Superintendent Minister: **Rev Gordon Gresswell.**
c/o Frodsham Methodist Church

November 2025

I remember when I played Noah in the school play. Ah, the memories come flooding back.
If you want to know how many bees Noah had – check the Ark hives.

'Noah was a righteous man.' Genesis 6:9

Tim Vine is one of my favourite comedians; "I decided to sell my Hoover... well it was just collecting dust," was his 2014 Edinburgh fringe winning joke. A Christian who is able to break down barriers through humour. In thousands of jokes he doesn't use swear words and is a genuinely funny man.

Unlike Noah. An enigma, a pivotal figure in the origin stories of Genesis, it is sometimes hard to see Noah's 'righteousness.' He doesn't seem to have any concern or compassion for humankind – at least with Sodom and Gomorrah Abraham pleaded with God to spare the people – he doesn't speak up but follows instruction, makes a wooden box, an Ark; *Schindler's Ark* is the book title of the *List* film whereby non-righteous playboy and capitalist Oscar Schindler saves hundreds of lives. Noah seems incapable of thinking of others, bringing only his family and some animals into a closed off world with only one skylight, an apt image of a blinkered mentality.

And when the 'new Adam' steps onto dry land, 'a man of the soil' he is the first to plant a vineyard (9:20) and falls into a drunken stupor. Naked, his youngest son, Ham finds him, gets his older brothers who, like God in the Garden of Eden, do the right thing and cover up the nakedness of their father. Noah, the 'righteous man' lacked the spiritual resources to survive the flood and lashes out at an innocent party, his grandson Cannan, the son of Ham; 'Cursed be Canaan: lowest of slaves shall he be to his brothers.' (9:24-25).

Canaan, Palestine today, and in the centuries past have seen some of the worst atrocities of history as a result of this type of scapegoating when we blame others for our own crimes and inadequacies. Furthermore, Ham is described as the 'founder' of Cush and symbolic of 'Black Africans', and the dehumanising stereotypes fostered upon 'black' people as 'inferior' and worthy only to be slaves. Eugenic arguments seem to be back in vogue with white Afrikaners' welcome in the United States, whilst black countrymen are excluded. Jesus reminds us always to be on our guard as we seek to welcome all into the Kingdom of God.

November is that month we are encouraged to remember. All Saints Day followed by All Souls Day where we remember the saints that have gone before us. Remember, remember the 5th of November with its, fortunately long-forgotten anti-Catholic connotations which leads us into remembering the 'war to end all other wars', which remains unfulfilled still.

It is important to remember the past; in the hope we can learn from it. We no longer condone slavery nor burn Catholics at the stake. We have learnt and continue to do so; Thank God.

Unconscious Bias training and Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) within the context of the Methodist Church are a welcome addition to our desire to welcome all. We hope to avoid easy scapegoating and distorted language which imperils us all. Jesus comes as the Prince of Peace and seeks to bring restoration to relationships and to restore the whole creation to a place where God's love is manifest and almost touchable; the Kingdom of God is near you.

November allows us to recognise a change in season, leaves fall, nakedness of trees reveal hidden landscapes, nights draw in and we prepare for winter. In remembering we can give thanks for those that have guided our paths; give thanks for those who fundraised to build our Chapels and Church buildings; give thanks to fallen soldiers and to remember how fragile, yet precious life is. Advent, our next season, is preparing for a future; November is remembering how we get to stand on this bridge between liturgical and meteorological spaces.

May God bless each of you this month and I leave the last word to Tim Vine: *My vicar's disappeared. Somebody get me Missing Parsons!*

Gordon