

Issue 2

29th March 2020

Together as One

Newsletter of the Methodist Churches in Hungerford, Lambourn, Newbury and Thatcham during Coronavirus Pandemic

Watch

From early on in this developing and deeply challenging crisis God has been speaking to me about many things, but the need to be prayerful and watchful was impressed on me from the outset. It comes from Jesus' encouragement to his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane as he faced the agony of what lay ahead. It was an instruction the disciples failed to follow.

We have some idea about prayerfulness but being watchful may not come so easily. These days of social isolation may give us time for watching. Watching birds requires patience and time. It requires attention – noticing details of plumage, colour and behaviour. A few minutes in the garden this week afforded me a moment to watch the first bumble bees busily searching for pollen among the violets and primroses. The vibrant colour of the primroses was only surpassed by the first Brimstone butterfly flitting by.

This is a time to watch over and to watch out for one another following God's example. 'he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord will keep you from all harm – he will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and for evermore.' (from Psalm 121).



It is also a time to watch for God to see what he will do, in unexpected ways in and through our prayers and practical actions where we can in these very unsettling and unfamiliar times. With love and prayers. Peter

Broadcast and online worship services

With the complete closure of church premises across the country the online services broadcast from many churches last Sunday will no longer be possible. However the Methodist Church has indicated that live streaming will take place from Wesley's Chapel, London and Wesley House, Cambridge conducted by those who live on the premises.

I would also encourage you to look for other online praise and worship if you can. Let's see this as an opportunity to discover alternative and enriching ways of worshipping with other traditions. Broadcast services on Radio and TV will continue in a different form including the excellent and varied Daily Service on Radio 4.

Repeat Prescriptions

Please look ahead and remember to put in any repeat prescription requests in good time. We know that one local pharmacy is working 1½ weeks behind on their prescriptions. Service is slower than usual due to staff illness and the need to enforce social distancing. If you don't have someone who can collect medication for you please let us know and we will see what we can do.

Foodbank

Message from Marilyn Britt at Thatcham Methodist Church. I just want to thank you all for donating food items to the Foodbank for the last 7 years. They have all been valued and appreciated by our many clients and also by the volunteers who meet them, hear their stories/crisis and feel we are able to help. This would not be possible without you.

For us all, life has just changed drastically. For many Foodbank clients income has reduced, but most outgoings have at least remained the same and for many increased. Many people will be worried and anxious about the immediate future. May I just ask those of you who are able, still to support the Foodbank which is continuing to help those who need it. The system will be different but effective. Crates will still be available in supermarkets for any donations. And just as important is prayer – it is essential for everyone, volunteers and clients, and for everyone else too that we continue to turn to God in prayer.

Charitable giving

In the present crisis which is affecting so many areas of life please pray for the many charities who will be affected by loss of income at a time when their work is needed more than ever. Now may be the time to think about your charitable giving to see whether you might be able to give a little more when you may be saving on transport costs, eating out, entertainment and other expenditure. I recognise this may not be possible for some as your income may well have suddenly decreased significantly too. God knows our circumstances and our hearts. Please also see the item about support for foodbank.

When you are considering charitable giving please remember your local church as income will have declined due to lack of lettings income. If you give regularly through the envelope scheme it may well be difficult for you to obtain cash and we won't be able to collect envelopes. Please consider setting up a standing order with your bank to allow regular giving to take place. If you need help to do this please contact the treasurer or gift aid secretary in your church.

Greenham Trust Coronavirus Emergency Appeal

The Greenham Trust has agreed to match fund donations up to £100,000 which will be used to support local charities during the present crisis. You can donate here <https://thegoodexchange.com/> The project name is as above - ref 17994.

Count your blessings

There is always something to be thankful for, no matter what is going on around us. How about keeping a list of blessings you can add to daily, or even a blessings book? You may be surprised at how much you write! You may like to write a prayer of thanks.

British Summer Time

Don't forget the clocks go forward by 1 hour on Sunday morning.

Contributions

I am happy to receive contributions for future newsletters if you have helpful advice or experiences to share as we live through this pandemic together. I cannot promise to include everything however as space is limited but I will read them.

And finally (courtesy of Karen Frost)

A priest, a minister and a rabbit walk into a bar. The rabbit said "I think I might be a typo."