

Issue 17

12th July 2020

# Together as One

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

## Verse for the week

'Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and God will give you everything you need. Matthew 6: 33

## Gardener's dilemma

'One is nearer to God's heart in a garden than anywhere on earth', so wrote the poet and hymn writer Dorothy Gurney. Well I might be able to suggest some alternative locations where I might find myself closer to God's heart. I expect it is easier to feel closer to his heart if you are in a garden which is tended by someone else. That is not to say that I never find a garden a place for relaxing contemplation. You do learn spiritual virtues there - patience, perseverance and vigilance for example.

Lately in our garden I have been struggling to balance competing demands just as I struggle to do in life. We enjoy encouraging wildlife into our garden, its presence brings great pleasure and not a little entertainment but we also try to grow a few vegetables - nothing too ambitious - potatoes, tomatoes, lettuce and runner beans. The challenge is that the wildlife can't distinguish between what they can eat and what we would rather they didn't eat! Take the squirrel for example. We have one that has been spending lockdown working on its fitness using one of Joe Wicks' workout videos! It has become a super jumper of Olympic standard. It has to be seen to be believed. I have had to move the bird feeders twice to thwart its efforts. It also took a fancy to the first of the ripe tomatoes. Then there is the battle to deter the sparrows from eating the flowers on the beans, the deer from eating the leaves and the slugs from mutilating the lettuces. Having given up using slug pellets so as not to harm the hedgehogs, none of which I have seen this year, I have to engage in a torch lit slug hunt if there is to be any hope of them leaving any lettuces for us. Thus I try to balance competing objectives so as to create a wildlife friendly yet productive zero food miles garden.

God knows that in our human frailty and sin, 'dwellers all in time and space' that we are, we have to do our best to negotiate difficult competing demands on us - the balance of work and rest, being and doing, activism and contemplation, giving and receiving, and retaining the familiar and reaching towards God's new opportunities, for example. However he gives a framework within which to do this. He provides his commandments with their prioritisation of the worship and honour of God. He shows us in Jesus the priority of the Kingdom, which we are to seek first, and demonstrates its imperative to love our neighbours and our enemies. Have we got our priorities right amid the competing forces upon us? As we move forward as churches and as nations, is it time to review our priorities as we balance the competing demands upon us? What has this pandemic taught us really matters?

With love and prayers, Peter.



## A song for today about staff at Homerton Hospital, East London

This song brought me to tears when I first heard it on the radio. I feel it touches so many of the themes of today even though it was actually written before coronavirus, George Floyd's death and the celebration of the NHS. I find its naïve directness both arresting and powerful. [Click Here](#)

## Action for Children Sunday

12 July is Action for Children Sunday. Please continue to pray for and support the work of this charity with its roots firmly in the Methodist Church as it works among needy families in the UK.

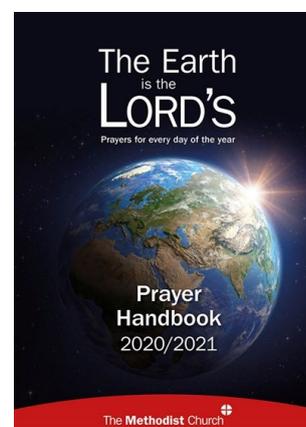
[Click Here](#) to find more information and prayers for this Sunday. If you would like to donate you can do so via the website [Click Here](#). The need for the support, campaigning and advocacy that Action for Children provides has already increased as a result of families spending longer together through lockdown and this is expected to increase.

## Information for you or someone you know feeling shut in

[Click Here](#) for details of local library services, including order and collect. [Click Here](#) for information about home visiting befriending or telephone befriending or contact Age UK Berkshire on 0118 959 4242 or [info@ageukberkshire.org.uk](mailto:info@ageukberkshire.org.uk)

## Methodist Prayer Handbook

Some of you will have purchased copies of the Methodist Prayer Handbook previously and know what a rich resource it can be. It includes a cycle of prayers for every day of the month, a pattern of Bible readings throughout the year, and other prayers and resources. The handbook, which begins in September is available now and the Circuit has very generously agreed to make it available free of charge. If you would like a copy please let me know via Email or phone.



## Remember your brothers and sisters in Christ

When we are faced with the continuing consequences of the pandemic and its effect on our lives it is easy to overlook the struggles of Christians in communities where health care and economic resources are far scarcer than here in the UK. I had news this week from a ministry in touch with Madagascar. Bishop Todd and Revd Patsy McGregor describe how the pandemic is affecting their part of the island; their story is replicated in many other parts of the country. They say, 'As of July 6th, there are 3250 cases and 33 deaths from Covid-19 recorded in Madagascar. Over the last couple of weeks the cases have dramatically increased. The country's economy is struggling as many have lost their jobs. The prices of staple foods such as rice, beans, milk and sugar are dramatically higher. Many people can't even afford food. The churches are struggling to pay their priests' salaries.' They add: 'The long term effects are going to be devastating.'

## Methodist Conference

You may like to read the Conference speeches by the incoming President and Vice-President of Conference. I think they offer important challenges to us as we move towards God's post Covid-19 future. To read the President's address [Click Here](#) and to read the Vice-President's address [Click Here](#)

## And finally some definitions

Flabbergasted: Appalled by discovering how much weight one has gained.

Flatulence: Emergency vehicle that picks up someone who has been run over by a steamroller.

Impeccable: Having immunity to woodpeckers.