



# The Way Ahead

Falmouth and Gwennap Methodist Circuit Outreach News

**'The days are near when every vision will be fulfilled.'**

Ezekiel 12:23b

## A Vision from God

The verse from Ezekiel 12, used above, was 'given to me' at the circuit healing service last year. The full text is this;

*The word of the Lord came to me: <sup>22</sup> "Son of man, what is this proverb you have in the land of Israel: 'The days go by and every vision comes to nothing'? <sup>23</sup> Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am going to put an end to this proverb, and they will no longer quote it in Israel.' Say to them, 'The days are near when every vision will be fulfilled. <sup>24</sup> For there will be no more false visions or flattering divinations among the people of Israel. <sup>25</sup> But I the Lord will speak what I will, and it shall be fulfilled without delay. For in your days, you rebellious people, I will fulfil whatever I say, declares the Sovereign Lord.'"*

*<sup>26</sup> The word of the Lord came to me: <sup>27</sup> "Son of man, the Israelites are saying, 'The vision he sees is for many years from now, and he prophesies about the distant future.'*

*<sup>28</sup> "Therefore say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: None of my words will be delayed any longer; whatever I say will be fulfilled, declares the Sovereign Lord.'"*

It's not that 'the days go by and every vision comes to nothing' is a proverb I've been hearing, but I have experienced a weariness. It is very easy to lose hope, to not try something because 'we tried it before and it didn't work', 'we used to do that, but we had to stop' or 'we can't because we do not have the volunteers to'.

I strongly felt at the time that God was telling us that the time is now, that we should be bold and take the risk. If God is in a vision it will happen, as has been demonstrated across the circuit where initiative happens because volunteers from the community step forward.

I took my sabbatical in Autumn and returned refreshed, with a new conviction that God was telling me that this was the time to move in this circuit. I began to follow up various 'threads' from last year, bringing groups together ecumenically across our communities and exploring exciting new opportunities with a small group from Falmouth, then everything changed.

## 'Being Church' in Lockdown.

We had to adapt very quickly when large gatherings were cancelled, so management of our Methodist movement became tricky, as Church Councils, Circuit meetings and Synods were postponed.

Churches initially began to meet needs locally, as venues closed we opened up our buildings for prayer, then we too had to close. Robbie's phrase 'maintaining a Holy Calm in a crisis' quickly became our mantra as we widened the scope of our regular email communication as we sought to keep in touch.

The Circuit Leadership Team quickly moved from monthly meetings to weekly internet 'meetings'. Our first concern was pastoral care, and how to ensure this continued. This is possibly different for each congregation but, with a high percentage of our members being classified as 'vulnerable' due to their age or health, it involves a lot of phone calls. As ever, we are grateful for the many volunteers who make this possible.

Our next concern was worship, the Circuit Staff began producing Sunday services on our YouTube page, members being asked to circulate service sheets to those unable to access the internet so that they could join in.

This was extended to include special services for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Ascension. As time went on we realised that there are so many people with something to offer, whose talents were not being used. We extended our provision to include Wednesday reflections produced by Local Preachers and Worship Leaders.

Prayer is key, the Circuit Prayer meeting has met throughout, now at 4pm every Thursday, on 'Zoom' or 'alone but together' for those unable to access it.

As potential needs were identified new initiatives started; a Facebook page to reach out by offering the opportunity to receive prayer requests, in response to concern from members who felt 'useless' and that we were not 'visible' in our communities, and a Facebook group to enable ongoing Theological discussion.

Comments about our circuit services have included the joy in seeing familiar faces, it may be good to try a 'circuit coffee morning' using the 'zoom' internet platform to enable people to 'meet' and chat over their own coffee and cake. The first is likely to be on a Tuesday Morning, beginning after Pentecost.

### The Falmouth & Gwennap Circuit exists to identify where God is at work, and to join in.

Whilst I do not believe that God created the pandemic, there is clear evidence of God at work:

- In the commitment of so many Key workers
- In the incredible Community responses
- In the positive Environmental impact, and government commitment to furthering this.
- The individuals offering to help the isolating

Jesus went to where people were and, whilst many of us normally do the same in our daily life, it may seem impossible to fulfil this calling today.

#### How can Circuit and Churches respond?

We normally do things that benefit many, such as operating/providing a venue for youth groups, lunch clubs, interest groups and fellowships etc. Whilst this has not been possible, we have been participating in or providing other forums, but are there ways we can share our values and our God more through these?

- We can praise the good work done by individuals and community.
- We can ensure our voice is heard when the need arises to speak out against injustice.
- We can offer to pray when words fail us

#### How are individuals responding?

We each do what we are able, some volunteer at a food bank, some keep in touch with others, some provide worship or circulate service sheets to members - or others in the community. Some are collecting prescriptions, doing shopping or baking for those who are isolating.

Those of us who are isolating also play our part in many ways.

- Praying (individually and as church, at all times!)
- Ensuring that vision remains on the local agenda
- Be prepared to challenge the 'Status Quo'
- Be bold! never let fear of failure stop you trying.
- Seek ways to support, and be supported by, others

'When will we be open again?' is a question I've heard, but we only ever closed our buildings! The Church is the people, so we can never actually close.

Whatever the timescale may be for restarting public worship, we should not presume it will look like it did or that everything new we have started will end.

### What can we take forward?

It is becoming clear that we are actually being church better in some ways right now:

As we seek to keep in touch with everyone we are learning about our neighbours in new ways, several people have noted that they have learnt more about someone in a single phone conversation that they had known in 10 or more years.

Whilst our buildings are closed, we have ensured that worship is accessible at home, do we do this for those of our members cannot attend normally?

This issue is only going to increase, as older members are prevented from attending as over-stretched carers are unable to get them ready in time. We should consider the ongoing discipleship of those who cannot attend, rather than seeing them as people to visit we need to recognise that they are still full members of our body with much to offer, without whom we are less than we could be.

Our resources have also been accessed more widely, shared with neighbours, friends and family.

Let us grasp this opportunity to reshape how we 'do church', following God's leading. The time is now.

Yours in Faith, Deacon Jane Mills

### Focus for Prayer

- For Government and community leaders as they evolve their response to the pandemic.
- For NHS staff, carers and all key workers seeking to serve and keep our communities safe, healthy, well fed and informed.
- For those whose lives have been forever changed through illness and bereavement.
- For those for whom the future is uncertain.
- For wisdom discerning what God requires of his church in this present age.
- As the season of 'Thy Kingdom Come' begins, help us to remember 'The time is now' and your prophecy is being fulfilled.
- May the Holy Spirit of Pentecost restore, strengthen, equip and guide each one of us.