

Ministers Monthly Musing

I have been thinking about numbers lately, both those that bring us joy and those that bring us sorrow. My current happy numbers include the mark for my degree, that our grandson Rowan will soon be celebrating his 3rd birthday and that to date I have lost 42 lbs in weight. The numbers that bring me sadness include the many lives lost during this pandemic and those who are still living with its impact. The reduced numbers we can welcome into our buildings as we begin to gather once more around the circuit, and the realisation that we will have spent nearly 170 days away from our building. Also not in an attempt to alarm you but from September 1st there are only 115 days left till Christmas!

Recently the UK saw how important grading numbers are as pupils and households awaited various exam results, and how the wrong numbers (or algorithm) can have a dramatic impact on future goals.

For those of use involved in the reopening process the task and responsibility of putting numbers under headings of Likelihood, Severity and Risk Rating has at times been overwhelming, as too have the pages of guidelines for the Risk Assessments, but we must also recognise that these numbers are designed to help keep ourselves and others safe at this present time.

So my monthly musing is this: **What numbers inspires our faith?**

1) We have just one earth and within the church calendar we are being invited to use September to mark the Season of Creation, when we celebrate and reflect with wonder our relationship with our Creator God and how God continues to sustain everything in it (Psalm 21:4). We also think about how mankind, being tasked by God to 'steward' the earth. We were told to look after it and nurture it, and we consider what sort of a job we are doing, and sadly the number people and livelihoods impacted by climate change rises every year.

490) This is the answer to Peter's question "how many times must I forgive" (Matthew 18:22) and I can only speak for myself that this is often the hardest part of discipleship, and it is not always about the other person either. I often find that it is my own forgiveness that I struggle with, asking for and accepting it from others, and as I begin to look back over this time I can see those times where I could have said and done things differently, phoned more people and maybe even opened churches more quickly and for those, and any other matter I ask for your grace so that as we move forward we know the love and care God has for each of us as we have for each other.



31,102) Is the number of verses in the Bible, contained within its 66 books. All of which help tell one central love story through the many thousand (even million) lives that it records from Genesis to Revelation. If you were to read 85 verses per day you would complete the Bible in a year, and please feel free to contact me as I have some reading guides if you would like a framework to work with.

169,377) Methodist members according to the latest Statics for Mission report. At the start of this new connexional year each member, and each person, who attends one of the 4,110 local churches (for there are many who attend our churches but are not yet members) are being encouraged to set aside 15 minutes for the next 52 weeks as we mark the 2020/2021 connexional year as the Year of Prayer for the Methodist Church. An online service is available between 12.45 to 1.00pm starting from Tuesday 1st September – visit <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/year-of-prayer/> for further details (and also for more ideas for praying at whatever time better suits) in which we are being asked to respond to God's grace and love in seeking the Holy Spirit's guidance in furthering the mission and ministry of the Methodist Church, one that is evangelistic, inclusive and stands for justice.

As for those unfathomable numbers, like trying to count the stars in the night sky (Genesis 15:5) or those numbers known only to God, our thoughts of God like the grains of sand on the shore (Psalm 139:18) or the very number of days ahead of us what we CAN count on it that God is with us, and knows us even to the very number of hair on our head, (Luke 12:7) loving us, guiding us and dwelling with us.

I end with a blessing from Numbers 6:24-26

The Lord bless you and keep you;

the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;

the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

Amen.

