

16<sup>th</sup> November 2020

*'Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations...' (Matthew 28)*

**A Pastoral Letter from Revd Josephine Soon to Amblecote Wordsley, Birch Coppice and Wesley Methodist Churches.**

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

The current Coronavirus Pandemic has radically changed the way we live together as a community, a nation and as a world. Unfortunately, it has also had a profound impact on the way we interact within our churches and in our worship. This in turn leads us to reflect on what it means to be part of the Church and what our response to the crisis should be as the People of God.

Church is a gathering of God's people; it is a 'missionary community' in all its communities and structures. The very spread of this pandemic, and its social and personal impact on us all, is a reminder that our shared human nature has both physical and spiritual dimensions that are closely intertwined.

It is for this reason that Jesus our Saviour, who is The Word made flesh, gave us the Sacraments as the primary means by which he touches our lives and communicates his saving grace to all. By gathering around our Lord Jesus Christ, each local church needs to go out within their own neighbourhood to meet those who do not yet believe in Christ, and to respond adequately to the major issues of the society of which we are a part. Church, we are also called to go out with the protection and guidance of the Holy Spirit to seek and gather all the baptized who do not participate in the life of Christian communities.

That is our mission and the very reason for our existence. The current Pandemic situation has made the situation even more urgent. Christians are being tested grievously. Even where faith itself is not shaken, many of us will need encouragement to pursue the mission Christ gave us.

If nothing else is stopping you, take every opportunity to go to congregational worship and receive Holy Communion. But if this is not possible, be lively and imaginative, and set aside time to attend online worship and Holy Communion (Eucharist), as many of you have been doing by following Premier Radio.

It is true that Eucharist worship online is a virtual assembly of the People of God; but it is a real assembly nonetheless, of real people raising their minds and hearts to God, in union with the whole Church and doing their best in the circumstances to keep the Lord's Day holy.

During the winter season, if you are looking for somewhere to go for a walk or visit, you are welcome to have a walk and visit Jesus in the '*Tin Chapel*' Birch Coppice Methodist Church. The building is open to the public for Private Prayer (spend time alone with God). I shall be at Birch Coppice Methodist Church every Sunday between 10am – 2pm. It will be good if I could greet and meet you in person.

Let me finally thank our pastoral visitors and church stewards publicly and warmly for their perseverance and hard work over the last few months. They have been working diligently in these strange circumstances to do what they can, and to learn new skills to help keep our church life alive. I am confident you will want to support them, to pray for them and to encourage them with your own goodness and example.

In Christ,

*Josephine Soon*