

Being Connected

Methodists spell it 'the Connexion'. 'Inspiring stories from the life of your Methodist Church' – as the Methodist Church magazine has it.

When one or more of the IT links with the outside world 'crashes', we shout for help and then realise very quickly what being unconnected to those we care about, even by screen, means to us.

We've become especially aware, during these difficult Covid-19 days, of another circle of friends. We recognise them as being in one or other of our 'communities of interest'. These include for us music, gardening, art, politics, books and church.

We realise that using the term 'community of interest' about the church might sound a bit lightweight when usually we use terms like 'God's mission' or 'discipleship'. But that's the difference between 'internal' valued language and commonly used (and valued) language.

Then there are the people we meet through our screen links with the world – currently around 7 billion of them! And there is an even more demanding fact that sometimes we see/hear one person expressing their acute need in such a way that we cannot bear to watch, and turn away. And then sometimes we find our own condition (age, disability, gender inequality) being shown to us afresh. And there are those who remain 'voiceless': this is so for many near us, for many in the UK, and for a great many around the world.

Elif Shafak is an award-winning British-Turkish novelist and writer. We've been reading her work, *How to Stay Sane in an Age of Division* (2020). She writes:

[There are] a lot of voiceless people. And the biggest irony is that all this is happening at a time when we as humans – regardless of race, gender, religion, class or ethnicity – are supposed to be more connected and empathetic [sympathetic] and free than ever before.

Marshall McLuhan gave us the phrase 'the global village' (1964). So, as we struggle to get through the threats and limitations of Covid-19, how can we encourage each other to be connected but not overwhelmed?

1. We can work within our own devotions at our Christian values – at that way of life that for us comes from the Jesus of the Gospels (throughout the

Gospels and notable in many New Testament passages such as 1 Corinthians 13).

2. We can join in 'public discourse' and thereby join with ('show solidarity with', some would say) many beyond the Christian Church. We need to argue and demonstrate that 'being good', 'seeking to be compassionate and loving', 'working for justice and peace' is hugely and significantly different to being harmful, abusive, oppressive, unjust or violent. Attempts to blur these distinctions – especially to promote lying over truth-telling – will not do.

3. Thirdly, and no doubt there are many more, we can continue to be in contact with each other at LMC – and thereby be a blessing to each other.

Tony and Barbara Holden