

The Methodist Church in Wales  
Yr Eglwys Fethodistaidd yng Nghymru



To colleagues in the Wales Synod  
of the Methodist Church in Wales

April 2014

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Dear Friends,

Earlier this week, I was driving over the Brecon Beacons to a meeting in mid-Wales. The air was bright and clear, the views spectacular and the hillsides full of young lambs feeding from their mothers and trying out their new and unsteady legs in the spring sunshine. It was a vision of new life and hope on the kind of day when you couldn't imagine a finer part of the world in which to live and minister.

Then I recalled making the same journey in the winter months we've recently experienced, with the rain coming down, the hillsides covered with mud and slush, and the same sheep looking wet and bedraggled, dependent on the feed being delivered by farmers out in all weathers and such shelter as could be provided. And it struck me that all this new life so evident in the spring lambs was only possible because of the care and commitment, not to say sacrificial attention, of hillside farmers and their families through the long winter months.

Perhaps this has something to say to us about the Easter we prepare to celebrate shortly. The communion service we hold on Maundy Thursday has its origins in the Passover meal that Jesus shared with his disciples in the Upper Room. In light of the events that followed that night, leading to the Cross and then the Empty Tomb, Christians have come to see Jesus as the Paschal Lamb, the one who was slain for our redemption. And behind all this lies the love of God the Father, the one who so loved the world that he spared not his only Son. It takes a lot of love and no small sacrifice to enable new life to come into the world. As we prepare to celebrate Christ who is the Resurrection and the Life, we remember the sacrificial love of God which makes all this possible now, as then.

I'm also conscious that in these last couple of weeks we've heard some sad news in terms of the death of two much loved colleagues, Timothy Mark (Bridgend) and Ian Whyte (Buckley). Easter is a time when the reality of death and the hope of resurrection are very much in all our minds. And so while we continue to pray for Anne and Shirley and for their families, our trust and hope for Timothy and Ian is indeed the Easter message for us all; that they may rest in peace and rise in glory.

With every blessing for this Eastertide,

*Stephen*