

Chair of District: Rev Gill M Newton

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PASTORAL MESSAGE – SUNDAY 12th APRIL 2020

Dear friends

As I write to you today, I am wondering how you have experienced the journey through Holy Week and how you are feeling as you arrive at Easter Day? The experience will undoubtedly have been very unusual and possibly unlike anything that you have known before. However, maybe our experience isn't that different from the disciples at that first Easter who were locked in a room and feeling very frightened when news of resurrection came to them. So, I hope that somewhere in these strange and different days you will encounter God in new and surprising ways and experience something of the resurrection hope that we celebrate in this season.

Over the coming weeks as we journey from Easter to Pentecost we are hoping to share testimonies of how people across the District have experienced God in this time. A number of people have already been asked to contribute but if you feel that you have a story that you would like to share and which will encourage others, please be in touch with Sam Roberts, District Communications Officer at comms@sheffieldmethodist.org

Sharing our stories to encourage one another is just one way in which we can express our faith in action and show a generosity of spirit towards one another. As we celebrate this Easter time, albeit in rather unusual circumstances, I want to encourage all of us to display that spirit of generosity in whatever ways we can.

At the heart of the gospel which we celebrate at Easter is the immense generosity and depth of love displayed by God in Christ for the whole world. The life, ministry, death and resurrection of Christ all speak powerfully of God's generous grace and we are seeing reflections of that in many ways in our families, in our communities, in our nation and in our world right now as people live and work and show care for one another in incredibly sacrificial ways in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic.

So, whilst recognising that some of us will find ourselves in need of support from others, it could be tempting for any of us to simply focus on and be concerned about our own needs and the needs of those we love rather than considering how we might respond generously to the many needs that there are within our communities, society and world? How can we continue to exercise this spiritual discipline of giving? Here are a few suggestions:

- Some local churches are concerned about their finances at the moment because of a loss of income from offerings and lettings. So, why not consider giving an extra financial gift to your local church? If you already give electronically it will be easy to add to that. If you usually give through an envelope scheme or in cash then ask your church treasurer about how to give electronically or simply put funds aside to give when we are able to be together again in church.

- The District has made it possible to donate via the District website to our District benevolent fund. In this way you could help the District to support individuals, projects, churches or partner organisations that are struggling in these times. You will find the information on our District website www.sheffieldmethodist.org/easter-giving-2020/ or you can following this link directly cafdonate.cafonline.org/12681#!/DonationDetails
- Local foodbanks are appealing for extra support. Why not increase what you usually donate to them or consider starting to give on a regular basis if you've not given before?
- Charities like "All We Can" have set up Coronavirus appeals to help support communities all over the world who are struggling with the pandemic. Why not consider supporting such a fund?
- Spend some more of your time in prayer for those who are in most need in these days or making contact by telephone with those who are alone and feeling vulnerable.

I'm sure you may have plenty of other ideas about how you can be generous. So, however you choose to respond I trust that you will also know God's blessing as we remember and celebrate all that God continues to provide and offer to us even in these difficult days. And if you are someone who is need of support yourself, please don't hesitate to be in touch with your own local minister or with me.

Christ is risen – He is risen indeed! May that truth make a difference to you each day and may it continue to prompt us all to live generously and graciously as we journey on.



Gill Newton

District Chair