

**Hinde Street Methodist Church**

Sunday 28 June 2020 11.00am

Rev Peter Cornick

**28<sup>th</sup> June, 2020**

**A sermon to celebrate the partnership between Hinde Street Methodist Church, London, and Kreuzkirche, Leipzig.**

**Hope and bearing fruit – based on Colossians 1: 3-14**

Our dear friends in Leipzig,

Your brothers and sisters in Christ living in London, send you greetings in the name of Christ Jesus who is alive and has sent us his Spirit.

It seems only a short time ago that we were enjoying your hospitality and worshipping together. We continue to pray for you and have remembered you during this recent crisis. We live in a world where divisions exist for political ends; we have seen it in our country. Our partnership bridges language and culture. It recognises our shared and complex history, continually seeking to discover what it means to love God and love one another. Our partnership celebrates with hope, our common humanity and common concerns. Most importantly, our partnership celebrates with hope, our common faith in Christ Jesus.

Much has changed worldwide since we were with you.

Coronavirus has affected us all, globally, in ways we could not have imagined. I remember in January, cities in China being locked down. I thought, 'well, that will never happen in London.' But London has been like a ghost town these last three months. We remember with sadness, people who have lost their lives prematurely or who now face economic ruin. These are difficult times to be living through.

A few weeks ago, came the tragic deaths of black people in the U.S. and the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement. This has caused us all to consider how we, as people and a church, must do better to lift up the voices, and include, people who are of black or minority ethnic heritage. Our preacher last week told us of the experience of a care worker in London, who is black. The care worker was going to work during the lock down period and was stopped by police on several occasions. We in London, cannot look at the U.S. and shake our heads. We need to look at ourselves.

In the church, during the coronavirus, we have gathered together each Sunday on-line. This has helped people to feel less isolated, given us the opportunity to talk to friends, and kept our prayer and worship active. For all the faults of the internet, we have found God's blessing as it has connected us during this time of separation. But our beloved singing has been so hard to do alone in our own houses – and we remember that you too cannot sing whilst meeting as a congregation in church. We hope for the day when we can all sing our praises together!!

Hope can be discovered in our partnership. Hope can be discovered in the cries of oppressed people being heard. Hope can be discovered in overcoming the adversities of isolation. That hope is in Christ and Paul, in his letter to the Colossians, speaks about hope. He reminds the Colossians that they 'heard of this hope before in the word of the truth, the gospel'. (1:5)

I always love to hear about those in the ancient world who fetched and carried these letters between churches. It seems one called Epaphras did so between Paul and Colossae. He may have been a messenger, but 'he has made known to us your love in the Spirit.' (1:8) Epaphras literally carried hope, as we do now in our exchange of sermons and prayers.

Paul celebrates how the Colossian church, because they had heard the gospel, is now 'bearing fruit and growing in the whole world'. (1:6) They are bearing the fruit of hope. Paul continues, praying that 'you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God.' The fruit they are bearing is seen by Paul in two ways. Firstly, for hope in the community, their city, through their good works. Jesus talks about one who even gives a cup of water, to someone in need, offering the welcome of God – offering hope. (Matthew 10: 42) Secondly, the hope which increases as they develop their own spiritual growth, their faith, their belief.

In our partnership, in hearing voices of those who cry for justice, in supporting one another in times of adversity, we see hope. We see hope in every good work, that we might do in our cities, and we see hope as we grow in faith. We bear the fruit of hope.

Paul writes: 'You have heard of this hope before in the word of the truth, the gospel that has come to you.' (1:5-6)

In our prayers, dear friends, we will always thank God for your faith, and your love, in Christ. Amen.

**The Rev. Peter Cornick**