

Dear Friends,

I am conscious that during the traditionally sleepy days of summer, this year church and circuit officers are very busy behind the scenes preparing for the business meetings which await us from September, making arrangements for the welcome services for Rev Funnell and Rev Payne, and planning the way forward with regard to the changing Covid-19 situation. We do owe a debt of gratitude to all those volunteers who give so generously of their time and effort for the work of God's Kingdom, through the Methodist Church.

Of course, the Church has always relied heavily on the devotion and dedicated service of its key members. One such person is Mrs Daphne Platt, whose inspirational long service at Addlestone, and as a circuit trustee, is truly remarkable. It was an honour to have met Daphne and I know that her passing on the 12th August will be lamented throughout the circuit by all who have enjoyed fellowship with her over the years.

This may be an appropriate place to thank Jenny Jackson for her unstinting service as Circuit Meeting Secretary, as she relinquishes that role, (which has yet to be filled). As we have begun to prepare for the September Circuit Meeting it is obvious what a fine job Jenny has done, and how much we have relied on her knowledge and guidance. Jenny has been a key figure in the life of the South East Methodist District, as Lay Stationing Representative, which is a major task in itself. Jenny is very much a Connexional Methodist and has attended Methodist Conference and supported the Connexion in various ways, including involvement in the life of the Queens Foundation Birmingham, where ministers are trained. I am sure Jenny will continue to serve the Church some way, but I do want to thank her on behalf of the circuit for her outstanding work as Circuit Meeting Secretary.

As I write I am conscious of the anniversary of V J Day, marking the final end of WWII. Like many of you, this is significant for me as my own father and an uncle of Hilary's both served in the Far East. There is no need for me to recount the stories that emerged after the war of the deprivations endured by many of our servicemen and civilians. We thank God for the comparative peace that we have enjoyed in more recent years but are aware of the continuing sacrifices of service men and women and their families. Let us continue to pray that former enemies may live in peace as friends.

I recently had an opportunity to visit Plymouth Hoe, with its long naval tradition, which goes right back to Sir Francis Drake and the Armada. There is a magnificent memorial there maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. It serves as a memorial for 23,000 sailors in the First and Second World Wars, whose names are recorded on the attached plaques, for whom there is no known grave. The immensity of the loss to the families involved, and the sacrifices of the sailors concerned, impinged forcibly on my mind as I walked around the memorial. The cruelty of war and the dignity of service somehow come together when one pauses to reflect at such a monument. I thought also of the grief borne quietly by so many families, who recognised that, though their own pain was hard to bear, many of their neighbours were also enduring tragedy and loss. They were truly, *'in it together'*.

**Pastoral Letter 21 19.08.20**

It seems to me, and this is a personal view, that in today's world the fashion is to celebrate victimhood, rather than to bravely endure suffering and celebrate survival and the overcoming of hardship. I do wonder if we are as resilient as former generations, who were seemingly more deeply rooted in the Christian faith than is today's society.

Words normally attributed to St Theresa of Avila (1515 – 1582), tell us: "*Patient endurance attaineth to all things; who God possesseth in nothing is wanting; alone **God sufficeth.***"

These are wise words, worthy of our acceptance, especially in the current pandemic.

I also encourage you to meditate on the words of Psalm 46 (AV):

*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. <sup>2</sup> Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; <sup>3</sup> Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. <sup>4</sup> There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. <sup>5</sup> God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early. <sup>6</sup> The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted. <sup>7</sup> The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. <sup>8</sup> Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth. <sup>9</sup> He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire. <sup>10</sup> Be still and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. <sup>11</sup> The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. "*

May God continue to bless you.

Warm regards,

Keith

Keith C. Beckingham, Superintendent Minister.