

St Paul's Methodist Church, Crawley
Extraordinary Times
a magazine to help us through COVID-19
Issue 45 **February 7th 2021**

From our Minister

First week of February, and we are still in the heart of lockdown. It feels like time is standing still, that we are frozen in a moment. Is there anyone reading this for whom the weeks are flying by? Unless, of course, you are blessed to be busy at work; but for many of us we are waiting and hoping for freedom like we wait and hope for Winter to turn to Spring. And this is proving to be a very long Winter.

As you step out for your exercise (in your local area, of course), do you find yourself doing the same circuit every day? I started to get fed up with taking a "walk around the block" and sought new alternatives. It's led to me discovering some interesting corners of East Grinstead that I never really knew existed. Given how wet it has been in recent weeks, maybe you, like me, have found yourselves ditching the woodland trails; some of my favourite country walks have become a skating rink of slippery mud. So I've tended to stick to streets with pavements, and found myself devising circular routes that take me through residential areas. But these are starting to become dull now – there are only so many people's front gardens that you can admire before you start to get bored.

I'm quite envious of my eldest daughter, to be honest. Along with her husband and our two little grandchildren, she has started a completely new life during lockdown by relocating to Jersey, where she is taking on a full time post as a church youth and children's worker. It was a move fraught with jeopardy, but two weeks ago they successfully completed the journey to the island by ferry, accompanied by a removal van containing all their worldly goods. A lot of prayer went into this epic house move, since at any point in the process lockdown could have thwarted their plans; such as the ferries stopping running (which they actually did for two weeks just before the moving date!), to removal firms suspending their business, to the island of Jersey closing its borders. What a massive relief when they finally arrived!

So, my daughter and her family, rather than having to pace around the same residential streets every day like I do, have exchanged their first floor flat on a main road in the borough of Croydon for a barn conversion on a farm, five minutes from the beach. There are goats, chickens and horses for the children to meet every day, and lots of adventures to come.

Which is all very well, but as some of you know and have already experienced yourselves, if you arrive in a different country (or on one of the Channel Islands), you have to quarantine for two weeks. So imagine the frustration of being in a beautiful new place, but being unable to go out and explore it! Sally tells me that she can smell the salt and the seaweed, but has yet to clap eyes on the beach.

This Sunday they are released from quarantine, and as I'm sure you can imagine, they will be heading for the sand and surf. But more importantly than that, they have arranged to meet some other families there – families from their new church.

Which is another thing, perhaps the thing we've all missed most acutely. Fellowship. Being in the company of other Christians. Robinson Crusoe lived next to a beautiful beach, but the solitude turned it into torment. We'd happily trade the most beautiful places in the world for a handful of good friends. And the awesome thing about belonging to Jesus is that wherever you go (lockdown regulations permitting) you instantly gain a new family of other people who belong to Jesus. And the adventure begins afresh.

As we look forward to Winter turning to Spring, and (we pray) lockdown restrictions easing; let's also anticipate with joy and hope the opportunity to meet face to face in fellowship again. Please God let it come soon.

God bless, *Ralph*

What's On

Sundays 10:45am online worship with Rev Ralph Ward

Wednesdays 2pm Rev Ralph's Bible study on Mark's gospel

Find these live on [Trinity's Facebook page](#) and [St Paul's Facebook page](#) with videos available afterwards

In your prayers

Pray for the continued decrease in the number of new Covid infections, hospital admissions and deaths. Ask God to help us all be patient as we wait for lockdown restrictions to be eased.

Continue praying for Lester Ford, Geoff Manning, Geoff and Jean Rose, the NHS, hospitals, medical workers and vaccinators.

Continue in prayer for members of our church community and others you know who need our 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

Zoom sessions for kids and young people

We will be holding sessions via Zoom for all children and young people in King's Kids and King's Teens on Sundays at 12pm, starting Sunday 7th February and Fridays at 6pm for those who can't make Sunday, starting this Friday, 5th February. These will consist of prayers, songs, Bible study, discussions and activities. We have sent out invitations but if you haven't received one and would like your child or children to join in, please contact Martyn and Carol at:

ask.stpauls@gmail.com

. and adults aren't forgotten either

Many of us have got used to using online facilities such as Zoom to attend virtual meetings, keep in touch with family and friends and do the occasional pub quiz. No reason then not to restart some of our house fellowships, or even start up new ones, in the same way until we can get back to meeting at the church or in our houses. Watch this space for developments!

“Trust in God and trust in the scientists”

Following the announcement that over 100,000 people have now died in the UK as a result of Covid-19, in this special Podcast, four Methodists speak about the role of faith in supporting the vaccination programme

Grace Penn-Timothy, a Methodist nurse who works in Accident and Emergency medicine speaks about the disproportionate impact that Covid-19 has had on people from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, the history of racial inequality in healthcare provision and the impact of misinformation around the vaccine. She examines the reluctance of some to take up the vaccine and explains how she urges friends to get vaccinated: *“I talk to my fellow ethnic minority people...you know how difficult it is to lose somebody. To die on your own with no friends or family around, it’s even worse”*.

Professor Paul Hunter, a Methodist who is Professor of Health Protection at the University of East Anglia, specialising in outreach response, speaks about the science behind the vaccination and the role of the Church in supporting communities during this time of decision making: *“We need to ensure that all sections of society have access to adequate information and education and support to make the right decision.”*

The Revd Dr Jo Cox-Darling, minister of Trinity Methodist Church in Codsall near Wolverhampton, which is acting as a vaccination hub with 1000 people coming through the doors each day to be inoculated, speaks on the chaplaincy service offered during the vaccination roll out at her church hall: *“We are having conversations with people who have not left their home for a year. We can start to enable those people to be part of a community again.”*

The Revd Prof David Wilkinson, physicist turned theology professor, Principal of St John’s College, Durham and Methodist minister, reflects on our duty to take the offer of a vaccine: *“For me it’s my discipleship, my love of God that leads me to say ‘this is a gift, I’m going to use it for other people’s benefit.”*
<https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/news/podcasts/the-methodist-podcast-episode-50/>

Join Christian Aid's virtual supporter conference 22-26 Feb

This Supporters’ Conference will be a great time to get and give inspiration for this year’s Christian Aid Week coming up in May which will focus on the climate crisis in Kenya. There will be lots of different sessions focussing on a wide variety of subjects such as fundraising, theology, campaigning, prayer and being a part of a wider movement for change. As it’s a virtual conference you can come and go as you please. Indeed, you could do the ironing or polish the silver while listening. This link will tell you more about it with the opportunity to sign up for the sessions of your choice: <http://caid.org.uk/supporterconference2021> Ruth Lewis

Methodist Church expresses concern over Myanmar

Following the news that Myanmar has been placed under military rule with the detention of elected political leaders, our President and Vice-President have sent a letter of concern and assurance of prayer to the President of the Methodist Church, Upper Myanmar and the General Secretary of the Myanmar Council of Churches. We continue to keep Myanmar, her people and leaders, in our prayers.

Good news about Circuit staffing

We have heard the very good news that in September 2021 a Probationer minister will be coming into our Circuit. Her name is Elisabeth Brooks and she will be primarily based at the Reigate church but will also spend one day a week at Trinity church in East Grinstead. She will be supervised by Rev David Faulkner from a neighbouring Circuit. David will accompany Elisabeth whenever she does something for the first time in this appointment, such as chairing a meeting.

Elisabeth and her husband, Chris, live in Brighton at present. They're both teachers and Elisabeth has been studying part-time at Queen's in Birmingham. They both love music and Chris is an organist. They have five adult children, two or three of whom may move with them. They will be based in the Redhill manse currently occupied by Rev Felicity Al-Hassan.

Assuming normal services resume by then, a welcome service for Elisabeth and her family is planned for September.

And finally – Friendship according to Winnie-the-Pooh

"You can't stay in your corner of the Forest waiting for others to come to you. You have to go to them sometimes."

Piglet sidled up to Pooh from behind.

"Pooh!" he whispered.

"Yes, Piglet?"

"Nothing," said Piglet, taking Pooh's paw. "I just wanted to be sure of you."

"It is more fun to talk with someone who doesn't use long, difficult words but rather short, easy words like "What about lunch?" said Pooh.

"I don't feel very much like Pooh today," said Pooh.

"There, there," said Piglet. "I'll bring you tea and honey until you do."

"If there ever comes a day when we can't be together, keep me in your heart. I'll stay there forever." Said Pooh

"How do you spell 'love'?" asked Piglet

"You don't spell it...you feel it." said Pooh

*"Friendship," said Christopher Robin,
"is a very comforting thing to have."*

Contacts

Rev Ralph Ward phone 01342 325877 email rlphwrd@gmail.com

Prayer requests & newsletter items ask.stpauls@gmail.com

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

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