

"It is more blessed to give than to receive." Acts 20: 35

Dear Friends,

I wonder what your experiences have been of giving and receiving? Hopefully, many of you have already received your first dose of a Covid vaccination and many more are in the pipeline. What a blessing it is to receive the gift of a significant level of protection against such a harmful virus. What a blessing it is to receive the gift of scientific, medical, governmental, and logistical expertise to enable us to look hopefully towards a time of freedom regained. What a blessing it is to receive such a gift when we consider all those around the world who will not receive it for many months, if not years, to come. What a blessing a return to freedom and liberty will be for us when we stop to consider all those whose freedom has been taken from them unjustly be harsh and oppressive political regimes. What a blessing it is to receive.

As a family we have been blessed in so many ways, large and small, through receiving the gifts or experience of other people - gifts of care and compassion, wisdom and prayer, small practical help during tough times, even the gift of a car out of the blue at a point in time when we were struggling to manage both mine and Lyndsey's work having to share transport! The Methodist Church has gifted to me rent-free accommodation and a living allowance to enable me to fulfil my calling as one of its Ministers. It has also recently gifted to me, and all other Ministers the opportunity to benefit from pastoral supervision – the chance to share with and be listened to by a wise mentor, which enables us to care for ourselves as we seek to care for others.

These are all blessings that I have received. It is a great spiritual practise, as the old song says, *"to count your blessings – name them one by one,"* to remind ourselves of when and how we experience the goodness and generosity of God at work in our lives. Perhaps this season of Lent during this time of pandemic is a most opportune time to count our blessings! We have all received so much through the goodness of God expressed to us through other people.

The Methodist Way of Life calls us to *"practise hospitality and generosity."* The words of Jesus recorded in Acts 20: 35 remind us that *"It is more blessed to give than to receive."* If I am so blessed through all that I have received, how much more blessed by God are those who have given to help me! If I am so blessed through all that I have received, how much more blessed will I be if I replicate that generosity towards others. Not that we give in order to be blessed! We give because we have been blessed by what we have received. In Matthew 7: 12 Jesus says: *"In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets."* We call this saying, *"The Golden Rule."* If I am blessed to receive good gifts, then I need to be the

sort of person who will give good gifts to others because then, I am living in the character of Christ.

A few verses earlier in Matthew 7 Jesus says: *“Is there any among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!”*

Generosity is in the heart of God, it is an aspect of the fruit of the Spirit and a part of the calling of Jesus’ disciples. We can give time, prayer, expertise and finance to build up the Body of Christ and enable God’s mission through the Church. And I would encourage you to prayerfully consider how you can do that. But actually, I want to challenge you to go beyond that and ask yourself how you can express God’s mission through your own life by practising hospitality and generosity to those who are in need, be they neighbours and friends close by, or people you have never and will never meet, on the other side of the planet. Maybe jot down a few thoughts in response to this letter and see if you can act on any of them in the week ahead. Freely we have received, freely we should give! You will bless someone through it and you will be blessed by God as you grow deeper into his image in you.

Every blessing,

Rev Tim

Notice

World Day of Prayer 5th March 2021

The World Day of Prayer is a global ecumenical women-led movement. This year’s service has been prepared by women from Vanuatu on the theme “Build on a strong foundation”, looking at the Parable of the Wise and Foolish builders.

As we are not able to meet together you are invited to share in the service which is being hosted by St Mary’s Parish Church, Burley on their website: www.burleyparishchurch.org.uk The service will be on line from 5th March for a week but it would be wonderful if as many as possible could access it at 10.30am on the 5th – as part of our wave of prayer. Children’s resources are also available on line. Anyone from around the Circuit is very welcome to take part.