



## Worship and Pastoral Resources for “Staying Connected”

### Week Beginning Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2020

This is the second of our ‘Staying Connected’ communications.

As Ministers we wanted to assure you that we hope to be able to encourage and resource the whole church family in as many ways as possible with the restrictions that we are living with in this current crisis. Adrian wrote the first one and this is me Fran, bringing you hopefully some positive thoughts and some of God’s overflowing love for each and every one of us. Julie and David will share in the coming weeks and we hope to continue being linked with you all in the days that lie ahead even if we can’t see you.

Our Methodist church is a Connexion, from the President of Conference to every one of us as worshippers and members. John Wesley desired for us to stay in touch with each other through the way we are organised as Methodists through pastoral groups and fellowships. So please stay connected through this link and play your part in passing these ‘Staying Connected’ messages on through your church family contacts each week. We are all in this together as God’s family and we want to share spiritual support and care in whatever ways are the most appropriate as we heed all the Government’s important instructions to us.

In most of our lifetimes there’s never been a time when so much has changed so quickly and left us all wondering what will happen next. This week has brought us a very difficult challenge – not to be able to visit those who are outside our own household; our parents, children, grandchildren, or our closest loved ones and I know we will all feel that wrench.

Any change is not easy at the best of times as it can seem we are moving out of our comfort zones, and Coronavirus has done that to us all. But what if the shift is a favourable one in the long run and ends up helping us to reset our life balance and reconnect to ourselves and what is truly important. The good news is that our faith strengthens us when things around may seem to shift, for we know we have a God who is faithful and who sent His Son to show us His love for all time and in all times and places.

**“Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday today and forever”** (*Hebrews 13:8*)

He is the constant in our lives who holds us fast when the storms seem to be all around.

**“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus the Author and perfecter of our faith”** (*Hebrews 12:2*) as we draw towards Holy Week.

May God bless and protect you, and all those you love during these challenging times.

Rev Fran Johnson

## Devotions

### Bible Reading (Philippians 4: 5b-7)

“The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

### ‘Thought for the day’

I guess we have all had some anxiety in the last few weeks. There are such a lot of ‘What if’s’ around at the moment. St. Paul is saying to us in all this, ‘God is near’, nearer than we think, closer than a breath and we can turn all our thoughts and worries towards Him in prayer. Our familiar hymn reminds us. “Take it to the Lord in prayer”. I hope we will turn to God whenever we start to worry, just to pause and stop and pray and discover that he is listening.

St Paul continues with what he sees as the outcome of bringing all our thoughts to Him – the peace of God will be ours and take us beyond all human understanding to a place where we can trust that God is in control.

So, may we let God’s peace guard our hearts against anxiety as we face whatever situations are around us and find His peace in the storm.

***Jesus said: “Do not let your hearts be troubled, trust in God, trust also in me. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you” (John 14:1 and 27)***

### Hymn (From STF 611)

Brother, sister let me serve you, let me be as Christ to you,  
Pray that I may have the grace to let me be your servant too.

I will hold the Christ-light for you, in the night-time of your fear,  
I will hold my hand out to you, speak the peace you long to hear.

### Prayer

We direct our voices towards heaven as we pray “Our Father who art in heaven.....”

### Blessing

*May the Lord comfort us in sorrow, calm us when anxious,  
us when lonely, embolden us when afraid,  
the light of his presence  
with the golden wings of his love. Amen.*

*befriend  
guide us with  
and protect us  
(Annette Sampson)*

## **Good News – Stories of Hope and Kindness - Ideas to share - Prayer Concerns**

A huge thank you to all those who lit candles last Sunday evening. It was a real help to remind us of our dependence on our heavenly Father and the future that he holds. I found it so helpful to know that we as a Circuit, Christians all over the world, as well as people we'd invited on our street were praying at the same time, and that the Light of Christ was shining in so many homes. I hope you found it encouraging.

I shared the idea with neighbours who also lit candles. On Monday night they lit them again and this has happened all week, so we have lit ours too to share a oneness. Good news - and prayer is spreading.

### **Shining the love of Jesus in our Communities**

The church at Hathersage, is placing a cross outside the chapel for people to tie on ribbons as prayer requests. The members at Litton are placing their cross outside the chapel for Easter Sunday covered with flowers.

For Graham and I, coming to live in Rowsley and in this small estate of 43 houses, gave us the opportunity to write to each home and offer help for anyone who may need it, and to ask for others who might be willing to help, to let us know. The response has been fantastic and so many have said how grateful they are to see a community spirit at work.

### **Prayer requests**

Our Children's and family's worker, Karen, is producing some material for the children in the Circuit. Please pray for this to be a real help as its distributed.

We remember our dear friend Josephine Soon who left our Circuit to train for the Ministry. Her Mother passed away on Sunday evening in Malaysia and we pray for her.

Please pray for couples who are looking forward to their wedding day and now find there is uncertainty as to when this may happen.

We pray for Cliff College, its Staff and Students that they will find the best way to be a dispersed community and be able to continue with valuable teaching and studying.

We offer prayers for all children and young people in our local schools and churches whose opportunity to take their important exams has been taken from them.

We pray for our neighbours that we may them show God's love and care. Guide us as to how we may be able to help and to shine for Jesus.

We lift up our Government and pray for wisdom and unity as they plan ahead.

We pray for all the NHS Staff and thank God for the 405,000 people who have already volunteered to join them in helping us work together to fight this virus. Lord keep them safe as they serve, protect them and give them the strength and help they need. AMEN

*Please share news, ideas and prayer requests with us and suggest worship materials which may be helpful for others. We would be pleased to hear from you via email or phone.*

## Resources/Suggestions for Worship at Home

Keep looking at the MC website, the Peak Circuit website and the Peak Circuit Facebook page. There will be a devotional video for Sunday from Adrian. Use last week's ideas too.

**The Connexional Prayer Handbook** - ask your Church Steward or Minister if you haven't got this year's copy

**Songs of Praise** is a helpful time of worship and good news stories from Christians

**The Archbishop of Canterbury** virtual Sunday service – on all local Radio stations. Last Sunday he urged people to care for others “in person or virtually” during “this strange and difficult time”

WORSHIP RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES \_\_\_\_\_ To all

families in the Peak: we are preparing weekly worship material for families with very young children, children and/or young people. These can be sent you by email and allow you mix and match prayers, bible story and activities from the different age groups to suit your family. Please email Karen, Children and Families Worker on [drklp02@gmail.com](mailto:drklp02@gmail.com) or text 07879 004167.

**Also for those with tots, children and young people:** from Joel at St. Thomas at Chesterfield Christian messages which, although presented for younger people, I found helpful for me

Kids Church – Every Sunday morning: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5tK44qnmdb>

Youth Church – Every Sunday morning: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zSDPq1fICAM>

Tots Time on Facebook – Thursday morning at 10.00am – Christian half an hour of songs and a bible story <https://www.facebook.com/TotsTimeStThoms/videos/d41d8cd9/543947766238576/>

## Suggestions for Pastoral Support

### Telephone contact:

Are there people who are on their own you can help? - Perhaps you can arrange to telephone someone on a certain day and time each week, so they have something to look forward to. The Ministers are happily available for anyone to contact –details on Plan

### Praying regularly

Perhaps get a prayer triplet together with 2 others, and over the phone or in an e mail, share with each other your own needs, difficulties and joys and then arrange to pray regularly for the other two in your group. Keep in touch and see how God is answering your prayers. **“Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you”** (1 Peter 5:7)

### Acts of kindness

There are already stories being told of wonderful acts of kindness across neighbourhoods. Alongside your prayers, take the opportunity to telephone or email someone who is isolated, buy some additional food for your local foodbank, or offer to deliver shopping for an elderly neighbour. We may not be able to touch physically, but we can make connections in so many other ways. I saw one church had placed little posies of flowers outside the church door and a sign saying please take one.

*Please share any other ideas with us*