



20th December 2020

The **Methodist Church**

South Warwickshire Circuit

Registered charity no. 1154830

Superintendent Minister: Rev Dr Iain Ballard

“Do not be afraid” said Gabriel to Mary. (Luke 1:30). Fear of the unknown is a natural reaction not limited to humans! I was laying our roadside paddock hedge the other afternoon when a Dad with his son were walking up the hill soon to pass me. Coming down the hill was a young woman riding one and leading another horse. The sight of my wheel barrow on the verge was enough to spook one of the horses who needed calming to walk past this scary thing. The little boy couldn’t understand why the horse found a barrow with tools frightening. I think the answer is that the barrow wasn’t there earlier when last the horse passed by which means it must be able to move, and if it can move, what will it do?.....

Mary’s response of fear is understandable and certainly forgivable. The fear of the unknown, perhaps informed by negative earlier experiences is common to all of us human and equine. Such fear can deter people from joining an act of Christian worship or coming to a fellowship meeting, or prayer meeting or some other faith linked activity. Will I be put on the spot? Will I be judged because I don’t know what to do or say? Am I good enough? Will I fit in? These, and so many questions spin in our minds.

What Gabriel told Mary would strike fear into anyone’s heart. Finding that you are going to be a parent if you are trying for a baby is one thing but discovering you are pregnant when that was not on your agenda is a whole different experience I imagine. Will I be judged? Will Joseph still want me? How will I feed him? Where will we live? And so many more concerns. But this is also a divine encounter more overwhelming than any of us can imagine. The challenge and responsibility of preparing and leading an act of worship that will enable a congregation to meet with their Lord on a Sunday morning in Warwickshire gives me enough anxiety thanks. But to be the means of having not only her life changed but through her all who will believe in all generations will be changed too. Wow!

Our own short term future is full of unknowns at the moment. As I write we are waiting to hear if a Brexit deal can be struck. Local farmers and businesses have much at stake hanging on the outcome whatever that is. Will COVID Vaccines be available on a scale needed? Will Christmas gatherings lead to another spike in illness and deaths? All the unknowns could paralyse us if we let them but just like Mary we need to trust in Immanuel, God with us, the powerful “known” in a world of unknowns. Celebrate Christmas as best you are able because restrictions in movement and numbers cannot take away the joyful celebration of His birth for Christian believers.

Rev Richard Wilde

A reminder:

Drive-in Carol Service:

Since we can’t sing indoors, we have organized a drive-in carol service at Stoneleigh. Places are limited so we shall hold it on two days: Saturday 19th December and Sunday 20th December – both days the start time will be 2 pm. – See enclosed flyer.

Booking is *essential*** -**

phone 01926 314077

or

book online: <https://tinyurl.com/SWC-Carols>

Dial – a – Prayer, Methodist Church

Listen to a prayer: 0808 281 2514

Listen to news:

0808 281 2478

Sunday Worship and Daily Prayers

There are plenty of opportunities to join in worship if you have the internet. We are encouraging everyone to link up

with the live stream worship being offered by the Birmingham District each Sunday morning at 10:30 am at: <https://www.facebook.com/Birminghammethodistdistrict/live>

Circuit Service

The Circuit continues to provide a pre-recorded service each week, via YouTube, Facebook and our website – see below for details:

Change of YouTube account:

Please note, the Circuit now has its own YouTube account, which means that the URL has changed.

Please access the YouTube video by clicking the following link or typing it into your browser:

tinyurl.com/SWCplaylist

If you regularly watch the Circuit Service, do consider subscribing to the Channel.

Rev Jemima, Michael Sharman & Graeme Russell have created **Family Worship Time** video which is available from 9:15 am on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month through our YouTube Channel – and can be accessed here: tinyurl.com/SWC-FWT

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SW.Methodist/>

Website: www.methodist-swc.org.uk

A full text of this service is available on the website, and is being sent by post to all those people who do not use the Internet so they can join in too. These worship opportunities will be available and sent to you every Sunday. We will be offering worship in a similar way each Sunday as the health crisis continues.

TV & radio opportunities for worship:

Radio 4, Sunday Worship, Sunday 8:10am,
Radio 4 Long Wave, Daily Service, 9.45am Mon-Fri,
Radio 3, Choral Evensong, Sunday 3pm.

BBC 1, Sunday Worship, Sunday 10.45am,
BBC 1, Songs of Praise, Sunday 1:15pm
(The times of the TV services can alter, please check the times)

Daily prayers at 10am are led by members of the circuit via zoom <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/328494818>

All members of the Circuit are invited to join, **you do not need a zoom account to join**. You can also join by **telephone**. Please contact Michael Sharman on 07412 401988 if you'd like help getting in.

Pastoral Support

A reminder that if you are in pastoral need of any kind please contact your own Minister direct by email or phone. We may also be able to arrange practical help with shopping and so on. Our details are below.

If in any doubt, please contact Rev Dr Iain Ballard and he will link you up with help locally to you.

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Keep safe. Keep caring. Keep praying. With every blessing to you and yours.
The Ministers and Stewards of the South Warwickshire Methodist Circuit of Churches