

“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.” Matthew 25: 35 – 36

Dear Friends,

How did you get on with my challenge last week to “count your blessings” and plan some acts of generosity? In many ways the words quoted above, and the next theme from the Methodist Way of Life, follow on well from our calling to live hospitable and generous lives. We move from the Learning and Caring section to the Service section and the commitment “we will help people in our communities and beyond.”

Acts of compassion and a concern for issues of social justice are part of the DNA of Methodism, and indeed, as we can see from the words of Jesus, part of the DNA of all Christians. In Wesley’s day there were many glaring issues that he and his fellow Methodists were concerned enough about to address from poor literacy levels and poor housing to slavery and prison reform, health care and alcohol abuse.

I wonder what the issues of social justice are that we need to address in our communities and society and across our world. Debt, vaccine nationalism, institutional racism, climate change...The list could go on and on, so much so that we often feel helpless. But each one of us can make a massive difference to someone’s life just by making a small difference! I’m sure all of our churches have particular charities that we support, and Methodism continues to hold dearly the work and witness of All We Can and Action for Children. As part of the mission of our own Circuit we have set up the partnership with CAP to run a Debt Centre. Sam and her willing bunch of volunteers are doing some amazing work with their clients, not just to help them go debt-free but to bring them into positive relationships with people who care.

One of the aspects of my ministry in this Circuit over the past 12 years that I have had the privilege to be involved in was the setting up of the Wharfedale Refugee Response group during the height of the Syrian Refugee crisis. That group continues to do such good, yet often unheralded work in the background making a massive difference in individual lives. Just this last week, one of the co-ordinators of the group shared this appeal on Facebook:

Making a House a Home - can you help?

Over the next couple of weeks, we will be preparing a local property for a family who have recently been granted refugee status and are moving to the area to begin their new life here. The house is currently empty and in need of a lot of TLC, so we are hoping that as always, this lovely community will rally round and show a warm

welcome by helping us to make their house feel like a home ready for their arrival early March. There are a few ways you can help...

1. Do you have any good condition essential furniture, appliances, or homewares from the list below that you don't need and would be willing to give to the family?

All items need to be in really good working condition, cleaned prior to donating, and it will be preferable if they are quite plain or neutral colours so that we can easily combine items together within a room. Everything will need to be delivered to us after the 1st March once we have keys to the property. We've already received many items but these are what we still really need:

Free standing fridge-freezer, curtain poles and rails, small desk suitable for a teenager/adult, desk chair suitable for a teenager/adult, table/desk lamps and floor lamps, wardrobes x2, rugs, non-fitted bathroom essentials - laundry basket/bin/toothbrush cups etc, wastepaper baskets, cookware/baking trays/equipment (not pans) eg, knives, peeler, washing up bowl, potted plants (indoor and outdoor), basic gardening equipment, washing line.

If the answer is yes to any of these then please do send an email to wharfedalerefugeeresponse@gmail.com.

2. If anyone would like to choose something to buy for the home instead, please do get in touch and we can check the list and suggest some items that might be helpful if bought new.

3. Just as helpful would be time and skills! We will be making sure the house looks just right for their moving day, so beforehand we will need some DIY help (putting up mirrors / curtain poles etc), and some furniture moving & lifting, and possibly a couple of larger items collecting by van. We will ensure there are COVID safety procedures in place to minimise risk, but please do ensure that you are fit and well before offering any of the services above, keeping you safe is always our top priority!

If you can help out in any of those ways, please do not hesitate to contact Sarah using the email address above or contact me and I will pass on the information.

This is just one example of many ways we can and do express help to people in our communities and beyond. Maybe it could inspire you to find ways of serving others. And Jesus reminds us that as we serve others so we are serving him.

Every blessing,

Rev Tim

Worship

You will be aware of the decision the Circuit Staff Team took in early January to suspend in-person worship in our church buildings. At the time we took that decision we committed to review at the end of January and then again after the Government released its guidance on a roadmap out of lockdown. The Circuit Leadership Team has now reviewed the position in light of the Government guidance.

There are a number of key considerations we have reflected upon including:

- The proposed lifting on March 29th of the legal requirement to stay at home.
- The guidance that those who are shielding or clinically vulnerable should continue to remain at home until the end of March.

- The slow progression in the increased numbers of people allowed to attend weddings over the next few months, from 0 to 6, to 15, to 30, to unlimited, between now and the end of June.
- The willingness of preachers to make themselves available for in-person worship in church buildings.
- The pastoral and missional work of our congregations and the needs of our communities.

In light of all this the CLT have agreed that where local church councils feel a strong and particular need to re-start in-person worship in church buildings, they may do so from Sunday 14th March subject to the availability of preachers willing to lead such services and the continued implementation of robust risk assessments and strict adherence to social-distancing requirements. As has been the case right through the pandemic, where it is possible for services to be held online, local church councils should give serious consideration to this and whether agreeing to meet in person or not, should also consider how to continuing supporting those who do not feel able to return to in-person worship at this time.