

### Zooming UK and beyond

I know we all miss gathering as a congregation for worship, prayer and Bible study but in these difficult days we need to strengthen our faith and find a variety of ways to nurture our spiritual growth.

Some people are turning to the TV & radio broadcast services and many are using a variety of online tools, some of which are outlined below.

On Sunday mornings many have joined Ridgeway Methodist Church in Plymouth on Facebook when Rev Darren Middleton preaches from his study.

Others have continued to worship with Revd Mark Dunn-Wilson when he preaches from Truro Methodist Church on YouTube at 11am.

Some have joined with Upton Vale Baptist Church or places they have visited on holiday and one member has travelled far and wide - joining congregations at Christchurch in Midrand South Africa, Tokai Community Church in Capetown, and churches in Lisburn and Newtonards in Northern Ireland.

Prayer requests are shared in the Goodrington Support group on Facebook, WhatsApp or by phone.

There is a weekly MET prayer meeting hosted by Revd David Hull on Zoom each Sunday evening at 7pm. This group continues to grow each week and is a vital way of sharing together in prayer.

Bible studies are widely available online including Methodist Evangelicals Together who have a weekly Zoom study led by Revd Derek Balsdon. They are currently studying the 'I Am' saying of Jesus using Paul Smith's book and are soon to start studying Ruth using the book co-written by John Haley.

Jeff Lucas presents a meeting daily as 'Jeffanory' - a reflection on Facebook and he has led Bible studies on the books of James and Jonah.

These new ways of 'Being Church Together' are growing in popularity and if anyone wishes to be involved in any of the groups please contact me for assistance and further information.

Wendy Forman

### Daily Prayer Partners

24 March was a day that changed our lives in the United Kingdom. We went into lockdown due to the Covid 19 virus infecting and taking so many lives. Everything closed down except essential services but never would we have expected churches to close.

Victoria Park, along with many other churches in the Circuit, consists of mainly elderly members. Communication has to be by telephone so, apart from watching the service on television on a Sunday, something was missing. We decided to light a candle every evening at 7.00pm and pray for one another and the Circuit, which we started to do right at the beginning. After a few days we came up with the idea of Prayer Partners and with encouragement from John Haley we made a rota of everyone who wanted to participate. We have 19 participants to date.

Every evening just before 7.00pm I contact a person on the list and we hear a short piece of music together and then pray for the situation we find ourselves in. I personally find it very moving and I believe everyone feels uplifted by being a prayer partner. It has confirmed my strong belief in the power of prayer.

When we finally open our churches again I have been asked if we can keep our prayer partner group going - to which I can say quite confidently a resounding "yes". Praise the Lord for his faithfulness.

Irene Cochran



The Methodist Church

# CONNECTED

Newsletter of the Torbay Methodist Circuit—Issue 15: June 2020

**"Many parts form one body" (1 Cor. 12:12)**

### Where is God in the good times?

Surely that's the wrong question! As we move into the fourth month of restrictions imposed upon us by the government to control the spread and consequences of Coronavirus, Covid-19, shouldn't the question be 'where is God in the bad times?' But why?

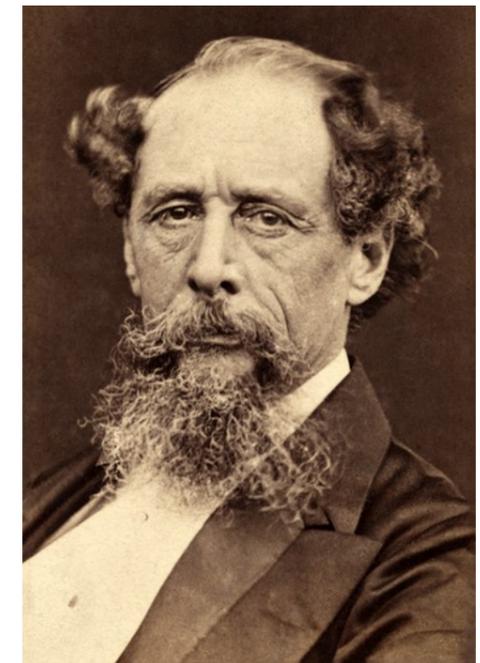
To be honest, I'm feeling a bit fed-up. I was due to spend a month in Brazil, joined for half my time there by my wife and my son, but had to come home after six days. I was due to go to Portugal for three nights with my friends from Torquay United Walking Football Club but that was cancelled. I was due to spend five Sundays with three colleagues at Methodist Churches in Poland but that has all been postponed. And, last but not least, I was due to spend a week with my daughter and her husband and two sons at their home in Germany – but that's not happening either.

These disappointments are, of course, nothing compared with those who have been very ill or with those who have died or have lost family members, friends and loved ones. They are people who my thoughts are with the most. Despite my frustrations, most of the things I had hoped to do will happen at another time – my disappointments are only inconveniences. Happily, that will be the same for most of us. I've even spoken to some people who have told me that, despite being very different, things in the lockdown have not been so bad - more time to spend on hobbies and interests, spring cleaning and gardening, to read or quietly think, even to be free from the stresses and strains of busy daily routine and the pressures of work.

Before we ask 'where is God in the bad times?' we ought really to ask 'where is God in the good times?' I would answer, 'he shows his majesty and grace through his creation, the beautiful sunrise, the blue of the sky, the green of the fields, the red or gold of the sand on the seashore, the glitter on the waves on a glorious sunny day, the colours of the flowers, the smile of a loved one, the kind words of a stranger. We find him in the Bible, in a prayer, in a quiet moment of contemplation.'

So 'where is God in the bad times?' Oh! Did you mean, 'why doesn't he do something about it?' You mean bend the rules of nature, not its majesty and beauty, but its chaos and disorder? Like Jesus did when he healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, fed the multitude, calmed the storm and even raised the dead? Do something like these very things that the sceptic does not believe he did? In other words, why doesn't God do something about Covid-19 to add to the list of things that the sceptic doesn't believe are the work of God?

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair" (*A Tale of Two Cities*, Charles Dickens).



Charles Dickens  
(Source Wikipedia)

Why doesn't God do something about it? Where is he? 'When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals' (Luke 23:33). 'God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them' (2 Corinthians 5:19). Where is God in the bad times? Just where he is in the good times – at the cross – waiting to be reconciled to his estranged creation.

Revd John Haley  
Superintendent Minister

### Zimbabwe: not one pandemic, but two



On 21 April the World Food Programme (WFP) Chief told the U.N. Security Council that the world faced not one but two pandemics. "At the same time while dealing with Covid-19," he said, "we are also on the brink of a hunger pandemic." The hunger pandemic has been caused by war, bad governance, natural disasters and changing weather patterns.

Tragically the people of Zimbabwe find themselves facing these two terrifying pandemics at the same time. Their failing health service was totally unprepared for the virus. The number of those infected and the number of fatalities is unknown, as is the number of deaths caused by starvation, but what is well known to all is the brutal reality of widespread hunger, increasing malnutrition and stunted growth in children. Last month the WFP reached 3.7 million Zimbabweans but that is less than half the number of those who are now food insecure.

Within this crisis - now approaching catastrophic proportions - the Zimbabwe Victims' Support Fund (ZVSF) continues to bring relief food to well over 2,000 of the most vulnerable families across Matabeleland – together with an allocation of soap to protect from the virus. Hunger is proving more of a driver than fear of Covid-19, so those with any money queue for hours to purchase food from supermarkets, even though social distancing is impossible and the stores are forever running out of basic foods. The desperate families receiving relief food from ZVSF are at least spared the queueing; they don't have any money anyway, and are therefore totally dependent on the rations our team bring them.



In the scramble for water - and food - social distancing is impossible in Zimbabwe

At the time of writing we do not know how the lockdown in this country will impact our income as a registered charity; nonetheless the Trustees have decided that, faced with suffering on this scale, we can do no other than to increase our funding to purchase an additional 10 tonnes of the staple food for the next few months. We rely upon Christian friends to help us meet this commitment.

Revd Graham Shaw



Please send good news stories of worship, fellowship, mission and evangelism to Torbay Methodist Circuit Office by no later than 27 July 2020 to be considered for inclusion in the next issue of *Connected*.

Torbay Methodist Circuit Office, Goodrington Methodist Church, Grange Road, Paignton TQ4 7JT

01803 846020 office@torbaymethodistcircuit.org

Office Hours: Tuesday–Friday 9.30am–1.00pm

Printed by Manor Print Shop, Old Torquay Road, Paignton TQ3 3QZ

### Contact us

During the period of the lockdown, the office is closed to visitors. Temporary phone 07380 638244 office@torbaymethodistcircuit.org

www.torbaymethodistcircuit.org

### The singing postman 'Have you gotta loight boy'

For those of you who can remember, there was a postman back in the 1960s who became famous for his singing. During these restricted times I have become a postman - although I haven't been singing yet!

After sorting out those who could be contacted by email and those who log on to Brixham Methodist Church Facebook, there were 30 people who could only receive my weekly letter by post. Four addresses were too far away for me to reach so I have to post them but the rest I hand deliver.

I have three routes to cover - Cowtown, Fishtown and Furzeham - and I certainly appreciate the opportunity to get out for some fresh air. As you know Brixham has very steep hills but fortunately for me, although from where I live I have a steep climb up to my deliveries, I can then always walk back downhill to number 133!

When I am walking up the inclines I puff and pant so much that I can only just manage a thank you to those who give me the 2 metre distance - let alone sing. What I have been able to appreciate is the beauty and wonder of nature and I am reminded that God is not in lockdown but very much alive and active.

I would like to thank the Circuit office for their help in posting to those at Palace Avenue and St. Andrews.



These photos show me at the beginning of my walk where I look fresh but it's a different picture at the end.

God Bless  
Doug

### Caring for the Community

Nick Pannell, a member of Palace Avenue Methodist Church and a mental health social worker in Torbay, writes:

In Paignton the frontline during the corona virus has been our care homes. Two of our largest homes have been affected and my prayers and thoughts these past weeks have been with the families and friends of those who have died.

But my most earnest prayers have been with the staff; there has been genuine heroism from those who have been asked to go into a care home which was heavily infected with Covid-19 and who have put their own lives at risk.

They certainly did not do this for the money - care work pays just above minimum wage. They did it (and continue to do it) because they have a compassion which runs deeper and stronger than their fear.

Soldiers go into battle waving patriotic flags to the sound of drums. Our carers risk their lives because they recognise, in even the most cognitively impaired men and women, a beloved



soul of inestimable value whose life is precious.

I know that those of Christian faith have been in that frontline but also those of other traditions too and those of no faith at all. It is when we can look into the face of a patient, so confused and frightened by the masks and other PPE that they try to pull it off, but we carry on loving and caring - it is then that we display some

God-given quality.

I remember during the Ebola crisis in Sierra Leone in 2015 with carers and nurses dressed head to foot in PPE. Before they went in to infected areas they formed a circle and prayed. Thankfully there is now a vaccine and the pandemic there is beaten.

God has given us the creativity, brains and means to overcome these dreadful diseases but it is His love that joins us to Him, and that passes through us to others, which truly heals.

Nick Pannell

### A Calming Word During the Corona Virus

Joni Eareckson Tada, the founder and Chief Executive Officer of Joni and Friends International Disability Center, is an international advocate for people with disabilities. A diving accident in 1967 left Joni Eareckson, then 17, a quadriplegic in a wheelchair. After two years of rehabilitation, she emerged with new skills and a fresh determination to help others in similar situations. She founded Joni and Friends in 1979 to provide Christ-centred ministry to special-needs families, as well as training for churches. Joni and Friends serves thousands of special-needs families through Family Retreats, and has delivered over 170,000 wheelchairs and Bibles to needy individuals with disabilities in developing nations. Joni survived stage III breast cancer in 2010, yet keeps a very active schedule. She and her husband Ken were married in 1982 and reside in Calabasas, California. You can learn more about Joni's ministry at [www.joniandfriends.org](http://www.joniandfriends.org)

absolutely no reason to be caught up in the panic or blame.

To those who stave off this virus, I implore you to join us in interceding for our nation's exposed populations, including the elderly, disabled people in care centres, special needs families, and ventilator-dependent individuals. These are the very people we serve at *Joni and Friends*, and we are convinced they have God's heart. Join us in lifting these vulnerable persons before the Throne!

When will this outbreak pass? Job would answer, 'I know that [you, O Lord] can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted' (Job 42:2). In the meantime, let us be people of light and hope, sharing Isaiah 46:9-10 with everyone we meet.

*"For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me... My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose."* (Isaiah 46:9-10).

Yes, this coronavirus COVID-19 is disconcerting. But as Dr John Piper writes, 'All natural disasters are a thunderclap of divine mercy... calling all people everywhere to repent and realign their lives, by grace, with the infinite worth of the glory of God.' So, pray fervently, share the good news of God's mercy, rest in His purposes, wipe all counters and wash your hands frequently!

This article is gratefully reproduced from [www.joniandfriends.org](http://www.joniandfriends.org)



Joni writes, I have a deep personal interest in the doctrine of God's sovereignty, for I am also an individual at great risk - I am an ageing quadriplegic with fragile lungs and an immune system which can be easily compromised. But I bolster my confidence with the same assurance we give the people we serve through *Joni and Friends*: The world belongs to Almighty God, so Christians can be confident in His plan and purposes. There is



### New location, same great support

During these difficult times Paignton Community Larder has been working harder than ever to help people who find themselves without the funds to feed themselves and their families.

Many thanks are due to the volunteers who have been able to carry on helping and best wishes to those who can't be with us at the moment but are all looking forward to returning when it is safe to do so.

Our big news is that we have moved to St Andrews Church, Sands Road, Paignton TQ4 6HA and we owe special thanks to the gang from Dacol windows.

Being in two places was becoming more and more difficult as we got busier and we would like to say many thanks to Christ Church for letting us use the Church for the last two and a half years.

When life gets back to normal we will start running Snack and Natter again from St Andrews and we look forward to seeing

new and old faces as we all miss our Monday mornings.

The good news is that we are now open to customers on Mondays 12.00 - 2.00 for collection of food parcels. Since the middle of March we have tripled our food parcels being sent out and since lockdown we have sent out 463 food parcels - equating to 14,634 meals. This meant that we had to go out and buy lots of food, which was interesting to say the least when stocks were so low in the shops.



Anita Davies  
Co-ordinator  
Paignton Community Larder

### Open Schools Worldwide

Here is an extract from a letter our OSWW Director Angie Pape, has just prepared to send to our supporters. Angie is based in South Africa. This letter is to personally thank you for your valued support to Open Schools and to ask you to join our team in prayer as the world faces significant changes to what we have for so long known as 'normal'.

Open Schools has 58 projects in Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa and before the lockdown we had 278 trained tutors helping over 3600 children. We are heartbroken that our children are currently not attending school and we have put our hope in the Lord that they are safe and being well taken care of until we see them again. Thankfully a few of our project partners have been able to continue to feed their children by serving them in small socially spaced groups; often the food they provide is the only meal the children receive each day.

We have utilised the lockdown time to stay in touch with our partners and as many of the tutors as we can, to encourage them and to counsel them if necessary. We are delighted to hear that, as far as we know, nobody is ill with the virus. As a



team we have been meeting via the web to pray for everyone and planning for the reopening of the projects. We have also been working on a tutor handbook which is full of all our training material and teaching tips to enhance the tutors' skills.

Pictured: two of our children at our project at the dump in Ethiopia giving thanks for the meal they are about to eat.

Alan McIlhenny Ph.D.  
Co - Founder  
Open Schools Worldwide