

Dear friends,

I hope you are all safe and well. I find myself reflecting on a year that has been full of postponements and cancellations. I am a big sports fan so was disappointed when the European Championships were postponed until next year, the same with the Olympics. I had been hoping to go back to Essex to visit my grandparents and show Sarah where I grew up and some of my favourite walks in that area, but those plans were cancelled. I'm sure most of you also know that our wedding was postponed until May next year. I am also sure that a lot of you have had similar experiences with having to rearrange celebrations for special occasions and milestones.

In this reflecting I've also thought about what has remained. This year I have seen more kindness and compassion from people than I have seen for a long time. One example of this is when the battery in Sarah's car died and our neighbour, who is a mechanic in the army, used his discount to order a replacement and then installed it for free. Love has not been cancelled - back in October my younger brother married his wife and while I could not be there in person we shared in the day as they live streamed it on the internet for friends and family who could not make it. I have also had other friends who got engaged over this last year. Faith has not been cancelled - as a church we have shared together in new forms of worship, through meeting online for services, bible studies and prayer meetings. We have these weekly reflections and resources that are emailed and posted out. I also know that many of us have reached out to each other through socially distanced visits and phone calls. Through all of this we have been a Church sharing the love of God with one another and giving us all hope.

Finally, despite the announcement last weekend Christmas is not cancelled. The Methodist Church's theme for this year is, "Best of all is, God is with us." Christmas is a celebration of this fact. Jesus is God incarnate, God with us, His life death and resurrection is the mechanism by which we are saved and drawn into a relationship with God. This relationship means that for us Jesus is eternally incarnate. Our faith in Jesus means we are never alone. God is with us and therefore Christmas can never be cancelled.

I wish you all a very Merry Christmas

God bless

Chris and Sarah