

St Paul's Methodist Church, Crawley

Extraordinary Times

a magazine to help us through COVID-19

Issue 35

November 22nd 2020

From your minister...

First of all, many thanks to everyone who contributed to this year's "Love in a Box" appeal. When the November lockdown was announced we all thought that it would be the end of the shoebox collection, but praise God the van came as usual and collected a total of 130 boxes. These were from a combination of people from both Trinity and St Pauls, and I have to say that I was hugely surprised and delighted that you all responded so magnificently despite our current circumstances (so was the van driver!). Normally we would collect just shy of 200 boxes, so I think this is tremendous result. Well done!

As usual the shoeboxes will be taken to Moldova and distributed to children on Christmas Day. Were it not for your generosity these children would receive no presents at all this year. As usual we will take a moment in our Christmas Day services to remember the boxes you gave and picture the children opening them. Don't know about you, but this thought brings me more joy at Christmas than opening any of my own presents (although I still hope to get some!).

How are you feeling during this current "circuitbreaker" lockdown? I've spoken to quite a number of people during November who are finding this one harder than the last. Don't know about you, but when I find myself feeling low for some reason, I try to identify the root cause so that I can try to deal with it. For me there are two factors: one is that having previously endured 6 months of isolation, we were just starting to open our churches and resume something approaching normal. But now we are back to square one, and that's discouraging.

The second thing for me is that the weather isn't as good. Say what you like about the challenge of Coronavirus, we were blessed to have a beautiful Springtime and Summer this year. We enjoyed wall to wall sunshine for months, and for many of us we felt reconnected to nature as a result. Something that modern life had taken from us was restored.

But it's a different story in November. The grey skies, the wind and rain: we don't feel like going outdoors so much, and then our domestic surroundings start to close in on us. Separated from our families and friends once again, the isolation is made more acute as the days grow shorter and Winter looms before us.

It has never been more important than now to keep our prayer life intact. Even in isolation at home, the Christian is never truly alone. Jesus is there with us all of the time, and scripture encourages us to cast all our anxieties onto him, because he cares for us (1 Peter 5:7). Our problem is that when we are feeling low we often don't feel like talking about it, or sharing it with someone else. Our relationships with other members of our household can deteriorate into short-tempered grunts or even full blown arguments: in these situations we need to take a step back and acknowledge that this isn't all down to our irritability – it's the Devil, who certainly hasn't left us alone during lockdown. He wants us to lose our determination and optimism – nothing pleases him more. As it says in 1 Peter

5:8, Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. As much as I try to figure out what internal factors might be causing me to feel low, I have found it very useful as a Christian to try and step back spiritually and externalise my emotions: knowing that most of my negative thoughts are not actually coming from me at all – they are coming from the enemy.

We don't need to be afraid of him – No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.(Romans 8:37) You are God's prize possession, his masterpiece. He loves you and desires to lift you up on the wings of eagles. When the Devil tries to tell you that you are rubbish, that your life has no purpose, that you can't cope – he's lying. That's what he does best. So instead, let's take those words from 1 Peter 5 and apply them to our lives during this "lost month" of November:

6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. 7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. 8 Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. 10 And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. 11 To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Has this scripture EVER been more appropriate than now? Take heart, my friends. Finally, as Advent approaches I would like to encourage you to make your own Advent wreath for use at home. Starting on Sunday November 29th we will be lighting the first candle on our own wreaths together as we join in our online morning service on Facebook. If you aren't able to join us in person, light your first candle at 10.50am, and know that you are connecting with people and households doing exactly the same thing at the same time. Though we are separated by distance, we can still be together.

Hopefully from Sunday December 6th we can resume worship in our church building, and we will be lighting the church Advent wreath each Sunday from that point onwards. And please pray for Christmas, that we be enabled to celebrate together safely this year.

God bless, *Ralph*

What's On

St Paul's is closed for the duration of this second lockdown. Hopefully, services in church will resume in December. In the meantime, join us online.

10:45am Sunday 22nd & 29th November (Advent Sunday)

Live streamed worship with Rev Ralph Ward from our [Facebook page](#)

Every Wed 7:30pm Online Alpha course with Rev Ralph

In your prayers

During this week news has come in of an unusually high number of St Paul's people who are either feeling unwell, waiting to have various medical tests, awaiting test results or expecting surgery. Please pray for everyone who has a concern about their health just now.

Continue praying for Barbara Fleming, Geoff Ridgway, Jean and Geoff Rose, and for others you know who need prayers at this time.

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

DIY Advent wreaths

Next Sunday, November 29th, is Advent Sunday but this year we can't be together in church for the lighting of the first Advent candle. So how about making your own Advent wreath!

You can find lots of ideas if you search online for "how to make Advent wreaths with kids", or perhaps you could design your own, or here is a simple idea for making one:

You will need:

- Tray or similar for laying the wreath on (you could use foil or a foil tray)
- 5 jars to hold the candles
- 5 candles—one needs to be larger than the others
- Green twigs, ribbons, flowers, pine cones
- Decorations for the jar

To make the wreath:

1. Decorate the jars but make sure the candlelight can still be seen.
2. Place the jars in a ring on the tray with four around the outside and Christ's candle in the middle.
3. Join the jars by weaving a ring of greenery and ribbons and decorate with pine cones and flowers or anything else you may have to hand
4. Put candles into the jars—there should be a larger candle in the middle jar

If you have your wreath ready during the live streamed service next Sunday in Advent, we could all light our candles together and feel more like being part of the whole congregation.



From a church member



I've been raising free donations for St Paul's Methodist Church, Crawley every time I shop online and we've just received our second payment! Our 7 supporters have earned £87.16

for St Paul's since March. More supporters would bring in more really easy money. You can help too, please sign up - it only takes 2 minutes and 4,300+ shops will donate to us for free every time you shop with them using #easyfundraising!

[Just click here](#)

Starry Night - online fundraiser for Action for Children

On Tuesday 8 December, join Action for Children and families across the UK for an evening of Christmas carols, fun and festive cheer hosted by Channel 4 News' Jon Snow.

Tickets are £10 per household and will give you access to exclusive entertainment, readings, and performances from celebrities including Angellica Bell and Call the Midwife's Jenny Agutter. For tickets and how to join in click [here](#)



And finally – a few bloopers from church notices, especially for singers

Miss Charlene Mason sang 'I will not pass this way again,' giving obvious pleasure to the congregation.

Next Thursday there will be try-outs for the choir.
They need all the help they can get.

*At the evening service tonight, the sermon topic will be 'What Is Hell?'
Come early and listen to our choir practice.*

This evening at 7pm hymn singing in the park across from the Church.
Bring a blanket and come prepared to sin.

(Thanks to Hilary for sending these)

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