Wrenbury & Nantwich Mission Area **Methodist** Churches

**Newsletter No 10. 31st May 2020**

Sunday is Pentecost when we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit that marked the birth of the Christian Church. So Happy Birthday ! Maybe treat yourself to a slice of cake today!

Our New Testament reading set for today is Acts 2, when crowds have gathered again to celebrate one of the main Jewish festivals. The disciples are also gathered together in Jerusalem, where they have been instructed by Jesus to wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The Jewish people have a wonderful rich heritage of celebrations, gathering together to remember how God delivered them from slavery, to give thanks and worship Yahweh. Our Christian festivals have emerged from the Jewish festivals that were instructed in Deuteronomy 16. Jesus himself kept the festivals. The evening before his crucifixion Jesus shared a Passover meal with his disciples. “**Pent”** ecost is 50 days after Passover, also called “Shavuot” or “ Feast of Weeks”, “Feast of First Fruits”. Jews would remember in particular the giving of the Torah, the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai, God’s special gift of rules for our moral and ethical conduct. The third main festival was the “ Feast of Tabernacles”: 7 days of thanksgiving for the gathering of the harvest.

Every Jewish male was required to keep these 3 festivals annually at a place of their choosing, but the place all Jews would love to be, at least once in their life, would be Jerusalem. At each festival they would worship God and give thanks for his salvation.

And so for this second festival we find the disciples again in Jerusalem along with God-fearing men from every nation under heaven. As they gathered there was the sound like a violent wind that moved through the room with the disciples into the streets.

This Pentecost we can’t replicate those scenes. We are still not allowed to gather in crowds. With tight border controls and nearly every aeroplane in the world grounded, there is currently no international travel. Our governments and scientists are trying to control the spread of a deadly virus. Controls and restrictions have been put in place to control a pandemic.

Amongst the new phrases we are using such as “social distancing” or “shielding” is “R”. SAGE (Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies) Chief Scientific Advisor Sir Patrick Vallance has said “R” is the most important thing you can understand to track an epidemic. “R” is the most valuable tool to inform the planning of how to combat the virus. “R” is the average reproduction number of secondary infections produced by one infected person.

The current national average range of “R” is between 0.7- 1.0 based on the latest data, but it takes 2-3 weeks for impact to change the rate. We’re told the optimum for rebooting the economy is “R” being 0.6- -0.75. SAGE are confident that if “R” is not above 1 the infection is not increasing, and very likely decreasing. I’m sure we’re all waiting for the day when we hear “R” is in the range the scientists want it to be.

“R” with 100,000 is very different from “R” with 1,000. “R" varies across the country. We’re told “R” is highest amongst the more deprived communities, whilst in places like Cheshire East we are below the average figure.

On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit spread throughout the crowds. As those gathered returned to their own towns and countries they took with them the power of the Holy Spirit and they shared it with all they met. A Spiritual pandemic that spread the gospel throughout the world. The very life that breathed the world into existence, breathed life and power into the disciples.

People met together in homes, they broke bread with sincere hearts praising God. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. The “R” rate then was far higher than 1.0. People wanted to share the wonderful gift of God’s love and grace they had received. They were not embarrassed or ashamed to speak of the work of God, they were not worried they might offend someone!

It seems “R” in our church is within a very safe zone (0.1-0.2). We see our numbers declining, our confidence in the message and gift we have to share fading. The “Church” needs to be doing the very opposite to the advice of SAGE in controlling how we share the good news. We may not be able to physically meet together at present but there are so many ways we can communicate the gospel. We can talk to people and share our story, our faith journey with others. Each of our stories has value and is worth sharing. The more contact with have with someone, the greater the chance of them picking something up.

The more time we spend with God, the closer we are to him, the more infectious we will be ! Let’s all pray for a pandemic of the Holy Spirit spreading through our communities, our country and throughout the world. Let’s introduce a new letter, **“M”**

**Me** – I can make a difference; **Mission** - we all have a part to play in sharing God’s love; **Multiply** – let’s increase the number of people we talk to about our faith, and share God’s love with. **Make Disciples** – Jesus’ final words to us were “Go and make disciples”. Let’s commit ourselves afresh to supporting and encouraging others on their journey of faith.

As we pray **“R” will decrease, l**et us pray “**M” will increase. In Jesus’ name. AMEN**

**With love and prayers Deacon Jill x 07926092304** **deaconjilltaylor@gmail.com**

***If you have access to the internet why not have a look at one of these streamed services !***

**Cheshire South Circuit – Wesley Place Methodist Church Alsager**

**Look on their web page or Facebook and you will find a Sunday morning service led by Rev Rob Hilton and others. Really well put together and worth a look (including a children’s activity).**

**Methodist Central Hall Westminster** Sundays 11.00 [www.youtube.com/mchwevents](https://www.youtube.com/mchwevents)

**Wesley's Chapel London** who will live-stream from the chapel (the Minister lives on the premises)

 Sundays 11am [www.youtube.com/channel/UCUAUqhmhevz5sqhh72LIMxA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUAUqhmhevz5sqhh72LIMxA)

**Swan Bank Methodist Church**in Burslem**:** this worship will be studio based – with strict distancing rules being followed

 Sundays 10:30 [www.youtube.com/user/SwanBank](https://www.youtube.com/user/SwanBank) and [www.facebook.com/swanbank/](https://www.facebook.com/swanbank/)

**Broomhall Prayers**

Jill plans to host a prayer meeting for Broomhall and Sound (and anyone else who wishes to join) on Friday 29th morning at 11.30 am. Log in details:

Call 03303360036. You will be asked for a guest pin 544188 then your name. If it works you will then hear everyone else on the call to share your news and prayer together. Online meeting details:

<https://meeting.powwownow.co.uk/login/guest/544188>.

[Our deliver-ers are so diligent that many of you receive your newsletter before the previous week is over! Take care to note the dates, as “next Friday”, for example, could refer to either of two days. We count from the Sunday dated at the head of page 1.]

I am sure you all join me in expressing gratitude to Jill for compiling this newsletter every week, giving us so much to think and pray about and put into action, despite her very difficult personal circumstances. *Pat*.