



Yorkshire North & East Methodist District

GREETINGS FROM THE DISTRICT CHAIR, THE REVD LESLIE NEWTON

Dear friends,

"This is the Lentiest Lent I ever Lented"so someone creatively posted on social media a few days ago. It made me smile, but it says something real about the strangeness and challenge of these days. For all of us these 'stay at home' days are testing. We remember especially those who are serving us in the health service, carers, providers, deliverers; those working in essential services to ensure we continue to be well looked after. We remember too the economic implications and hardships, and the truth that whenever there is a shock to the economy it is the poorest who always take the biggest knock. But these days are costly for us all in one way or another.

I'm immensely grateful to ministers, preachers, worship leaders around the District seeking to ensure that people can access worship and prayer resources either in paper or online. Thank you too to all the pastoral visitor and less formal networks of support helping to keep everyone in touch.

Nonetheless, even with all of this wonderful ministry, as we pass through the days of Holy Week and Easter, I recognise that the disruption of our normal patterns of worship and fellowship are costly. It can be hard for us to truly celebrate, and to sustain our faith in the Christ who brings new life, when we are in these days of exile.

I find great hope in these verses from John 20. They remind us that the risen Christ is not kept out of our homes by our walls and doors. He is not kept out of our hearts by our physical separation from our church family. He comes to us, and offers us His peace, and the gifts and fruits of His Holy Spirit.

As John Wesley discovered, all those years ago during spiritual struggle, God can come to us when things are at their toughest and 'strangely warm' our hearts. He brings new life, new beginnings, hope and assurance.

My prayer is that in the strange and hard days of Easter 2020 we will discover the risen Christ coming with fresh power into our homes and our hearts: bringing renewed faith and assurance – that we can then share in all sorts of ways to the world around us.

With love
Leslie

John 20:19-22

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'

TRAVELLING FROM EASTER TO PENTECOST

After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over the course of forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. 'This', he said, 'is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.' **Acts 1: 3-5**

Eastertide is the period traditionally known as the "The Great 50 days" spanning from Easter Sunday to Pentecost Sunday. As we envisage this year's Eastertide being a season of continued social distancing, I want to encourage us to use these days positively – both spiritually and practically. **So, here are three "Great 50 Days 2020" themes:**

LOVE

Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." Matthew 22:37-39

Reflect regularly on the Great Commandments of Jesus and how you can fulfil them in these stay at home days:

- How can you more fully express your love of God?
- How can you show love to your neighbour?
- How can you take better care of yourself?

PRAY

Pray without ceasing. 1 Thessalonians 5:17

Commit to praying each day, remembering especially:

- Your family and loved ones
- Those suffering illness or loss through Covid-19
- Leaders in the church, government and society generally
- Scientists working to find vaccines and treatments
- The future mission and ministry of your church
- Your own relationship with God

GIVE

In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. 2 Corinthians 8:2

Some of us will need to be receiving support rather than being able to give, and we want to be able to respond to that need. However, many of us will be in a position to generously give:

- To local foodbanks or other charities bringing care and support;
- To international agencies such as All We Can, bringing help to the neediest places of our world.

Alongside this, please could I encourage you to give a **'Love Gift' to your local church?** The loss of letting income and cash giving is having a serious effect on local church finances. If you could give through online transfer or cheque, or perhaps write an IOU to be paid when you can return to church, this would be so helpful. Another option is to contribute to the District Benevolent account which is solely to alleviate needs around the District.

GREAT 50 DAYS

LOVE | PRAY | GIVE

I invite you to join with me in making these three themes a priority between Easter and Pentecost.

I will be sharing more resources online and by email to support us in exploring these themes through the 50 Days. Hopefully these can be shared locally with those not online.

To receive
'Great 50 Days 2020'
updates directly
please send me an email to
chair@yorkshirenethodist.org

Please know of the ongoing care, prayers and support of ministers and lay leaders around our District. If you're struggling to find the support you need, please contact the District Office at admin@yorkshirenethodist.org or on 07809 431871