

Issue 23

23rd August 20

Together as One

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

Verse for the week

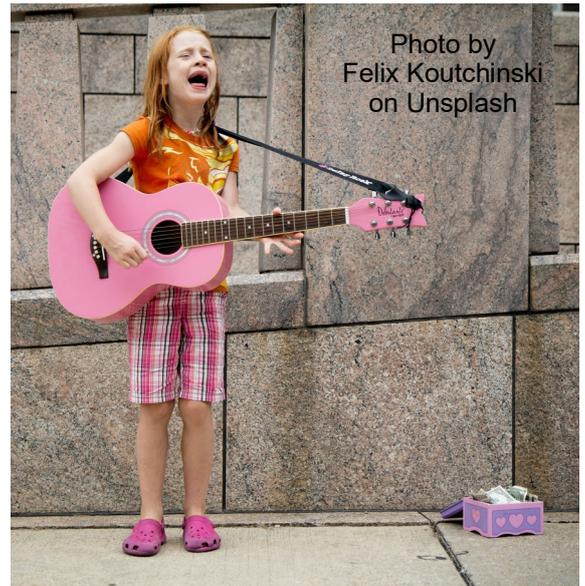
'I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being.'
(Psalm 104: 33)

Keep on singing

One thing I found myself doing, especially in the early most traumatic and frightening days of this pandemic, was turning to music to bring relief and solace. It was a refuge from the relentless march of this unseen virus and the seemingly endless discussion on the news programmes. My way to survive through the frequent conducting of funerals in May and early June was to listen to music. Driving to the crematorium through quieter than usual streets to meet with another family trying to remember and celebrate the life of a loved one with only 10 people present, sat apart from each other, unable to meet before or after to hug, to reminisce, to celebrate a life, was a time like no other in my ministry – one I do not want to see again.

Experiencing and sharing the grief, the numbness, the personal and collective anxiety and sense of menace was set against a musical soundtrack. Both preparing and reflecting on route back and forth were eased by whatever music Radio 3 offered. It was sometimes rousing, sometimes reflective and sometimes melancholic. It may have been secular or religious but it was always beautiful and somehow outside of the confines of the immediate crisis. It spoke to me of something lasting, permanent and greater than what I was experiencing. It pointed me to God. It may well be that other types of music would suit you better but it is classical music that happens to be to my taste.

One of the many challenges we will face when we can gather again to worship will be the prohibition on singing. Music, worship and praise have been bound together in humanity's long and varied acknowledgement of the divine. We find it powerfully expressed in the book of psalms; the hymn book of the Bible. We must find ways to continue to sing our praise to God and not be silenced. It may seem strange to continue singing in praise of God if you live alone but I encourage you to sing the Lord's song even in this strange land of isolation. Singing lifts – it lifts the chest as we draw in air, it lifts the eyes as we look up and out beyond ourselves and it lifts the spirit as we look to God. It also makes a spiritual statement. So let's sing the praise of God from our hearts wherever we are and however we can whether on our own or with someone we live with. The result may not seem tuneful, or even something you would want others to hear but do not lose your voice – God will hear and take delight in it as he has promised he will.



What should we sing?

As a follow up to the article overleaf you may like to read this article about the need to include lament in the songs that we sing [Click Here](#)

Here is a link to a video prepared by Stephen, a member of our family who is a Christian youth pastor, also reflecting on the way the book of Psalms, the song book of the Bible, helps us express all the varied emotions of this season. It concludes with Psalm 150, a great psalm which encourages praise by all means at our disposal [Click Here](#)

Plans for Together as One Newsletter

We are very grateful for your encouraging comments in response to this newsletter which has been produced over the last 23 weeks. We realise it has been an important way to keep in touch when churches have not been open and usual contacts have been more difficult but we certainly never expected to be doing this for so long. Church events are still not able to take place as they did before the lockdown and it may be many months before they can, so we need to move to something that is sustainable for the long term. So from the beginning of September Together as One will be produced twice a month on the second and fourth Sundays of the month. Karen will kindly prepare one edition and I will prepare the other. We are always interested in contributions and ideas so please keep them coming. Peter

Beirut explosion

As I am sure you know, on 4 August a devastating explosion occurred in the Port of Beirut, causing widespread casualties and catastrophic damage to homes, hospitals and other buildings throughout the area. Hospitals have struggled to cope with the number of casualties, with many intensive care units already near capacity as the country struggles to deal with the impact of Coronavirus.

All We Can the Methodist Relief and Development charity is working with a local partner in Lebanon to support those in greatest need. If you would like to donate [Click Here](#) or via **Christian Aid** [Click Here](#)

Prayer written by the Revd Ruth Gee, Assistant Secretary of the Conference.

As we continue to see and hear reports of devastation in Beirut we pray for those who are bereaved or injured and for those responding to the catastrophe that has engulfed the city.

Gracious God, we pray for those who live and work in Beirut that the bereaved may be consoled and the injured comforted and healed. We pray for the rescue services and the hospital staff giving thanks for their commitment and skill.

In the midst of catastrophe we pray for peace, truth and justice.

As the sound of explosion fades and the smoke clears, give wisdom to those who lead, courage to those who serve, and hope to all. Amen.

And finally

I wonder

Why do we press harder on a remote control when we know the batteries are running out?

Why does someone believe you when you say there are four billion stars, but check when you say the paint is wet?

