

Pastoral Letter #5 Thames Baptist Church

How are we all going as we near the start of our third week of lockdown? Remember we do not need to have a stiff upper lip about this. If you need help, ask!

Did you manage to get on the website and join us to do communion together and hear the sermon. Or download the Baptist app for our church? There were a few hiccups on Sunday with the sermon. I had inadvertently made it private so I could see it when I checked but no one else could. Thanks to those who let me know and we fixed it by 11am. This is from Elizabeth...



It is Holy Week this week – the week leading up to the events of Easter. Normally there would be lots of activity this week, especially in the liturgical churches, but not this year in the same format anyway. Our Good Friday service where we normally combine with St James Union church has been put on pause and we will each do our own services this year. Ours will be in the same format as the last few weeks, on line. I would urge you all to look at Shine TV too over this time, it's available on Sky or Freeview.

I have been busy with Foodbank every morning Monday to Thursday with Food bank parcels. Thank you Pauline for coming in and making parcels up when I run out up front (she is down the back and I am up the front so we are well and truly physically distancing). We have had a steady stream of people from the church and from the public coming in with food items, fruit, cash and Pak n Save vouchers, which is lovely. It shows that we care for more than ourselves. The bin at Pak n Save has been full each week too.

Some people are shy about putting their hand up for food bank support, thinking others are more deserving or whatever. If you know of anyone who needs a food parcel, get them to ring the office or ring on their behalf. I hate to see people suffering when they do not have to.

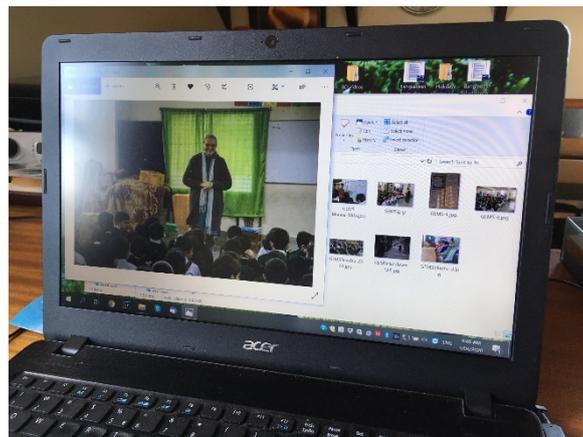
Last week I started asking people what they were doing in lockdown, so we can share with each other, because fellowship (even vicariously) is a very important part of being church.

From around the church family:

Thelma sent in this jpeg. She said that butterflies were her healing symbol and she has this picture on her wall



From Lynette: Apart from gradually working through long lists of things to do in the house and garden, and keeping in touch with family and friends by phone, email, skype etc, I have been sending photos from my recent trip to Bangladesh to a person in NZ who has set up a website to promote the work there. Ross and Cindy are NZ Tranzsend workers running two schools - one in Dhaka and one in Chandpur. They are working hard to get on line learning set up not only in their schools but even throughout rural Bangladesh. They are recruiting teachers from all over NZ to help with this. Check out the website at <https://bangladeshvision.org/> to see what they are doing - and see some of my photos :-). Very timely with all schools in Bangladesh now closed because of Covid19.



At our place, it has been nice to see a pair of kereru in the trees beside us, as well as Tui and Fantails (Piwakawaka). There was even a noisy flock of Rosella that visit the pear tree. Have they always been there and have I just slowed down to be able to notice them or are they new to the garden?

Gardening seems to be the theme in this lovely weather. Whether it is Frances McLaren raising seedlings in her glass house or David Kitchen killing things at his place.



Please keep the pictures coming. It reminds us that we are not alone in the world.

Most people in the church are either on email or cell phone but for those who aren't (and you can find them in the telephone directory), please give them a ring just to touch base, and tell them you are thinking of them. Lynette rings Pat every Sunday and reads the sermon to her. In the Union church, they do the same for their people who have difficulty reading or have no access to the electronic word.

On an odd note, does anyone have postage stamps? No one in town sells them (with the Post Office and Warehouse Stationery closed) and we are down to just a few for those letters that we mail out.

An Easter prayer found by David Gibson:

Lord, thank you for loving us more than life itself. God, life is hard and uncertain. So much pain, hurt, and heartache seems to surround us. And yet, knowing this, You still willingly gave up your life and became God with us and God who rescues us. Because of Your sacrifice, we can spend eternity with You. There is no pain You cannot conquer, no hurt You cannot heal, and no life You cannot transform. Your death and resurrection proved that nothing is impossible for You, and that we are more than conquerors because of You. Today and every day, help us to fix our hearts and our minds on You. And as we do, please give us more of Your joy, hope, and peace. We love You, and we want to worship You.

Amen

Please pray for those with compromised health in our congregation, especially those with breathing issues or damaged lungs, that the virus would pass them by. Pray for those who are struggling with the dynamics of this enforced family bubble that keeps people in close proximity 24/7.

Keep close to God and keep in touch with others.

Yours,

Chris