



The Good News Letter

COULSDON METHODIST CHURCH

www.coulsdonmethodistchurch.org

Facebook: @coulsdonmethodist

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From our minister

Dear Friends

My wife, Tina, keeps talking about these as “Groundhog days” – that is, days when you seem to live the same day over and over again. She is the film buff in our house, so she can tell you much more about the film “Groundhog Day” than I can. However, her point is well made, these lockdown days do mean that every day is very much like the one before; we are living the same day time and again. It shows how important it is to have punctuation points in our life. That is true whether it is about a weekly rhythm – with some days like Sunday having their distinctive flavour - or whether it is the looking forward to and preparing for holidays – or indeed simply meeting up with relatives. Much of normal life is not possible for now – or for some time to come.

After that introduction, I was tempted simply to reproduce last month’s letter and see if anyone noticed. Very little has changed this month and Church buildings are still completely closed. I noticed part way through the month that my message on the website was wrong. It said the Church was closed – which as one of the URC preachers of this month pointed out is NOT the case. The Church is not the building; it is us, God’s people – continuing to practise and live out our faith, caring for and serving each other and our neighbours. While that cannot for now mean physically meeting together, there are still services to share in – including our own offerings – on Facebook and our website. Just to remind you the addresses are www.facebook.com/coulsdonmethodist and www.coulsdonmethodistchurch.org. Please follow those if you are able to do so.

The innovation of April has been the institution of Zoom gatherings taking place at roughly the time we would be meeting after morning service. It has been good to see each other’s faces again – and to be able to see that we are outwardly coping well enough.

I’m sorry there has been so little inspiration in this letter. Such are the days we are living through. I will continue to pray for you – and to offer prayers and worship via Facebook and the website. Those activities continue to punctuate my life.

With love and prayers

Stephen

What is distinctive about Methodism?

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

7. Small groups

Early Methodist gatherings were called 'societies'. John Wesley encouraged different kinds of small group to develop, so that both leaders and members of the societies could receive support and challenge in their faith.

These groups, called 'classes' and 'bands' met regularly, and the idea was to be accountable to each other about how each person was living the Christian life. So people had to be very open and willing to be changed by the experience.

In the twentieth century it became less common for classes to meet in this way, but recently many Methodists have been trying to reclaim this tradition.

The supportive small group has been found to be one of the most powerful ways for people to feel that they belong and to learn and grow.

Many Methodist churches have home fellowships, Bible studies and house groups. Increasingly they are seeking in various ways to renew and expand the opportunities for Christian conversation about the things that matter.

You can download a leaflet called Resurrecting the Classes at www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/disc-new-resurrecting-the-classes-180610.pdf. It explores the tradition of small groups in Methodist history, explains how they connect with the more recent development of cell church and gives lots of practical advice about doing small groups well. Some churches have been re-thinking the whole way their church is structured, and have put small groups at the centre, through Cell Church (www.celluk.org.uk).

Bible quiz

(Answers next month, or email editor if you can't wait that long!)

1. What is the last word in the Old Testament?
2. By which name was Paul of Tarsus previously known?
3. Whose wife was turned into a pillar of salt when she looked back?
4. In the Bible, who is said to have lived on a diet of locusts and wild honey?
5. How many years did Noah live for after the flood?
6. There are only three angels named in the Bible, Michael and Lucifer are two - name the other.
7. The book of Esther is unique because it does not mention which word?
8. The Bible was written in three languages - Hebrew, Koine Greek and which other language?
9. Who made the first translation of the Bible into English in 1382?
10. Name the longest book of the Bible with 150 chapters?
11. In which town was Jesus born?
12. Who took the place of Judas in the twelve disciples?
13. Who was the older brother of Moses?
14. What kind of wood was Noah's ark built from?
15. Who, following Moses' death, became the leader of the children of Israel?

Church diary *(provisional...)*

Thursday morning prayers, via Facebook or website

Sunday morning worship, via Facebook or website

Sunday Zoom meeting – ask Stephen for details

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Let your outstretched arm, O Lord, be our defence; your mercy and loving kindness in Jesus Christ, our salvation and the grace of your life-giving Spirit, our strength; now and for ever. **Amen**

John Knox, Book of Common Order, 1564