

Pandemic Pastoral Letter #14 | 2nd March 2021

“I am the LORD, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment.”

Exodus 6:7, NRSV

Dear «Forenames» «Surname»,

Scripture has been a source of strength and comfort to me over the last year, realising that the stories scripture retells often explore human experience of God in light of crisis or uncertainty. From the panic of the Israelites as Goliath stood before them, to the crisis Ruth and Naomi faced through grief and famine – scriptures story proclaims the truth of a faithful God in all seasons of life.

One of the stories I’ve read and found most fruitful spiritually is the story of the Israelites after escaping Egypt; passing through the red sea, and then spending 40 years in the desert. (Read all of Exodus!) Every aspect of the communal life together was changed as a result of their Exodus and passing through the waters.

Despite the struggle this community faced, God calls them mine. Despite their sometimes complaining, despite their taking matters into their own hands and making a golden calf, God was faithful and continued to be faithful to them.

2021 began with as much uncertainty as 2020 ended with, and while vaccination and the latest Spring ‘roadmap’ from our government continues to offer increasing confidence, our living within uncertainty will continue for some time.

But no matter what comes, there is one truth we can depend upon – that our changeless God is as faithful to us now as he has always been – and despite our uncertainty and worries about the future, God will continue to be faithful to us.

As always, while restrictions distance us, you are regularly in my thoughts and prayers. If you find yourself in need of a conversation about life, faith, uncertainties we face, or would like me to pray for you, or even with you over the phone, please don’t hesitate to get in touch.

In peace & hope,

Rev Dan

News & Updates

Worshipping Together Booklets & Prayer Guide

The Worshipping Together booklet for March is enclosed.

COVID-19 - Update on buildings and future reopening

At the moment our local oversight teams are beginning to work on assessing the government roadmap and how this will apply in our local buildings, and the possibilities of how and when is the appropriate moment to begin to resume activity within them.

We are still awaiting sector specific guidance from government and other advisory bodies, but at the moment we are working on the assumption that any face-to-face activity will need to occur under the same measures as we adopted in the Autumn.

Based on the roadmap, very little activity aside from face to face worship will be permitted indoors until Step 3 of the plan when a limited amount of indoor mixing is going to be permitted (currently no earlier than 17th May). An exception to this is that some children, youth and family's activity is likely to be possible within stringent risk assessment from Step 2 (currently no earlier than 12th April).

As I work with the teams on planning and possibilities for reopening and when, it is helpful to have input from across the community and hear your voice, as we did back in the summer. Some of our oversight teams have already been gathering views, but if you have not yet been asked and would like to contribute please do so by making contact with me, your pastoral visitor or a church steward, with your response to the question below.

Which best describes how you feel about attending physically gathered worship services in the building?

- I will return at the first opportunity we have.
- I will return at the first opportunity, if I am comfortable with the precautions
- I think I will feel ready around the end of March (coincides with ending of shielding, lifting of stay at home order and some outdoor social contact)
- I think I will feel ready around May (coincides with indoor social contact beginning to be allowed)
- It may be quite a while before I return.
- Something else (please share if you feel able can)

Zoom Coffee

Every Wednesday at 10am you can join our zoom and phone-in coffee morning, hosted by Lynne James, and accessed via the Together channel. Bring your favourite brew, biscuit, or cake of your choice and enjoy chance to share fellowship with each other. All welcome.

Lent with Luke – Lent Study Opportunities

Our Lent Course has begun well and continues through March, and people are always welcome to join for one or all sessions as we explore passages in Luke's Gospel together.

Each of the 5 sessions will run twice, a morning and an evening each week, led by a range of people, and all you will need is a Bible. Sessions are held on zoom/phone, via the Together Channel.

Week	Session Dates	Passage
Week 2	Mon 1 st March, 7:30pm Wed 3 rd March, 10:30am	Luke 11:1-13 Prayer
Week 3	Mon 8 th March, 7:30pm Wed 10 th March, 10:30am	Luke 13:1-9 The Transfiguration
Week 4	Mon 15 th March, 7:30pm Wed 17 th March, 10:30am	Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32 Lost & Found
Week 5	Mon 22 nd March, 7:30pm Wed 24 th March, 10:30am	Luke 17:11-19 The Ten Lepers

Gathering for Worship in March

We have put provisional plans in place for acts of public worship through March to be via zoom and phone.

March	7 th	14 th <i>Mothering Sunday</i>	21 st	28 th <i>Palm Sunday</i>
Together 9am	Dan Balsdon	Dan Balsdon	Dan Balsdon	Dan Balsdon
Morning Worship 10:30am	Lynne James <i>Leprosy Mission</i>	Dan Balsdon	Joyce Stroud	Malcolm Lindo

Holy Week: 'Voices of the Witnesses'

Throughout Holy week we will hold a reflective time of worship each weekday evening as we journey through Holy Week. Each Day we will reflect on a different voice among those who witnessed to Jesus' ministry and the events of Holy Week.

Each service will start at 7:30pm and meet via zoom and phone, lasting roughly 30 minutes, led by Dan and others from our worship teams.

Lent Charity – The Leprosy Mission

This lent we focus on the work of the Leprosy mission and will hold a special service to hear more about their 'Unconditional appeal' and the work they do at our 10:30am online worship on 14th March including a message from Chris Stratta, Regional manager for TLM.

From 24 January to 24 April, every gift will be doubled by the UK Government meaning that your gifts will have twice the impact!

Donate online at <https://www.leprosymission.org.uk/campaign/#/> or call TLM on 01733 370505.

Together Channel Details

All services will be held on our shared Together Channel

access details for phone and/or zoom below:

Join Via Telephone

the cost of the call will be equivalent to your standard rate as per your telephone bill.

1. Call **one** of the Dial in by phone numbers from a mobile or landline.

It shouldn't matter which number you call, occasionally one doesn't work, if this happens for you, hang up and try a different number.

📞 **0203 481 5237**

📞 **0203 481 5240**

📞 **0203 051 2874**

📞 **0203 901 7895**

📞 **0131 460 1196**

2. When asked enter the meeting ID. For **Together** this is **878 7997 8475** and press **#**

3. (optional) You will be offered opportunity to add a participant ID, you can skip this step by pressing **#**

4. When asked enter the meeting password. For **Together** this is **473352**

Telephone Controls when in a call.

Get the attention of the host by pressing * 9

Mute/Unmute by pressing * 6

Join Via Zoom (on desktop, laptop, tablet or smartphone)

1. Visit <https://zoom.us/> and click 'Join a meeting' – or open the zoom app.

2. Enter the Meeting ID: **878 7997 8475** press enter/return

3. Enter the meeting Password: **473352** press enter/return

Methodist Dial-in phone lines

Our Connexional dial-in phone lines which were set up at the start of the pandemic have been updated to now include a weekly pastoral message from the President and Vice President of conference.

Weekly pastoral message from the President/Vice President: 0808 281 2695

Weekly Prayer: 0808 281 2514

Fortnightly Podcast: 0808 281 2478

Note that all numbers are FREEPHONE numbers.