

Resources for Churches...

Responding to the Coronavirus

Reflection: Kindness

“In a world where you can be anything, be kind.” Caroline Flack wrote on Instagram last December, only a few weeks before she died. Sadly, she is by no means the only person in the public eye to discover that not all people are kind. But thankfully, no matter how restricted many of us are at the moment, making a difference by being kind is something we can all still do. To be kind is to be caring, considerate and generous, saying and doing things that help, putting the needs of others before our own. Scripture ascribes our human capacity to be kind to our being created in the image of God (Gen 1:27), who is consistently kind and loving. Whilst the word kind may not always be used itself, it is embedded in the range of words used to describe God's character: e.g. love, goodness, mercy, compassion, etc. (e.g. Ex 34:6, Psalm 145:9). Jesus himself describes his Father as kind, not only to those who love him but also those who are ungrateful and evil (Luke 6:35-36). He showed us what God's kindness looks like in practice, even to the point of loving his enemies. The apostle Paul instructs the early believers to clothe themselves 'with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience' (Col 3:12) and lists kindness as one of the fruit which is seen in a believer's life when they have God's Spirit living in their hearts (Gal 5:22). Kindness should be something we show instinctively, consistently and indiscriminately.



Interestingly, the theme chosen for this year's Mental Health Awareness Week in May was kindness. Apparently, recent research suggests being kind is good for us. Being kind helps us feel better about ourselves, gives us a sense of purpose and helps us feel more positive about life. It brings people together, builds loving relationships, deepens friendships, builds community, reduces our sense of isolation and increases our feeling of belonging. If this time of COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything so far, it must be that we need one another, that in some way we are all vulnerable and that even small acts of kindness can make a huge difference when we are struggling. It has been so good to see communities pulling together to help the weakest and neediest - volunteers have done shopping, run errands, picked up food donated by supermarkets and left it outside their houses so that people in need of free food can pick it up. Jigsaws, books, DVDs and toys have been put on people's drives as a means of helping others survive the constraints of lockdown that bit more easily. Being kind does everyone good.

It has been so good too that, as a church, we've been able to show kindness to those around us. Now we have our 'Thinking of You' cards we can all be handing them out, delivering them or posting them to people we know or have met as an act of kindness. We can't all be out shopping for others or baking cakes, etc. but giving out cards is something we can do and it's good to have something we can do 'together' as a church whilst we are all scattered away in our homes. Some of you have told me of the overwhelmingly grateful responses you have had from people who have received them and the following message sent to us last week following our Monday night card delivery just proves what I was saying above: It was a lovely gesture to call round tonight. It really makes us feel like a close-knit community and it means a lot to know there is some good in the world. Thank you for all your kindness. Our team of visitors are still visiting homes near the church with the cards and packets of chocolate buttons each week and are now calling back on people who shared their needs with us and asked for our prayer. But let's ensure that our showing kindness isn't just left to our small visiting team, but is something we are all doing in our own ways where we are. So do be thinking of who else you can give cards to (ask me for more if you need them) and let me have your suggestions of what you think are things we can all be doing to follow up on these. Let's all listen to how God's Spirit is prompting us and respond. And if all that research is correct, the good news is we will find it helps us feel good too.

Resources for Churches...

...continued

TEN ways to be kind:

1. Smile and say hello to a stranger
2. Ring someone up and say something nice about them
3. Give someone an unexpected gift
4. Let someone pull out in front of you when driving
5. Pray for someone ahead of you in a queue
6. Stop yourself from saying something critical about someone
7. Simply listen to someone who needs to talk
8. Make peace with someone or between two people
9. Do a favour for someone to help them out.
10. Reflect on God's loving kindness and what being more loving, compassionate, merciful and generous might look like in your life right now.

And don't forget to share with the people you are in touch with each week the good that has come out of it so we can all be encouraged.

I discovered a new virus-related poem a few weeks ago and have been waiting for the opportunity to fit it in to a letter. This seems like the ideal moment!

Kindness

To recap what we now know: it did not begin
in a laboratory in Wuhan, nor with a pangolin or bat,
but it already lay dormant within us, like a seed
in need of certain conditions to grow;

its symptoms are many and various,
and may include some, or all, of the following:
tear drops, sudden laughter, a feeling of warmth,
and a peculiar uplifting of the heart;

it leaves its traces everywhere: from boxes
left on doorsteps to conversations over fences;
it can be transmitted over vast distances,
through a phone call, or from a smile across a street,

or a certain softness of tone spoken beside
a hospital bed; it affects young and old equally;
there is no race or gender immune from it;
it has the power to topple bad governments;

if one person were to pass it on to just three others
and they, in turn, were to pass it on to three more,
in no time at all, the world would be full of it,
and where, might we ask ourselves, would we be then.

Brian Bilston May 8 2020

<https://brianbilston.com/tag/kindness/>