

Fulneck and Gomersal
Moravian Church
Bi-Weekly Newsletter

Wednesday 27th May 2020



Minister's Letter

Dear friends,

This Sunday is Pentecost. Both of our congregations would normally be involved in ecumenical acts of witness to celebrate what is sometimes called the birthday of the Church. These will not be taking place, but I encourage you to remember our neighbouring churches in your prayers, and if you go on a daily walk, to pray for the homes and businesses that you pass.

This is the tenth newsletter that I have produced since our church buildings were closed. In recent weeks we have heard about the relaxation of some lockdown measures and the re-opening of schools and some businesses. Fulneck School is preparing to open for some year groups from the 1st of June with social distancing measures in place both inside and outside the buildings.

Places of worship remain closed for now, but the Provincial Board, together with a working party of selected ministers and the Provincial Youth and Children's Officer, have met using Zoom to start thinking about the safe re-opening of our buildings. We are still waiting for government guidance on exactly when and how this can happen, but it is likely that things will not get back to normal for some time.

As a first step, all the church committees have been asked to calculate the seating capacity of their churches with social distancing measures in place (it is about 18 people at Gomersal and 32 at Fulneck), to consider cleaning procedures, and to consider the potential impact on services if those who are classed as vulnerable are unable to attend.

Although the buildings have been closed, Church has still been happening in different ways: through the weekly newsletters, through the online services, through the Zoom Julian Meetings, through the Zoom Bible Book Club, through the Facebook film club, through the telephone calls both formal and informal. I saw a post on Facebook recently which summed this up well:

"The Church has not been closed, so it doesn't need to be re-opened. We have simply stopped worshipping in our buildings for a time to protect the health and well-being of our people and our communities. The Church does not require a building in order to be the Church. What is required is love, compassion and the presence of God."

There will be lessons that we have learnt during lockdown that may change the way we do things in the future, including how we use technology. The United

Reformed Church have produced a helpful discussion paper which includes the following reflection:

"We are on a journey through a pandemic, not knowing our destination, but aware we follow in a line of saints of old, who have set off before us in the footsteps of Jesus, walking the way. Like those before us, we may travel with faith and doubt, hope and fear, and, perhaps, have a holy encounter along the way. That we travel at all will mean that we are changed. Pilgrimage is about taking and risking such a journey, faith is knowing that we are accompanied by God, hope is in a Kingdom destination, and love may be experienced with companions."

I mentioned in the second weekly newsletter about weekly offerings. Thank you to everyone who has continued to give what they can at this time. A standing order is the easiest way to give and if you would like to set one up please contact your treasurer. Those using envelopes can put them through the letterbox of Br Trevor Kernohan at 35 Fulneck or Br Les Machell at 12 Whinmore Gardens, Gomersal. Please note that cheques are preferred by Br Machell if possible.

In the last newsletter I outlined what other people will be doing while I am on sabbatical, but I haven't yet said exactly what I will be doing for the next couple of months. I have two 8,000-word assignments to write. The first will be titled "Theological Understandings of Wellbeing Activities in a Local Moravian Congregation" and will be based on the Wellbeing Wednesday activities at Gomersal. The second hasn't got a title yet but will look at different interpretations of the verses in Paul's letters that appear to condemn homosexuality. I have a big pile of books in my study that I will be starting to engage with from next week.

Stay safe. The next newsletter will be out on 10th June and will be produced by Sr Mary Holmes. If there is anything you would like included, please call 0113 2558547 or email mary@woodhall28.co.uk.

Yours in Christ,

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