

Warwick Methodist Church
Keeping in Contact During Covid-19
Number 35 – 6th October 2020

Dear Friends,

Well, what a day!! We met in church – 33 people present, with another 25 joining over Zoom (including family in Australia and Cardiff). Yes, it was strange not singing – but after so long apart, it was good to be together. The foyer sometimes got a bit too crowded for people to stay 2m apart, so may I gently remind you that of all the measures we are currently recommended to follow, maintaining physical distance is probably the most important.

It is of course more difficult to hear what people are saying when wearing a mask, even if you are not hard of hearing. Perhaps we all need to learn some hand signals!! The next service planned at church is at 3pm on Sunday 18th October – Not Your Normal Church – and will comprise approximately half an hour of silent guided meditation, following the pattern of the three verses of Be Still and Know that I am God. We are currently planning that it will also be available over Zoom. A couple of people asked me after the service on Sunday when we would return to meeting weekly. The answer at the moment is that we don't know, the leadership team is keeping it under review, along with the question of how long to continue with the Prayer and Reflection sessions on Wednesdays and Saturdays. It is a question of weighing up the undoubted spiritual and emotional benefits of gathering, with how many people want to gather, and how many are available to do to the necessary work. Watch this space for any changes.



Now, how about another jigsaw – it's been a while since I shared one. This one was tricky – all the different shades and shadows, and given the subject matter, no right way up either. To complicate things even further – it is double-sided, with another collection of marbles on the other side.

There are some decisions in life which are straightforward. There is unambiguously a right way and a wrong way to do certain things, a right and a

wrong decision to make. But the older I get, the more apparent it becomes to me that those things are few and far between. Most issues can be viewed from a whole variety of perspectives and angles, with people arriving at different conclusions based on where they started from.

A friend of mine recently posted something online about the search for a vaccine. A friend of theirs, whom I do not know, made a lengthy reply which had nothing good to say about anyone, referred to the 'plandemic' – a word which is used to suggest that the virus is being used as a means of undermining civil liberties – and along with references to a whole host of conspiracy theories, said that the death figures were being overstated by the government, with the true figure being around 2,500. I asked this person to explain their perspective and was treated to a rather uncomplimentary tirade. Buried in it was the statement that this man's mother had died in June because her usual treatment had been suspended due to Covid.

I expressed my condolences and retreated. It was not the time to dig in to the circumstances or conduct a careful analysis of the various information he was seeking to spread. I don't know whether this man's mother's life was shortened by her not receiving treatment, and if so, by how much. I don't know how many others have been in a similar situation. And – here's the important thing – while we do know that the measures taken to control the virus have been hard to bear and brought their own problems, and will have repercussions for years to come, none of us can be certain what would have ensued if different decisions had been taken. I also know that that man was grieving, and in order to cope with his grief, he had turned to anger.

Where do we turn, when we don't know what to do? Centuries ago, the prophet known as Second Isaiah wrote this:

For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.
⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts. Isaiah 55:8-9

When life is confusing and we do not know what to do for the best, it helps to take some time to be quiet, and ask God to show us his thoughts. I find it especially helpful when someone has done something which riles me! Few people set out to cause offence and hurt to others. Mostly we hurt one another through mis-steps and lack of attention – and I find quiet listening a helpful way of recalling that perspective. That person who causes you so much irritation had things going on in their life, past or present, which leads them to be the way we are. That goes for Government officials and your next door neighbour, as well as random people off the internet – and me, and you!

Keep safe; keep caring; keep praying.
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