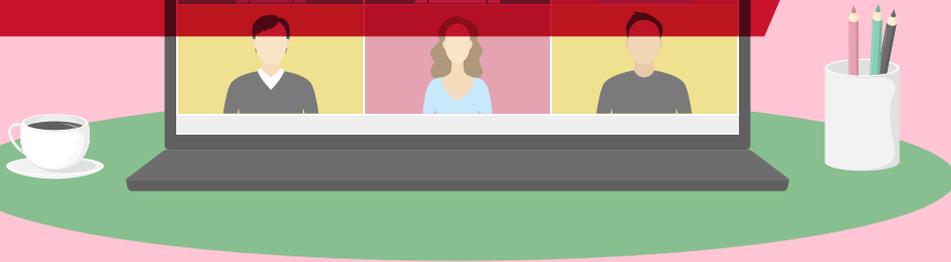


FROM THE DEVELOPMENT WORKER

The Revd Derek Balsdon



On the window sill in my study, I have a wooden cross. On Ash Wednesday, I swap the empty cross for a crucifix, and swap them back again on Easter Sunday. The crucifix is a profound reminder to me of Jesus' willingness to suffer and die for the whole world, including me. He knows what suffering and death is like, and he understands the pain and suffering that the COVID-19 pandemic and other troubles have brought into our lives. The empty cross is a significant reminder to me that Jesus is our risen Saviour and living Lord, and that death is not the end. Jesus' death and resurrection are at the heart of the gospel, and offers Good News to all, but sadly many people have not yet received the gospel. To experience new and eternal life, we first have to experience something of the cross.

Some people, even some within our churches, are not taking enough notice of the cross, and are failing to accept that Jesus died to take the punishment for their wrongs. Once we believe that Jesus died for us and confess our sins to him, and then we surrender our lives to him, we can experience new life now and have an assurance of eternal life to come. This should also birth within us a desire to share his Good News more effectively. Part of my role within MET involves growing disciple-making disciples, and I do this through the weekly Bible studies and other teaching opportunities, either in person or online. Most of the online activities which we are currently offering can also be accessed via ordinary phones. Please contact me for further details.

For well over a year, we have hosted a 7pm prayer meeting every Sunday, and two Bible studies most weeks. These are continuing to provide wonderful

opportunities for Biblical teaching, corporate prayer and Christian fellowship. Hosting and leading these has been a regular part of my work over the past year. Most of the conferences that I would have attended with a MET stand this year have either been cancelled or moved online. For the Cliff College Festival At Home (28-31 May), we have again produced an inspiring video for their seminar stream. It is entitled *Sharing Jesus Today*, and includes interviews with Carolyn Lawrence, Andy Frost, Jacqui Parkinson, David Hull, Marian Izzard and myself.

The *God In Love Unites Us* report is being debated and voted on at most district synods this spring and at the Methodist Conference (24 June - 1 July). While this is being supported by many Methodists, there are also a considerable number of Methodists who are against it. Part of my time is spent communicating with, and offering support to, those who are questioning their future within Methodism, and with some individuals and congregations who have already left our denomination. I empathise with those who are struggling within the denomination that has been such an important part of their lives.

Upholding the authority of scripture is one of our core values, and the restrictions caused by COVID-19 have provided fresh opportunities for Bible teaching. This year we are offering a number of online Bible Teaching Days. The first one was led by Carolyn Lawrence, the Vice-President of the Methodist Church, on the theme of Growth. Carolyn's first session was Personal Growth, and the second session was Church Growth. The theme of the next Bible Teaching Day was Exploring the Spiritual Battle. I spoke

about struggles with powers, strength in praise, and strategies for protection, and Roz Addington spoke about signs of coming under attack. In early May, the Revd William Porter spoke on *The End Times and the Rising Up of the Church*. Videos of these Bible Teaching Days have started to be uploaded onto our website. Go to methodistevangelicals.org.uk/videos. Equipping for Ministry was also held online for a dozen diaconal and presbyteral participants. The Revd Chris Briggs' theme was *Click STOP and RESET: Mission and ministry beyond COVID-19*.

Our autumn Bible Teaching Day will be *Digging for Treasure*, our annual expository preaching day-conference. After the success of last year's online event, we have decided to run it online again this year. It will be on Saturday 2 October 10am-4pm with the theme *Opening Up the Bible's Big Picture*. We have a great line up of speakers: Andrew Ollerton from the Bible Society, Kristi Mair from Oak Hill College and David Hull, Chair of MET. Even though this conference is focussed on preaching, anyone who wants to dig deeper into the rich truths of the Bible is welcome to join in. For more information, and to book, go to methodistevangelicals.org.uk/dft.

We are very hopeful that REVIVE: The MET Prayer Weekend will be able to take place at The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Friday 22 - Sunday 24 October. The theme is *Living Through Forgiving*, and I will be speaking about how forgiveness enriches our lives. We are privileged again to have Paul and Tracey Critchley leading the worship. There is a £20 per person discount for early bookings. See the enclosed flier for further details. This weekend should be a wonderful opportunity for Christian fellowship. Perhaps I will see you there.

Yours in Christ Jesus,

Derek

