

Spring 2019

Dear friends

I am writing this at the beginning of Holy Week. As I journey through the next 7 days alongside various groups of people, I will be trying hard to avoid a sense of stale repetitiveness and instead attempt to live the events with something of the foreboding and expectation which might have been felt for those who walked with Jesus. Those close to Jesus must have known that 'something' was afoot, but they could barely have predicted what. As we now read accounts of those days, we see a picture building with each event recounted as having a special symbolism. The Gospel editors, especially John, were great story tellers who pique our interest and offer us surprises and insights. But these accounts came long after the actual events, they were far from the age of instant, 24 hour news. The accounts we read were set against a backdrop of ordinary life and no one could have predicted what would happen or even taken time to ponder the significance of the actions of a wandering preacher. This is the context for Holy Week, but it is of course how we live our faith day and day out, seeking what God wants of us in each situation we encounter.

My favourite definition of 'mission' encourages us to 'find out what God is doing in the world around us, and then join in'. Too often we think that the things of faith are separate from the things of God. When I first began my ministry as a workplace chaplain, people would often ask if my intention was to take God into the workplace? I soon learned that God was in those places long before I arrived and stayed around long after I left.

A couple of items relevant to this Plan:

You will remember that last summer the circuit churches took part in Bible Month, a series of four services inspired by the book of Jonah. Bible Month is now a fixture in the Methodist calendar and this year materials have been prepared encouraging us to work through the letter to the Colossians. The churches will begin this exploration with a Local Arrangement service on June 30th for which materials have been prepared locally (Shirley will begin the series a couple of weeks earlier). Church Stewards will then liaise with the planned preachers for three more weeks using the material provided to us by the Leaders of Worship and Preachers Trust. The series last year was greatly appreciated by many, I hope the same will be the case this time.

Finally, a piece of extremely good news! Inspired by the development of a new training programme for Local Preachers it has been my privilege to issue six new 'Notes to Preach'. A Note to Preach is the first step in becoming a fully accredited preacher. I am sure the circuit will benefit greatly from the experience and insights of Alberta, Kweku, Paul, Ruby, Comfort and Kingsley. At first they will share in leading worship with a mentor and as their experience grows will lead assessed services on their own. Please pray for them as they follow God's prompting to explore this important ministry.

God bless

Yours

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.