



SEE, I AM DOING A NEW THING!

Anne Middleton

**ANNE MIDDLETON,
PERFORMING ARTS
MISSION ENABLER FOR THE
PLYMOUTH AND DEVONPORT
METHODIST CIRCUIT, IS
TRYING TO BE PRESENT AND
RESPOND CREATIVELY TO A
NEW SEASON.**

When I stopped my role as MET Connexion Editor in January 2019, I was preparing for a period of change and knew that I had to make myself available for something new. In my farewell note, I wrote about being in a time of limbo - waiting to find out where my minister husband, Darren, would be stationed and what God had in store for me. It was a long season of waiting - though I remember making a decision that I would make the most of every opportunity during that time.

I had to remain available, but needed some income, hence I signed on with an agency to do some work as a Supporting Artist. It wasn't easy with child care, but I had some wonderful opportunities, including the delight of being able to take part - in a small way - in the CBBC series of Malory Towers! As I write, I am in a new liminal season. I wrote in my final edition about walking in the dark - not knowing what was around the corner - but trusting in God and hoping that he had something wonderful in store for me.

On 2 January - a year after my final edition of MET Connexion was released - I started a new role as Performing Arts Mission Enabler (PAME) in the circuit where my husband is posted, the Plymouth and Devonport Methodist Circuit. This is a new role for the circuit and the perfect role for me. I created a

logo (with the help of Daniel Watson, MET Connexion Designer) - a spotlight on the cross - which sums up how I see my role. I am passionate about the power of theatre and the arts to touch the soul and transform lives.

Then, only three months in, everything stopped! I had a lot of writing to get on with and new material to prepare, but I realised that I needed to be doing something now - not just preparing for the future. I had to be fully present, responding to the 'new' present and find a new way of working and being. My husband took to 'virtual church' like a duck to water. Don't get me wrong, he has spent hours preparing videos of his services, but he is really good at it. He suggested that I do my Easter story: 'Piggy and Woof Follow the Clues' as a video and said he would help me. I am the least technical person in the world - and it was quite stressful - but I could see the potential and have since made more story videos.

Early on in lockdown, I felt inspired to write a poem. Carolyn Lawrence, Vice-President Designate at the time, had asked me to write something on her theme of 'growth' to perform during the worship at the Methodist Conference. When we realised the Conference probably wouldn't be able to go ahead as planned, I decided to write something anyway. After a conversation with Carolyn and inspiration from Isaiah 43 and the current Covid-19 situation, I wrote 'Do you not perceive it?' This is when I truly discovered my passion for writing poetry! I found that I could express myself so much better through poetry. It was a truly reflective time; I realised that I wasn't really in a pit or hemmed in - it was more of a cocoon! I understood more than ever how important it is to live in the moment.

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I noticed spring arrive more than ever this year. God speaks to me through nature. I started asking God what he was trying to show me and ask of me during that time. I had a real sense of letting go and 'letting God' and of 'being'.

I decided to make a video of my poem, to be available for the possible virtual Conference. I commissioned Simeon Wood - a fabulous Christian flautist to write a piece of music to go with my poem. Then I had discussions with another creative friend, Angela Smith, who filmed herself painting. I filmed myself simply responding to the poem, which, although I'd written it, spoke so powerfully to me! I feel that God has had his hand on the whole process and has inspired me to step out of my comfort zone and to do a new thing.

So, I just want to finish by encouraging you to live each moment in the moment, and to join in with what God is doing. God has a purpose for each and every one of us. When we can get to the stage that we don't mind what 'season' we're in - whether we feel useful or useless, because we're just being the person that God has created us to be - we will then be at our most fulfilled, fertile and fruitful. I also just want to say: it's OK to grieve what we've lost. I don't just mean loved ones; life is painful. 'Becoming' takes a bit of letting go and that's not easy.



Do you not perceive it?

Do you not perceive it?
In parched earth
Hard and cracked
Deserted, abandoned
Buried, forgotten
Deep down in the pit
Something is stirring

Locked in - hidden from sight
Treasure in dark places
Dig down - don't you feel
That pulse from deep within
Ascending from the darkness
Reaching for the light?
Do you not perceive it?

Stop! Don't touch!
Isolate, protect, forget
The wound, deep inside
Hide, from the light
Disconnect, lock-down
In your shallow tomb
Shut-up - air-tight

Do you not perceive it
In the air we breathe?
Restricted, stifled - gagged
Suffocating - air grasping
Greedily snatching hold
Of life as we know it - can't let go
Of breath withheld...

Do you not perceive it?
Something growing within
Small and tender
Vulnerable, soft
Deep inside, safe from the unknown
Not a tomb - a cocoon!
Did Jesus fear the loss of Mary's womb?

The word grew like a tender shoot
Like a root out of dry ground
A vessel of healing and hope
The water of life
Showering us with... love

Calling to all who are thirsty
Drink - and never thirst again!

Do you not perceive it?
Pouring life into hard places
Seeping, soaking, softening
New life sprouting forth
Like springs in the desert
And streams in the wasteland
See? I am doing a new thing!

In fertile soil of vulnerability
Raw and tender wounds
Grow seeds of hope into
Oaks of righteousness
Standing firm, providing shelter
Roots deep and nourished
By springs of living water

Reaching out - reconnecting
With greater intimacy
Between I and Thou
Finding our inner voice
The cacophony of chaos
Tunes into a cosmic chorus
Echoing throughout creation

As our faces tentatively test the light
May we fill our lungs with
The ruach - the breath of Life
That flows through the universe
Fully connected, present and
participating
In the symphony of creation
Proclaiming the Father's glory!

See, I am doing a new thing!
Do you not perceive it?

*Do you not perceive it? © Anne Middleton.
Written during the period of lockdown owing
to Covid-19; inspired by the situation and
the verses from Isaiah 43:18-19, which are
part of the prayer card for the President and
Vice-President of the Methodist Conference
2020-21.*



Anne Middleton invites you to join the Performing Arts Mission (PAM) Facebook community. To see the video of her poem and other resources, visit and like her page: www.facebook.com/performingartsmission

