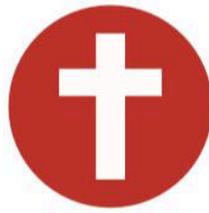




Jesus said, "Do **not** let your hearts be **troubled**, and do **not** let them be **afraid**"

John 14:27 (NRSV)

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"The best of all is, **God** is with us"

Attributed to John Wesley

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Be assured the **Methodist** people are praying for the **world** at this time



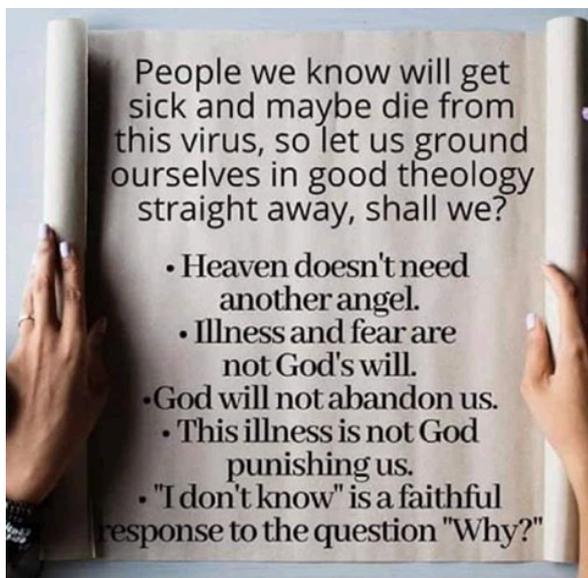
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Dear Friends,

What a week! We've known this was coming, but there is much uncertainty, anxiety, humour, hope, and frantic organisation going on. Our household is now in 'lockdown', with Ned still on chemotherapy he's been told that he and all his family must self isolate for 12 weeks. So having fetched Esther from University on Tuesday, we're now all in and not mixing. We only go out to walk in the fresh air, and talk to neighbours from across the street.

For us there are so many positives, our year last year of separation, awareness of the dangers of infection during cancer treatment, and forced isolation seem to have prepared us well. At least we are all together, well supported, have phones and computers, and are, at the moment, well.

My intention is to issue a weekly article like this for pondering, thinking, and prayer. I hope the pastoral visitors and stewards, and others at Wesley place and Oakhanger will be able to forward this to you electronically, or print a copy and push it through your door.



I hope to include a few pictures and reflections, some serious, some lighthearted, and some thought provoking, especially for those of you who don't have access to Social Media. I begin therefore with this picture:

Let's be clear at the beginning of this crisis, God is not punishing us and we haven't upset him! We learnt as a family last year, as many of us do in life, that sometimes life is dark, hard, frightening, and awful. This is one of those times, but God remains a God of love. The story of Jesus is a story of God who has come to us, knows what human experience is, and journeys with us through the darkest of times. As we approach Holy Week and Easter, our story is one of Jesus being drawn ever

more deeply into the darkest human experience and death. Our Easter hope is because of resurrection.

Which all sounds fine perhaps in theory, but sometimes, as this scroll suggests, to say “We don’t know” is a perfectly good answer to the question ‘Why?’ That is as valid faith as having all the answers, perhaps more so.

Here’s a hymn perhaps we haven’t sung much, it’s no 101 in our book, and was written by the wonderful Iona duo Graham Maule and John Bell:

1. Before the world began one Word was there;  
grounded in God he was, rooted in care;  
by him all things were made;  
in him was love displayed;  
through him God spoke and said, 'I am for you.'
2. Life found in him its source; death found its end;  
light found in him its course, darkness its friend,  
for neither death nor doubt  
nor darkness can put out  
the glow of God, the shout: 'I am for you.'
3. The Word was in the world which from him came;  
unrecognised he was, unknown by name;  
one with all humankind,  
with the unloved aligned,  
convincing sight and mind: 'I am for you.'
4. All who received the Word by God were blessed;  
sisters and brothers they of earth's fond guest.  
So did the Word of Grace  
proclaim in time and space  
and with a human face, 'I am for you.'

You might prefer a more traditional hymn, such as this, from no 51:

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father  
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;  
Thou changest not, Thy compassions they fail not;  
As Thou hast been Thou forever will be:

*Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!  
Morning by morning new mercies I see;  
And all I have needed Thy hand hath provided.  
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.*

Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,  
sun, moon and stars in their courses above,  
join with all nature in manifold witness  
to thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love:

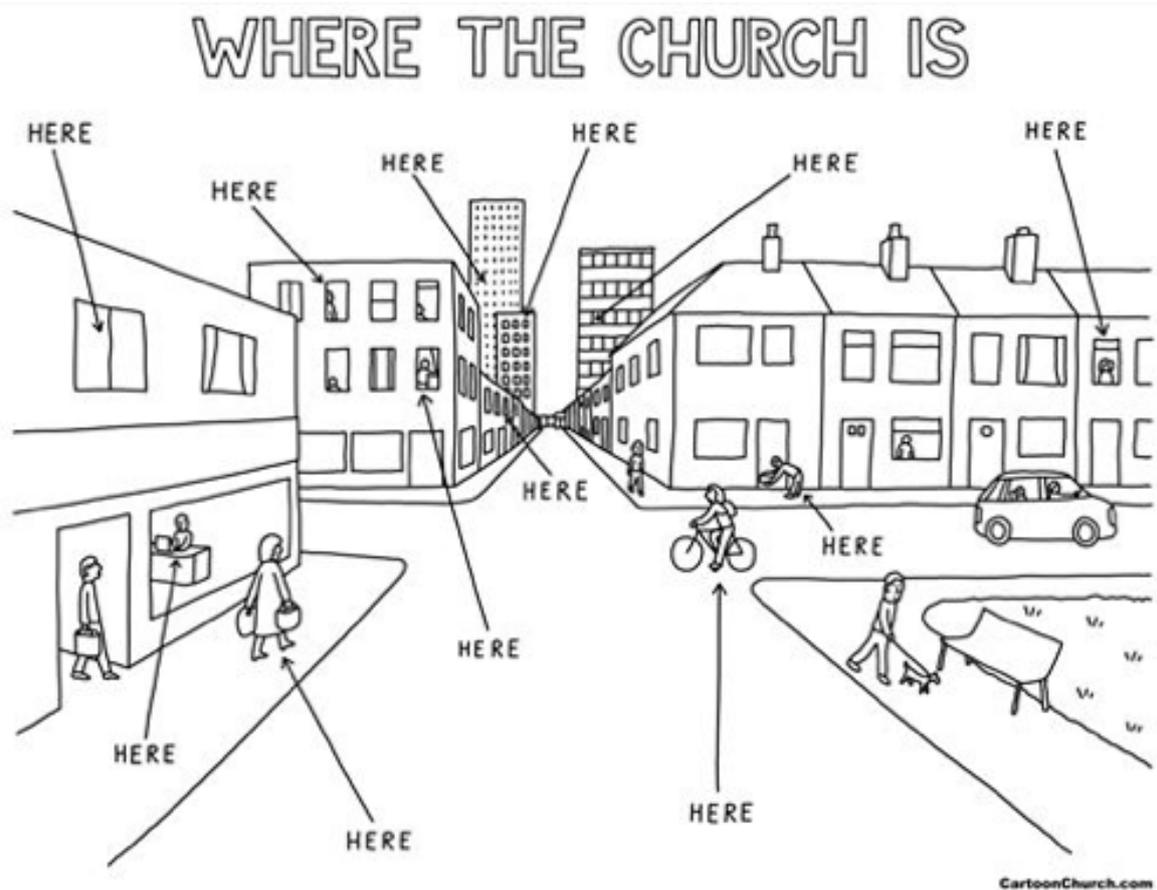
*Great is Thy faithfulness! .....*

Pardon for sin, and a peace that endureth,  
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;  
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,  
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

*Great is Thy faithfulness! .....*

I wondered about producing a service sheet for us all to read through, with readings, prayers, Bible readings, and a written sermon, but decided to be a bit more informal, and different. I would however recommend you watch the BBC One Service for Mothering Sunday from St David's Cathedral, Pembrokeshire. We worshipped there in January on holiday this year, and the Dean led our service and spoke with us. If you get this in time, it's on at 11.45am. Otherwise, I'm sure you'll be able to catch up on iPlayer.

We're hoping in the coming weeks to improve how we keep in touch, one of the things I'd love to get is a recording of our Church singing the Lord's prayer, one where we can really hear the children singing! I know not everyone likes it, but it is something that holds us together at Wesley Place. Although the building is shut for the foreseeable future, the Church, the Body of Christ, still exists, here's a cartoon Bill Anderson shared on Facebook, I hope he won't mind me copying it for us all to see:



Here is a prayer from our President, the Rev Barbara Glasson, I suggest you sit quietly, and pray it through, thinking about every word and every line, and how it makes you feel and what it makes you think as you read it.

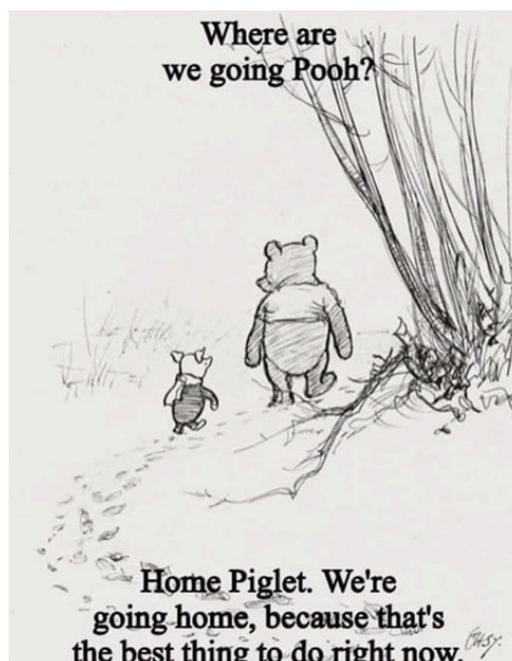
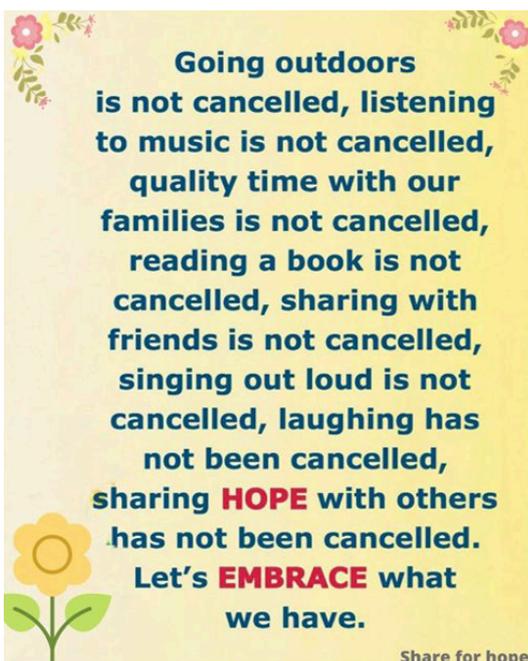
We are not people of fear  
We are people of courage  
We are not people who protect our own safety  
We are people who protect our neighbour's safety  
We are not people of greed  
We are people of generosity  
We are your people God  
Giving and loving  
Wherever we are  
Whatever it costs  
For as long as it takes  
Wherever you call us.  
Amen.

We should also remember to hold before God

- those who're sick, and will become sick,
- the NHS staff already working so tirelessly,
- the scientists seeking to understand this virus and find a vaccine
- our government and their advisors working so hard to lead the country
- each other at Wesley Place, the friends we will miss talking to over coffee, and the groups we cannot attend because it's too dangerous.

If someone comes to mind as you pray, why not ring them up and say hello, see how they're doing?

Finally, we learnt the need last year of being positive, so here's two final offerings from the internet:



Stay safe, keep your distance, wash your hands, don't be afraid to ask for help, (You can ring me on 872597 or call your Pastoral Visitor) and God Bless you!

Rob