

The Methodist Church Huddersfield Circuit

A Letter to the Huddersfield Circuit 25th March 2020

Dear Friends,

These are difficult times for our world and for our communities. Covid-19 is having an impact on us all. For some it brings with it the loss of life itself, for others a significant increase in vulnerability and fear, for loved ones as well as themselves. For some it means anxiety around employment and having enough to live on, for others a deep degree of isolation and loneliness. For some it entails working in ever riskier conditions, especially in hospitals, for others a major adjustment to how their work is done. For some it provides new challenges, for others huge frustration about a human response which leaves supermarket shelves empty.

Much has changed for us all, particularly with the greater restrictions on our lives set out by the government on Monday. Now seems, therefore, an appropriate time to send this letter to you all across the circuit, with my thoughts, prayers and best wishes, as we live through this together, though apart. I know that there is significant commitment playing out in the way you are responding to the challenges – through local community volunteering, keeping in touch with neighbours, friends and family, dealing with administrative issues facing your local churches, working out ways of sustaining reflective and devotional practices. I am reminded of the first conversation Fiona and I had with the Chair of the Haitian Methodist Church when he picked us up from the airport. “You will need to be *flexible* in order to survive in Haiti” he said. We soon discovered on a daily basis that any plans could and would be blown off course by any number of unforeseen obstacles and events. If it rained the phone would stop working until everything had dried out, a part of life that I have been particularly reminded of recently with phone conversations forming such a valuable way in which we are all offering care and support in our current circumstances.

Our rhythm of life has been severely disrupted. We are having to adjust to different patterns, and this is not easy. We are not used to being restricted to our homes – relocated, if you like, or perhaps even dislocated! The instruments in a band or orchestra which focus most on rhythm make up, of course, the percussion section. This provokes some thought, because the word percussion has at its root the idea of striking, hitting or shaking. There is a certain, if for the most part limited, violence in the way rhythms are beat out on drums, cymbals, tambourines and triangles. That is a metaphor or image you may like to reflect on further, but at the very least it seems reasonable to suggest that there is a shaking of the rhythms going on presently in our own lives and in the life of our world.

With this shaking of the rhythms comes vulnerability. When I looked a little further into *percussion* I came across the suggestion that it may also be related to the idea of *bark broken off a tree*. Now that is definitely an image which conjures up for us a loss of whatever may protect us. And much of our vulnerability lies in the uncertainty we are living with – uncertainty and insecurity about our health, our economy, our communities (church and beyond). Will things eventually return to how they were before Covid-19, or has life now changed for good? And how do we feel about that? How do you feel about that?

In the same way that circuit staff are finding new rhythms to our work, exploring alternative ways to sustain church life and community participation, all within a worldwide perspective, so all of us find ourselves working out how our responses might be as creative, meaningful and purposeful as possible.

Whatever we do, it counts!

Keep safe.

With my very best wishes to you all.

David