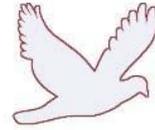




Borders Mission Circuit

Part of the Methodist Church of Great Britain



The **Methodist** Church 

Dear Friends in the Borders Mission Circuit

Ministers Weekly message

Today's reflection is based on John 13: 1-17. Please forgive me for veering from the lectionary but bear with me! I stand here feeling extremely hot, donned with a gown, gloves, eye protectors and feel I might suffocate with my face squashed tightly into the mask of the now very well-known and talked about PPE. If you had told me a month ago, I would spend Holy Week preparing to return to work on Intensive Care I would never have believed you! The last time I worked on Intensive Care was in 1999 as a staff nurse, little did I know what a precious skill that would prove to be. Since Christmas we've watched the news more than ever before and heard it repeatedly said that there was going to be a shortage of intensive care beds and staff, eventually the call was put out for any critical care staff to return to help. I am extremely grateful to have been allowed to respond to this by the church, it does seem the best place for my skills to be used at this time.

So why this passage for today? This passage is *the* Bible passage which the Methodist Diaconal Order identifies and sees itself in. It is one we would have reflected on in Holy week, Jesus washing the disciple's feet.

In the passage as Jesus and His disciples arrived in the upper room, they found there was no servant to wash their feet. Only days before, Jesus had said to the twelve, "Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave" (Matthew 20:26-27). If they had listened, heard and given mind and heart to His teaching, one of the twelve would have washed the others' feet, or they would have mutually shared the task. It could have been a beautiful thing, but it never occurred to them.

Having said this is the passage which the Diaconal Order identifies with, I find it ironic that in my 10 years as a deacon I have never washed anyone's feet, yet as a nurse I washed peoples feet numerous times a day! As a community nurse we often did this because if the patient had a leg wound, we found the wound would heal better if the leg was kept clean. It was no sterile procedure, just the act of washing the leg or foot and redressing the wound. What I now find interesting as a deacon is that the act of washing had a deep effect on how the patient felt. I think the act of sitting at someone's feet made the person, not the patient, feel better! What was it - the actual washing of the foot, the sitting at their feet, the conversations that took place during it, the physical act of a touch of a caring hand, or a combination of all these?

Of course, the washing of feet the Diaconal Order identifies within this passage is metaphorical, if I went around as a deacon offering to wash feet, I not sure it would go down well! Or maybe it would? My nursing vocation and calling as a Deacon feel one and the same. You have only to watch Call the Midwife to see a Religious Order that identified their ministry as nursing, some Diaconal Orders around the world were and are made up of deacons whose roles are those of nurses or teachers.

It was late one evening just before the schools shut that the NHS put out a call for anyone with prior Critical Care experience to get in touch. My nursing qualification is very much out of date, and I had no idea if I would be of any help to the NHS or not. However, my hope and desire are the same both as a deacon and as a nurse and that is to metaphorically wash feet, and in doing so practically demonstrate the Love of God through action to those around.

Some words Rishi Sunak, Chancellor of the Exchequer, spoke particularly stuck me were:
'Now, more than any time in our recent history, we will be judged by our capacity for compassion. Our ability to come through this, won't just be down to what government or business can do, but by the individual acts of kindness we show one another.'

As the Corona virus has spread across the world it has changed from something we watched on the news, to something that feels all too real now as people we know and love have caught it, become unwell, recovered or sadly died. Stopping all our activities to isolate and social distance isn't easy. Knowing how to support each other in these times feels difficult. We don't know how long the social

distancing and isolation will last, and it is hard to know just what we can do, but we can wash feet in little ways to demonstrate the Love of God to those around it. And for now that might be through prayer or simply keeping in touch through phone calls and messages.

As Jesus washed the disciples feet, we too seek to wash feet in simple ways. The scripture says we will be blessed when we wash feet, so lets do it in whatever ways we can.

As a religious order we have a daily prayer and so I offer this to you for use and reflection –

Eternal God, You are the source of all life, the fount of all wisdom, the wellspring of all grace.

Your days are without end, your loving mercies without number.

I depend on you and remember your goodness to me, and those who have gone before.

Your story has been told in every generation:

The Lord Jesus Christ lived among us, full of grace and truth,

Revealing your tender mercy, he healed the sick, comforted the broken and lost.

In humility he washed the feet of his disciples, calling us to follow his example as one who serves.

You are God, ahead of me, leading me, guiding me and calling me;

You are the Lord God, the all-wise, the all-compassionate. And I lift my heart in worship today and for ever. Amen.

Samantha Taylor on behalf of Rev Loraine, Rev Nicola, Deacon Sam and Rev Peter

A prayer from Traidcraft that it has been suggested we share around the Circuit:

Loving Father,

In these difficult days we turn to you.

We thank you for the work of the emergency services and key workers across our nation and ask for your hand of protection upon them. We also thank you for your Church and the work she is doing to help those most in need.

For those who are sick, **bring healing.**

For those who mourn, **bring comfort.**

For those who face uncertainty financially, **bring stability.**

For those who don't know what to do, **bring clarity.**

For those who are at risk, **bring protection.**

For those who are frightened, **bring calm.**

We ask these things also for our producers across the globe. Grant them reassurance that they are not forgotten and that we continue to stand with them. Continue to keep their routes to market open, their cashflow strong and protect their crop.

We ask for wisdom for those in leadership positions, both locally and nationally as they seek to guide us through the coming days and ask also for peace in our land.

Mighty God, for whom all things are known. We pray these things in the name of your son, Jesus Christ.

Amen