

Warwick Methodist Church
Keeping in Contact During Covid-19
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Dear Friends,

“Doing nothing with friends is never doing nothing, is it?” asked the boy.
“No,” said the mole.

That quote from my current favourite book, *The Boy, the mole, the fox and the Horse*, highlights what for most of us has been the most painful part of this pandemic – the reduction in social contact with our families, friends, and our church family.

Sometimes we have important news to share – this week, my family are excited because my eldest niece has got engaged! When they will actually be getting married, and how many of us will be able to attend, is another matter – but the news brings us joy. My mother, still mourning the loss of her dog who had to be put down after a road accident, is making plans to go and view a puppy – much to my sister’s disapproval. Sometimes, we have things which burden us, and it helps to have someone to talk it over with. But much of the time, when we are in someone else’s company, what we talk about is not that important. What matters is being together – knowing that someone else enjoys your company, wants to listen to what you have to say, and is willing to share with you some of the things that are important to them. We are social animals – even those of us who are introverts and enjoy our own company.

The pandemic has made this contact so much more difficult for us. Yes, we can use the phone – but it’s not the same as sitting down over a cup of tea or coffee and having a good old chat, is it? And while cafes are open, I’m sure I’m not the only person who is still feeling somewhat nervous about going into them. And so we are thrown back on our own company, or the TV, a book, the radio.... and it’s not the same.

Of course, not all the relationships in our lives are the ones in which simply being in the other person’s company is the focus. When I go to the GP, I expect her to be empathetic and professional, but I would not expect her to tell me anything about what’s going on in her own life, or discuss politics. At the hairdresser, there is more of a chatty atmosphere, and a bit more personal sharing. But if I were having a crisis in the middle of the night, I would not expect to turn to either of them, and if I happened to pass them in the street it would be nice to be acknowledged, but I would not expect them to stop for a chat.

With my close friends, and with my sisters, I expect to be able to talk about anything – inconsequential things, things of deep significance, and utter rubbish. Simply communicating with them is a way of nurturing the relationship.

What about our relationship with God? Is it professional and structured – hymn, opening prayer, readings, sermon, prayers of intercession, closing hymn? Is it chatty, but confined to a certain time and place? Or is it a true, deep, respectful, lasting friendship? Is God the one to whom you can and would turn, at any time of day or night? The one to whom you can tell anything and know that you will be heard. The one you can trust with your deepest self and know that you will be held tenderly. The one with whom you can do nothing, and it be time well spent.

Next Sunday, October 18th, we launch our new venture called Not Your Normal Church, or NYNC for short, at 3pm. The first session, which I will be leading, will be guided silent meditation. I will tell you a little about meditation, and guide you through one way of doing it – how to meet with God in the silence, becoming comfortable in God's presence, listening to what the still small voice has to say, and receiving the grace, love and healing which are always on offer to us. It will also be available on Zoom – details to be posted on the church website and on the WhatsApp group, if you prefer to join in from home. It may not be for you – but you won't know unless you try!!

It's a bit too soon (in my view) to be using the C-word yet, but I can't deny that Advent is approaching. This year, we would like to produce a devotional guide for Advent, incorporating readings, prayers or quotes to accompany us on the journey through Advent. If you have anything suitable, please send it to me and depending on how much I receive it may or may not make it in! The idea is to produce a little card or leaflet which can be distributed to all of our church family. Even though meeting is possible, it is not comfortable for everyone, and it's still not the same. So anything we can do to reinforce our sense of connection sounds good to me.

We are not alone. We are one with God, and with one another. It's just that we sometimes forget.

Keep safe; keep caring; keep praying.
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