

31st March 2020

Dear Friends

I wanted to start with the story of Jesus meeting his disciples on the water when he told them 'Don't be afraid' and invited Peter to step out of the boat. Peter found the courage to do this even though it was scary and unfamiliar and while he was focussed on Jesus he could walk on the water but as soon as he was distracted by the strength of the wind and the height of the waves he began to sink. Then he shouted, 'Lord save me' and Jesus reached out and rescued him. (Matthew 14 vs 22-33)

At the moment we find ourselves in a frightening and unfamiliar situation when we need to keep our eyes focussed on Jesus and renew our confidence in his saving love. Even when we are confident of his Grace, we can renew our experience of his Grace by echoing Peter's words. In your prayers you may find it helpful to use the Jesus prayer 'Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me' or the 'Kyrie' Lord, have mercy on me, Christ have mercy on me, Lord Have mercy on me.' 'Christi Eleison, Kyrie Eleison, Christi Eleison.'

As a nation we have entered a season of being shut down and as it continues I am aware that time may begin to drag for many of us and that some of us may be lonely while others may be struggling because they are living in cramped accommodation or facing the demands of children tired of being cooped up indoors. At the same time, we have experienced a week of remarkably good beautiful weather and as pollution levels fall, because people are not flying or driving in the usual way, the earth is renewing itself. Some of us will be revisiting old favourites on the television while others will be getting around to jobs they had saved for that proverbial rainy day. For all of this season presents challenges. I hope we can all find a balance between being Marthas, always in need of something to do and Marys who have discovered the art of being still, as Jane Day encouraged us to do in her message for Baptist Churches.

Communication.

Like many other churches we are seeking to do our best and explore different ways people can connect with each other.

If you would like to join the church's WhatsApp group, which is proving to be a lively forum for people to share with each other, please do let me know. The Church's Facebook page also has regular posts to encourage and inspire you.

We are keen to encourage you to go praying. With this week's letter you will find a copy of the church's prayer guide for this month that has been prepared by Sandra. If you would like to sign up to prayer emails, please let me or Lyn Western know.

The deacons of the church are seeking to call people regularly. If you would like to call me, you're welcome to do this. My phone number is 07852 490034 and my email is rmijanes@aol.com. Please do let us know if you are not well or need help of any kind.

Sunday Worship

Last Sunday we shared a service that you could follow at home via email. This was assembled at the last minute and we couldn't send it to people without email in time. I'm sorry if you missed out because of this. If you receive this letter by post, you will find a copy of the service you can follow at home this Sunday.

We are also hoping to live stream parts of the service and will be informing people with email about how to access this via email later this week. *(If you don't have email it's unlikely you can access the livestream)*

Let me conclude with a prayer you may like to use.

God of Grace.

In this moment of crisis, when we are so vulnerable to fear, we seek your peace.

Give us confidence in Jesus who said 'Do not be afraid.'

Teach me to find my centre in you.

You are full of compassion for all your creation, for my neighbours and the people I love, and you welcome all who seek you, to discover your grace in Jesus Christ.

Teach me to love with your compassion and be helpful like Martha.

Teach me to be still in your presence and listen for your voice like Mary.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Your friend and pastor

Mark