

“I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.” Psalm 27: 13 – 14

Dear Friends,

In my last letter, I focussed on the commitment from the Methodist Way of Life to *“look and listen for God in Scripture, and the world.”* I wonder where, when, and how, you have seen God at work or heard God speaking in the past week? What did that look like, how did it make you feel?

For some time now I confess that I have not had a consistent pattern or plan for reading Scripture and I have felt God’s nudge in relation to that. So, I have made a commitment to start reading the parts of the Bible which relate to the period that the people of Israel were in exile in Babylon – the Books of Daniel and Ezekiel – and to their return to the Promised Land and the process of rebuilding for a new future – the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Why these books? It feels to me like a lot of us are living in a state of exile due to the constraints of our Covid context. Much of what was familiar has been taken from us and we are still unsure what life will look like once our restrictions are eased. There has been a lot of grief, over deaths of people close to us, and loss experienced in all sorts of other ways like being unable to worship together in our church buildings, not having meals with family and friends, being unable to book holidays, or even just being able to go to school or work. Things we have taken for granted for so long have just be ripped away and that leaves pain and scars.

I believe these books, though written thousands of years ago, can speak to us today and can give us hope for rebuilding a different future. Even having only just made a start, I am struck by the thought of Daniel’s faithfulness in a foreign land. He kept his trust and faith in God and practised the spiritual disciplines that helped to keep him nourished, in the face of the most hostile of environments and he discovered God’s strength and guidance to keep going. Life was not suddenly made easier for him. He spent the whole of his adult life as a captive in a foreign land, but he knew that God was guiding him, and that God had a purpose to work out in his life and in the lives of God’s people. I look forward to discovering what else I can learn from him.

This feeds into the aspect of the Methodist Way of Life I want to share with you this week. We move on from the section focussed on Worship to the one concerning Learning & Caring, and the specific commitment: *“We will care for ourselves and those around us.”* Certainly, prayer, worship and the search for God through Scripture and the world are vital practices in enabling us to care for ourselves – for our souls and

spirits. But I wonder, what else might we engage in or with to care for ourselves and others at this most difficult moment?

It seems now as though an awful lot of people just feel flat. We are fed up with it all dragging on. It appears whenever it looks like there might be a little relief, some small light at the end of the tunnel drawing us towards it, something else changes and the hope is quashed. Cycles of renewed optimism and what may turn out to be false hope have, time and again, raised expectations, only for them to be dashed in the light of the cold, hard, realities of an ever-mutating virus. I do believe that with time, patience, scientific knowledge, good governance, and community buy-in, there will indeed be a time when we need not fear Covid 19 but how do we stay sane in the meantime. In fact, let me re-phrase that, how can we learn to thrive and to be faithful in the foreign land that is Covid 19?

I think I want to just offer 3 thoughts:

1. **Be kind to yourself.** Very few of us are the best versions of ourselves right now because some of the things that help us to be our best just aren't possible at the moment. That is ok. Recognise the truth of it. Begin to plan for a time when you might be able to pick up once more some of those activities that fill you with joy but don't beat yourself up in the meantime. You are a person made in the image of God. You are a person God loves deeply. You will only have a certain amount of energy for each day. Use it wisely. Try and focus your mind on the aspects of life that reveal beauty, truth and goodness and recognise them within yourself.
2. **Connect with others.** Wherever, whenever, however you can, in safe and appropriate ways. Way back in the very first chapters of the Bible we hear the voice of God say, "*It is not good for the man to be alone.*" Some of us may live alone by choice or by circumstance but that is not the same as being alone. We need contact with others to provide companionship, conversation, perspective, and encouragement. Yes, it is difficult to connect with people how we would want to, but it is not impossible for us to make some connection. Use the phone, write a letter, make a video call, chat from a safe distance. Try not to let a day go by without speaking to someone. And if you think you have no one to speak to then ring your Minister or your Pastoral Visitor. Without such connection we can so easily lose a balanced perspective on life and allow our mental and emotional health to suffer.
3. **Lean into the life of Jesus.** What I mean by this is to practise the spiritual disciplines. You may know them better as soul-training exercises or means of grace. They are exactly the things that our Methodist Way of Life can help us with. They are practices which help to nourish our souls and when our souls are healthy, then we can face pretty much anything. Prayer, the study of Scripture, worship, fasting, service, generosity, solitude, silence, meditation, confession. Even the simple practice of reading and reflecting on the words of a favourite hymn or song can bring peace to the mind and joy to the soul.

So, in the week that lies ahead, I challenge you to find practical, simple ways of being kind to yourself, connecting with others, and leaning into the life of Jesus. My bet is that if you can do that, you will discover God doing it right alongside you.

Every blessing,

Rev Tim

Notices

Quiz

The Social Justice Team at Burley are going to be hosting a zoom quiz on Sat 6th Feb. The quiz will start promptly at 7pm and will help raise funds for the church's charity – The Burley-Tereli Friendship Trust. They would be delighted to welcome any friends from around the circuit to take part. The link copied below can be used to access the quiz. For those not able to use zoom, there will also be a hard copy version which can be emailed or posted out. If you would like to receive a copy please email Rev Tim. Donations for taking part can be made via online banking to Burley in Wharfedale Methodist Church. Acc. No. 60118036. Sort Code: 20-11-81. Please use the reference "Church Charity." Alternatively, cheques can be made out to Burley in Wharfedale Methodist Church and posted to Rev Tim.

Topic: Burley Quiz

Time: Feb 6, 2021 07:00 PM London

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85755364823?pwd=TkhoN0VGcUg2dkNnV1dpU2ZSYXRqUT09>

Meeting ID: 857 5536 4823

Passcode: 044903