

Western Bay of Plenty Methodist Circuit
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The Methodist Church of New Zealand
Te Hāhi Weteriana O Aotearoa

Dear friends in Christ,

I am writing this pastoral letter at an unprecedented time in our world's history. Because of modern communications we are aware of what havoc and pain the 'Corona' virus (also known as COVID-19) is inflicting all over the world. Many have families who are cut off and isolated, elderly and vulnerable. We see the latest news and the horrific toll of lives internationally and the sense of rising panic in the public's reactions with so many stockpiling supplies without any thought of others. Some of us may feel like the Israelites must have felt when they saw the Egyptian army charging down on them! And we can develop a 'siege' mentality that takes hold of us as some still remember the conditions they faced during the years of the Depression and World War II.

What carried people through that dreadful period was a trust in God's divine providence and the sense that the cause of life was right in God's sight. People worked together, supported their neighbours, gave sacrificially and 'hunkered down' till it passed. I am reminded of Moses reply to the cries of the Israelites: *"Do not be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the Lord will accomplish for you..."*

We are part of God's realm; we are called to extend and make real that deliverance by playing our small part!

With all this in mind I write to share with you the steps we have taken – and will take - in this Western Bay of Plenty Methodist Circuit.

- The Methodist Church of New Zealand – Te Haahi Weteriana O Aotearoa – having, closed all church services (in following the Government's directives) has now called for the closure of all Church centres. That means that as of yesterday no group will be allowed to assemble or use any of the church premises.
- Staff (such as Erin, Valma, Margaret and I) are still available by phone and email.
- The Pastoral team of Wesley will develop a 'telephone tree' (St Stephen's has one and Veena has Te Puke well covered), through which we may keep in contact with all parishioners.
- Erin requests that: "In light of the Government Covid-19 Level 3 and 4 alert, and in order to protect the people responsible for the banking from unnecessary possible exposure to Covid-19, could anyone who wishes to make their cash/cheque offerings please consider doing it electronically. Details are available from Erin – either on the church email address: – tauranga.methodist@xtra.co.nz or phone 541-3339 (home) or (021) 878 557. Your assistance would be much appreciated".
- We will be posting worship and devotional resources on our web page:

http://www.methodist.org.nz/find_us/waikato_waiariki/tauranga/wesley/home_2



Wesley Methodist Church
100 Thirteenth Avenue
Tauranga 3112



St Stephen's Methodist Church
9 Brookfield Terrace, Otumoetai
Tauranga 3110



Te Puke – Mt Maunganui Methodist Church
2 Oroua Street
Te Puke 3119



and we also recommend that those who have access and IT know-how (or access to a teenager!) use the resources on our *Waikato-Wairiki Methodist Synod* - Face book page where there is a message from our Synod Superintendent Rev Dr Susan Thompson.

- Ngaire and her team will be constructing an outside display of stations for Holy Week. This will enable us to keep a spiritual contact with Easter without encroaching on the social distancing we must strive to maintain.

There will need to be more contact as fresh information becomes available but I pause at this point with the words of the old song - MHB 525 "Through the love of God, our Saviour" as a good ending hymn –

Through the love of God, our Saviour, All will be well;	Though we pass through tribulation, All will be well;
Free and changeless is His favour, All, all is well:	Christ has given full salvation, All, all is well:
Precious is the love that healed us;	Happy still in God confiding;
Perfect is the grace that sealed us;	Fruitful, if in Christ abiding;
Strong the hand stretched forth to shield us,	Holy, through the Spirit's guiding;
All must be well.	All must be well.

We expect a bright tomorrow; All will be well;
Faith can sing through days of sorrow,
All, all is well:
On our Father's love relying,
Jesus every need supplying,
Then in living or in dying
All must be well.

Let us remember – we're in this together "He waka eke noa"



Leigh Sundberg
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