



'Staying Connected' 21
Week Beginning Sunday 9th August 2020
Pastoral Letter

Dear friends,

We've been sharing together in 'Staying Connected' and Zoom worship for 21 weeks now. I'm sure none of us imagined at first that there would be so many restrictions on our lives and it would last for so long.

I wonder what has been the hardest thing for you during this time of pandemic? Maybe just getting through each day, maybe making decisions to find the confidence to leave our homes again and be around people. Maybe someone in your family has lost their job and sees no hope of finding one or maybe a bereavement. There has been so much uncertainty that has left us all seeking comfort and assurance.

I've felt the hardest thing has been social distancing from those you love. For me I've found it so hard that I haven't been able to hug my daughter yet – or my two little grandsons. Jack is just 2 years old and doesn't understand, and recently reached out his arms to me when he saw me at the window. What a difficult moment as I pushed back the tears. How I've longed to reach out and hold them all and feel the comfort of love and togetherness. There is something so comforting about the touch of a hand. I've felt myself just wanting to comfort others who I've seen in need, in a natural way, by putting a hand on a shoulder, that touch of reassurance.

What a blessing it has been to know that in the darkest moments of peoples lives , even the end of life experiences, that we have seen our remarkable front line carers in care homes and hospital wards, full of compassion holding people's hands in those final moments to bring comfort.

Down the centuries the touch of the hand has been pictured through songwriters, artists, sculptures and many other creative forms. An old folk song expressed: *"Put your hand in the hand of the one who stilled the waters"*. In the 60's - The Beatles sang: *"I want to hold your hand"*.

I remember visiting the Sistine chapel in the Vatican and discovered that Michelangelo had designed the panel of the creation of man, with the fingers of God and Adam, touching each other. The leaders at that time demanded that there was no touch, but that the fingers of both were kept apart and more: that the finger of God was always stretched to the maximum. The meaning being that God is always there reaching out to us, stretching out his hand, but the decision to reach out and touch him is up to us.

In the film 'Love Actually' we hear a beautiful rendition of Keith Whitley's song, *"When You Say Nothing At All"* ... Which includes the words: *"There's a truth in your eyes saying you'll never leave me
The touch of your hand says you'll catch me if ever I fall."*

That gave me a picture of today's lectionary reading from Matthews gospel: In the midst of the storm when Peter stepped out of the boat we read: *"Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him"* (Matthew 14:31.) When Peters faith faltered, he reached out to Jesus, the only one who could help.

Jesus is still waiting for us and will always be there in every storm of life as we reach out to him. We keep on walking forwards as we continue to live with Coronavirus with the assurance that Jesus walks with us, comforts us and blesses us and holds our hand.

Last Sunday I went for a first walk with my family, we were still social distancing, but Jack came up alongside me and a small little hand reached out for mine and held tight. I suppressed tears of joy and inwardly thanked God for that special moment.

With many good wishes, prayers and Christian love to you all. Rev Fran

(PS. If you are coming to Zoom Worship this Sunday evening at 7.00pm, please could you have a tealight or candle with matches, and a piece of sandpaper or a nail file/emery board or scouring pad alongside you.)