

St Paul's Methodist Church, Crawley
Extraordinary Times
a magazine to help us through COVID-19
Issue 12 **June 7th 2020**

From the minister...

If you happened to have joined me online on Wednesday afternoon for my weekly act of worship, you will have noticed that I became distracted at one point by the sight of a large queue of traffic outside of my dining room window. Over the past few weeks we've become accustomed to a lot less traffic on the roads, and especially with the schools being closed the road that runs past my house (Lingfield Road in East Grinstead) has been very pleasantly quiet. Normally we experience a solid line of traffic from about 3.30pm (when the schools turn out) right through until after the evening rush hour; it's been so nice during lockdown to have been spared the noise, the pollution, and the people peering nosily into our windows as they sit waiting for an opportunity to creep forward in the queue.

So, when I glanced out of the window at 2pm on Wednesday and saw a traffic queue of the scale to which we used to be accustomed back in the days when life made sense, it was surprising! My wife had just arrived back from food shopping, so she was able to tell me that the reason for the congestion was that the East Grinstead branch of McDonalds had just reopened, and seemingly half the population of the town had decided to go and reacquaint themselves with the delights of a drive through Big Mac and fries. The resulting traffic jam of cars attempting to turn off the main road into McDonalds car park had caused gridlock!

Whatever your opinion of McDonalds (other fast food outlets are available), it is evident that one of the things that people have missed the most during lockdown is the taste of salty junk food. To be honest I'm quite keen on it myself, but not so keen that I would leap into my car the moment I heard (probably on Twitter) that the local branch had reopened, and join the throng of lemmings determined to resume the process of hardening their arteries and giving themselves type 2 diabetes.

Which begs the question, what have you missed most during lockdown? Yes, I know, your family...hopefully your church...holidays? And maybe, like me, you've missed the opportunity to socialise. I've missed going to my favourite restaurants and hanging out with my friends. It's interesting to speculate what will happen when restaurants and churches alike finally reopen. Will we all flock back to church with the enthusiasm (bordering on desperation) displayed by the McDonalds brigade? Have we learned, by virtue of having had it denied to us for an extended period, just how important and special our church fellowship is to us?

And what things will change in our behaviour patterns after lockdown restrictions are lifted? What things will we no longer bother to do? What little habits that controlled our lives to a greater or lesser extent, will we now feel that we have the courage and confidence to resist, post – lockdown? What things will we pledge to devote far more of our time to than previously?

There are some aspects to this Coronavirus experience that have been really painful or stressful for us. But there are others that have made us realise just what our real priorities are in life. Let's emerge stronger and more grateful as a result.

God bless, *Ralph*

A prayer...

Thank you Lord for your faithfulness

That you have never deserted us during this difficult period

Teach us the simple honest faith

That steers and prioritises our life

So that we may live well for You

And learn to respect and value one another

Amen

What's On This Week

Sunday 7th June

10am *TakeTime Live* join in a meditation in real time, or later by pasting <https://mixlr.com/taketime/> into your Web browser

10:45am live worship with Rev Ralph - *Ruth in June* week 2 *Loving at Work*

Wednesday 10th June

2pm live prayer and bible study with Rev Ralph

Links to the services will be on St Paul's Facebook page and website and also sent by email so that everyone who has internet can participate.

Prayers at 6 & 8

1-7 June is Volunteers Week so please give thanks for all volunteers who have worked with the NHS and in local communities to support and help during the Covid-19 situation. Pray for the USA and for the many people hurt and angry following the death at police hands of George Floyd. Pray for an end to racial injustice however and wherever it occurs.

Please pray for

Geoff who is now in Crawley Hospital and for Jean, still unable to visit him.

Continue praying for Faye, Maria, Emma, Linda, and others with needs known to ourselves.

Send your prayer requests to ask.stpauls@gmail.com

Permission must be received from a person before their name is put on the Church prayer list.

A Big Thank You

Many thanks to everyone who has responded to my recent emailed letter about St Paul's finances. I asked those who normally contribute to St Paul's through the collection during services to consider using alternative methods, such as setting up a standing order with their bank or using BACS. The response has been very encouraging and is extremely helpful. If you didn't receive the letter, or if you have mislaid it, email ask.stpauls@gmail.com and we will be pleased to send you a copy. Many thanks to all those who are continuing to support the church financially during these difficult times. *Martyn*

Volunteers' Week

This takes place 1 - 7 June every year to celebrate and say thank you for the contribution millions of volunteers make across the UK. This year, because of Covid-19, the usual celebrations are being down-played and the thanks are being emphasized. A short film '*commUNITY makes us*', narrated by Claire Balding, celebrates the contribution of volunteers before, during and after the pandemic. https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=5&v=6C8hJe9IrEc&feature=emb_logo

Sad news

We have heard from her daughter, Lucinda, that Rosina Ridley passed away on the 22nd April in East Surrey Hospital. Rosina was in former years a loyal member of St Paul's and will be remembered by our older members.

Have you been watching Springwatch?



If you follow the 'Watch' TV programmes in Spring, Summer and Autumn, you'll be familiar with the usual format where the presenters are based at one location. This time they've each been presenting from their own home areas with just one camera operator. Extra interest

has been added with the use of pre-recorded and archive material and fixed cameras looking at the goings-on in various birds' nests. This new approach, brought into play because of Lockdown, has attracted approval, some saying it's even better than before. As well as live TV shows each evening, Springwatch offers more all the rest of the day on the BBC website and on Facebook.

As well as all that, I have my personal wildlife show. I like to sit, ostensibly working on my laptop, where I have a good view of the bird feeding station in the garden. Just now, with lots of young to feed, the action is frantic and the dramas are many out there. A fat wood pigeon has just stuffed its crop full but is sitting on the food tray just to prevent others getting to it. Half a dozen starlings are mobbing it, screeching away, but the pigeon sits firm. The hanging seed feeders are covered with sparrows which are officially on the Red List of endangered species, so I think we have more than our fair share! A couple of dunnocks and a robin lurk underneath to peck up what falls to the ground. Baby blue tits have been brought along to learn how to use the feeders, but they haven't caught on yet so they beg with fluttering wings and get fed by their parents.

The stars of the show this year have to be the colourful goldfinches. A flock of goldfinches is known as a 'charm' for good reason. They call to each other as they fly in and stay on the feeders for a long time so are an easy joy to watch.

Where am I going with all this? Many people have found comfort and interest in wildlife during these last weeks; on TV, in our gardens and while being out for walks. But a couple more things have been in my mind. God has gifted us the resources to be highly adaptable and creative when we find ourselves in a changed world. Springwatch is just one example. Churches are another with streaming and recording improvised worship. People have found they can work from home and shop online – you can think of many more examples. The other thing is that, through all the dramas and disasters, all that wildlife just gets on with life. Somehow that gives some re-assurance that "This too shall pass". As Rev Ralph often reminds us, God is in charge and will see us through.



So my prayer is one of thanks for wild creatures, for their beauty and fascination and for what we can learn from them, and for the amazing way God has made us resourceful, creative and adaptable in the most testing of times. *Joyce*

Barry's Isolation Diary week 9 – missions accomplished

I am feeling somewhat smug this week having, despite what I wrote a few weeks ago, completed a couple of jobs from my to do list, one of which has been on my list for at least a year.

The first job crossed off was replacing three broken panes of glass in the greenhouse and the rotten piece of wood which allowed a vine to have its root outside. Sadly, having waited three years for the vine to mature sufficiently to produce a small harvest, the following year it died. Actually, cutting the glass involved much planning before I felt prepared to try and cut the glass. I had a stock of glass from secondary glazing we had in the 70s at our previous home which we brought with us when we moved, so there was plenty to practice on. Note to Sheila "I told you it would come in useful one day!" Despite a great deal of trepidation, I did eventually manage to pluck up the courage to cut the required panes and, remarkably, achieved reasonably smooth edges and they all fitted including a triangular one.

The second task was to replace part of the side of my shed which had slowly warped out of shape and was allowing water into the insulation. As you may gather this is no ordinary garden shed but is fully lined and insulated in accordance with instructions supplied by the late Michael Warnock. This involved Building Paper, Insulation and Plastic Sheeting not necessarily in the order I would have expected. Internally it has chipboard walls which are wallpapered and a tongued and grooved ceiling. This acted as my office for about a year when we first moved here in 2001.

My second shed, although much younger, now looks tatty by comparison with my ex-office which looks quite smart having been repainted with preservative. Perhaps I'll have to do that just to make them look the same. It just goes to show how desperate one can become after all this time confined to home.

We are still waiting for the lettuces to get large enough to provide one meal's worth; still, the rain will have helped.

Stay safe and God bless, *Barry*

Re-opening Methodist Churches

The latest statement from The Methodist Church, dated 4th June, says '*We continue to heed the Government guidelines for churches and to consider carefully the needs and risks involved in reopening places of worship. At this point, we do not anticipate making any changes to our own guidance until after the Conference which takes place between June 25 and July 2.*'

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St Paul's website www.crawleymethodistchurch.org.uk

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