

Together as One

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

Verses for the week

'Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way as you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.' (Matthew 7:1-2)

Daffodils for Mum

As I write this I can see daffodils both in a vase on the mantelpiece and in the garden through the window. Just as snowdrops present in winter promise the arrival of Spring, for me at least, daffodils confirm that Spring has fulfilled the snowdrops' promise. Today is Mothering Sunday and Mothering Sunday and daffodils remind me of something that happened in my childhood. Then my sister and her friend gathered some daffodils from a roadside verge to present in love to their Mums. It was a sincere, innocent act of love except that what appeared to be a roadside verge to them turned out to be the edge of someone's garden. I observed this incident from the margin with the superiority of the older brother. I remember thinking, and perhaps saying, (although I hope not!) 'how silly not to realise that you can't pick daffodils from someone's garden. I would never have done that!



Thinking back over the event now it must have presented my parents with quite a challenge to navigate its moral dilemmas. I don't know how it was all resolved, probably phone calls to another set of parents, a co-ordinated response, an apology offered, an offer of compensation, the clear indication to my sister as to what she had done wrong and yet a recognition that the act was well-intentioned, motivated by love and received as such. All of the above were necessary, I imagine. It begins to feel like a case study in a child care manual! What would you have done?

I can certainly appreciate that is it not the clear cut case of right and wrong I thought at the time. Yet I wonder how much of the older brother's attitude still dwells in my heart as I chunter against the selfish actions of people who fail to obey the stay at home law of the land, whether in dramatic ways by helicopter, or in the thousands of daily minor infringements justified by, 'I don't think I'm doing anything wrong. I don't know the complexities of everyone else's situation and circumstance. I am in no place to condemn. I am in a privileged position - able to work from home, able to get outside into the garden, or for daily exercise along nearby streets. I live in a country with an excellent health care system, with vaccines freely available, with food shops full of more than enough and goods delivered to my doorstep if I need them. I could go on. My responsibility is consider my own actions, not to judge those of others. It is to live by the standards and principles set out for me in the words of the Bible lived out in the life of Jesus Christ because I know to whom I am answerable – the God of justice and righteousness before whom I will one day stand - the One who remembers mercy and who says there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Thanks be to God for his mercy and grace. With love and prayers, Peter.

I wonder why?



Recently, Taxwatch released a report entitled 'Equality before the law?' [Click Here](#) It used data supplied by the government to explore the way in which we pursue and prosecute benefit fraud in comparison to tax fraud. Their findings were as follows:

- If you commit benefit fraud, you are 23x more likely to be prosecuted than if you commit tax fraud.
- The government employs 3.5x more staff to tackle benefit fraud than tax fraud.
- You are 8.5x more likely to receive a custodial sentence for benefit crime than for tax crime.
- Yet, tax fraud costs us 9x as much as benefit fraud each year.
- Tax fraud costs £20bn each year compared to £2.2bn for benefit fraud.

Unsurprisingly the result of this is that there are far more investigations, prosecutions and sentences handed out to benefit claimants than tax evaders. This is not a criticism of the hard work of HMRC staff who diligently chase up as many tax fraudsters as they can. Rather we might ask ourselves why the government fails adequately to resource HMRC, especially in respect of its compliance work which has seen a reduction of 800 staff over the last 4 years.

If you are concerned about this imbalance, you might like to look at the Church Action on Poverty campaign 'Fair Tax Now' which calls for this anomaly to be addressed. [Click Here](#)

The book of Leviticus reminds us: 'Be fair, no matter who is on trial – don't favour either the poor or the rich.' (Lev 19:15). Perhaps our policy makers would do well to remember that ancient wisdom.

Spring Harvest Home21

Once again Spring Harvest will be available to enjoy at home this year. If you have heard people speaking about their wonderful experiences at the event why not experience it for yourself? For a modest charge of £55 you and your household will have access to the worship, seminars, events and entertainment which form the familiar programme. For details [Click Here](#) If finances would prevent you attending please let me know.



The theme this year is 'Unrivalled: Why we worship' and the list of speakers looks very impressive. It all starts from 7.30pm on Sunday 4th April and ends on Thursday 8th April. If you sign up all the events will be available to watch as catch-up until the end of April.

Methodist Church stands in solidarity with Myanmar

The Methodist Church in Britain is standing in solidarity with its partners in Myanmar following the coup that occurred in the country at the start of February. For more details [Click Here](#)



Local Elections - Postal Ballots

Local elections and postponed by-elections, police and crime commissioner elections are due to take place on 6th May. For details of which election is taking place in your area [Click Here](#) In view of the pandemic you may prefer to have a postal vote - for details of how to apply [Click Here](#)

And finally (thanks to Colin)

What do you call a blind deer? *No idea*

What do you call a legless blind deer? *Still no idea*