



The Methodist Church

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3 April 2021

To: The Nene Valley Circuit

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ

'In times such as these'

Easter Greetings to you all in the name of our Risen Lord.

As I write this letter, it's Holy Saturday and I was reminded this morning that today is a day when we look forward; not only as individuals to tomorrow – Easter Day – but we're looking forward as a Circuit; because from tomorrow, six of our buildings will once again be open for Worship. Hallelujah! The restrictions are beginning to be lifted and we will, once again, be free to exercise the calling that each and every one of us has from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; the call to reach out to those in our communities, in our society who are lost, broken or unloved. How do we do that as we emerge from lockdown? Are we going to return to what we've always done or, will we grasp the opportunity to 'cast our nets on the other side' and try something different?

I've spent Lent not only reading through the Psalms but in reading and reflecting on the Gospel of John. Today, I read John 21 and it was here, in this chapter, I read the words which I think are so very appropriate for 'times such as these.'

'Jesus Appears to Seven Disciples

²¹ After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. ² Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. ³ Simon Peter said to them, 'I am going fishing.' They said to him, 'We will go with you.' They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

⁴ Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ Jesus said to them, 'Children, you have no fish, have you?' They answered him, 'No.'⁶ He said to them, 'Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.' So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish.'

We, like the disciples, have gone through much. Some of us have lost friends and loved ones, some of us have lost employment, some of us have been frustrated and all of us have been in exile, away from our families, our friends and our way of being. Now, we are emerging from lockdown, opening the doors of our buildings and getting our lives back to

some sort of normality. People keep saying it will be the ‘new normal’ – whatever that means!

As Christ’s disciples, it’s a wonderful opportunity and excuse (as though we need one) to try things differently. Let’s face it, our Churches weren’t exactly ‘hauling in... so many fish’ before COVID-19 were we? Our Lord says: ‘*Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.*’ In other words, use your gifts and graces, expertise and talents in a different way to reach those people who don’t yet know the love of God within their hearts and lives.

It’s not necessarily about getting people in through our doors on a Sunday morning. It’s not necessarily about getting people to help us in the things we’ve always done – because we’re getting too old now to do them!

It is about letting people know they’re valued and loved – no matter who they are. It is about helping the blind to see (Jesus). It is about helping setting the prisoner free (from addictions, bad habits and enslavement). It is about helping people realise their God-given potential to help haul in the biggest catch for God’s Kingdom and it is about now, not tomorrow or next year, but now as we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and the resurrection of our Church fellowships across the Circuit.

My prayer is that as a Circuit we seek God’s will for our lives as we journey together for the sake of our risen and ascended Lord.

I close with words of a hymn written by Marjorie Dobson (StF:664)

1. Lord, you call us to your service, each in our own way.
Some to caring, loving, healing; some to preach, or pray;
some to work with quiet learning, truth discerning, day by day.
2. Life for us is always changing in the work we share.
Christian love adds new dimensions to the way we care.
For we know that you could lead us, as you need us, anywhere.
3. Seeing life from your perspective makes your challenge plain,
as your heart is grieving over those who live in pain.
Teach us how, by our compassion, you may fashion hope again.
4. Lord, we set our human limits on the work we do.
Send us your directing Spirit, pour your power through,
that we may be free in living and in giving all for you.

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Rev'd Lesley

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