



Dear friends,

I wonder how you're doing this week? As things change in terms of my pattern of work and life, with changes in restrictions, and churches trying to work out 'what next?', I've found myself looking back on the past few months...

What's been my best bit of 'lockdown learning'? well, if I'm honest, I think it's the onions! I hate cooking onions, but they form the base of almost everything we eat in our household. As my friend David says, 'an onion is what you cook while you decide what to have for tea...'. As our opportunities to leave the house became limited, way back in March, I started cooking the fresh veg I bought from the greengrocers almost as soon as we got home, and freezing it – especially onions. Cook 10 at a time, and divide up into batches to freeze – the house only smells of onion once a week! In fact, I have started freezing all kinds of components for meals, and it's one of the things I will continue, even as our lives take on a new and, for now, more permissive shape.

Nothing very spiritual about that, I know – except the taking delight in the good things which grow, and can be harvested, prepared, cooked and savoured. But it makes me think about planning ahead...and so also about the planning which can help us stick spiritually, as well as practically, to a pattern of life which is life-giving for us and for others.

You might remember some of what Tim shared with us about a 'way of life', and maybe you've got a card somewhere around with a Methodist Way of Life printed on it {more about that in the new connexional year...}. I have been enjoying Simon Reed's book "Followers of the Way: Ancient discipleship for modern Christians". In it, he reflects on a suggestion from his friend David Cole that we should 'meditate momentarily' taking a few seconds regularly throughout the day, 'divert daily' for ten to twenty minutes to reflect and pray, 'withdraw weekly' for a few hours, 'make a date monthly', for a whole day if we can, and 'abdicate annually' from our routine responsibilities to allow a short time away to focus on God, shaping a pattern of prayer which weaves through the whole of life. Such a pattern must be fitted to the individual, I know, and many of us live in circumstances which make some of this unattainable, but I am intrigued by the rhythm he recommends.

I know I find the longer periods of time with God much easier to build into my life than the seconds and minutes...I wonder which is harder for you? So, this is my challenge for the coming Methodist year: to make 'meditating momentarily' and 'diverting daily' a reality, to complement the pattern of retreat which has always been part of my life of faith. I wonder if you might make a Methodist 'new year' commitment to yourself in God's company?

I can hardly believe that next time I write will be in September. This Superintendent will be 'reflecting' on holiday for the final two weeks of August, and so there will be a break in our fortnightly pattern of letters.

I hope, though, that I will see as many of you as possible at Zoom worship on **30<sup>th</sup> August 6pm**, bidding **farewell to Revd Godfrey Nicholson**, and again on **Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> September 6pm**, as we welcome **Revd Pete Brazier and Deacon Guy Austin-Bride** into ministry in the circuit team.

Peace, Jo