**Minister’s letter for June 2019**

Dear friends,

For the final five years of my period as minister in Doncaster I had the honour of being chaplain to Doncaster Rovers Football Club. Although my first sporting allegiance has always been to my home-town club, Hull City, I definitely have a soft spot for Donny Rovers, and always look out for their scores when the results come in. This season has been a fairly good one for the club, and they went into their final match of the regular season knowing that a win would seal their place in the end of season playoffs.

The later than usual kick-off time of 5.30pm on the Saturday gave me the opportunity to travel up to see the match. Knowing that my 5-year-old grandson, James, who lives in Doncaster, is developing an enthusiasm for football, I arranged to take him and his dad to the match. The sun was shining, the crowd was enthusiastic, and although the team didn’t play fantastically well, they nevertheless managed to achieve the much-needed victory. James thoroughly enjoyed the experience, and looked great in his new Rovers kit. I am sure that for James, the memory of attending his first ever football match is one which he will treasure for many years to come, and I feel so privileged to have been able to share the experience with him. It takes me back 30 or so years when I shared similar experiences with my own children, though those memories are now not so clear! (My memories of taking Sue to her first ever football match are not so positive – she took her knitting along!)

Reflecting on such experiences has reminded me how privileged I have been in my role as a Methodist minister, over the years, to have been able to be alongside people as they have experienced unforgettable and key moments in their lives. Sometimes there have been times of immense sadness or even tragedy; at other times there have been experiences of tremendous joy and celebration. Of course, the calling of all of us, as part of God’s family, the Church, is to travel together through the journey of life, to be there for each other in the joys and sorrows. As Paul reminds us in his letters, we are to *‘encourage one another and build each other up’* (1 Thessalonians 5.11), and also to *‘rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn’* (Romans 12.15).

Being there for each other, sharing our time and energy, and standing alongside one another, is not always easy. Fortunately, we are not called to this ministry in our own strength, but in the strength, love and peace of Christ, through the indwelling Holy Spirit. May we all be open to the renewing touch of God, sensitive to one another’s needs, and truly understand the joy and privilege it is to be part of the family of God.

With love,

Steve