

Together as One

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

Verse for the week

Christ is the one who gives me the strength I need to do whatever I must do. Phil 4:13

One year on

It's a year since we first heard about Covid-19 and who could have known then how much our lives were about to change. The Bible verse above reminds us that however challenging or different our lives have been and continue to be, Christ can give us the strength to carry on. Instead of a "Thought" from me this week, I've asked three people to tell you about how they've looked after themselves during the pandemic. Pete & Sandra (members at Thatcham) write about looking after their physical wellbeing, whilst Anne (a member at Lambourn) told me about taking care of her mental and spiritual wellbeing. Thank you for your contributions.

With my love and prayers, Karen

You'll never walk alone

Pete & Sandra Sharpe

The pandemic has affected us all greatly, in a variety of ways. Confined to barracks, apart from essential medical and shopping trips and exercise, many have turned to new indoor pursuits, be it reading, jigsaws, crafting, singing – the list goes on. We decided to exploit the permission to exercise to the full, and what a joy it has been. Last February, I was rendered almost immobile by a sudden acute onset of arthritis in the knee. Faced with months, if not years, of waiting for surgery, I needed to exercise to keep the muscles in my leg from withering. In July I was still reliant on crutches, but after a few weeks of small steps, and with a lot of encouragement from Sandra, I was able to discard them and start walking further. Initially this was only a few hundred yards, building up to the $\frac{3}{4}$ mile walk to meet Sandra from work each day. Once the mile mark was achieved, we have increased distance and time, and now we feel lazy if we do not walk at least 5 miles a day – come rain, snow or shine. My Fitbit reliably informs me that I have walked 1,030 miles since mid-September.

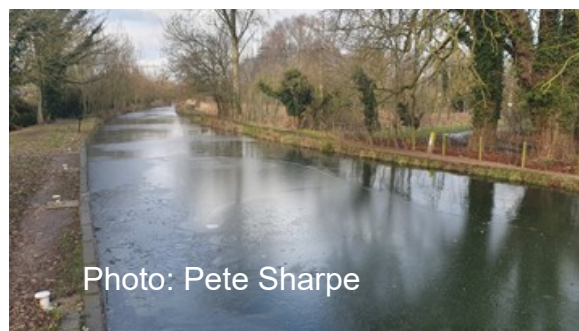


Photo: Pete Sharpe

I used to loathe walking anywhere, but now look forward to our daily stroll. In wet weather we stick to the streets. We have discovered countless streets, footpaths and cut-throughs in our local area. There's nearly always something new to spot, be it progress on building works or new growth in gardens. A favourite is a pyracantha bush lovingly trained and shaped into a huge Loch Ness Monster.

Our favourite walks though are in the country. In autumn, the colours of Bucklebury woods were glorious. Treks up to Greenham Common rewarded us with sightings of stonechats. The most rewarding walks are along the canal. We've watched as autumn colours have given way to February mists and, last week, frozen locks.

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The birdlife we have encountered has been amazing. Initially it was 'just' ducks and swans, but our list now includes woodpeckers, bullfinch, grey wagtail, redwings, egret and, most spectacular of all, a kingfisher. It often feels as though robins are accompanying us along our way, and we joke that our walk is not complete unless we have seen a majestic red kite.

Our walks have certainly been a highlight of these difficult times – a chance to keep fit, clear the head, escape lockdown (legally) and revel in the wonders of God's creation.

Keeping well

Anne Jones/Karen Frost

Anne and I enjoyed a long chat on the phone.

Anne has been shielding most of the time except during the summer months when her family was able to visit, enjoying picnics in Anne's garden, making the most of their time together.

Anne said she felt the first lockdown hadn't been too bad as the weather had been good, lots of radio/TV broadcasts showed patients being clapped as they left hospital and famous people survived the illness, reports said Covid was a terrible thing but soon "we'll be over it" or "after Covid..."

However, as time wore on Anne began to feel "really low" and the only way she was able to cope when she woke each day was to "get up and get busy". Anne said it would take her an 1-1.5 hours for the "blues" to fade away; that if she sat for too long she "could feel the cloud coming over." Anne said she's now the eldest in her family and sometimes, when relatives rang, she found it too much to say "I'm fine" when she wasn't.

Anne loves her home and garden and attending clubs in the village. She said she'd spend most of the day gardening or doing chores. Then, each afternoon she would stop, turn off the radio/TV and sit for 30-60 minutes to pray.

Anne became a penpal with pupils from Lambourn Primary School. She has enjoyed receiving the letters and has responded to them all. (Anne loves writing.)

Anne's grandson's wedding has been postponed twice. Four weeks ago Anne discovered she could play Scrabble online. (I know Anne is an excellent player from seeing her at Lambourn Friendship Club!) She's been playing against her sons, grandchildren and some new people she's met online.



Photo: Unsplash

Anne worships on Sunday using our Methodist Worship at Home which enables her to feel as though she's "in my own church". A relative sends her church's Worship service to Anne's phone. Anne says it's quite different to the worship she is used to and takes delight in listening to it.

Anne finished our conversation by saying she's "made it (the pandemic) as happy as I could" and "somehow a phone call to my beloved daughter, keeping busy, playing Scrabble and praying for the Lord to help me has kept me going."

And finally

My doctor told me that jogging could add years to my life. He was right, I feel ten years older already.