

Monday 20th April

Dear Friends

On Sunday the 19th, I invited you to read Luke's account of two grieving disciples walking the Emmaus road and being surprised by a stranger who they recognised was Jesus when he broke bread with them (Luke 24 vs 13 - 35). Our Prime Minister has just announced the lockdown will continue for at least three more weeks and we find ourselves walking the same long road together. For some of us this will be a busy season because we are continuing to work, while others will find we have time on our hands and wonder how to fill our days. All of us will feel the restrictions on our movement and while some people will be discovering new ways of connecting electronically others will find this is beyond them.

As I walk about, I am struck by how well behaved nearly everyone is; we are all learning the art of social distancing - often with a friendly word of gratitude or greeting. I am also noticing all the children's rainbows in the windows of people's houses. I enjoy sharing in the applause at eight o'clock on a Thursday evening when I have been standing on our drive or hanging out of a bedroom window with a saucepan and a wooden spoon to create some noise. Just as we are mindful of the people serving us on the frontline, we need to be mindful of the people for whom this season of our lives is difficult because they are vulnerable to depression and loneliness and also the people who are grieving because they have lost someone they love.

Many of us are waiting and wondering when it will be over and, of course, none of us knows how or when the government will relax restrictions, require us all to wear facemasks or begin widespread testing and contact-tracing. We are also mindful of all involved in developing a vaccine. As we walk this long road, we need to learn the art of active waiting, practising patience and continuing to persevere. In Romans 5 vs 3,4 and 5, Paul says perseverance builds character and character builds hope and hope never disappoints us because God has poured his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit he has given us. We can persevere in neighbourliness, giving and acts of kindness and compassion and we can persevere in prayer as we uphold the people in our hearts and whom God leads us to pray for.

I want to encourage you to reflect on three challenges this week. I will be posting you tube videos on these themes in the coming week.

The first is developing an attitude of gratitude, deliberately choosing to offer thanksgiving to God, often for the small things that put a smile on your face and remembering to say thank you to others.

The second is reflect on the way our heroes and heroines during this time have not been the celebrities and millionaires but ordinary people putting themselves in harm's way for us. God is profoundly concerned with justice; the prophet Amos rebuked the people for their empty worship and said 'let justice roll down like rivers and righteousness like a never-failing stream' (Amos 5 vs 20-24). We may wonder as we return to a 'new normal' about the ways we may seek a more just and equitable society.

The third is to recognise the earth is breathing more easily as levels of air pollution fall during this time. The climate crisis is still before us and perhaps we are being shown that reducing carbon emissions is possible?

At New North Road, we are trying to stay in touch with one another through post and by email with a pastoral letter and a service order each week. You can also see the church's face-book page, join our WhatsApp group or ask that you be registered to see our new website while it is being developed. I am also posting a YouTube video several times each week. Everyone should be contacted by a deacon of the church from time to time and you are also welcome to contact me on 07852490034 or rmijanes@aol.com.

Jesus our Lord greeted his disciples with words of peace when he appeared to them following his resurrection (Luke 24 vs 36). 'Shalom, peace be with you'. May God's peace be with you, give you strength and sustain you with hope.

Your friend and pastor,

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