

Dear friends,

It has been a while since I have written a minister's letter so I hope that these greetings from the minister's desk (well, dining room table!) find you well and that you have had some opportunity for rest and relaxation over the summer, possibly with an opportunity to catch up with family and friends as the easing of lockdown and restrictions has allowed.

We are approaching the beginning of a new Methodist year and as our church life begins to open up again following lockdowns and the easing of restrictions there are a few things I would like to draw to your attention:

* We begin our Methodist year with our covenant service on the 5th September. This includes sharing in Holy Communion and you may be aware that at this year's Methodist Conference a vote was passed to allow online communion to become part of the worshipping life of the church. This means that whether you are in church, or at home and joining the service by electronic means, we can all celebrate together and share in bread and wine **consecrated in the service** (rather than previously consecrated as had become our custom during the pandemic). To this end, if you are in church, the elements will be prepared as usual. We are still working to our covid-secure guidelines so the elements will remain covered until it is time to distribute them to people in their seats. If you are in church you will be invited to take your own wafer when the plate is brought round and similarly with the wine. If you are worshipping at home and joining the service on Zoom you are invited to carefully set aside the elements of a small piece of bread and a sip or two of grape juice before the service begins. All the elements will be consecrated during the service at the same time (those in church and those in homes) and we will eat and drink together as a community of faith.

* It is good to see folk slowly returning to our church building for services. We know that as folk return, some may feel anxious. We are very mindful of this and want to make sure that we have a care for everyone attending worship. We will endeavour to continue to seat people appropriately spaced. If you are attending church in person just a quick reminder to encourage you to wear face coverings when you are moving around the building. Please also use the one-way system still in place as indicated by signage and sign up for services with Linda Foster in advance as has become our usual custom.

* We are hoping to serve refreshments from the coffee bar after the service on the 5th September for those who wish to stay. To enable people to do this safely we are asking folk to leave the worship area at the end of the service using the one-way system; collect refreshments at the coffee bar and then go back into church to be seated to enjoy your drinks. (We will remind people in church about this on the day).

* We now have an offering plate available at the front of church for those who want to place their gifts there. This needs to be done **before the service begins**.

Thank you to everyone for your care and cooperation thus far and I know that this will continue in the coming weeks.

Blessings

Claire