

Dear Friends,

The lockdown has affected people in different ways. Introverted people, who are energised in solitude and who find socialising tiring, have perhaps been the folk who have most easily adapted. Some have thrived and found this was a crisis where their personality traits could be deployed for the common good. Perhaps in future we will value these people more, rather than labelling them 'aloof'.

Extraverts, on the other hand, who are energised by meeting people and who find solitude draining, have had a hard time. Some have reported symptoms of depression. In them and others there may be long-term ongoing pastoral needs as a result.

Likewise, we are only beginning to glimpse signs of the future effects on our wider society. Home working will doubtless play a bigger part in the world of work, even if it is more easily utilised for white collar and middle-class jobs. Already I hear stories of employers reconfiguring offices with workstations spaced further apart, and likely rotas of who will be in the office when, rather than everybody being there together Monday to Friday.

Other industries may be less fortunate. I write on the day Pret A Manger has announced job cuts (where will I get my Chicken Caesar baguette and Cinnamon Danish in future?) and the arts and entertainments industries are being offered financial assistance but with no clear sign when they can offer live shows again.

The Church will not remain untouched, either. The Gospel may not change because God's character is unchanging, But if the message is unaltered, our methods may not be.

We can be pretty certain that when we do begin worshipping together in the same physical space again that it won't be a straightforward return to how things were as recently as February. Communal singing isn't going to be possible for a while since the additional exertion can project the virus further. That is going to be very strange for a Methodist spirituality that was 'born in song'. For the time being some of our preachers who are still shielding may appear on screen rather than in person. And for a considerable time we shall not get our caffeine fix after the service, but leave quickly after the blessing.

Well, that all sounds rather miserable, doesn't it? Is there a way to be positive as we go forward into this great unknown? I think there is.

While we wait for some of our cherished practices to return once the virus has been sufficiently suppressed in our society, it would be good to concentrate on valuing the things we do have rather than bemoaning what we don't have. After all, what we do have is all given to us by God. These things we do have are his gifts to us and therefore should be treasured.

Allow me an illustration from my hobby of photography. People ask, 'What is the best camera to buy?' and that's a bad question, because some are better for sports action and journalism, some are better for landscapes, some for portraits, and so on. But even without that, it's a common response among photographers to say that 'The best camera is the one

you have with you.' Use whatever is to hand and use it well! There is a time to be content and to use what you have skilfully. Only as your skill develops, may it be worth buying a better camera.

And something like that is important for us as Christians. Paul told Timothy that 'godliness with contentment is great gain' (1 Timothy 6:6) and while we don't have all the resources we would love to have, this may be an important Christian principle for us to remember and to live out. Wouldn't it also make a good witness in a society that never seems to think it has enough?

And if the coronavirus and possibly a no-deal Brexit lead our nation into a severe recession, it may be even more important than we think now.

Every blessing in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave Faulkner". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

**Dave Faulkner**