**Wrenbury & Nantwich Mission Area Methodist Churches**

**7 March 2021**

Sunday’s lectionary is the very familiar account of Jesus overturning the tables in the temple court. A very public display of his anger.

I wonder, **What makes you angry? …** the toilet seat not being put down, the toothpaste being squeezed from the middle, a tap left dripping, dirty washing on the floor, waiting for a jab, seeing people not wearing a mask or clearly breaking lockdown restrictions ……….. ?

Are you a “Victor Meldrew” kind of person ranting away *“I don’t believe it*”?

I’m proud to say I’m a market trader’s daughter from Wolverhampton (so take caution). I was brought up on the markets, I remember working on Saturdays from around the age of 5. My younger sister was also taken as a baby. She was allowed to sleep under the counter in a cape apple box. It did us no harm and greatly assisted our mental arithmetic. I still love markets to this day, the hustle and bustle, the sounds, the smells, the bartering.

So what was it that made Jesus so angry? The outburst took place in the temple courts. The temple being a place of worship. We can have different views on the type of worship we enjoy/practise and how our places of worship should be used. There’s a balance between not allowing the Lord’s house to be desecrated whilst not worshipping the building, which still applies today. As Methodists we are quite fortunate that our buildings were designed to be functional rather than ornate. They were built to maximise the space, “preaching houses”, a gathering place for worship, but also to be used for mission, a place to build relationships with God and community.

Some of us have rented rooms to generate much-needed income, but then find we have no space or time available for us to do mission or plan anything as a church. Worse still, we don’t build relationships with our property users, they are just seen as tenants, rather than guests in God’s house where we offer radical hospitality. Some of us have been hit hard as our buildings are closed and our rental income has dried up.

We need to reflect on how God’s temple should be used in the future as we eventually emerge out of lockdown. What is the true purpose of our building when we have found new ways to worship? Buildings can be a millstone needing a great deal of finance for maintenance . If we don’t maintain our buildings there is a risk that they become a sad reflection of our relationship with God. On the other hand our buildings can be a great gift, that glorify God when used wisely, enabling us to gather for worship, which many of us have missed so much, but also to physically meet one another, breaking bread, offering hospitality, building bridges into the community through the activities we invite people to.

The temple in Jerusalem was made up of a series of courts leading ultimately to the “holiest place”. The outer courts were for the gentiles, the next the women, then the Israelites and finally the court of priests.

All the buying and selling, the noise and smells of animals was going on in the court of gentiles, the only place a gentile might come, beyond that point access was barred. The temple authorities and Jewish traders were making the court of gentiles an uproar, a rabble, where no one could pray. The lowing of the oxen, bleating of sheep, the cooing of doves, rattle of coins, the raised voices in bargaining disputes, all combined to make the court of gentiles a place where no one could worship.

Then further injustice: the gentiles travelling to the temple were only permitted to purchase animals for their sacrifices from the temple at exorbitant, inflated prices, exploiting the gentiles. I’m sure we’ve all been unhappy to pay inflated prices at motorway services, or a festival or hotel bar, but that’s a cost we bear when we choose to use such facilities. Jesus was angry that gentiles where being exploited to worship at the temple.

Today people are still being exploited. Those on low incomes are highly likely to pay for gas and electric on prepaid metres, whose tariffs are far higher than for those who can afford to pay by direct debit. Stores such as “Brighthouse”, who allow customers to pay for items on a weekly basis, taken up by people on the lowest income end up paying far more for the goods than anyone paying outright. The smallest quantities such as bread, milk, tinned goods cost far more proportionally than bulk buying, again usually purchased by the elderly or those on low income.

We live in a world still where the rich are becoming richer and the poor poorer. We’re learning that Covid 19 is adversely impacting on the poorest in our society.

Injustices made Jesus angry. He turned the tables to remind the authorities what the temple should

be used for and there should be equal access for all.

I love a bargain and don’t like paying over the odds, but where is the saving being made? Cheap goods are usually produced in sweat shops, by poorly paid workers. We all need to be mindful of our shopping habits looking for fairly traded goods whenever possible, ensuring our farmers are paid a fair price for their milk, supporting local small businesses rather than online giants who often evade taxes.

For those who listen to the Archers, set in the well-to-do country town of Borsetshire, maybe not too dissimilar to Nantwich, it wouldn’t be the first place that springs to mind as being part of a corrupt network of human traffickers, yet local builder Philip Moss exploits 3 young men “horses” (workhorses) who work for him for no pay, just basic accommodation. When goods and services seem remarkably cheap, there’s usually a reason.

Today there are 40.3 million people in forced labour by sexual exploitation, domestic servitude and forced marriage.

I ask again, what makes you angry? What will you do about it?

**Are you willing to turn tables or speak out against injustice?**

**With Love and Prayers, *Deacon Jill* x**

***Broomhall & Sound Chapel***

Sunday 7 March 10.30 am Zoom

Led by Rev Rob Hilton

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82976672769?pwd=aG9pSjMvR3dzaDJaZlFkcnduSmFTZz09>

Meeting ID: 829 7667 2769

Passcode: 366121

**PRAYER**

 Please remember Brian and all the family and friends of Helen Johnson (Aston) who passed away last week.

 Also all who mourn Kath Nord (NMC) as her funeral takes place at Crewe Crematorium on Tuesday.

 Alan Mumford (Broad Lane) is still in Leighton hospital, Ward 6.

 Please add the people, places and situations known to you where God’s healing, strength, justice, peace and hope are especially needed.

 Why not let the people you are particularly concerned about know they are being thought of and prayed for?

A verse brought to my attention this week by someone faced with a very important decision:

**“*The Lord will fight for you, you need only be still*.”** (Exodus 14:14) (*Pat)*

**LENT DISCUSSION GROUP** by Zoom

every Tuesday in Lent 7.30 pm

Based on Andrew Roberts’ book “*Holy Habits”.*

Led by Andrew & Jill Taylor

 9 March – Habits: “Prayer, fellowship & worship”

16 March – Habits: “Making disciples & eating

 together”

23 March – Habits: “Gladness, generosity &

 worship”

*Everyone is very welcome to join us for one or all of the sessions. It’s not necessary, but you may find it helpful to read Andrew Roberts’ book “Holy Habits”. It is a great book to read during Lent, even if you’re not able to do the course. It can be ordered by Denise & Steve at Nantwich Book Shop.*

Join Zoom Meeting

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87967239246?pwd=NXhxOU1GYXZ4VThXRDBhSmJDVzRqZz09

Meeting ID: 879 6723 9246

Passcode: 212993

**Toilet Twinning Project**

Donations totalled £1,702, excluding those sent direct by churches and individuals. Certificates will be distributed soon. This is a truly excellent result in terms of more sanitary conditions for many families in some of the world’s poorest communities. It also demonstrates amazing support for our young people, who initiated the challenge. Thank you all !

**Wrenbury & Nantwich Mission Area Methodist Churches**

**Worship Sheet No 48 7 March 2021**

**Opening Prayer**

God, whose temple is the whole creation,

we praise you for the signs of spring:

crocuses breaking through the cold earth,

early morning sunshine through the clouds,

days lengthening.

We praise you that earth tells us of your presence.

God, whose temple is found in community,

we praise you for the people around us:

our families and friends,

the neighbours we’d like to know more,

the strangers who surprise us with kindness.

We praise you that we look at others and glimpse

 you.

God, whose temple is written into our bodies,

we praise you for our human bodies, and

We praise you that our bodies are a temple of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Hymn: Love divine, all loves excelling**

 **(StF 503)**

Love divine, all loves excelling,

 joy of heaven to earth come down,

fix in us thy humble dwelling,

 all thy faithful mercies crown.

Jesu, thou art all compassion,

 pure, unbounded love thou art;

visit us with thy salvation,

 enter every trembling heart.

Come, almighty to deliver,

 let us all thy life receive;

suddenly return, and never,

 never more thy temples leave.

Thee we would be always blessing,

 serve thee as thy hosts above,

pray, and praise thee, without ceasing,

 glory in thy perfect love.

Finish then thy new creation,

 pure and spotless let us be;

let us see thy great salvation,

 perfectly restored in thee:

 changed from glory into glory,

 till in heaven we take our place,

till we cast our crowns before thee,

 lost in wonder, love, and praise!

*Charles Wesley (1707-1788)*

**Let us pray together**

Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

you are wisdom in our world; you flow through

creation and consciousness.

Our attempts to house you in bricks and mortar are foolish. Come to us as we gather here within this church made to honour you, and lift the stones from our hearts, so that we may be your Church in word and in deed. Amen

**Today’s Gospel Reading: John 2: 13-22**

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, “Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father’s house a marketplace!” His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.” The Jews then said to him, “What sign can you show us for doing this?” Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews then said, “This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?” But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

**Time to Reflect**

When I am writing we are in the middle of a lockdown. Many of our church buildings are closed for public worship, though a few are open. We have had to get used to worshipping in our homes, using You Tube videos or Zoom video meetings, or through worship sheets like this one, or a mixture of all three and perhaps other possibilities. Many will miss the architecture and the atmosphere of their building, or the fellowship and bustle and chatter before and after services. Some people have been deprived of that for nearly a year. This causes us to ask, ‘what makes a church?’

In the story we just read, Jesus was forcing people to face the same question. Traditionally there was only one “house of God” for the Jews - the Temple. That was where God dwelt. There is very little archaeological evidence of synagogue buildings in and before Jesus’ time - some scholars would say there was none. There is evidence in Jewish writings that synagogue meetings happened in this period, but not perhaps in dedicated buildings. The house of God was the Temple. And, as you may imagine, if there is only one house of God it becomes even more special. And here Jesus is, wading into this holy place, clearing it out and laying down rules as to who can do what there! What right had he? Jesus would appear to be claiming to be the “messenger of the covenant” whom God promised to send to his Temple in Malachi 3: 1-4, who would purify not only the Temple, but God’s people - starting with the religious officials! But then he gets even more radical. When he says “Destroy this temple and I will raise it up in three days”, he is essentially saying God is not living in the Temple Herod built, but in his own body. He is the real temple, the real house of God.

Do we tend to get too attached to our local building? Sometimes churches are called Bethel, which is Hebrew for “house of God”, and sometimes we think God dwells there and we feel we cannot worship him anywhere else. Jesus challenges that way of thinking. He is the one above all in whom God dwells. In him God became flesh and dwelt among us. And it is in drawing closer to Jesus in a personal relationship that we enter God’s house and offer him the worship he truly seeks. And we can do that anywhere - in our kitchen as much as in St. Paul’s Cathedral, or in our local chapel. Draw close to Jesus, and he will draw us close to the Father and the Spirit, so we can worship him in Spirit and in truth.

**Take a time to sit quietly**

**A time of prayer**

 In the name of the one who came to cleanse the Temple, we pray for the institutions by which we organise our society: for churches and chapels and house groups; for educational establishments; for places of healing, law and order, commerce and recreation.

 May they serve the greater good, and adapt to the changing needs of the time.

 In the name of the one who came to redeem the world, we pray for those institutions by which we regulate global relations: for governments and rulers, democracies, monarchies and dictatorships; for bodies that regulate trade, diplomacy and the balance of peace; for environmental, development and welfare organisations.

 May they serve the greater good,
and adapt to the changing needs of the time.
 In the name of the one who came to save us from ourselves, we pray for those institutions we have in our lives: for our friends, families and colleagues; for our local communities; for the church communities to which we belong.

 May they serve the greater good, and adapt to the changing needs of the time. Amen.

**The Lord’s Prayer**

Our Father ……

**Hymn: StF 701 Heaven shall not wait**

Heaven shall not wait for the poor to loose their

 patience,

The scorned to smile, the despised to find a friend:

Jesus is Lord: he has championed the unwanted;

In him injustice confronts its timely end.

Heaven shall not wait for the rich to share their

 fortunes,

The proud to fall, the elite to tend the least:

Jesus is Lord; he has shown the masters privilege -

To kneel and wash servants’ feet before they feast.

Heaven shall not wait for the dawn of great ideas,

Thoughts of compassion, divorces from cries of

 pain:

Jesus is Lord; he has married word and action;

His cross and company make his purpose plain.

Heaven shall not wait, for triumphant Hallelujah’s

When earth has passed and we reach another

 shore:

Jesus is Lord in our present imperfection;

His power and love are for now and then for

 evermore.

John..L.Bell (b. 1949) Graham Maule (b. 1958)

**Blessing**

The almighty and merciful Lord,

the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,

bless us and keep us, now and always. Amen.

*Original Materials by John E Staton*

*Hymns reproduced under CCLi 155789*

Jenny and Sue’s Walk-All-Over-Cancer

Members of Broomhall & Sound chapel

Dear Friends,

Many of you will know that 12 months ago Jenny Davenport lost her lovely daughter-in-law, Caroline, to cancer. Caroline was a lovely girl, who herself, with her friends the Marching Milk Maids, had raised tens of thousands of pounds for cancer.

Well, when Jenny and I heard of this ‘Walk-All-Over-Cancer’ Campaign we decided it would be nice to take part in memory of Caroline. (You may have seen the adverts for this on the television.)

The challenge is to walk 10,000 steps every day in the month of March.

We have set up a Just Giving Page, if you would like to support us in this venture. We also have some sponsor forms if you prefer not to give on line. The Just Giving site is:-

<https://fundraise.cancerresearchuk.org/page/jenny-and-susans-walk-all-over-cancer-fundraising-page-440> *Sue Sullivan*

**Circuit News –** March 2021- Issue 234 distributed 1.3.2021

Dear Friends,

 I continue to be looking forward to a mission-shaped future for our circuit. The pandemic has been a God-given opportunity to see both the creativity, ability, ingenuity and resilience around the circuit, as well as the tiredness, exhaustion, and difficulty in other places. Our Circuit Vision ‘A faithful and Fruitful Future’ takes the image of gardening, and while it is clear that there are some plants that will not have survived this particularly harsh winter, there are other green shoots that have surprised us all by their appearance. This is natural, to be acknowledged and, in the right ways, celebrated.

 To continue the analogy, though, I speak of one part of our circuit in particular - Crewe. The third minister we will be saying goodbye to this year is, of course, Rev Jennifer Matthews. Jennifer has held two appointments in our circuit and, having begun her ministry here, moves on in August, following her sabbatical from May. We will be holding a celebration and farewell service for Jennifer on Sunday afternoon 25th April - watch this space for further details.

 The Circuit Leadership Team took the brave decision to allow Crewe to be a fallow part of the garden for a couple of years while we look carefully at the soil there and its needs. This is no criticism of the existing plants there, but a chance to stand back and ask a really important and difficult question - What does the future of Methodist Mission in Crewe look like? Only when we have started to get to grips with that question can we look to resource that future with the ministry that is most appropriate for it. That process has begun in a small way, as I have met some of the stewards and representatives who have started to think about their area and what a Mission plan might look like. This Easter a District Mission Review Team will continue that task.

 Meanwhile, we have put together a small team of ordained and lay people to cover the ministry needs in the interim.

 At the tail end of last year, between lockdowns, North Street was able to open in a limited way, a new management structure is in place, and the atmosphere and relief at being able to open was quite tangible. New faces continued to appear, and the staff and volunteers are committed to a friendly, welcoming atmosphere, and a renewed sense of purpose when we can open again in earnest. I am excited about the community of people forming at the North Street cafe, and the way we are gently sharing and celebrating the good news, and waiting to see what God is doing. North Street has been thinking long and hard about its future recently, and will be re-opening in a refreshed and new way - and I don’t just mean a new lick of paint! Watch this space.

 I write at the end of LGBT+ History month. There have been some powerful reflections and testimonies on the Methodist Website, and on other forums freely available to us. The Conference, when it meets in June in Birmingham, will make a decision regarding the possibilities of same sex marriages taking place on Methodist premises. Discussion behind this decision has been going on in our church for all of my active ministry now, nearly 30 years. Personally I moved appointments early on in my ministry, at very short notice, because of the consequences of people objecting to decisions that were made. It is a conversation I have listened to throughout those years. I have found myself, belatedly, realising that this is not an issue to deal with, it is about people to be listened to. And so, knowing some will find this hard to read, I offer this reflection from a Methodist, available on the Methodist Church website. All I ask you to do is hear the voice of a Methodist:

**“You are us, and we are you” - Lois Tucker, a young Methodist, shares her experiences of being Christian and queer as part of LGBT History Month**:

 *When thinking of my experiences as a queer Methodist, and as a queer Christian, the first things that spring to mind are the “Oh yeah” moments. An OY moment is when, out of nowhere, you are abruptly reminded that you don't belong, that you might be (grudgingly) tolerated, but that you are not accepted.*

 *A lot of different things can create that moment. Some of them more deliberate than others, anything from a passing comment about ‘traditional families’ or taking a ‘biblical view’ of relationships, to that surprised little “Oh! Oh Ok! That's so good!’ that you get when you speak about queer issues in the first person and someone needs you to know that they are just “So Ok” with that.*

 *Like I said, not every OY moment is meant to hurt you and not everyone who creates one is a homophobe but every single one reminds me that I will always be "other", something to be rejected or affirmed and never able to just be in love and it not be a big deal. There are a lot of ‘OYs’ to choose from, all of them from my Christian spheres, but I think the most painful of these came from my granddad just two years ago. I’ve been out since I was 18, and though I’ve never ‘come out’ to my grandparents, I’ve made no secret of it either, but denial is a powerful thing I suppose.*

 *I don't remember how this conversation started, but I remember it went downhill from a comment from my Gran about how gay relationships and queer people were ‘just not nice really’, like I was some kind of tasteless painting or tacky accessory. My Gran is a woman of strong opinions, so this didn't faze me. I began to gently question why she felt that way and why gay marriage was any different from straight marriage.*

 *This was when my granddad spoke up. As is often the case in a couple, my Gran's strong opinions about things, from boats to marmalade to the EU, means that my granddad doesn't have many strong opinions at all, he’s easy-going, gentle and I’ve heard him state a strong opinion about something maybe four times in my life. At that moment, he said that it wasn't just ‘not nice’ to be queer and in love, it was flat out wrong, it shouldn’t be tolerated, it was against the Church and the traditions of marriage.*

 *I felt like all the air had gone out of me, I love my granddad and I know he loves me, but the thought that he would never love any wife I had, that cut deeper than anything else I had heard before.*

*It was a complete rejection of something so important to me from someone I love, and he hadn't even realised that he wasn't discussing his dislike of the hypothetical queer person who wears fishnet tops, has one earring and goes to gay bars every night, he was telling his granddaughter that her love was tainted.*

 *We have come a long way in the last 50 years and I’ll never not be grateful for that: being queer is a huge part of my identity and it is nice to know that I won't be assaulted on the street for that and that no one could fire me for it or refuse me service without it coming back to bite them, but it does make me sad that the more Christian the circle, the more I feel like a puzzle piece in the wrong place. I have several wonderful groups of friends, many of them queer themselves, the rest are totally uncaring if I’m queer or not, and some of them with an amazing devotion to their faith, so it's easy for me to forget that people still care so much about my existence and who I might love.*

 *It makes it all the more like a slap in the face when I’m reminded someone in one of my Christian settings might suddenly hate me if they knew I was queer.*

 *I think the only way I know how to end this piece is by saying that I might not be disowned, excommunicated, killed or fired, but that those things aren't something I should have to be grateful for, they should come as standard. I also want to end this by saying that tolerance is no longer enough, I don't want to be tolerated, like the notion you’re never more than 6ft from a rat, I don't even want to be ‘accepted’ as something that Christians graciously permit to be here, I want a real change and understanding that queer people have been around forever, that they’re going to be around for the rest of time, and that we aren't ‘like’ you, we ARE you, fearfully wonderfully made.*

 *We built the Church, we cracked Nazi codes, we wrote timeless plays and books, ruled nations and fought wars, changed the world for the better and loved and lived just like you do.*

 *No tolerance, no acceptance. Just an understanding that you are us, and we are you, we aren't tenants of the Church, we built it as surely as you did.* Lois Tucker

If and when you may want to respond to this, I ask you to do so with the grace and kindness for which we Methodists should want to be known.

Your friend and Superintendent Minister,

***Rob***

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**Big Dreams Holiday Club**

A few of the lay leaders and lay workers have produced the third virtual holiday club in the Circuit. The theme was Big Dreams – dreams that we have and hopes/dreams for the future – we of course looked at the story of Joseph. It ran from February 17-19th for primary school children. The way that it worked, is that there was a 30 minute video at 10:00am on YouTube, followed by an hour gap before we joined the children on Zoom for 30 minutes. We have been blessed to have 57 children book on and it has been full of lots of fun and learning. Please keep praying for the children and families, that God’s love has been shared and the Holy Spirit is at work.

[A few pictures were provided, which regrettably cannot be reproduced here.]

Thank you to all who have been involved one way or another. ***God Bless, The Big Dreams Holiday Club Team***.

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**The Big Story**

Elizabeth Morris and Jonny Newbould have been finding ways to reach families in an online capacity during this pandemic. They both decided to start up a YouTube channel called The Big Story. This was primarily aimed at primary school children but can be accessed by anyone. The format of the videos is that there is a craft or activity and a story. They have been working through the stories of the Old Testament but since Christmas they have focused on Jesus on the run up to Easter. There is a new video released every week. If you would like to view the videos, the link is attached below -

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCN9duNM4ZWpd0LKDYlgpjYg/videos>

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**Vacancy**

The Dane & Trent Methodist Circuit is seeking to appoint a **Circuit Administrator** to assist and support the Superintendent Minister in her Circuit-related duties and responsibilities.

20 Hours per week at £9.50 an hour (The Living Wage) – worked over 4 days Monday to Thursday 9.00 - 2.30pm with 30 minutes lunch break. Based in Congleton.

More information from: office@danetrentmethodist.org.uk or Telephone 01260 270899

Closing date for applications: 19th March 2021

Please forward information to be put into the next Circuit Newsletter to Daniel Keen, 1108info.cheshiresouth@gmail.com or phone 07598 580541 by Wednesday 24th March – Thank you

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 “I have been in many places in my life but I've never been in **Cahoots**. Apparently, you can't go alone. You have to be in Cahoots with someone.

I've also never been in **Cognito**. I hear no one recognizes you there.

I have, however, been in **Sane**. They don't have an airport; you have to be driven there. I have made several trips there, thanks to my friends and family. I live close so it's a short drive.

I would like to go to **Conclusions**, but you have to jump, and I'm not too much on physical activity anymore.

I have also been in **Doubt**. That is a sad place to go and I try not to visit there too often.

I've been in **Flexible**, but only when it was very important to stand firm.

Sometimes I'm in **Capable**, and I go there more often as I'm getting older.

One of my favourite places to be is in **Suspense**! It really gets the adrenaline flowing and pumps up the old heart! At my age I need all the stimuli I can get!

And, sometimes I think I am in **Vincible** but life shows me I am not.

People keep telling me I'm in **Denial** but I'm positive I've never been there before!

So far, I haven't been in **Continent,** but my travel agent says it is on the list.’’

*Thanks to Doris Tucker (NMC) and her daughter Gill*

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If we feel hemmed in by current circumstances, let us remember that Joseph in his prison cell found that ‘God was with him’ and he could serve him there. Paul and Silas in prison ‘sang hymns and prayed’ – and were miraculously set free.

Let us not cease to give thanks for all that is good and cannot be taken from us, even in hardship.

 ‘Lord our God, O God of righteousness, let your light shine out. Go with us on our way. May we have clear eyes and hearts through your Word and your Spirit. Through temptations and struggles be always with us, lighting our way to what is right and good. Protect and bless us. Move our hearts from their very depths to thank you for all you have done for us, to praise you and to glorify you. Amen.’

**Nantwich Foodbank**

As at last Monday, most needed items are:

Tinned meat, vegetables and fruit;

UHT milk, long-life juice and coffee.

Local collection points are:

Sainsbury’s, Nantwich

Morrison’s, Nantwich

Tesco Extra, Crewe

Or to arrange collection, email:

 storemanager@nantwich.foodbank.org.uk

The next Drop-off at Brine Leas School will be

on Saturday March 27th. Details nearer the time.

Here is more advice on dealing with lockdown – some serious, some less so.

**A Prayer for Putting on a Face Mask**.

Creator God, as I prepare to go into the world, help me to see the sacramental nature of wearing this cloth. Let it be a tangible and visible way of living love for my neighbours, as I love myself.

Christ Jesus, since my lips will be covered, uncover my heart, that people will see my smile in the crinkles around me eyes. Since my voice may be muffled, help me to speak clearly, not only with my words but with my actions.

Holy Spirit, as the elastic touches my ears, remind me to listen carefully and caringly to all those I meet. May this simple piece of cloth be a shield and banner, and may each breath that it holds be filled with your love.

In your name and in that love, I pray. Amen.

*Rev. Richard Bott, Moderator, Presbyterian*

*Church of Canada.*

**Caution**…

We have become used to all wearing masks when we go out. Recently I have heard several people say they did not recognise who it was talking to them – with scarf or collar pulled well up and hat well down too, so that only eyes are visible, and even they perhaps behind glasses. While we can see out clearly, let’s be aware that others can’t necessarily see in, and could find the encounter a little unnerving until they have worked out who it is accosting them! Just identify yourself.

I am also alarmed to hear people say that now they have had their first vaccinations, “We’re all right”! The media tell us so often and so insistently that the first jab reduces our chances of becoming infected or spreading infection *after 3 weeks*. The second dose, about 12 weeks later, further increases our protection. Meanwhile, *keep behaving as if you might be infected.*

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**Lockdown Advice**

 Everyone, please be careful because being locked down at home is driving some people crazy!

 I have been talking about this with the microwave and toaster, who agreed things are getting bad, but I said nothing to my washing machine, because she puts a different spin on everything. I certainly couldn’t share it with the fridge, who has been acting cold and distant.

 In the end the iron straightened me out: she said the situation isn’t all that pressing and all the wrinkles will soon be ironed out. The vacuum, however, was very unsympathetic – told me to just suck it up. But the fan was optimistic and gave me hope that it will all blow over soon.

 The toilet looked a bit flushed but said nothing, while the front door said I was becoming unhinged and the door knob told me to get a grip. You can guess what the curtains told me: “Pull yourself together!”. I am sure we will survive.

The sun is alone too, but it still shines.

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**Mood Swings**

I felt a bit down in the dumps today while mowing

 my lawn. I must have just hit a rough patch.

Sometimes I have been rebellious:

- I put a stick in a non-stick pan.

- I washed my hands without singing Happy

 Birthday

Then I regained my self control:

- I avoided everything that makes me fat: pictures,

 mirrors, scales …

At times I become nostalgic:

… remembering when shops wrapped fish and chips in old newspaper, and I sometimes found my plaice in the Sun.

I resorted to a spot of online retail therapy:

… an advert for a shire horse said ‘£600 - add to

 cart’.

True: a pizza was delivered in a box that said ‘open box before eating pizza’. Which of us is stupid?

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I asked a librarian if she had “Great Expectations”. She replied, ‘I used to, but I ended up working in the library.’

I’m planning a holiday in Italy. I’m leaning towards Pisa.

Five out of three people have difficulty understanding fractions.

Aren’t train spotters sad? I counted 15 today.

How is it possible to have a civil war?