to know we are thinking about things at the same time as other folk all over the country (and beyond).



[If you are reading this on a computer or other device, the blue links should be active hyperlinks – if you click on them you will be taken to various internet sites where you can watch, listen or read the items mentioned.]



8pm Friday 3rd April: Invitation to hope

Imagine you’ve just had a journey to Swanwick... maybe a complicated, busy, delayed one, maybe rushing after work, maybe with others, maybe alone. You’ve found a seat in the dining hall and eaten your dinner then made your way up to the Derbyshire Hall, somehow managing to squeeze in with 250 other women... it’s really noisy... some of us are loving every moment, others are wishing we hadn’t come! Who were you hoping to meet this weekend? Picture their faces, call their names, give thanks for them – maybe send them an email or text.


- **Read: Psalm 62:5-7**
- **Reflect:** In contrast to that crowded room, you are probably sitting on your own at the moment, or with just a few other people. It is quiet. Pause in the silence and recognise the presence of God within that silence... the psalmist speaks of God as a rock, as salvation, as a fortress, a refuge, a mighty rock, deliverance, honour... Choose just one of these words and meditate on it for a few minutes. You may like to write or draw something to reflect how that idea of God makes you feel this evening. Find hope in God.
- **Listen:** If you have access to the internet, listen to Stuart Townend singing ‘[There is a hope](#)’ (if not, the words are on the separate sheet of resources).
- **Pray:** Lord our God, at the ending of this day, and in the darkness and silence of this night, cover us with healing and forgiveness, that we may take our rest in peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (MWiB)



10am Saturday 4th April: Travelling in hope

You’ve survived the first night and (hopefully) didn’t lock yourself out of the bedroom or have a fire alarm. Breakfast was fine and the opening worship lifted your spirits. It’s time for the Bible Study – this was going to be all about Noah and his family travelling in hope, but that’s being saved for another year. Meanwhile:

- **Read:** Romans 5:1-5
- **Reflect:** In what ways am I suffering today? What about others around me and around the world? Am I open to this suffering producing endurance in me – what would that look like? And character? In what ways might my character be moulded by the experiences I am having now? Is it true that all this leads to hope? And that

hope does not disappoint? According to Paul hope does not disappoint because **'God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us'**. In another letter, Colossians, Paul speaks of **'Christ in you, the hope of glory'**. Sit quietly, perhaps light a candle , invite God's love to be poured into your heart afresh and believe it will be, meditate on the phrase from Colossians. Be thankful.

- **Listen: Do the Next Right Thing** (from Frozen 2): Anna is in a bad place, she is separated from her sister and her friends; how will she get out of the cave and find the energy to keep going? The emotion of this scene might seem overwhelming, but maybe we can identify at this uncertain time. The 'motto' of the film is profoundly practical and deeply rooted in Christian spirituality too... 'Do the next right thing'. Watch and listen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K2WQkZwpRIs> or read the words on the resources sheet.
- **Pray:** O my Lord, give me the strength today to choose


generosity over judgement, forgiveness over bitterness, courage over self-pity,

grace over resentment, so that your honour and glory would be upheld. Amen. (*Prayer by Naomi Sharp*)




4pm Saturday 4th April: Poetry for hope

Have a look again at the list of workshops which were offered and think about all the amazing work being done around the world to offer hope to others. I was going to offer a time to reflect together on some poetry which might give hope. Over the past few years I have discovered new energy and hope in reading and memorising poetry. Have a look at these two suggestions (full texts on resources sheet):

- **Thomas Hardy: The Darkling Thrush** – A winter poem, written on 31st December 1900 as the century turned. Hardy, an agnostic, uses some very 'churchy' words in his poem which ends with a tremendous hope of hope.
- **Emily Dickinson: Hope is the thing with feathers** – A charming, enigmatic little poem which it is really not difficult to learn by heart... go on, try it! 
- If you get into this, you can spend a lot of time researching both poems on the internet and finding out more about Hardy and Dickinson. I recommend Malcolm Guite's blogsite to hear the former <https://malcolmguite.wordpress.com/2019/12/31/the-darkling-thrush-by-thomas-hardy-5/> and if you like puffs, watch this tiny video on the latter! <http://www.godinreallife.co.uk/200/hope-with-feathers>



10am Palm Sunday 5th April:

Sunday morning would have been a climax to our weekend – gathering in the Derbyshire Hall, processing as a huge body to the Chapel with palms and palm crosses and stones to build a cairn. There we would have celebrated this special day in the Church year in style with a 'Green' Communion... instead: 

- **Read: Luke 19:28-40**
- **Reflect:** How are the different characters in this well-known story **'travelling in hope'**? What is Jesus hoping for? The disciples? The crowds? The Pharisees? What do you hope for today?

Notice the lovely way in which Luke recalls in this passage the announcement of the angels to the shepherds when Jesus was born (Luke 2:14) – **glory and peace** again accompany the coming of Jesus. Look out for ways to notice, to experience and to share the glory and peace of Christ today.

- **Sing:** All for Jesus, all for Jesus (Singing the Faith 342) Words on resources sheet.
- **Pray:** Today we remember a vast crowd in the streets of Jerusalem...

Today we remember Palm Sunday processions in which we have taken part...

Today we feel frustrated not to be gathering with others at our MWiB weekend...

But today we recognise that you are still with us Jesus, still on the move, still entering our lives...

Today we recognise that you are the One who comes in the name of the Lord,

bringing glory and peace, to us, to our loved ones, to our islands, to Italy, to the world.

Here in the quiet of my own home I raise my palm cross and offer you my praise, Jesus Christ, giver of life, love and peace.

May I walk beside you this week through the drama and despair of Holy Week

to the glory and hope of Easter Sunday. Thanks be to God. Amen.

The weekend is over – perhaps it's been quieter than you expected, but at least you don't have a long journey home now... but we do all have a long journey through the next weeks and months of isolation and anxiety and disorientation. **Stay strong, do the next right thing and travel in hope.**

God bless,

Jill