



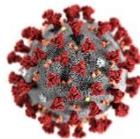
# The Aldershot and North Camp Anchor

Issue 15: Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Dear Friends,

The headlines proclaim, “The Football Season Starts Again” but the headlines don’t tell the whole story. What has started again is very different to what stopped back in March. Football matches are played behind closed doors with computer generated crowd noise and, for some matches at least, cardboard cut-out pictures of supporters in the stands. To adapt a phrase from Star Trek – “It’s football – but not as we know it”.

Similarly, the headline “Churches to open in July” doesn’t tell the whole story. The Government document, giving details of the regulations which must be followed if a church is to open for worship, runs to a total of 19 pages. The Methodist Church has issued its own document applying the general Government regulations to Methodist Churches. This document runs to 16 pages not including the separate Risk Assessment documents.



It isn’t possible to include here all the advice given in these two documents, but key issues are:

- The need to complete a detailed risk Assessment as a legal requirement.
- The need to continue with the 2-metre social distancing unless additional protections (such as requiring people to wear masks throughout the service) are put in place.
- The need to have one-way routes in our buildings, separate entrances and exits and a system to ensure that hand washing, or sanitising, can take place as people enter and leave the church.
- The need to keep an accurate record of those who attend each service so that if there is an outbreak of Covid-19 we can supply this information to the Government ‘track and trace’ system.

- The need to exclude any singing from our services and to limit the length of the services – perhaps to 30 or 45 minutes in total – with the requirement that those attending worship leave the building immediately after the service.
- The need to ensure that communion is taken in a ‘Covid-secure’ way. It is not clear how this might be done but it might involve the use of gloves and full face plastic visors to distribute the elements.
- The need to ensure that those aged over 70 or in other vulnerable groups continue to follow the advice to ‘stay home as much as possible’.

None of these regulations is impossible for us to follow, but putting the details in place will take some time. We are not planning to meet together at Aldershot or North Camp before September. We will need to accept that even when we decide that it is safe for us to gather for worship, it will not be ‘church as we know it’.

Last weekend The Very Rev Robert Willis, the Dean of Canterbury Cathedral, spoke about the reopening of the Cathedral. During the lockdown the Dean has been leading on-line prayers from his garden. The daily morning prayers, when held in the cathedral, gathered a congregation of about fifteen people. The on-line prayers have been watched by three thousand people each day and there is the desire that such on-line worship might continue alongside the return to a physical gathering.



The Dean, pictured here wearing the protective mask he will use when giving

communion, is quoted as saying “The pandemic has taught us to value the things we took for granted, but we need time to reflect on what it means for our future”.

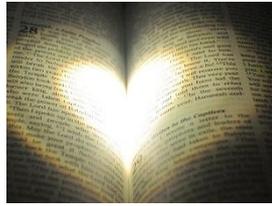
Those are wise words and over the coming weeks we will, at Aldershot and North Camp, prayerfully reflect on what we have taken for granted and what this new situation means for our future.

Yours in His service,

*Chris Blake*

## Worship Reflection

Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.  
(Psalm 119 v 105)



### Hymn (StF 97)

When all your mercies, O my God,  
My rising soul surveys  
Transported with the view, I'm lost  
In wonder love and praise.

Prayer: Living God, for the strength that you have given and for the help that you are always ready to give, receive our praise. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

### Bible Reading (Matthew 13 v 1-9)



That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. Such large crowds gathered round him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. Then he told them many things in parables, saying: 'A

farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop – a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. Whoever has ears, let them hear.'

### Reflection

I have a friend who comes from a farming family. One Sunday, when he was preaching on this parable, he took into church an old-fashioned hand operated sowing machine like the one shown in this picture. The machine is worked by moving a piece of wood back and forth like the bow on a violin. This action enables the seed to be widely spread around the farmer's field. My friend demonstrated this in the service and every part of the church was covered with seed!



I'm not sure what those doing the church cleaning thought of this illustration, but his point was well made. The parable speaks about a generous sower who scatters good seed into every part of the field. The difference between the growth or otherwise of the crop is not down to the action of the sower, but is due to the quality of the soil.

God's gracious love is generously made available to each one of us – but how is our soil? Are we hard hearted, or shallow, or do we fill our lives with 'weeds' which distract us from being faithful followers of Jesus?

If we are open to God's words, focused on Jesus and open to the work of the Holy Spirit then we will be good soil and God's harvest will be seen in our lives.

### Prayers of Intercession

We pray especially this week for -

- Our churches in Aldershot and North Camp as we explore how we can be safe and 'Covid-secure'.
- Children and young people as they spend time in the classroom in the last weeks of this school year.
- All who face particular challenges with their mental or physical health at this time..

Gracious God, we ask these prayers through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord and Saviour. Amen

### Hymn (StF 124 v 3)

For the harvests of the Spirit, Thanks be to God;  
For the good we all inherit, Thanks be to God;  
For the wonders that astound us,  
For the truths that still confound us,  
Most of all that love has found us,  
Thanks be to God.

Final Prayer Gracious God, so dwell within us that we will rejoice each day at all your mercies and love you with all our heart and soul and mind. Amen.

The Story project returns next week. Contributions (250 words maximum) telling something of your story of faith can be sent to [chris.blake@methodist.org.uk](mailto:chris.blake@methodist.org.uk)



Bible Reading: © Biblica 2011. Prayers: Methodist Prayer Handbook © TMCP 2019. Some prayers taken from "2000 prayers for public worship" by Nick Fawcett. CCLI No 000295.