

Issue 16

5th July 2020

Together as One

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

Verse for the week

'Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed,
for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.' Joshua 1: 9

Return to church buildings?

As you know churches have been permitted to open for private prayer and will be able to open for worship from today. Is it of significance, I wonder, that the timing of this change coincides with an opening up of the leisure sector? Is church-going seen as a leisure activity but without the measurable economic benefit to the country? Well, I leave you with that musing. What is clear is that if you visit a restaurant, café or cinema the experience will not be the same as it was before the unpleasant intrusion of COVID-19. The same will be true of church. We will have to implement similar measures to keep each other safe as the

owners of commercial premises. 2m social distancing will apply as we can't realistically provide other ways of reducing the risks; no books can be used; at present no hymns can be sung; we will need to keep a record of who attended; to get to church you cannot travel in a car driven by or with someone from outside your household and we will not be able to gather for other church activities in the church hall or in homes.

The full details of those measures are still not clear at the moment and we are awaiting further guidance. Church Stewards and Property Officers are already beginning preparations but it will still be some weeks before we are able to consider opening buildings for worship. The continuing presence of this virus has also led to a reduction in the number of preachers available to lead worship as some by reason of their age or health have decided that now is the time to step back from their preaching ministry and others are planning to move away from the Circuit. There will be more details in a planned newsletter from the Circuit soon. This means that providing a preacher or worship leader in every pulpit every week, which was already becoming difficult, now seems unlikely.

We will all need to consider whether it is safe in our particular circumstances to come to church as well as whether to visit other places where people gather e.g. shops or cafés. This is particularly so if we are over 70 years of age, have an underlying health condition, or have previously been advised to shield. In due course it would help our planning to know how likely you are to attend church while social distancing measures apply and it has the very unfamiliar feel described above. I will be in touch about this.

This may sound very negative and discouraging. In fact I think we are being presented with new opportunities and above all God is still with us as He has been throughout lockdown. Please continue to pray for us as we find our way through these unfamiliar waters.

With love and prayers, Peter.



Irish Blessing

A video in which over 300 churches from the entire island of Ireland, across denominational and racial boundaries, sing a blessing over Ireland and beyond. It includes 'Be Thou my vision'; a traditional Irish blessing; stunning scenery and locations; traditional Irish dance, music and instruments; sign language and so much more. [Click Here](#)

Final clap for carers

Everybody across the country is being encouraged to come together on the weekend of the 72nd birthday of the NHS, July 4th and 5th, to thank not only NHS staff but all key workers, good neighbours and all those helping others through the coronavirus pandemic.

The two key moments will be:

- A minute's silence on the evening of July 4 when people will be asked to light a candle (preferably battery operated for safety) and place it in their window in remembrance of all who have died during this time.
- A moment of thanks and connection on July 5 at 5pm when we take part in one last country-wide clap of thanks and then stay out to raise a glass or have a cup of tea with our neighbours.

Wired for Sound?

Not only a song by Cliff Richard but a reference to the very easy to use devices (similar to those used to provide Talking Newspapers) and bought by Thatcham Methodist Church with a grant from Greenham Trust's Coronavirus Appeal Fund. Although people have appreciated the Worship at Home printed services each week, as time has gone on people who do not have a computer have mentioned to us that they really miss hearing the human voice leading worship. Well done to Karen and the team who have worked hard to make this available. We have already heard very appreciative comments from one happy listener. I am sure there are members in other churches who would benefit from this way of hearing the service while we cannot attend worship in person. If Church Stewards from other churches would like details about how to make this available to members of their congregations, please contact Karen Frost on 07444 851606 or pastoraldevelopmentworker@outlook.com

CMF - Christian Medical Fellowship

My attention was drawn to the website of CMF this week through an article I read. Here you will find some amazing accounts of the continuing COVID-19 experience of health care workers not only in the UK but from countries where the demands are even greater. Apart from increasing my sense of admiration and feelings of gratitude even more, listening to Frontline experiences has informed and encouraged my prayers. Listen in here [Click Here](#)

Methodist Conference

The Methodist Conference took place over the course of this week largely via Zoom. Some decisions requiring detailed conferring and consideration were therefore postponed. Essential business was carried out including the reception into full connexion and the induction of the new President of Conference, Revd. Richard Teal and the Vice-President Carolyn Lawrence. Please pray for them, for all newly received ministers whose ordinations have had to be delayed and all ministers and their families moving to take up new appointments in these strange and challenging times. You can find many more details here [Click Here](#)

And finally

What do you call a three-footed aardvark? A yardvark.