

Issue 5

19th April 2020

Together as One

Newsletter of the Methodist Churches in Hungerford, Lambourn,
Newbury and Thatcham during Coronavirus Pandemic

Verse for the week

“No eye has ever seen or no ear has ever heard or no mind has ever thought of the wonderful things God has made ready for those who love Him.” 1 Corinthians 2: 9

‘And the doors of the house were locked for fear’.

It is fear that keeps us behind locked doors. I still occasionally hear people speaking fondly of village life in the past when no one had a lock on the door because, I presume, people did not live in fear of their neighbours. This time of isolation for the greater good, has been termed a lockdown. Fear lurks behind it too - the fear of a virus we cannot see.

The disciples were locked away in fear not of a virus but of the deadly foe that had so recently caused the violent death of Jesus their Lord and master. As his known associates, they feared the same fate. They feared the footstep on the stair and the rap on the door. Without either footfall or knock, Jesus entered that locked room. He met them in their locked confinement. He invaded their locked hearts and brought peace, joy and hope by his presence – by demonstrating the power of life over death, hope over despair and faith over fear. Now more than ever we need the reassurance of the Easter truth. We need it and the world needs it. Those who grieve without being permitted even the norms of mourning to relieve their suffering; those who wait by the telephone for the daily call from the hospital doctor caring for a loved one when they cannot visit and those desperately waiting for the benefit payment or the loan to be confirmed as they cannot work or their business has collapsed.



I pray the unique circumstances of this Easter celebration may cause you and many to reflect deeply on the fear-bursting truth of the resurrection that opens locked doors and locked hearts to the eternal love of God. With love and prayers. Peter

Spring Harvest

Along with thousands of other Christians up and down the country, I have been blessed by tuning in to Spring Harvest this week. The talks etc. are available on YouTube until 30 April, some for longer. I would particularly recommend the daily devotionals by Pete Greig and Cathy Burton (which relate well to the current coronavirus situation) and the evening celebrations. If you type Spring Harvest 2020 into the YouTube search engine, the programmes will appear. The online offering came to an amazing £200,000! Enjoy! Chris.

Twin a tap

We are all aware how important simply washing your hands is. A number of churches have supported Toilet Twinning in recent years and the organisation has recently launched an urgent ‘twin your tap’ appeal to fund a global handwashing and hygiene programme through its partners in 45 countries. By supporting this initiative you will be helping save lives now and providing longer term hygiene benefits too. For details [Click Here](#)

When this is over by Laura Kelly Fanucci – A Roman Catholic writer

When this is over

may we never again take for granted
A handshake with a stranger, Full shelves at the store
Conversations with neighbours
A crowded theatre, Friday night out
The taste of communion, A routine check-up
The school rush each morning
Coffee with a friend, The stadium roaring
Each deep breath, A boring Tuesday, Life itself

When this ends

may we find that we have become more like the people
we wanted to be, we were called to be
we hoped to be and may we stay that way -
better for each other because of the worst.

Amen to that I say. Let's pray that we, that humanity, will learn and grow from this pandemic.

An Easter Day like no other

Thank you to those who let us know how you spent Easter Day – keep them coming. Some were up early for a virtual sunrise service (thank you Karen for organising that for friends in Thatcham). Others joined in services around the country and even in other countries too. My morning began with two services on the radio. This was followed by a quiet time, Bible reading and prayer outside in the early sunshine. The peace was only broken by the sound of distant children's voices at play, the ear-splitting song of a wren, the insistent teecha, teecha call of a great tit and the song of a chaffinch in the garden. At 10am Chris and I sang our 2 resurrection hymns to add to the avian chorus of praise to God. By 10.30am we had joined the online service at St Aldate's in Oxford where we worshipped occasionally when in Abingdon. I have to say it was so liberating to share in an act of worship that I didn't have to lead on Easter Sunday morning for the first time in many years. Hearing people recorded in their homes sharing the Easter blessing in their own language moved me deeply as did the worship led from her home by the worship director.

Prayers of Hope

Many of you joined the national prayer at 7pm on 22 March, the first Sunday of lockdown. To keep the prayer going, Churches Together in England is offering a poster to encourage Prayers of Hope to continue and to let people know we are praying. [Click Here](#)

Thank you

Thank you to everyone for the pastoral care you are offering just by picking up the phone, sending a WhatsApp message, Email or text to keep in touch. I know how much it is appreciated. If you haven't heard from anyone lately why not give someone a ring and cheer each other up in the process.

And finally

I'm reading a horror story in Braille. Something bad is about to happen... I can feel it.

A man entered a local newspaper's pun contest. He sent in 10 different suggestions, in the hope that at least one of the puns would win. Unfortunately, no pun in 10 did.