SERVING WEEK 3

There’s a lot of serving going on. People at Bents Green have responded wonderfully well to the crisis with love and care for each other. As well as physical caring, in the form of cards, shopping, and distanced meetings in gardens when the weather is good, there is an invisible network of phone calls, texts, WhatsApp groups, zoom meetings and of course prayer, that is helping to sustain us all.

New things are happening in the wider world too. The Spirit of God is out there sowing seeds. Some may fall on stony ground, or soon wither, but for the moment there is some wonderful growth. For instance:

* 1. The growth of neighbourliness, street by street, as people meet out of doors, learning each other’s names and providing practical care;
  2. The amazing response of three-quarters of a million people to the call for volunteers to take food and medicines to people in isolation;
  3. The new appreciation of the service of delivery drivers, bin men and others;
  4. The way the media and the public have responded to the heart-warming service of some very old, very young and severely disabled people in doing what they can to raise money for the NHS;
  5. and the truly Christ-like service of those in the NHS and care homes, who care for others at the risk of their own health, and sometimes at the cost of their lives

Let us pray that, when the crisis is over, our society does not revert to what it was before, but remains more caring and appreciative of each other. Let’s pray too that Government will really show that all lives matter by using resources to reduce the inequalities and the hardship suffered by so many.

What part can churches play in this? By continuing to do the things we do now. But is God sowing new seeds among us too? Are there new things we can do to help meet the needs of this time?

We know that lots of people are suffering anxiety and stress. We know that lots of people have lost their jobs and material security, and are worried for the future of their families. We know that lots of people are asking big questions and searching for meaning in the crisis. We know that lots of people have lost loved ones and not been able to celebrate their lives as they would wish. We know that lots of people have suffered long term damage to their health.

Is God calling us to offer help in some way to meet such needs in our community? We know about the power of tea and cake. We know about the power of prayer and the transformative effect of the love of Jesus. Is God sowing the needs of new forms of service among us, to meet the needs of this time?

As we emerge from lockdown, let us as individuals and as a church, be open to God’s call to new forms of serving.

*Produced by John Wilkins on behalf of the Bents Green Holy Habits Planning Group (Debs Barnett, Glenn Evans, Martyn Read, Graham Wassell, Daphne and John Wilkins).  You can find more information on the Circuit Holy Habits Programme on the Sheffield Methodist Circuit website and also the Sheffield Methodist Circuit Facebook page.*