

St Paul's Methodist Church, Crawley

Extraordinary Times

a magazine to help us through COVID-19

Issue 26

September 13/20th 2020

From the minister...

I'm sure you have heard this week about the new "Rule of 6" which was announced by the prime minister on Wednesday. If you are wondering how this will affect our plans to reopen and re-establish Sunday services, then I have some reassuring news. Under the new regulations churches are permitted to continue to hold services with congregations up to the maximum capacity identified by our Covid risk assessment. In the case of St Pauls this is approximately 40 people. So we are going to continue with our plan of forthcoming services (more details below).

The rule of 6 will apply to groups of people: so this means that if you come to church with other members of your "bubble", you may no longer sit together if the number of people exceeds six. However, if your single household happens to contain more than six people, you may come to church and continue to sit together! Takes a bit of getting your head around, doesn't it?

In practice I think most people attending our initial services will be either coming in couples or alone, so there will be no discernible difference to what we have begun doing already. The greater challenge comes when we start to welcome our families and children back to worship. If we are able to keep households socially distanced from one another whilst in church then it's fine, but with small children in the equation this is going to be tough. I'm trying (in conversation with some of the parents in our church) to think of ways in which we might be able to get the children back together – but with this new "rule of 6" it has become more difficult to see the way forward. Please keep praying for our families and children as we try to find a solution.

Turning now to dates and times of forthcoming services. Here is a timetable of our services at St Pauls for the coming weeks:

Sunday September 13th: no service

Sunday September 20th: 9am service led by Ralph

Sunday September 27th: no service

Sunday October 4th: 10.30am Communion Service led by Ralph

The reason we are only meeting fortnightly in September is that I am also doing 9am services for Trinity in East Grinstead on alternate weeks. From the first Sunday in October we return to the circuit preaching plan, so services will be at 10.30am every Sunday from that point on, and will be led by a variety of local preachers. I will be popping up on the first Sunday in each month like I used to

before lockdown to lead a communion service (and additionally if there are 5 Sundays in a month). If you've been enjoying hearing your own minister leading services online every Sunday over the past 6 months, then you can still catch me on Facebook by watching the 10.45 morning service from Trinity each Sunday, because they are not planning on opening that service to the public until the singing ban is lifted. You won't be able to tune in live of course if you are attending St Pauls, but the recordings will be available afterwards on Trinity's Facebook page. Please note that from the beginning of October, half of these services will also be led by local preachers or other circuit ministers, since I will be coming to St Pauls and to other circuit churches.

If you are on Facebook then I bring news that I will be starting an online Alpha course shortly. This will be live on Facebook every Wednesday evening from 7.30pm – 8.30pm, commencing on October 7th and running for a total of 11 weeks. I will be leading all the sessions from my home. If you've never done an Alpha course before then I heartily recommend it, even if you have been coming to church for years. Alpha is basically an introduction to Christianity, and I have seen quite a lot of people come to Jesus over the years through Alpha courses I have led or been involved with. If you have friends or family members who you think might like to join in, then please let them know about it.

To register for the course simply go to the St Pauls Facebook page and click the box that says "Try Alpha Online". It will lead you to a group which you can join, and through which you can tune in the course sessions each week. The group is private, but anyone can join (or leave) at any time. More details to follow.

Do spread the word, particularly about our services restarting, with people you know who don't receive this newsletter. I look forward to seeing you again soon.

God bless, *Ralph*

A prayer...

Lord, in these ever changing times

We often feel insecure and uncertain

We reach out to You

The only constant, unchanging part of our life in these troubled times

You are our rock and our fortress

In You we will trust

Our confidence is in You

Our hope is in the cross

The price You paid for us

Thank you for loving us

AMEN

Please note – next issue of ET will be in two weeks' time, 27th September

What's On This Week & Next

Sunday 13th 10:45am Online worship from Trinity with Rev Ralph

Sunday 20th 9am 30 minute service at St Paul's with Rev Ralph

10:45am Online worship from Trinity with Rev Ralph

Tuesdays **During the afternoon sometime** Live message from Rev Ralph in St Paul's

Wednesdays 2pm Wednesday worship online with Rev Ralph

Prayers at 6 & 8

As we face new restrictions on meeting friends and family as Covid -19 infection levels rise, ask God to give us all strength and patience to deal with the situation. Pray especially for students returning to universities and colleges and for their families, anxious for their safety.

Continue to pray for Geoff and Jean as well as others we know who have 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

Dial-a-Prayer



FREE phone lines for prayers and news from the Methodist Church

Listen to a prayer: 0808 281 2514

Listen to news: 0808 281 2478

Content is updated weekly on Thursday afternoon

It's done – I've had my hair cut!



My long hair has gone to *Little Princess Trust*, to be used to make a wig for a child with cancer. Many thanks to everyone who kindly supported me and donated. The total money raised today is £565.00; more than I had hoped for and enough for a wig to be made for a



child with hair loss due to cancer. You can see more about *Little Princess Trust* at <https://www.littleprincesses.org.uk/> Many thanks, *Sue Poole*



Change begins with a bicycle!

The miles are being clocked up by our new President, Rev Richard Teal, who is out cycling every morning this month. He is raising funds for *All We Can*, in particular, their work with communities in Uganda where bikes are helping to break the cycle of poverty. Here is Richard's own account:



"As part of my upcoming year as President of the Methodist Conference, I was meant to visit Uganda with *All We Can*, the Methodist Relief and Development Charity, and find out more about their work – including meeting an innovative local partner who use bicycles to help bring about long lasting transformation in rural communities. Despite coronavirus travel restrictions not allowing this visit to take place, I have still been inspired by this work, and wanted to fundraise for it.

"For communities living in rural Uganda, bicycles are more than a mode of transport – they're a vital tool to help break the cycle of poverty for girls like Nawalat. Nawalat dreams of becoming a nurse – but her journey to school is long and difficult, and as the eldest child, she must help her widowed mother and younger siblings at home.

"Young girls like Nawalat have the potential they need to break the cycle of poverty. Through your support, All We Can's local partner has helped her to access a bicycle – and now, she can take her future into her own hands. Nawalat's two-hour walk to school, and the risks she faced along the way, meant she arrived late, and was turned away from class. Now she cycles, she's there on time, every day – and she can help with chores at home as well. Her dream of becoming a nurse has been made possible, thanks to her bicycle.

"If you would like to help help make change possible for more children like Nawalat, please make a donation to *All We Can* on my JustGiving page <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/richard-teal> " Thank you.

(Donating through JustGiving is simple, fast and totally secure. Your details are safe with JustGiving - they'll never sell them on or send unwanted emails. Once you donate, they'll send your money directly to the charity.)

Contacts

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Extraordinary Times is published weekly 'for the duration'