

Pastoral Letter #20 | 29th August 2021

***He is the Lord our God; his judgements are in all the earth.
He is mindful of his covenant for ever,
of the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations,
the covenant that he made with Abraham, his sworn promise to Isaac,
which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute,
to Israel as an everlasting covenant, saying,
'To you I will give the land of Canaan as your portion for an inheritance.'***
Psalm 105:7-10 (NRSVA)

Dear friends,

Happy New Year!! No, you've not fallen asleep and woken up in 2022, but September marks the start of the Methodist year here in GB. Through August some ministers have moved, some have retired, others are moving appointments and others are beginning new ones. 1st September marks the start of their first year in their new appointments, please pray for them.

With bated breath, I hope I am not being too hasty in saying **'Happy New Normal!'** While coronavirus is here to stay, as individuals and as church communities we have much more freedom than we did. I know I am not alone in being pleased to be able to sing with others again, I have really missed it. We still rightfully live with mitigations to do what we can to maintain a community of care, but I'm already finding the mitigation much less restrictive.

So have we found New Normal? Well, I'm not sure, but perhaps we have at least found **'A'** normal. The baseline guidance and mitigations we're working with are likely to be with us for some time, so I reckon this is broadly going to be normal for us for a while now.

Over the last 18 months lots of you have made comments to me which in one way or other recognise that the pandemic is an opportunity to learn and consider what we could do differently, as individuals and Christian communities, as we emerge. You've seen the pandemic as a time for renewal and refreshing. A time to begin again.

The Gospel is also about renewal and beginning again. Full of forgiveness and redemption, the gospel story affirms that in Christ there is always a chance to

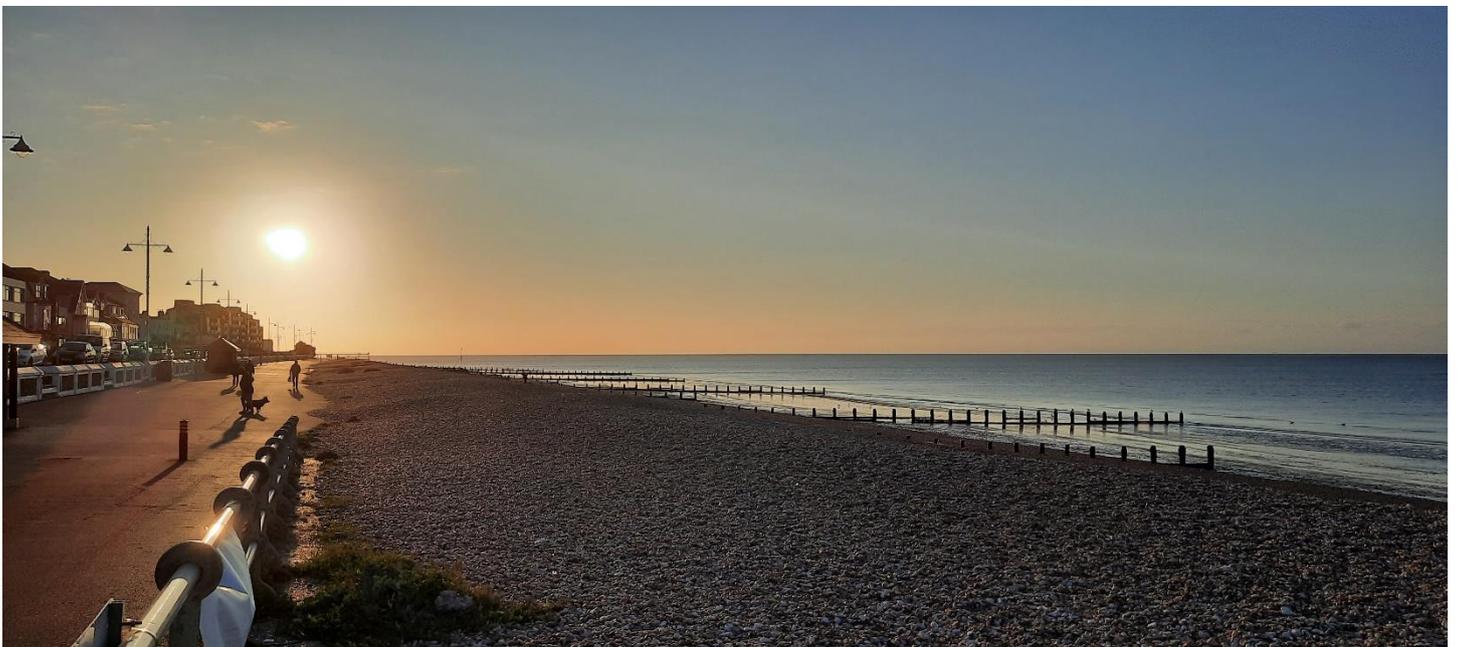
restart and be renewed. Throughout scripture, God's covenant with Israel is repeated time and time again as both a reminder of God's commitment to be faithful to those who belong to him, and a renewing of the people's faithfulness and trust to God and to God's community.

That's why through September we'll be holding covenant services in each of our locations. We were unable to hold usual covenant services back in January, so as we enter September and the new Methodist Year, and begin to become familiar with the current 'normal' we anticipate will be with us for a while, I felt God quite clearly say to me, 'now is the time to renew your covenant together.'

The Methodist covenant is something that can mean a lot to us personally but is never individualistic. It is always about God's relationship with us as God's people, the communal body of Christ, and our faithfulness and service to and with one another.

As we renew our covenant together this month, I hope it will help us as communities to be rooted in the truth and certainty we find in our faithful God, holding before us what has past, learning from our experiences, and to begin stepping forwards into whatever the future holds.

In love and grace, Rev Dan Balsdon



The rising Sun, Bognor Regis, August 2021

News & Updates

Worshipping Together Booklets, Prayer Guide

Your Worshipping Together booklet for September is enclosed. This month uses the theme 'Season of Creation' focusing on God as creator and a Christian response to God in caring for creation.

Also enclosed is a prayer guide for September. Our thanks again to Debbie Dean for preparing this for us.

Worship in September

The below summarises the circuit plan for our section of the circuit for September. Felpham's 10:30am service will continue to also be available by phone and zoom on the Together Channel (access details on past mailings).

| September 2021 | 5th | 12th | 19th | 26th |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| Morning Worship @ 10:30am Bognor Regis | Rev Dan Balsdon <i>General Church Meeting</i> | Geoff Craghill | David Parr | Rev Dan Balsdon <i>Covenant Service inc. communion</i> |
| Morning Worship @ 10:30am Streamed by zoom and phone + onsite @ Felpham | Roy Firth | Rev Dan Balsdon <i>Covenant Service inc. communion</i> | Lynne James | Liz Bates <i>Church Anniversary</i> |
| Morning Worship @ 10:30am Westergate | Lesley Barnes | Rev John Scrivens | Rev Dan Balsdon <i>Covenant Service inc. communion + General Church Meeting</i> | Katherine Suttie <i>Harvest Festival</i> |

Circuit Service

A service of farewell and thanksgiving to Rev John Scrivens and Bob Boyce will be held at Offington Park Methodist Church on Sunday 26th September at 6pm.



Harvest

Local leaders will share arrangements for Harvest festivals in each of our locations later in September.

COVID-19 - Ongoing Oversight & Starting Events and Groups

Our TOT teams continue to monitor our risk assessments and are always available if you have any questions. All activities meeting on the premises must have an appropriate risk assessment and/or covid mitigation policy in operation to be suitably insured.



If you're a group leader looking to resume a group, considering resuming something in a different way, or looking to start something new, there will very likely be covid-risk mitigation work to undertake, and a conversation with a member of the TOT team or Rev Dan is advised as early as possible.

Please make sure any events/meeting are booked with church booking secretaries to ensure our TOT teams have full awareness of building use.

Dates for Church Meetings



A reminder (and a couple additional ones) of coming dates for church meetings. Agendas and other relevant papers will be circulated closer to the time as we are able.

Our **General Church Meetings** in particular will be important spaces where we will devote a significant amount of time to reflecting together on our shared lives together as congregations through the pandemic so far, lamenting what we have lost and testifying to where we have encountered God.

We will also begin conversations about the future of our shared life together, prayerfully seeking God as we discern what paths God may be calling us to travel.

Bognor Regis

General Church Meeting – Sunday 5th September, 10:30am onwards

Pastoral Meeting – Wed 15th September: 10am – 11:30am

Church Council meeting - Wed 29th September, 7:30pm – 9:30pm

Felpham

General Church Meeting – Sunday 3rd October, 10:30am onwards

Church Council Meeting – Friday 15th October, 7:30pm – 9:30pm

Westergate

General Church Meeting – Sunday 19th September, 10:30am onwards

Church Council meeting – Thursday 7th October, 1:30 – 3:30pm

(Possibly preceded by a bring your own picnic lunch)