

Issue 20

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Together as One

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

Verse for the week

'Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy (different, set apart, sacred)' Exodus 20:8

A holiday at home

The end of the school term for many would normally have brought an opportunity for a break from routine to spend some time on holiday. For those who have been working under great stress throughout the last months in the NHS, in the care sector, in distribution, essential retail or food production a break is more needed than ever. Many holiday plans have been changed or abandoned altogether.

Even as I write those who had plans to travel to Spain find them threatened at very short notice by the rise in Covid-19 cases there. I know many will not be able to get away this year and of course some of you are not able to consider going away in the first place. Our own holiday plans, set for early June, have long since been cancelled and forgotten.

So what are we to do? Shrug our shoulders and carry on? Wallow in self-pity in the face of what has been lost? Well, how about considering the origin of holidays. The clue, as so often, is in the word and its origin in holy day. It is a day that is set apart, different and other. Our collective recent and present experiences mean there is all the more reason to have a holiday at home, a holy day or a holy week when we break out of our new enforced limitations and do things differently. Going to new places helps us to make that break, so holiday at home requires more discipline and imagination but it is still possible. Like every holiday it requires planning. Ask yourself what you enjoy about going away and then consider how you can still do that at home. If you enjoy the new experiences of foreign travel, different food and culture, then order in a takeaway of your favourite dish or cook it at home – journey in imagination. If you have the Internet, culture and overseas experience is but a few clicks away. Decide to brush up on your language skills. If you enjoy the different pace of life a holiday brings, set a holiday pattern at home, take a more leisurely breakfast, take up a neglected hobby or craft, forget the chores and do something different. If you are able to get out just for a few hours make that a holiday experience – take a picnic, visit somewhere new nearby and do it spontaneously and slowly if that suits your personality. Of course it will not recreate the experience of a sun-drenched Greek island but it can be different and holy. Remember to ensure that Sunday is a holy day, different and sacred whatever else you do. Find a pattern of worship, Bible reading and prayer that works for you. Visit other churches' services online as you would do if you were away. Let God lead you and refresh you, physically, emotionally and spiritually. Above all keep God central and give him thanks in all you do.

With love and prayers, Peter.



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Methodist Connexion Magazine

The summer edition of the Connexion Magazine has recently been published. Copies are usually available in church but if you would like to see a copy please let me know. It contains a number of inspiring articles about how churches have responded to the pandemic and can also be read via the Methodist Church website [Click Here](#)

Peregrine falcons in Newbury

As you may have seen in the local press a pair of peregrine falcons have nested on the BT building opposite the police station. The first time I was aware of this was when I was buying petrol at Sainsburys and heard the distinctive cry of a young bird. I didn't need to see it to tell you what it was and where I had last heard it. The sound took me back immediately to the coast and cliffs of Pembrokeshire last July (Martin's Haven for those who know it).



What a delight! Since then I have heard and seen the birds flying high over Newbury as I have been out and about, alerted first by that distinctive cry. If you are in Newbury in the next few days it may not be too late to catch a glimpse of this spectacular flying machine which has been timed at a maximum speed of 180mph in a dive on its prey. This makes it the world's fastest animal and on your doorstep too!

More beatitudes

- Blessed are those who can laugh at themselves: they will have no end of fun.
- Blessed are those who can tell a mountain from a molehill: they will be saved a lot of bother.
- Blessed are those who know how to be quiet and listen: they will learn a lot of new things.
- Blessed are those who do not take themselves seriously: they will be valued by those around them.
- Happy are you if you can appreciate a smile and forget a frown: you will walk on the sunny side of the street.
- Happy are you if you can take small things seriously and face serious things calmly: you will go far in life.
- Blessed are those who think before acting and pray before thinking: they will avoid many blunders.
- Happy are you if you know how to hold your tongue and smile, when people interrupt and contradict you, even when you know you are right: the gospel has begun to seep into your heart.
- Above all, blessed are you who recognise the Lord in all those you meet: the light of truth shines in your life, for you have found true wisdom.

And finally

A minister decides to buy a parrot. "Are you sure it doesn't scream, yell, or swear?" asked the minister. "Oh absolutely. It's a religious parrot," the shop owner assures him. "Do you see those strings on his legs? When you pull the right one, he recites the Lord's Prayer, and when you pull on the left he recites the 23rd Psalm."

"Wonderful!" says the minister, "but what happens if you pull both strings?"

"I fall off my perch, you stupid fool!" screeched the parrot.