

GLAZEBURY METHODIST CHURCH

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REV ANDREW'S MESSAGE –

“Don't waste a crisis” 3

Today is Trinity Sunday the Gospel reading is from St Matthew chapter 28, from the 16th verse.

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

The triune God calls and commissions the Disciples and through the words as recorded by Matthew gives us the Church of today, what we have come to regard as “The Great Commission.”

This is not some form of guidance, or guidelines for life, nor is it an off the cuff remark of little value – for we know from St Paul's second letter to Timothy – *“All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.”*

This is an instruction, from Jesus, the Son, the second person of the Trinity and I suggest that we ignore it at our peril! John Wesley reminds us - *“The church changes the world not by making converts but by making disciples.”*

So, I wonder, when, if and how do we re-open our Church buildings? Let us remember, the church is a high-risk setting for COVID-19 transmission. Church activities contain multiple factors that facilitate the airborne spread of the virus, in addition, many of our members are at greater risk for serious complications from it. Therefore, Trustees should carefully consider when and how to resume in-person ministries and have a clear plan to do so.

Social distancing is the order of the day, and this isn't something we have to endure for a few weeks till we get back to regular life. So, in their consideration and deliberation as to how and when to open, the Trustees will need to carefully consider the requirements and their ability to fulfil them into the unknown future. Trustees need to be mindful of a long-term plan, to the end of the year at least if not longer, seems likely to me.

Then – Trustees will also need to remember that many members of their churches are elderly and immunocompromised. What should they do as we begin to reopen; all be it in a more limited fashion? I suspect that many members will not feel comfortable and will elect to stay at home for some weeks or even months yet, else their health would be put in jeopardy by attending church.

These are challenging questions for the Trustees, for at the same time as attempting to re-open church we need to maintain, if not improve the ongoing communication, so that people do not become disenfranchised or feel that they are missing out and are spared from making difficult personal decisions about their church attendance, against their health.

That means a robust system of Pastoral care, **an increase in what we are already doing**, not an easing off, that whatever we do, all members need to feel that they belong.

So how might that look, because one distinction that is to be found in our church communities at this unusual time is the divide between those who are used to technology and those who are not.

Then, as well as maintaining and developing good quality internal contact and communication, now is also the time to capitalise on our good work in the community.

From a recent Leading Your Church Into Growth (LYCIG) email I read – “Thousands of people are plugging into our on-line services. Some don’t stay for long, but many do, and they are younger people (33% of under 50’s according to some research). In addition, churches are visiting, delivering to, and helping care for lots of people in their local communities.

Put these two pictures together and they form a great platform or context for evangelism.

This is what LCYIG thinks of as the church having great ‘**Presence**’ (you will remember that from last weekend) lots of people in our communities see us as ‘their’ church. They respect and value us more than we realise.

- Now is an opportunity to capitalise on that, it may be that we don’t really know who they are, but we can try to engage with them, what mid-summer getting to know you gathering could we consider?
 - Might we host a zoom coffee morning
 - Pub quizzes are great on Zoom
 - “Ask a member” - people may have questions about faith or church we could set up an open conversation on Zoom?
 - On line messy church / holiday club – a sort of Blue Peter, here’s one we made earlier, linked to a Bible message.
- When we come to our limited weekly worship it needs to be accessible to those who don’t attend, (for the reasons mentioned earlier) including the newer people who may be interested, so I think it needs to be online, live and virtual. A recorded version sent to the churches excludes the possibility of non-attenders to access real time and feel involved, part of the event. One church worship that I listen to on Sunday invite people into a Zoom session immediately after worship, there’s our time for fellowship and sharing. (You can’t do that if you’re listening to a recording on Wednesday!)
- We’ve taken hymn books, what can we do about trying to get some form of hand held technology into the hands of those who will choose not to come back in a hurry, where might we be able to source some laptops, or tablets, help people to engage as we open the church, we need to make sure that no one is left behind simply because they choose health over attendance. (We may still have some ‘seed’ money available from Circuit that could help here?)
- Weekly fellowship which we have largely neglected could easily be restored online, and I suggest that is something that we do quite soon.

The first thing each church needs to do as it emerges is to re-evaluate its very reason for its existence, because it is a huge commitment of resources and energy. I have no doubt that the Triune God will add many numbers to the list of believers this year and next, but will he do it where you are, is it his church to do with as he pleases, or is it your little oasis a place of security and friendship?

Now - why do you want to re-open your church?

Why not share your thoughts with the church Stewards as we begin to imagine Church again.

Bible readings for 7 June 2020 - Genesis 1:1 -2:4a, Psalm 8, 2 Corinthians 13: 11-13 and Matthew 28 16-20.

SHARING SUNDAY WORSHIP

We are sharing our Sunday Service over the telephone. Most weeks we have over 180 callers from across the Leigh & Hindley and Liverpool North Circuits.

If you would like to listen in, at 10.30am on Sunday:

Dial **020 3478 5289** on your telephone,

When it asks for the access code, enter **145 404 825#**.

(this number will be the same each week)

When it asks for your ID, press **#**

We can then join together in worship

The call will be charged at the standard UK phone rate.

FOR THOSE THAT LISTEN TO THE SUNDAY SERVICE AND EVEN TO THE PODCASTS. IF YOU HAVE NOT GOT A SINGING THE FAITH HYMN BOOK AT HOME - SO THAT YOU CAN SING ALONG - PLEASE LET ME KNOW AND I WILL ARRANGE FOR YOU TO RECEIVE ONE - Christine Taylor Mobile: 07801 252625 or email - christine.arran4872@aol.com

PODCASTS

Regular podcasts from Rev Viv can be found on: <https://soundcloud.com/user-476066366>

I send these out daily to those who receive notice sheets by email each week. If you know of anyone who would like to receive them please let me have their email address and I will include them in the distribution. Christine Taylor

FEELING THE EFFECTS OF 'LOCKDOWN'? If you are on your own, or not, and are feeling the effects of the 'lockdown' then phone your Pastoral Visitor for a chat.

IF YOU ARE not a member of church and need to talk please ring Rev Andrew Bradley or Delia Caswell on the phone numbers at the top of the first page of this news sheet.

Let me have some thoughts/reflections on the lockdown situation. You could also send stories, poems, and prayers. (Christine)

A personal message from the President of the Methodist Conference, the Rev Dr Barbara Glasson

It is with outrage and deep sorrow that we have witnessed the recent brutal killing of George Floyd in the United States.

But outrage and sorrow are not a sufficient response to racism and inequality in society. How to begin a process of change? It starts with self-examination and listening to the people whose lives are affected by discrimination and hate.

This week I received these words from a Methodist living in south London:

"The young people whom I have worked with for over the last 15 years have felt the impact of racism in every institution they have been part of from schools, to university, to various work places, and other than local support and informal church networks they have not found the Methodist Church as a place that speaks up for them."

As your President, I start by saying I am sorry. Sorry for being silent when we should have spoken out against the everyday injustices that affect BAME communities. I am sorry that, despite our efforts, we have not done enough for those who feel excluded and we need to do better. We know this includes people of all ages from the Windrush generation to the very young. I am sorry when we have not listened carefully enough and not challenged the assumptions of white privilege and bias.

Repentance can lead us to change, to embody a gracious, loving spirit of inclusion and understanding. There is no excuse for racism. All people are made in God's image. We are one body in Christ Jesus.

I hope we can listen more carefully to the voices of BAME members, especially younger people, who face racism, discrimination and violence on a daily basis. Then our Church must be brave, speak out, speak up and challenge racism wherever we find it, especially when we find it in ourselves.

I have been in contact with the Vice-President who joins me in supporting this statement.

The Rev Dr Barbara Glasson, President of the Methodist Conference

Notes

The Methodist Church 'believes that racism is a denial of the Gospel' - standing orders, SO 013B.

Church Allotment - If anyone, who is able to go out, is feeling a bit at a loss of what to do!!! Why don't you think of giving the church allotment (opposite Bents) a little attention? All help would be appreciated. Thank you to Aaron and Alan for their on-going caring of the allotment. If you are interested please contact Alan Crozier on his email address – alancpds@hotmail.com.

A PRAYER FOR THESE DIFFICULT TIMES

Compassionate God, Be with those who need you. The unloved, the friendless, the oppressed, the sick, the dying, the bereaved. Take your love where we can't, or won't, reach. Make your Spirit known in the worst places and times, so that all may benefit from the sacrifice that Jesus made for humankind. It is in his name we pray. Amen (Rev Jeff Walker)

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE SOMETHING TO THE NEWS SHEET PLEASE CONTACT ME ON EMAIL BY WEDNESDAY OF EACH WEEK: christine.arran4872@aol.com or phone me on Mobile: 07801252625.