Wrenbury & Nantwich Mission Area **Methodist** Churches

**Newsletter No 13. 21 June 2020**

Sunday 21st June, is Midsummer’s Day, the longest day of the year before the nights start closing in and we head towards winter. A frightening thought ! This is the 13th newsletter, which means for a quarter of the year our church buildings have been closed and you have worshipped at home using these service sheets. You may feel the time is dragging, but in some sense the year is racing by.

Some of us have experienced a return to some glimpse of normality: many shops have reopened, we are being encouraged to support local retailers by spending our money in the shops, even if it means queueing. Some of you have ventured into town for the first time (with some fear and trepidation).

My daughter Ruth (Miss Arnold) is a year 1 teacher in a primary school in Stoke. Her year group is one of the groups of children expected to return, but out of a class of 28 children only 11 have come back for fear it is not safe to do so yet. We’re all fully aware that we must stay 2m apart, but that is almost impossible for 5- year-olds to comprehend. Miss Arnold is 6ft (2m), and her children think she is a giant. To help the children understand the concept of 2 metres apart, they have to imagine Miss Arnold lying down between them, which they think is a huge space.

We’ve been told that 2 metres greatly reduces the risk of spreading the virus. It’s a safe distance but maintaining that distance for many businesses, especially in hospitality, is now putting 3.5 millon jobs at risk. An urgent comprehensive review is being called for, when scientists and economists have to consider all the risks if the 2m rule is eased, and agree what level of risk we’re prepared to live with.

Having walked around Nantwich lake a couple of times this week and witnessed the growing number of young people gathering in large groups quite close together, it appears they no longer think social distancing rules apply. Whilst walking by, thinking they are too close to each other, I am mindful of how desperate they are just to get back to some normality and hang out with their friends. I’m sure many of us are longing to do the same, to hug our children and grandchildren and have all the family round! Some of us have had to choose whose “bubble” we are going to join !

As we begin to think about ‘going back into our buildings’ we need to take time to consider what we have learned from being out of them. Have we finally grasped that church is not a building - we teach that to our children, but do we hold that in our hearts? We, the people, are the church, the body of Christ meeting together in community, acting together in mission, longing together for the transformation of our world, responding together to our calling.

When Methodism changed from a connexion of societies to become a denomination or church we began to erect and use separate Methodist buildings which became our churches. Methodism came first, our buildings came second.

As we look to the day when we can “go back to church”, with all its needful risk assessments and procedures, we need to guard against entering another lockdown, that of being so caught up in our buildings that we miss the opportunities to be church without them.

As our managing trustees of the Methodist Church consider carefully their next steps of how to navigate a way through the 29 pages of the risk assessment, they must first undertake a spiritual assessment: what is God calling this church, this chapel to be? The Spirit might be asking us to be brave, not to cling to the old but to be the pilgrim people of the moment. Let’s be a people of vision, let’s not long to get back to normal, let’s see what God might do if we allow ourselves to be led somewhere new.

Let us be generous and gracious to one another, allow different churches and chapels to make the decisions they need to without pressure to get on with the usual, allowing instead time to consider the Spirit.

Let us guard the holy fire, and guard our buildings only as a means of that; let us keep walking the way together bearing the burden of grief for all that which and those who have been lost, in love for one another and in service to our world.

Take a few moments to reflect on our readings for this week. I love the phrase in Psalm 86: 4  “*Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul*.” Even in these challenging, pandemic times, what gladdens your soul? What brings you joy? Have you thanked God for the glimmers of light you have seen in the darkness? The rays of sunshine, the hope in challenging circumstances?

There may be days when everything feels overwhelming, you don’t feel you have the strength to carry on. Even Jesus had days like that. Our gospel reading in Luke takes us to the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus is almost overwhelmed with the situation he is in, and begs his heavenly Father not to let him go through the ordeal that was before him. V.42 “*Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”* God doesn’t promise us an easy life, free of trauma, sorrow and pain, but he does promise we don’t go through it alone. Jesus needed the strength of an angel from heaven to get him through the night. V.43 “*An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him*.” How much more do we need the strength of an angel to get us through a difficult time! Angels don’t only come from heaven, God uses mere human beings like you and me to help and support one another when we haven’t had the strength to do things on our own. Angels may just come and stand by our side (2m apart of course!) so we are not alone, or some angels bake cakes, feed us, write letters, send flowers, whilst some angels are allowed to wrap their wings around us and just hold us.

I’m grateful to you angels who have ministered to me during the last few weeks

Through all things we need to pray, thanking and praising God for the things that gladden our souls, praying for our world and its leaders having to make difficult decisions, interceding for others who need upholding though a difficult time, and for ourselves that we will be daily renewed by the Holy Spirit and our relationship restored with our Creator God and heavenly Father. Amen

**With love, thanks and prayers, Jill x**

**Broomhall and Sound Zoom Services**

**Sunday June 21st – a special service with a Fathers’ Day theme. Also June 28th**

Zoom 'doors' will open at 10.15, and if anybody new to Zoom would like some help before the service begins at 10.30, Charles, the host, will be there to try to help them. The service will only last approx. 30 minutes, leaving plenty of time at the end for chatting (Zoom won’t close down until 11:30).

The easiest way to join is to click on this link which should take you to a 'waiting room'; and from here you will go through to the service itself.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81296781558?pwd=bFl1K1dkeEVZZXljS2RDRDBHUmpFQT09>

You should not need the meeting ID and password, but in case you do they are:

 Meeting ID: 812 9678 1558

 Password: 991013

**Lightwood Green Phone Fellowship**

**6.30 Sunday Evenings**

You are welcome to dial in and join members of the Mission Area in prayer and fellowship.

Call **0330 336 0036**  and PIN **571297** which should be charged at the same rate as any calls to landline numbers.