

Burley in Wharfedale and Menston Methodist Churches

Deacon Liz Day
2 Marchup Heights Cottages
Silsden Road
Addingham
LS29 0LQ

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They called an emergency meeting with the elders, allotted a substantial sum of money, and gave it to the soldiers.

'This,' they told them, 'is what you are to say: "His disciples came in the night, while we were asleep, and stole him away." And if it gets reported to the governor, we'll explain it to him and make sure you stay out of trouble.'

They took the money and did as they had been instructed. Matt 28 : 12 – 15a

Dear Friends

Hopefully Tim is having a well earned Easter break and I have been asked to write the pastoral letter for Menston and Burley this week.

How was Holy Week and Easter Day for you? I know from phone calls and messages that some of you have been appreciating the mailings with worship resources, news and greetings from the circuit and our own churches.

Many of you seem to have been tuning in to services further afield which we have been able to watch on the computer, or listened to the morning services on the radio.

I have been helped by reading some of 'Lent for everyone' by Tom Wright. I was also very blessed by 'Easter at Kings' on the TV.

But what is helping me particularly at this strange time when we can feel so distant from our families and friends are the methods in which we are staying in touch enabling me to still feel connected with people and with God.

Not being at all technically minded, I have now mastered Zoom on the computer, which I have used in connection with church meetings as well as socially with friends. As you know, I am a Methodist Deacon and the Diaconal Order have had very regular zoom prayer meetings and services which have been so meaningful and special and provided me with some real moments of engagement with God and with my colleagues (I even zoom into my slimming world group on Friday mornings!!)

The other thing I have done, which I vowed I would never do, is join Facebook! Thanks to contacts rediscovered I even 'attended' a virtual beer and hymns evening on Easter Day which an old school friend was organising from one of the Bradford Methodist Circuits!!

On a more serious note, I turn to our passage from Matthew's gospel at the top of the page.

As I said, I have been reading Tom Wright's commentary for Lent exploring Matthew's Gospel.

The passage I have chosen for this letter appeared on Easter Monday. It doesn't take long does it for people to start covering up the story? Soldiers, priests and leaders all collude to spread 'fake news' about what had happened to Jesus! How often does that happen today? People closing ranks to cover up the truth, to save face, to stop someone obtaining power or control.

No doubt there will be those who much prefer to spread stories of criticism and blame about the situation we face with Covid 19, and some will be valid, I'm sure. But we must focus on what could come from this experience which is positive. The engagement with our neighbours, the re-discovering of old friendships, the general 'coming together' in a crisis.

I appreciate that many will have lost loved ones (to Covid 19 or other illnesses) and will not be thinking in a positive way about the current climate and the virus at all and I don't want to make light of this at all. I have taken several funerals recently when there have been just a handful of people allowed at the very short service, some not able to be with their relatives in hospital at their passing.

But the truth of Easter morning demands that we change as believers. We can't simply go back to 'normal' after Good Friday – we are to be resurrection people – showing our faith in the risen Jesus through our lives, through the people we are.

There are many who realise the significance of this time we are now living through from a spiritual perspective. It's given us all a lot of time to think, opportunities to re-discover the important things in life and our interdependence on one another. When this is all over.....don't let's just carry on as we did before. Let us learn and grow through this time and emerge all the more enabled to share our truth with others and speak out against the sceptics!

Easter blessings to you all

Liz