

A newsletter for May 2020

"It's been a long time, already" said one of the people I telephoned recently. Indeed, we are already in the 7th week of lockdown and I know that for many it is becoming very wearisome. For those who are still at work there is a sense of everything taking so much longer as distancing and protection and concern about safety controls everything that is done. For those working from home there is a sense of being considerably more busy than normal as doing everything by email and telephone and video is so much harder than just meeting people face to face, but for those who are staying in and keeping safe, especially for those who are retired and on their own, time is really beginning to drag. The sense of isolation and the yearning to engage with a 'proper' human being, family member or friend, is so strong for probably all of us.

In many respects, as we have gone through the Easter story, I have been reminded just how important the sense of community was to the followers of Jesus. Clearly, in the early hours and days after the crucifixion of Jesus, even in the weeks up to Pentecost, the disciples and other followers supported one another as they tried come to terms with firstly the sadness but then the amazing of the truth of the resurrection. This sense of community formed not only the safe place for them in an alien world but helped them share what they were discovering about this new situation in which they found themselves. The ability to engage with one another was clearly so important.

For us all, this challenging time reminds us just how difficult it is to be Christians on our own, how difficult it is to be the church when we cannot meet together! However, we will keep trying to support one another by phone calls and messages - and thank you to all those, pastoral visitors and many others, who are doing such a great job of keeping in contact with people. We will try to keep our worship alive for as many as possible through the distribution of services and by the use of technology - and thanks to those who are printing and distributing paperwork. And we will keep on adapting and moving with the times, even if that means that since we have had to move out of our church buildings we will move online for those who are happy to navigate the internet. Above all we will keep on, keeping on, doing all we can to keep the faith vibrant and visible in our communities and for the church to rise again, by the power of the Holy Spirit, declaring the love of God in word and deed. As it is now highly likely that it will be many more weeks before we are back in church I am hoping we can keep strong, keep focussed and make the best of this time to support one another as we try to make sense of the situation.

Blessings

Arthur

Some thoughts from Wendy

A couple of weeks ago I was speaking to a member of our church family who, like Mike and I, had booked to go to Oberammergau to see the Passion Play in May. Unfortunately this has now been postponed until 2022 and I commented that we would not be transferring our booking as a lot can happen in two years.

This set me thinking about some of the things that have happened to me personally in the last two years. Firstly I lost my only sister, Jean, quite unexpectedly, eighteen months ago and I found this quite traumatic and difficult to come to terms with. I had spent most mornings having coffee and a chat at her home, as well as going to MWIB and Sunday services with her for many years. I felt very much on my own at that time.

But God is good and Mike arrived on the scene shortly before this happened. It is still not two years since we met and, of course, this has changed my life completely. I count my blessings every day, especially during these last two months when we have been in lock-down and I have someone special to share the long days with.

I believe our lives will change very much during this present, unprecedented, period and after it has passed, we will have to adapt to a different way of doing things; hard for people of my generation! But thankfully we have a God who walks with us every step of the way and will guide us through all the changes and difficulties we will encounter.

One of the most frequently heard phrases today is 'stay safe' but as God's faithful children we put our trust in him, in the knowledge that he will keep us safe whatever happens in the future.

So stay safe and God be with you.

Wendy

Things going on in May which might interest you

Christian Aid Week - starts on Sunday 10th May but clearly is going to be very different this year with no fundraising activities or house-to-house collections. So, if you can support the on-going needs of the most vulnerable across the globe at this time by giving a donation online or by phone, please do so at www.caweek.org or **08080 006 006** (a freephone number!).

Thy Kingdom Come - time of prayer between Ascension Day and Pentecost (21-31st May).

This year a prayer journal "Jesus loves all" has been created. Hard copies will be available following the end of lockdown but in the meantime copies can be downloaded from <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/16916/thy-kingdom-come-prayer-journal.pdf>

In the meantime I will try to get a limited number of hardcopies for collection from somewhere yet to be identified and announced, but if you receive The Connexion magazine you will already have found a copy or three!

Festival at Home - this year's Cliff Festival which will take place from 22nd to 25th May.

Under the theme "Global Vision" all the activities of the Cliff Festival will be available for you to join for free on the internet. The instructions of how to view the programmes will be found on their website at <https://cliffcollege.ac.uk/cliff-festival/festival-2020>

A couple of special requests

1) If you become concerned about someone, maybe because they are not answering their telephone, or it is constantly engaged for several hours, please will you let me know. About once a week so far we have had to follow up on a concern for someone and I am more than happy to 'don the dog collar' and head off to knock on a door just to check folk are okay. Normally we find there is no reason to be concerned, but I would rather turn out early and find it was not needed than turn out too late and find there is a problem.

2) Mobile phone reception at the Manse is terrible! Unless I am in the roof I don't usually receive calls or get notified of voicemail messages. The landline remains the most effective way of contacting me, as even when I am not at home I am most likely to be either driving or taking a service, so am unlikely to answer the mobile anyway. My message is clear: phone the landline or text the mobile, please!

Next issue – probably June – it would be good to have a few more stories of how we have survived the lockdown.

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