

Together as One

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

Verses for the week

'See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you. Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise from the ends of the earth...' (Isaiah 42: 9 +10a)

A day to remember

Surely that broadcast to the country by Prime Minister Boris Johnson on the evening of 23rd March, 2020 will live long in our memories. What did you feel when you heard it? By then we had the sense of something momentous and unprecedented in our collective experiences was about to happen. It had been signalled by the budget and the closure



of schools the week before. On that morning I visited the dentist for a filling. I would, he told me, be one of his last patients for some time. I cycled through the eerily quiet streets and stopped off to get some essential supplies. It is interesting what you think might be essential in such circumstances! What I bought was too bulky to be carried in the bicycle paniers so I left some things in the church to collect later. When I heard the announcement of what we now call lockdown beginning at midnight, I drove to church, feeling like a burglar with criminal intent, to pick up the things I had left. In the afternoon I took part in a conference call with council officials, police and other voluntary bodies to represent local churches and that certainly made me realise that this was deadly serious. I woke in the middle of the night worrying that I hadn't remembered to wash my hands and what to do if either of us developed symptoms or worse, which it seemed might happen at any moment. This was not about far away China, or Northern Italy, this was about me and mine and here and now.

The anniversary of that day gives us a vital reason to reflect, not only on the events of 12 months ago but on all that has changed since – to remember the more than 125,000 deaths, those who have lost loved ones, those who were, and still are, deprived of contact, education, work, income and opportunity and to think about new patterns and habits we have established that we might want to keep and how to do that when life becomes busier again. What do you want to keep, to learn, that will enrich your life? I need to consider how I will maintain the rhythm of daily prayer made possible by not needing to go out to evening meetings, the benefits of meeting online, the 30 minute walk several days a week, more cycling and less driving. These things are on my list, what is on yours? The 23rd of March is a day of remembering and reflection. Overleaf you will see some suggestions as to how to do that. These questions are not merely for our personal introspection but for church and community especially when resources, human and financial, have dwindled during the last 12 months. What is essential now and what is no longer so, even though 12 months ago we thought it was?

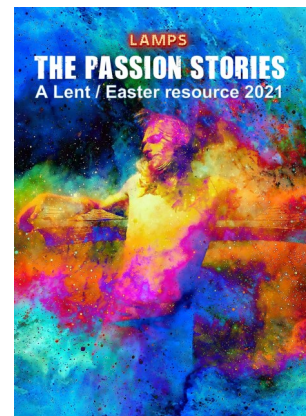
With love and prayers, Peter.

Ways to reflect and remember

You may want to spend some time on 23rd March considering your own experience of the last year and your own losses. Some losses will be deeply personal so please do talk to me or someone you trust if you would find that helpful. You may be thinking of other people for whom this day will bring painful memories - perhaps now is the time to contact them again. The Church of England estimates that over the last year between 6 and 8 million people have been affected by a bereavement (not all caused by Covid-19) that they have not been able to respond to in the way they wanted to. Notably this was because they could not attend a funeral. We have a huge backlog of unexpressed and mourned grief around us. You may want to reflect on the positives which you can see from the turmoil of the these 12 months. A day of reflection is being promoted by Marie Curie, for details [Click Here](#) and by Hope Together UK, for details [Click Here](#) There will be a minute's silence at noon, with people encouraged to light up their doorsteps that night. On this page on the BBC website you can see photographs and very brief tributes to some of those who have died because of Covid-19 [Click Here](#) How ever we choose to reflect, we do so in the presence of the God of all comfort.

Passion videos

As we approach Holy Week you might like to watch these monologue videos co-written by someone I know who was the youth pastor at one of the Abingdon churches. The six videos are performed direct to camera by Mary Magdalene, Simon Peter and a young centurion called Marcus. They recall the events of Holy Week in accessible contemporary language. You may want to share them with members of your family [Click Here](#)



Census

Today is census day which has taken place every 10 years since 1801, with the exception of 1941. You should already have been contacted by post with an access code to use to allow you to enter data online. If you haven't received the code you can request one from the census.gov.uk website here [Click Here](#) If you need help in completing the census please let me know.

The gift of a vaccine

As we and more of our family, friends, and neighbours receive their vaccination, we are both grateful and relieved. But we are very aware that many communities around the world are suffering and don't have access to vaccines. And many of them lack the basics they need to protect themselves like clean water for handwashing. As you or a family member is protected, please consider giving a donation to Christian Aid to help protect those who don't have access to vaccines. To

make this easier the Southampton Methodist District has initiated an appeal in support of Christian Aid's work [Click Here](#) All donations will support Christian Aid's response to the coronavirus pandemic.

And finally

Did you know that Henry VIII's second wife would never rush into a room; she'd just amble in.