



The Methodist Church

South Molton and Ringsash Circuit

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Dear Friends

I hope that you are all coping in these stressful times and are managing to maintain contact with family, friends and neighbours. If there is any way in which I can help you at this time, please let me know.

As I write this, we are now into the extended lockdown in the UK and we have reached a point where the contrary voices are starting to be heard not only in the UK but across the world. Donald Trump wants to open the USA for business and is suggesting that disinfectant should be injected into people to kill the Coronavirus! Some of our European neighbours are starting to ease their lockdowns but our government remains cautious on this. Unusually I find myself supporting our Government and commending them on all the actions that they have taken so far. There may be criticism about the speed of response - hindsight has always provided a near perfect solution to everything that happens in life. The criticisms about PPE supply and speed of testing are perhaps countered by the fact that in a global pandemic demand will always outweigh available supply. Some will want us to buy ourselves out of the supply problem, even offering a premium for the products that we need. I cannot support this because of the impact on so many others across the world.

I maintain contact with Caroline in Zambia, who calls me 'uncle' because of her past school sponsorship. I know that if the pandemic should take hold in Zambia it will be lethal for the poor. I have also had contact with Sambeet in Puri, India. Currently safe, but if the pandemic hits them their hospitals will also not cope. I am unable to get news of 8-year-old Vilciana in Haiti who I am sponsoring through 'Compassion'. In Haiti this pandemic will devastate what little they have. Just three places where I have links and I know that you may also have similar links around the world.

To use our power to get to the front of the queue will deprive others whose need is as great as ours but whose poverty relegates them in every way. What gives any of us the right to have a better survival chance than them through our wealth? So, my thoughts have solidified over many years.

As we come out of this, we, as a country and the world as a whole must no longer be driven by obtaining maximum profit. This self-centred approach has led and will continue to lead to the exploitation of the poorest and most vulnerable in our world. In the past British manufacturing was decimated by the focus on maximising profits. M&S and Clarks moved production overseas closing the very manufacturers who would now have been able to produce the PPE equipment we need. Profit as the sole motivator should not be supported in the future and has to change in the economic aftermath of this pandemic.

As a world leader the UK needs to lead the world in our equality of treatment that shows respect for all, open opportunities for rich and poor, and Old Testament justice needs to flow out from us across our world. Love is the most important word in the dictionary (adding sacrificial brings perfection).

This pandemic is undoubtedly a threat to the UK and to the world, but it also presents an opportunity for us to change. Out of the bad God has given us an opportunity to change the world, to remove division, to heal the planet and to build a better world that comes closer to God's plan for us all. But this means that you and I have to love sacrificially so that all needs are met across the world (needs not wants). Jesus gives the example of what it means to put the needs of others before self. His disciples are called to follow Him and his example in life to bring salvation to all.

There will be tough times ahead but as we walk with Jesus and are filled with his Spirit so we can be catalysts for change, working alongside like-minded people of all faiths and none. The Spirit of Jesus sets us free to walk in his light together so, let's change the world in Jesus name.

Stuart