



Pastoral Letter from the District Chair

Dear Friends,

The start of the Methodist Church year on 1 September provides a natural opportunity for circuits and churches to plan for the year ahead, as we look to the future with a mixture of hope and concern at what the autumn and winter may bring. Although the national vaccination programme has been a great success, it is unclear whether and to what extent future restrictions may still be necessary.

However, one of the most encouraging developments during the past eighteen months has been the way in which circuits and churches in the Bedfordshire, Essex and Hertfordshire District have responded to the situation posed by lockdown and the need for social distancing. Detailed risk assessments have been carried out efficiently and effectively. Sunday services have continued by electronic means whenever restrictions have prevented congregations from meeting in person. At other times, church premises have been suitably adapted to allow safe access. I am immensely grateful to all those who have worked so hard to ensure that worship, fellowship, and mission can continue.

Already there has been much theological, political, and social commentary on the present and future implications of the pandemic for corporate and individual human life on a fragile planet. Clearly, far-reaching changes are presently underway and will likely continue apace. Yet the people of God are well placed to adapt and respond to changing circumstances. Our identity in Jesus Christ gives us an overarching story and a fixed reference point in which to assess and prioritise change. Holding fast to him means we need not be anxious when familiar and apparently stable patterns of living, working, and worshipping must be reassessed in the light of changing circumstances. After all, 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever' (Hebrews 13.8).

Grace and Peace

David Chapman

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