

29th July 2020

Dear Friends,

A new month is nearly upon us! Last weekend, my family and I had the pleasure of attending an open-air worship service hosted by St. Peter's, the Parish Church in Addingham, in their green space on their church grounds. One of the joys was seeing folks from the Anglican church that I hadn't seen since February or March. It was hard to believe that so much time had passed in lockdown and how we continue to live with restrictions. We are all living into a new normal; many would call it the "new abnormal!" I believe the restrictions of social distancing and wearing masks are with us to stay . . . at least for a good while until there's a vaccine or other effective way of warding off the Corona virus. Jesus promised that he would be with the disciples (and us) until the end of the age. (Matthew 28:20) So may we trust God is with us as we live into the "new abnormal" watching over one another with care.



As a circuit, we have not yet ventured back into our churches to offer weekly Sunday services. More time and planning are needed to safely return to that form of worship. Therefore, in the meantime, the churches on the circuit continue to offer online worship along with printed worship sheets for those who cannot access the internet. Sadly, we have not been able to partake in the sacrament of Holy Communion, the sharing of the bread and wine, together as a Methodist community since early spring. But, folks are finding ways to commune with one another over Zoom or in gardens with social distancing over a cup of coffee/tea. Whether it's online or in the garden, chatting with friends or reflecting on the mystery of the divine, may we trust God is with us as we seek and find connection.

Also, for many on our circuit, this is a very sad and difficult time for a death has occurred in the immediate or extended family or in the wider circle of friends. Some deaths were expected while others were totally unexpected. Due to varying pandemic restrictions, our familiar traditions with funeral services and bereavement care have been altered. This can leave such a vacuum in peoples' lives. Comfort often comes through the gathering of people. The loss seems to be even more magnified due to Covid-19 restrictions. In the lowest points of our lives, in our grief and in our good-bye's, may we trust God is with us even when we can't see his light or feel our own light has been extinguished.

May the words of Dr. Albert Schweitzer bring us hope, reminding us the power of human connection: "Sometimes our light goes out, but is blown again into instant flame by an encounter with another human being. Each of us owes the deepest thanks to those who have rekindled this inner light."

Thank you, Wharfedale and Aireborough Circuit, for the many ways you fan into flame the light in others. By doing so, the incarnate Christ becomes more visible. Your ministries within your churches and in your surrounding communities help cultivate connection in Christ which brings about hope and newness of life. May we rejoice that God is indeed with us as we continue together along this uncertain journey in the days, weeks and months to come.

In Christ's service,

~ Rev. Shannon