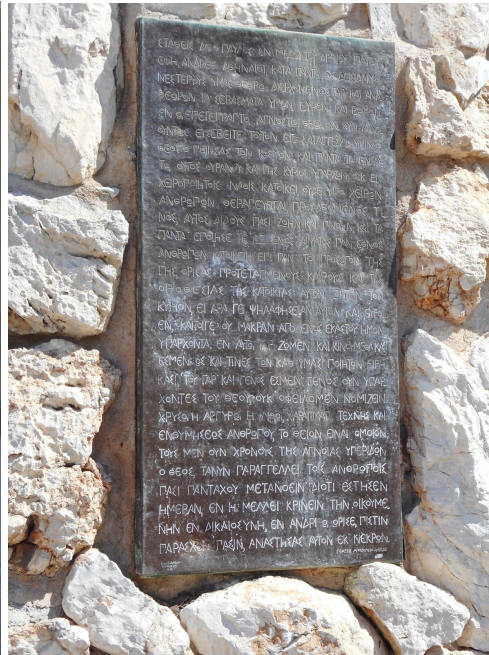


Acts 17:22–34**So, what’s the story?**

This is the question that our Methodist President and Vice President have, together, been encouraging the Methodist people to think about this year.

What’s the story, in terms of our understanding of God’s story in Scripture?

What’s the story of our own experience of God at work in the world and in our lives?

What’s the story of our experience of God in the mission of the Church?

Paul knew God’s story in the Scriptures (our Old Testament) pretty well and when he was given the opportunity, in the Areopogus (possibly the earliest aristocratic council of ancient Athens), he was able to tell the story, succinctly. Not only was he able to tell the story, he was also able to link that story into the experience of the people in the Areopogus, “For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: ‘To the unknown God.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.”

So, do we know the story of God in the scriptures and, are we able to connect that story with our current situation and location – with people’s ordinary experience? If not, there is a real danger that we and the gospel become increasingly irrelevant to people’s lives.

So, how does the story of God in the scriptures connect with the current pandemic? I’ve heard people using the story of the Exodus from Egypt as a metaphor for coming out of the lockdown, equally I’ve heard people use the story of the Exile in Babylon and the return to Jerusalem to speak of a

rebuilding of our society. How do you see God's story connecting with our own situation?

And what of our own story of God? How have we seen God at work in our lives recently? How do we connect that experience with the experience of ordinary, everyday people?

And what of the story of God in the church? How does that experience connect with real life?

The response to what Paul had to say was mixed. Some mocked, but others said, "We will hear you again about this." The response to what we have to say, whether in word or in deed, will probably be mixed too. Some will want to hear us again, and that's great.

So, what will it mean to be Church, post lockdown, in Alderley Edge? What will our story of God's transforming grace be? And will we be church again, just like it was, or will we be changed by God through the experience and how will we tell the story of God at work in the Church, in the world and in our own lives?

Rod Hill
Methodist Minister