

GLAZEBURY METHODIST CHURCH

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Bible readings for 24 May 2020 – Acts 1: 6-14, Psalm 68: 1-10, 32-35, 1 Peter 4: 12-14 5:6-11 and John 17: 1-11

REV ANDREW'S MESSAGE – "Don't waste a crisis"

Every major crisis creates unexpected problems, how are we going to find revenue, how are we going to reopen, what does Social Distancing look like in a church that can only seat 15 people, house groups, bible study, Pastoral Care, the list while not endless is certainly long. Similarly, every major crisis creates unprecedented opportunities, we have more and different problems than we had a couple of months ago, but we also have more opportunities today than there were a couple of months ago. So, while we may need to address the problems, we mustn't overlook the opportunities, practical opportunities to make changes that we ought to have made months, if not years ago.

Churches historically resist the temptation to challenge the norm; we are satisfied with following procedure and tradition. It takes insight if not a little courage to question; to ask ourselves and those who would lead (Presbyters, Leadership Teams, Stewards) what needs to be done. However, in times of crisis I wonder if there isn't more latitude to do so – to engage in some meaningful collaborative shared thinking as we begin to realise that the demography of our churches does not lend itself easily to adapting to the changes necessary in the future.

Let's face it we are a fifth of the way through the 21st Century, yet most of our church buildings languish in the 19th physically and technologically and even in the language that we speak. Many churches are unable to satisfy the most basic of requirements for disability access let alone meet the needs of the upcoming generation, "Generation Alpha" (those born entirely in the 21st Century) nor their parents or the generation in between – the 20 somethings, all whose needs and expectations are on the whole not being met by the local Methodist church.

Worse the sustainability of our buildings represents a challenge to our limited financial resources, as a matter of interest across the 11 churches in the Circuit we spend in excess of £160,000 on our buildings alone one way or another, which can in most cases be seen as propping up an aging and much loved museum piece consuming time and money energy and effort, and despite our best efforts and believe me when I say, we are working ever so hard – we are not on the whole building the kingdom, we are not on the whole making Disciples, we are keeping ourselves going and at best scratching the surface of our main reason for being here.

Maybe the words of John Wesley will cut more ice *"I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist.... But I am afraid, lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power. And this undoubtedly will be the case, unless they hold fast both the doctrine, spirit, and discipline with which they first set out."*

Or those of the Archbishop of Canterbury – *"Everything Christian churches do beyond worshipping God and making new disciples is decoration."* We have some highly decorated churches!

We are faced with a crisis – and now is the time to act, and I believe a full strategic review is required. We need to critically analyse the fundamentals of our business and purpose with everything, all our resources of people, buildings, and money on the table for inclusion. So, begin by asking yourself what really matters, what are you most looking forward to after this church 'lockdown'?

Then look at it again in the light of these two questions.

Maintenance church - whose main question is **how do we keep going?**

Main focus is on pastoral activities, worship based on tradition of what we like/have always done
Church life based on repeating this year what we did last, An institution, Reducing numbers, disappearing.

Mission Church – whose main question is **how do we keep growing?**

Focus on pastoral and mission activities, worship based on a tradition of helping congregation and visitors experience an encounter with God, Church life and strategy based on 'what do we need to do now?' A movement, increasing numbers, appearing.

Then I think it's worth looking at the four P's of church growth, the key factors that are involved in churches that are growing are, **prayer, presence, proclamation, and persuasion.**

What new initiatives, what enterprises are waiting for us, where, as they say is the 'low fruit' something quick and easy that has great impact?

I'm running out of space this week, these are some of the things that occupy my mind.

- We need to be active in prayer for growth, for effective evangelism
- We need to develop our presence, build on our friendships, add to what we have already begun to do in our communities.
- Do all churches need to reopen – ought not some see this as an opportunity to 'cease to meet' and to put their collective energy and resource into another Methodist Society, thus releasing property to be sold or redeveloped.
- Why does the Circuit not release the Trustees from responsibility of one of the church buildings and explore a range of risk-taking initiatives?
- We need to invite people to come and hear the proclamation of the Good News, presenting the gospel in an attractive and appropriate way, theatre, holiday club, inspirational talks about faith.
- Create small enquirer groups to explore in depth the demands of Christian discipleship
- Churches need to be more generous in their giving to causes and charities, and members need to be more generous in their giving – remember the Latte example, if we'd done what was suggested then some churches wouldn't be facing the financial problem that they are today!
- We need to think far more strategically and prayerfully, as to how the Circuit usefully deploy its diminishing financial resources? Things that produce fruit, disciples and in turn members are what will sustain us into the future.
- We must make our buildings and activities more accessible, physically, and technologically – remembering our main purpose of being!
- What opportunities continue to exist for new expression of church, pop up worship, pop up church the list is endless and we need more risk taking not risk averse leadership, yes we'll make mistakes, but we'll also grow and learn in the process.
- We know that coming out of this pandemic there will be increased social, mental and practical needs, what professional services can we provide, or buy in, what practical things can we do for those in dire need?

In all this we need humility and openness a willingness to explore and be challenged, because things are not going to 'get back to normal' any time soon, and those churches that remain open will only survive if they adapt and catch up with society around them.

More next week – focussing on specifics of what can be done – though what do you think? Remember these are my views, taken from other sources where necessary and are not the expressed views of my colleagues in the Circuit. (Though they may share some of my thinking!)

Prayer and Pastoral concerns.

Please keep Delia, Peter and their family in our prayers as John, Delia's brother, is seriously ill and not expected to recover.

ALSO can we pray for all teachers who may be expected to go back to school at the beginning of June. They are so apprehensive. Pray for the children and their families who will be asked to return to school.

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.

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, prayers or your celebrations of VE Day (Christine)

The Methodist Conference will meet virtually this year

The Conference Business Committee met last week and agreed that the Conference should meet June 25 – July 2 2020 in order to conduct its essential business. The committee recognised that the restrictions that are likely still to be in place at the end of June mean that a virtual meeting is necessary. The committee was encouraged by the experience of the Council when it met virtually at the end of March.

Final details about the timetable are being discussed and there will be further communication with all those attending after the Council has met on 16 May.

We are particularly mindful of those for whom this is a significant Conference personally (eg ordinands and those designated for office) and hope that the Methodist people will keep them and all the representatives in their prayers.

MONIES:-

Culcheth & Glazebury Community Day should have taken place on 8th May and the Auction on 25th April but were understandably cancelled. Usually the combined income from just these 2 events would have been at least £2,000!

As Social Distancing is likely to with us for some considerable time it's not likely that events like this will be able to take place in the near future, never mind being able to physically attend worship together. Unfortunately, we are somewhat reliant on these types of events, not forgetting the weekly 'collection' to help pay for the running costs of the church and the quarterly assessment to the Circuit which allows us to have a Minister. Currently we have a large shortfall of income.

How can you help?

Are you a member of the 'Envelope Giving Scheme' or a cash in the collection bag giver have you considered changing to Standing Order?

Many church members and friends have Standing Orders set up which means regular giving continues throughout the year.

Anyone is welcome to set up a Standing Order directly into Glazebury Methodist Church's bank account:

Sort Code: 60-13-04

Account No: 01841629

Please use your name in the comments field.

You can at any time make a donation (which can remain anonymous if you wish)

But don't forget that if you are a UK Tax Payer you can still Gift Aid if your gift is recorded. To remind you for every £1 you give the Government will add an additional 25p to the church. Thank you to everyone for your giving and continued support.

NOTE – Delia will be contacting those that pay by the envelope scheme at the beginning of each month so that arrangements can be made to drop them off at Delia's home.

A PRAYER FOR THESE DIFFICULT TIMES

God of all hope we call on you today.

We pray for those who are living in fear:

Fear of illness, fear for loved ones, fear of other's reactions to them.

May your Spirit give us a sense of calmness and peace.

We pray for your church in this time of uncertainty.

For those people who are worried about attending worship.

For those needing to make decisions in order to care for other

For those who will feel more isolated by not being able to attend.

Grant us your wisdom.

Holy God, we remember that you have promised that

Nothing will separate us from your love – demonstrated to us in Jesus Christ.

Help us turn our eyes, hearts and minds to you.

Amen

ARTWORK

Noticeboard Pictures

There has been some wonderful artwork around the village during lockdown.

We have 3 large empty noticeboards at church that would look wonderful if filled with pictures of flowers, rainbows, notices of appreciation..... If you are passing please drop a picture (or 3) off at church. There is a big box outside the main door where you can drop your picture(s) off or there is a Sellotape dispenser to stick them up! The brighter, the better. Thanks Robert G

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

