



The Good News Letter

COULSDON METHODIST CHURCH

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From our minister

Dear Friends,

It feels a very short time since the last Good Newsletter. That's partly because my previous letter was deliberately delayed to inform you of our plans for reopening. So it is under 4 weeks since I last wrote for this August organ – as distinct from this August edition. (I get a full 5 weeks next time!)

July has been the month for preparing for and testing out our “new normal”. That has been put into practice twice at the time of writing – for the first Thursday prayers with a congregation since March – and for the first Sunday morning service in Church for 4 long months. It is a case of “so far, so good”. All the work in preparing the Church for use with social distancing – and carrying out a suitable cleaning process – enabled us to meet safely. It feels strange not being able to sing – and having to leave fairly quickly at the end of the service; but the rest felt familiar (and safe!).

One of the comments I made during my sermon on Sunday was about the conversation Tina and I shared. That was about how fortunate we feel that the “lock-down” did not affect us too significantly. Our income from pensions and benefits was virtually unchanged. Our ability to visit local shops when they were not busy – just popping out for 5 minutes – was very convenient. For my part I have definitely kept myself busy – continuing to offer regular updates to the 2 congregations I serve, plus regular Thursday prayers on Facebook live – and complete Sunday services on YouTube. My semi-retired status has been well in the background; and that's suited me just fine.

We are well aware that many other people have not had life so easy – and I think we must be careful not to forget them. That is of course true of those who have directly suffered from Covid-19 – some who have had times in hospital and recovered, and some who have died from the virus. That of course means there are many people who have been bereaved during this time – and they have not always had the chance either to show care during loved ones' last days or to have a proper funeral. Then there are the indirect effects on people losing jobs and facing huge struggles to pay their way. It is good that the Purley Food Hub has found a way to stay open – because the need has almost certainly increased. We must continue to support that work. Our gospel is one of love and compassion – and particularly for the weakest and most vulnerable. We may have been able to reopen for worship – but that is not the only challenge we face in these times.

May our love, care and compassion be sufficient to include the many who need them. May we together find ways to go on living out the love of God – so that all may know they are included in God's love.

With love and prayers

Stephen

Floating Shelter

I have received the news that, owing to the pandemic, there will not be a Floating Shelter this winter. This is a government decision and applies to all night shelters run on the model that is familiar to us. It is clearly not safe for guests to have communal sleeping areas and shared bathroom facilities, and to move daily from one venue to another, not to mention the problems of trying to enforce social distancing throughout our social evenings. Furthermore, a large proportion of the volunteers throughout

the Croydon Churches' Floating Shelter (CCFS) are themselves in a vulnerable bracket. We have a duty to ensure the safety of all and this would just not be possible under the conditions of night shelters.

I hope that there will be other ways in which we can support the homeless this winter. The swift and overwhelmingly generous response to the call for emergency food provision at the start of lockdown was an excellent example of how our Churches Together in Coulsdon network can enable us to respond to need collectively at the drop of a hat. CCFS is currently working with the council to explore other ways in which we might be of service to the homeless and I will keep you posted on developments.

It would have been nice to mark our Coulsdon churches' 10th anniversary of involvement with the homeless this winter on a more positive note. In some ways rough sleepers have been well served by the extra government provision for them (hotel accommodation, etc.) and for the time being this has been extended but there still remains the plight of those who do not have recourse to public funds who always form a proportion of our shelter guest list. Furthermore, the economic fallout from the pandemic will no doubt bring a new wave of people into the homeless community. We will do what we can to support any local initiatives and may well be back with our usual work in autumn 2021.

Leonie Wilding, Floating Shelter Coulsdon Co-ordinator

What is distinctive about Methodism?

(The last in a series of short articles, reproduced from the website of the Methodist Church)

10. The Connexion

Do not allow yourself one thought of separating from your brothers and sisters, whether their opinions agree with yours or not. John Wesley

Methodists belong to local churches or ecumenical partnerships, but also feel part of a larger connected community, the Connexion.

This sense of being connected makes a difference to how the Methodist Church as a whole is structured. At its heart is an understanding of the Christian community as the 'body of Christ'. Just as a human body contains different limbs and organs that depend on each other, so we should be close and caring enough to feel each other's pain and delight. We should put the good of the whole body before our own individual needs.

The promise of mutual support is a strength of Methodism. If you become a member of the Methodist Church, a pastoral visitor is responsible for visiting you and offering spiritual support, encouragement and challenge.

In the Methodist Church decisions are made as openly as possible, giving opportunities for all to contribute. It is important for all views to be heard and taken seriously, especially where Christians disagree.

Westminster Central Hall: new website for online services

July saw the launch of a brand-new website, "MCHW.live", from Methodist Central Hall, Westminster. This website will now be the new, permanent home for all their online services. Read more about the new site and what you can find on it, at www.methodistlondon.org.uk/mchw-launches-new-website .

FREE phone lines for prayers and news from the Methodist Church

Listen to a prayer: 0808 281 2514

Listen to news: 0808 281 2478

Zoom scams - be aware

There are a growing number of Zoom scams in operation. One such involves people receiving a text message saying 'you have a Zoom voicemail from...' and giving a name e.g. 'Janet44'. Whilst Zoom does have a voicemail function, in this scam users are then given a '09' number to call. If you receive such a message do not make the call as calls to 09 numbers are charged at an exorbitant rate per

minute. Given the increase in people using Zoom to access church activities, please ensure that those who are vulnerable or less 'tech-savvy' are aware of this scam and not conned into dialling a '09' number.