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Dear friends

Falmouth & Gwennap Circuit - Pastoral Letter October 2020

When the pandemic crisis first hit us the nation went into lockdown. Politicians have subsequently said that they were surprised how compliant everyone was. We all remember how eerily quiet the roads were, as everyone stayed at home. Was this because we are naturally law abiding people? Or was there another reason? I wonder if the way we were feeling was a significant factor in how we behaved.

Our feelings are very important. They are a key element in what we do, or don't do. I suspect that, at the time, there was considerable fear around. The virus was sweeping, apparently unchecked, around the world. People were dying in unquantifiable numbers, and everyone seemed vulnerable to catching it. Fear of this illness, the like of which we had never seen before, drove us to do exactly what we were told.

But I detected another feeling then, too. Hope. We hoped that, if we obeyed the rules, the virus would pass us by, and we could resume normal life. We talked of putting our holidays on hold till later in the year. We thought that after a few weeks away from church we would be able to restart Sunday worship, just as it had been before.

Now, we are into the 'second wave'. This time, as politicians urge us to behave in particular ways, we constantly see reports of people ignoring their instructions. Students have come in for a lot of criticism in this regard, but in reality they are not alone. There seems to be a marked reluctance to endure another dose of restrictions. Why is this? Well, perhaps there is less fear now. Far fewer people are in hospital, and many fewer are dying from Covid-19 (as it has become known). Those who do are almost always now people with some underlying health issue. So why should I be afraid?

However, I wonder if also we have lost the element of hope. There seems no end in sight for us. Some of us have resumed services in our chapels, but we cannot sit together, greet each other in any physical way, or sing any hymns. It isn't as it used to be, and it doesn't look like changing soon. Without hope, there is little incentive to strive to make a difference.

As we watch with a kind of fascinated horror the four yearly ritual of the American Presidential Election, we may be mesmerised by the antics of candidates. We cannot understand how people can be taken in by them. Yet maybe the answer is, they hope for a better tomorrow. Whichever

side of the political divide you are on, the electorate wants hope for the future. They give their vote to a candidate hoping for their wishes and desires to come to fruition. But we know that history tells us that it never works as people anticipate. Hopes are dashed. Reality is different from the dream of what the future might hold.

So hope is important. And hope is a key element of the Christian faith. Not an aspiration, or a desire, or blind optimism. Something much more powerful than that. For us, it is a central part of faith. As the writer to the Hebrews put it (Hebrews 11:1): 'Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things unseen.' We are assured that God's kingdom is coming - it is part of the Lord's Prayer. Perhaps this is something that we should offer to our world at this time. Let's be a people of real hope in a world of hopelessness and despondency.

As a Circuit, we are beginning to get things under way again. Some congregations are meeting on Sundays, while others have not yet taken that step. I know that the online services have been greatly appreciated by many of you, and they will be continuing. We have reorganised the pastoral responsibilities, and the new arrangements are:

Pastor Jenny	Lanner
Rev Liz	Carharrack, Carnkie, Frogpool, Perranwell, Penmarth, Ponsanooth, St Day, Stithians
Deacon Jane	Mylor
Deacon Jane with Jenny R	Penryn
Rev Celia with Jenny R	Edgcumbe, Mabe (Trenoweth)
Rev Andrew	Falmouth, Mawnan Smith, Langholme

You will note from that list that Rev Celia has kindly volunteered to help us out. We are extremely grateful to her for that. Her experience and expertise, along with her wisdom and wit, will be of benefit to us all. Thank you, Celia!

This Sunday, 11th October, at 3.00pm the Vice-President of the Methodist Conference is preaching at a service at Gwennap Pit. You are all invited to join in this District event. I hope to see you there!

Love

Andrew

Rev Andrew Mumford

Superintendent Minister, Falmouth and Gwennap Methodist Circuit