

## **Marske-by-the-Sea Methodist Church**

### **Staying connected during the lock-down**

I am writing this at the end of the first week of the UK being in "lock down" so as to help stem the spread of coronavirus. Life seems so strange with meetings cancelled, services of worship stopped and a huge part of society being in isolation. By the time you read this much more may well have developed - who knows? Understandably, many people are very concerned, concerned for themselves and those they love and care for. News from other countries and the amount of media coverage are certainly enough to worry almost anyone.

I am also aware that by the time you read this we will not be far from the end of Lent, with Holy Week and Easter following. For the first time in my life-time there will be no Holy Week and Easter services - that is going to be so strange.

Two things, however, strike me about the Holy Week and Easter story. Firstly, God did not stop his son, Jesus, from dying the most horrific death on the cross, but nor did Jesus walk away from such suffering. God never said that there would be no difficulties or suffering in the world; all that we are promised is that God would always be with us. Psalm 23 is a wonderful example of that promise, as are many of the words of Jesus. This promise has helped many followers of Jesus as they have walked through natural and human-caused suffering over the years.

But the second thing which strikes me is that Jesus's friends, his disciples or followers, supported one another through the terrible events that unfolded in what we know as Holy Week. Even in the account of the period following the resurrection of Jesus, when we find the disciples locked in their homes in fear, they are still encouraging and supporting one another as they became more aware of the incredible truth that Jesus was, in some very special way, still with them.

Though I cannot read the future, I suspect that the next few weeks are not going to be easy for any of us, and possibly very difficult for some. In these times we need to remember that God has not forsaken us but he still loves us, and that we will get through this time so much more easily if we support and encourage one another. I am always so hurt when I see examples of bad human behaviour such as unnecessary panic buying of essential items which are needed by all of us. The Christian way is to show God's love by looking out for the needs of others around us, our neighbours, family and friends, but especially for those who are most isolated and vulnerable, and there is clear evidence of that going on already amongst those who can still get out to do necessary tasks.. And even if we cannot get out we can still keep in touch with one another by telephone and, as importantly, to pray for one another.

God bless and take care

Arthur

### **Being Church while we can't be in church**

#### **Worship**

For the duration of the lockdown it is quite clear that the BBC will be broadcasting a Sunday service which I am sure many of you will find beneficial. This will be in addition to the on-going "Thought for the day" slots on various programmes.

However, the Methodist Church already has 'worship from home' options available including the live streaming on the internet of four different Sunday services! Obviously you need a computer and the internet to find these but links to them can be found on the "Worship during the pandemic" page of the Methodist website [www.methodist.org.uk](http://www.methodist.org.uk). Also there are now three different worship sheets for each Sunday, the one of the Methodist website, together with Worship at Home from The Vine and the Darlington District sheet which has been distributed to those whose email address we have. A number of kind folks are dropping one or other of the sheets off to members without email during their daily exercise.

#### **Pastoral Care**

Throughout the coming weeks it is essential we keep in touch with each other while we can't actually be together. Pastoral Visitors are an important element in this but others too, we know, have risen to the task

of keeping in touch especially with those living on their own. Clearly, any one of us can pick up a phone and call a friend - so please do.

If anyone is feeling in need of someone praying with them on the phone, a number of people have offered to do this. Just get in touch with Arthur (01287 651340) and we will arrange this.

### **Support during self-isolation**

We are aware that many of our members who are within the most 'vulnerable' groups do have family and close friends to support them. But our concern is to ensure that everyone who need support does still have the help they need, especially if they have isolated themselves. If you find yourself in this position please call Arthur and we will see what we can do to find someone local to help, be it fetching food or medicines.

### **A word of warning**

We have already seen some people using this situation to take advantage of others, from reselling things like hand-gel at exorbitant cost on the internet, to taking money off people to buy food but not turning up with it. We must all be extra vigilant at this time.

## **Watched over in Love**

Last week, before we were told not to drive away from home to take a walk, Mike and I parked our car near the village of Charltons and joined the Cleveland Way towards Guisborough.

We met no other walkers for nearly two miles, until we were on the outskirts of the town, but those few we did meet, were all following the social distancing rules so there were no problems.

When we reached the top of a hill, ready to return, however, we were unable to find the right track back to our car as there didn't appear to be any sign posts for the Cleveland Way. We met a couple of folk who were unable to point us in the right direction and suggested we rejoin our original path. Luckily a dog walker appeared when we were pondering what to do and he obviously knew the area very well. He pointed out the path we needed to follow and told us the signs to look out for.

We set off but so far along, the trail seemed to disappear and we were at a loss to know where to go next. Suddenly, we heard someone shouting in the distance and when we looked upwards we saw our dog walker, waving from a higher track. He could see the path we were looking for from his vantage point, whereas it was hidden from us.

For the next half mile or so, our friendly guide kept an eye on us and if we deviated from the path, called a warning out to us. Eventually, we joined the Cleveland Way and could see where we needed to go to get back to the car.

We were so grateful to the kindly dog walker who went that extra mile to make sure we were safe and it reminded me that we must never forget that there is someone who is looking out for each one of us, every minute of every day, whatever is happening in our lives. Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, never leaves us and is always with us, keeping us on the safe path home.

Wendy

### **A note from Stephen, our treasurer**

You may have seen appeals from various charities which expect to suffer financial losses during the current crisis. Although our church has more than adequate reserves at present, most of our income has abruptly ceased, and we still have most of our normal expenses to pay.

For now, our only regular income is from standing orders, of about £800 each month. Our main outgoing is the Circuit Assessment, at over £2,300 per month, which has to carry on, to ensure that our Circuit Ministers receive their stipends. So we're £1,500 in deficit each month straight away. We will continue to use some gas, electricity and water. We have two instalments of this year's insurance premium still due, and there are quarterly rental payments due on the photocopier, whether or not we are using it.

We would ask those of you who make use of weekly offering envelopes to keep putting your offerings aside, as far as you can, ready for when worship services resume. On the other hand, if you have access to internet or telephone banking, you might like to consider setting up a standing order, at least for the duration. If you are able to do this, please contact me, Stephen, on 01642 486216 to obtain a form with the details that you need.