

25th April 2020

Dear Friends

This continues to be a strange season of our lives. I really miss seeing people face to face and I'm looking forward to the day we shall be able to see each other again.

Next week I want to focus on some good news stories that people have shared and I'm mindful that there are some rays of hope, not least the beginning of trials for a new vaccination. In the meanwhile, I am also aware that people are experiencing real sadness even when this sadness is about small things. I am sadly aware that my behaviour has changed in ways I would have found inconceivable three months ago as I actively avoid people when I am walking and doing the shopping.

In this letter I want to give attention to the news that we are hearing and the question of truth and truthfulness. We are all being advised to ration our intake of news because it can be overwhelming and that's good advice. As I listen hear debates that seem complex, especially about contact tracing and testing and who will be prioritised. These debates also raise questions about the ways our privacy and anonymity can be safeguarded if tracing our contacts is done via mobile phones. These debates are worth tuning into because they address moral dilemmas that are real and urgent.

Our society is sometimes called a 'post-truth' society. This is a strange phrase that means that we live in a society in which people are encouraged to create their own facts even if these are different from what is demonstrably true. Believing the earth is flat would be a silly example of this but there are many more serious examples. On social media conspiracy theories and stories that have a tenuous relationship to the truth can spread like wildfire. When I read these stories, I am grateful for journalists, for journalism is about seeking out the truth and it's a great thing that we live in a nation where journalists can do their essential task without fear of the law. Paul says 'let no one deceive you with empty words' 5 vs 6 so we need to use our common sense and practise discernment whatever we are reading, watching or listening too.

One of the games I love to play is called 'two truths and a lie' and it's fun to play with adults and children, especially with people who know somethings about you but not everything. Here is an example of three statements about me and all you need to do is guess which one isn't true. This one isn't difficult.

I live in a house with a garden on four sides.

I drive an Aston Martin.

I love reading detective novels.

Of course, the statements can be more elaborate than this and it's a great game for people who like telling stories. Sadly, we live in a society where some people enjoy telling lies and do this when they believe it serves their agenda and their needs.

When Jo Cox, the M.P. for Batley and Spen, was murdered by a fanatic I promised I would gently but firmly begin to challenge some of the lies I was reading on social media. We can all make our stand for truth in our own ways but perhaps the simplest thing to do when we hear something we are not certain about or that sounds dodgy is to ask the question, How do I know this is true? Before we share it with someone else.

Jesus Christ said I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. This is good news, it's worth sharing and it's true. 'We have a gospel to proclaim, good news for all throughout the earth, the gospel of a Saviour's name, we sing his story tell his worth' Paul said, 'Live as children of the light.' Ephesians 5 vs 8. In your kindness and neighbourliness, in the conversations you share and the words you speak, let your light shine!

As we walk this long road I'm reminded of the song that says 'I will weep when you are weeping, when you laugh I'll laugh with you, I will share your joy and sorrow till we've seen this journey through.' With that in mind please do remember David Heaton and his family in the loss of his dear wife Marjorie. The funeral on the 11th of May will be a very short and simple event because of the current restrictions.

We are seeking to create a new prayer meeting that will be at 11.15 on Wednesday 6th May and 7.15 on Wednesday 13th May for forty-five minutes. You can pray at the same time as everyone else and also share in this via zoom or the church's Whats app group. You are welcome to join us and use the church's prayer diary day by day in your own prayers too.

The deacons of the church are seeking to be in regular contact with everyone. You can connect via the WhatsApp group, visit the church's Facebook page and participate in our Zoom gathering on Sundays at 11.45. If you would like to be registered for our new website which is being developed or follow up the other opportunities, please do let me know. My number is 07852 490034 and my email is rmijanes@aol.com.

So May the Lord bless you and keep you in his path.

Your friend and pastor

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