

Together as One

29th November 20

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

Verses for the week

Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. (Hebrews 13 1+2)

Strangers into friends

Just before the present restrictions began I had the great delight of meeting two young people who are planning their wedding and who want to use the church building in Newbury. The wedding is planned for next September. It was really uplifting to begin to get to know these two strangers. Especially at the moment, to be a small part of the hope-filled anticipation of a shared celebration of love and commitment in the presence of a loving and committed God, was deeply renewing for me. I had not realized how much I have missed meeting new people. I do enjoy such first time meetings. Here I had a precious opportunity to seek connection, to engage those very human and God-given instincts to relate. This is the process, in some small way, of turning strangers into friends, of being hospitable, of helping people to feel welcome and valued.



This couple are of Ghanaian heritage, and one of my previous churches included a significant group of Ghanaian worshippers so I knew a little of their culture and background. So there was a link. The bride lives in Reading and the groom is living in Coventry, the city where I grew up, so there was more common ground. Coventry had recently played and beaten table-topping Reading - they haven't won since and languish near the relegation zone. So there was an opportunity for friendly rivalry and banter.

We must practise the skills of turning strangers into friends. We need actively to seek to meet new people for they enhance our lives, challenge our insularity and our narrow thinking. We rely on strangers all the time, their unseen skill and graft, they are vital. Strangers may easily be overlooked, ignored and taken for granted, but they, like angels, can be God's messengers too. We need them and not being able to meet, to converse and to be enriched by them is another entry in the deficit column caused by this pandemic, this costly and destructive evil that blights the world today.

With love and prayers, Peter.

Resumption of services in church buildings

We have been advised that we will be able to meet again for worship inside our church buildings after the current restrictions end on December 3rd regardless of which tier West Berkshire is placed in. The same precautions and restrictions that were in place previously will still apply, including the wearing of face coverings, social distancing and no singing. This means we will plan to hold services in Hungerford and Newbury on 6th December.

Christian Aid Carol - 'When out of poverty is born'

Here is a carol written for Christian Aid and sung by a scratch choir. This also acts as a reminder that Christian Aid is one of the many charities seeking our support to maintain its vital work. For details [Click Here](#)

CTNA Community Christmas Day meal delivery service 2020

Due to the Coronavirus instead of the usual Christmas Day Celebration for older people Christians Together in the Newbury Area (CTNA) are offering a meal delivery service for any older people in Newbury who would otherwise be without a cooked Christmas dinner on Christmas Day. Should you or anyone you know be in this category please contact Joanna Abraham, CTNA Secretary, to arrange a home delivery by

Email: marinaoabraham@gmail.com or **Telephone** 07828 244119

Christmas Poem Book - A stocking filler for a good cause

Every year just before Christmas, Cold Ash village produce a Christmas poem book. The book is full of amusing, topical poems designed to raise a smile in these sad and difficult times. It is sold in aid of local health services and the West Berkshire Community Hospital. The money raised is then matched by the Greenham Common Trust and most years the hospital benefits from around £1,000. These books have in the past, been bought by the village organizations but this year, when the NHS need the extra funds so much, most of these organizations are closed.

A donation of around £5 a copy is suggested.

June Heaton a member at Thatcham is willing to co-ordinate any orders, and people can get in touch with her directly by Email june.heaton@hotmail.com or telephone 01635 228512.



Prayer: God awaits us

I read this in my daily Bible readings this week as part of some helpful comments on the challenge of prayer. I pray it will help and encourage you too. 'Pray without ceasing'. My inner nine-year old pipes up incredulously, 'without ceasing'? Are you mad? Impossible! The living only do one thing without ceasing and that is breathing. Exactly. Prayer is the natural orientation of the heart, just as drawing breath is the natural disposition of the living. It's not that prayer is difficult; it's that we allow everything else to conspire to make it seem so. Prayer is the heart's true north. When we stop fighting and come to rest, we find the presence of God. When we stop striving, preening and fretting, and close the door of our inner room, actual or metaphorical, there is God – waiting, welcoming our stumbling attempts, drawing us into silence. In this quiet place we come before Abba (the family name for God the Father used by Jesus close to Dad), knowing and being known. All our gifts, wounds and scars are seen. God knows every desire of our hearts – the good, the bad and the ugly – and asks that we hand all to Him in trust.

Written by Kate Bruce and taken from Guidelines copyright © The Bible Reading Fellowship 2020.

And finally

The first time I got a universal remote control, I thought to myself, "This changes everything".
