

Together as One

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

Verse for the week

You who bring good news to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good news to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, 'Here is your God!' (Isaiah 40: 9)

Easter a year on

I wonder if like me you have thought back to last Easter and perhaps considered our yearlong journey since then. Perhaps you have considered how



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much Easter is the same this year yet also how different it is. Then we faced a largely unknown disease without proven treatments and without vaccines. Then our Prime Minister had been in intensive care and had only just survived. Then the shock and fear was immediate and personal. Much around felt chaotic and disorganised, from PPE to unpredictable supplies in the shops. Last Easter, I remember, we watched an Easter Day service led from his study by a minister and his wife. It was novel and strange. Contrast worship this Easter when I have joined in Holy Week reflections from Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford and with daily reflections led by a different Local Preacher or Minister for our home church in Chippenham. We have joined in a Maundy Thursday service from the Ffald-y-Brenin Christian Retreat Centre in West Wales and in a service prepared and led by brothers and sisters from the global persecuted church on Maundy Thursday. They know what lockdown worship really means. We have shared in a Good Friday service from Oxford presented from the same church as the service last Easter from the vicar's study. On Easter Day some were able to watch a service prepared for the whole Circuit. How much more sophisticated is the presentation now! I have learned how to prepare, record, edit and distribute worship at home and this began with our first attempt last Easter.

All of this is made possible by readily available digital connections. This change has been forced on us. Of course it has its downsides but where would we have been without it? Isn't this a gift from God too? The difficulty of course is that not everyone has access to this digital world and meeting for worship in person is vital – worship is a participatory occasion not a spectator event but not everyone can meet in person either. I imagine it is a little like the experience of those who heard about the printing press, the radio or the television and discovered it was another way to worship and share the Christian story. Except this revolutionary communication method is much more widely accessible. We have to think creatively and imaginatively about what we do now. Time to listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches I think!

With love and prayers, Peter.

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Digital hesitancy

We have discovered some of the advantages and disadvantages of the internet during this pandemic. I suggest it is probably true to say that all human activity, can be used for good and ill, and the internet is no different. Human beings' capacity for selflessness and selfishness was present a long time before Tim Berners-Lee sketched out his idea of a linked network of computers. The same wires, servers and software code

can carry videos of grandchildren to their shielding grandparents as can carry abusive images of children to a sex offender. The same internet can link a WhatsApp group intent upon serving food to the hungry as can unite a group intent upon violent crime. And the contrasts are not always as clear cut as those examples, are they? What should we do? Should we abandon the virtual space because it is corrupt and too dangerous or should we engage, contribute and seek to be the salt and light that Jesus calls us to be? You may be a reluctant member of the online community, very far from being a digital native - perhaps feeling forced into joining in because more familiar, direct human alternatives are denied to us or because so many services are now only available online. I sympathise with those sentiments, but I think God is calling us forward and will equip and encourage us to use what is available to his glory. Here is just one example of how God has used the internet to reach one young woman. [Click Here](#)

Now, you may have a mobile phone or a tablet but need help to learn how to use it. That is something we are going to need to provide assistance with too when it is safe to do so because you won't be the only one. I would love to hear from you if you have ideas as to how we can help and how we can use technology better.

Landfillharmonic

During the recent Lent Course about Caring for Creation we thought about our need to practise the 5Rs more intentionally, namely Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Rot here is an inspiring example of what can be achieved with what others throw away. [Click Here](#)



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Pandemic Beatitudes (with thanks to Margaret)



Blessed are they who wash their hands, for they shall hold living water;

Blessed are they who self-quarantine, for they shall help others;

Blessed are those who do not hoard, for they shall feed families;

Blessed are those who keep their distance, for they shall draw closer to God;

Blessed are those who sing songs to sheltering neighbours,

for they shall be members of the heavenly host;

Blessed are parents who learn to teach at home, for they shall learn from their children;

Blessed are they who shop for older folks, for they shall receive everlasting thanks;

Blessed are the front line health workers, for they shall be called healers of humanity.

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And finally

I phoned the local gym and I asked if they could teach me how to do the splits. They asked, "How flexible are you?" I said, "Well, I can't make Tuesdays or Thursdays!"