

Issue 14

21st June 2020

Together as One

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

Verse for the week

'Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves.' Romans 12: 10

Thank you Karen

A **BIG** thank you to Karen for preparing and editing the newsletter last week. You will be pleased to know that she has kindly agreed to do so again, something to look forward to.

We need to talk

I am sure I am not the only one struck by experiences during this pandemic that pull in opposition to each other. On the one hand we have become aware of our interconnectedness and our interdependence. A virus that began somewhere in Wuhan, China has, within a few months, affected almost every corner of the world. In consequence many have become more aware of their neighbours; errands have been run; food shared and extra phone calls made to support one another. There has been a greater focus on and appreciation of the creation around us because we have had fewer distractions. When you can't move beyond what you can see from your window or what you can find in your garden or local park it becomes all the more precious. This appreciation has led to a greater sense of our dependence on the natural world and our wanton wasteful neglect and despoliation of it. We see this connectedness too in the protests which have spread around the world after the death of one black man on one street in a city in America. Racism should be a concern to us all, not just the few.



Yet in order to deal with this virus we have simultaneously isolated ourselves from one another. Even as lockdown eases we may need to be part of a social bubble for mutual protection. A bubble creates a safe space within which to keep the outside at bay. We have disconnected ourselves from community and hence from the challenges of those who are different, have different insights and perspectives through which we grow. The danger, I find of self-isolation, is that I can soon settle into a comfortable selfishness where I shape the world as I want it to be. That may be something as trivial as getting up later or going to bed earlier depending upon your preference. All this is another way of saying that I need other people or I am diminished and I don't think I'm unique in that. It is a consequence of the way we have been made by God who is in essence relational. He made us for relationship with himself and so with one another. In the world of social media one of the negatives is known to be people only hearing or seeing information which suits their own point of view. The algorithms that drive that world reinforce these biases and prejudices. That is why we urgently need the interchange of conversation and discussion with the ability to listen and appreciate a different perspective from those who are not like us. Online conversation will only take us so far.

With love and prayers, Peter.

Telling the whole story

We are most often challenged by non-Christians about the question of suffering. That has only increased in a time of pandemic. There are really no easy or simplistic answers and any attempt to offer them, or to comfort ourselves with them, will never satisfy and to do so sells the Bible narrative short. We need to learn to tell the full story, to be honest, just as the writers of many of the psalms and the Book of Job were. Here is a short article I read this week from one of my regular feeds that expresses this much better than I can. [Click Here](#)

The renewing effect of nature

This is something I have experienced last week both through watching and learning from the excellent Springwatch programmes on TV and while out walking in the local area. On one walk I enjoyed the aural feast of the scratchy song of sedge warblers and whitethroats, and the ear splitting song of the wren and of Cetti's warbler. I marvelled at the wheeling of a family of four ravens, a soaring buzzard and the apparently effortless hover of the kestrel all within a short distance on the same walk. I know that you have found solace in the wonders of creation too from the drawings and photographs I have received, see below.



'A walk by the canal' drawn by Muriel Wood. Muriel says, 'after walking the dogs, I have tried to recapture the beauty of some of our wild flowers.' And very well she has done it too.



Photograph of clouds between Hungerford and Froxfield captured by Myles. He says, 'I was very taken by the simplicity of the scene and those rather splendid billowy clouds... - it does instil a sense of tranquillity.'

Photograph I took of Gwynneth's sunflower grown from one of the seeds shared in a service just before lockdown. If you were at the service let me know how your sunflower is doing.



News update

Here is a link to the newsletter of Churches Together in England, select the PDF version from the page. In it you will find lots of topical articles about churches' responses to issues of racism and reports of Thy Kingdom Come in particular [Click Here](#)

Here you will find one of the regular BLOGs on the Methodist Church website challenging us to be brave as we move on from this crisis—food for thought [Click Here](#)

And finally

What kind of man was Boaz before he got married? Ruthless.

WESTBERKS FOODBANK.

You may remember a couple of months ago, Peter kindly put in the newsletter information about the Westberks Foodbank. To keep you up to date, when the WB Foodbank Centres closed different teams were set up to deliver food and toiletries to clients' doorsteps, thus keeping everyone safe.

People have continued to donate in the supermarkets collection points, unwanted Government food boxes have been collected by the Foodbank and some villages have organised central collection points via WhatsApp and Facebook groups. A local Thatcham company also organised doorstep collections from people unable to get out. Tesco has been donating large amounts on a weekly basis to Foodbanks up and down the country. However, some of these initiatives are coming to an end in July and this will put tremendous strain on our stock levels and ability to feed people.

The number of clients has increased and is likely to increase further fairly soon. May I please ask on behalf of the WB Foodbank to remember those in need of food when you do your shopping. WB Foodbank crates are in most supermarkets and are emptied regularly. There is a WB Foodbank app which does highlight warehouse shortages, but otherwise the list is mainly tins of meat, fish, tomatoes, vegetables, instant mash, sponge puddings, fruit, rice pudding custard, tea, coffee, long life fruit juice and UHT long life milk. Toiletries particularly soap, shower gel, shampoos and deodorant are also essential, together with pet food. Also donations of toilet rolls, washing up liquid and washing powder are very much needed.

Thank you for your support. All donations are very much appreciated by our clients who are really grateful. Please also remember the WB Foodbank in your prayers, for both clients and all the volunteers. I hope you are all keeping well and safe.

Marilyn from Thatcham