

St Paul's Methodist Church, Crawley
Extraordinary Times
a magazine to help us through COVID-19
Issue 48 **February 28th 2021**

From the minister...

The Government's announcements on Monday brought us hope and anticipation as a nation for emerging from the Coronavirus pandemic, but from a church point of view there have been no changes to current restrictions.

The Winter lockdown has prevented us from meeting: not because we couldn't, but because we had a responsibility towards one another during the height of the pandemic. But now more and more people are getting their first jab (some have had their second!), and there seems to be a renewed sense of confidence and optimism. So it's time to consider how best to move forward with our Sunday services.

Over the Winter of national lockdown, the people of St Paul's have been generous enough to share your morning services with Trinity in East Grinstead. I appreciate that this is not an ideal situation, as you tune in to Facebook each week for worship from the unfamiliar surroundings of a church which you have possibly never attended in person. But on the plus side, it has been good to combine our worship with another fellowship in our circuit, and of course this has been predicated by the fact that you share the same minister. I have enjoyed the opportunity to preach and lead worship with you every week, rather than once a month like it would be under normal circumstances. It has enabled us to engage in an extensive programme of themed preaching and bible study, which has given many of us a sense of progression and the opportunity to venture deeper into scripture than previously.

For the first three Sundays in March we will continue to share in the 10.45 Sunday service from Trinity, led by myself. I will be joined by the other Trinity musicians from March 7th onwards, as they start to move forward from lockdown and join together in leading worship. But from April 1st I will be taking a three month sabbatical, which means I will be away until the beginning of July and won't be preaching at all. So on Palm Sunday (March 28th) Trinity and St Paul's will be going their separate ways on a Sunday morning, and we will start producing our own online services which will come from St Paul's and appear on the St Paul's Facebook page. Both St Paul's and Trinity will resume the circuit preaching plan from Easter Sunday onwards; which means that a variety of local preachers and circuit ministers will be leading our services week to week from our own church.

The biggest frustration for many of us is that we are still not permitted to sing together in worship, and this is what creates the biggest dilemma. Is it preferable to attend a 30 minute "spoken word only" service at church on a Sunday, without any singing? Or would it be better to keep our services online, so that we can at least have some music and join in from our respective homes? Our current thinking at St Paul's is that it is preferable to continue online for the time being; which will enable us to feature worship songs and hymns led from our

church building by choir and the young people's singing group. This will commence on Palm Sunday with a pre-recorded service, at which I will be bringing my final bible teaching before I go on sabbatical.

We are all hoping and praying that we have seen the last lockdown, and that once our services have begun, they will not be halted again. As soon as the singing ban is lifted, we will open the doors to the 10.30 Sunday services so that we can once again worship together as a whole church family. But exactly when this will happen, we don't yet know.

Please continue to stay safe and look after yourselves.

God bless *Ralph*

What's On

Sundays 10:45am online worship with Rev Ralph Ward

Wednesdays 2pm Rev Ralph's Bible study

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

Zoom for Kids

Sundays 12noon and Fridays 6pm

If you haven't joined in yet, email ask.stpauls@gmail.com for an invitation

In your prayers

Join in this prayer by Sarah Mullaly, Bishop of London

O God of Hope, we commend to your protection and care all healthcare professionals and keyworkers who are attending to other people. As we thank them for their determination and compassion, we pray that your Holy Spirit will support and encourage them, especially at times of physical and emotional exhaustion. Amen.

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

Presidency support for Housing Commission report

Following the launch of the Archbishops' report on the housing crisis, *Coming Home*, the Revd Richard Teal and Carolyn Lawrence, President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference, have made the following statement:

"We welcome this report and are glad to have been able to contribute to this valuable research through the secondment of a member of staff to the team. The people who suffer the most as a result of our national housing crisis are the poorest and the most marginalised in our society. Covid has exacerbated this and the major structural challenges we face as a community are likely to become more apparent as millions more find themselves vulnerable to losing their homes or being unable to afford good quality housing. We need new and ambitious ideas to enable a positive environment where quality affordable housing is available to all and we hope that this report will be a catalyst towards an achievable vision for homes for every individual and family which allow for human flourishing."

The warmed heart

What makes a Methodist? The Revd Richard Teal considers the warmed heart.

John Wesley had been piously brought up by his devout parents and he followed them in the Christian way. He was ordained as a priest in the Church of England. In 1725 while in Oxford he made a solemn vow to devote himself wholly to God, in outward conduct and inward temper and he also strived to fulfil this throughout his life. Wesley's Journal May 24th 1738 shows how he had to re-assess the whole previous 35 years of his life. His familiar words are often cited: *"I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."*

Notice how Wesley went "very unwillingly" to Aldersgate Street. He had come back from America in 1737 profoundly depressed. To Wesley it was the exposition of scripture which spoke to his condition: "one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans" that the moment of release came for him and the joy of the gospel broke through. Methodist scholars differ in their assessment of what that experience of John Wesley on 24th May 1738, really was. Traditionally it is seen as his conversion. Others see it as an experience of assurance of faith, still others as fullness of the Spirit; yet others as the completion of something which began in earlier years. Whatever it was, it was very significant for John Wesley and it certainly shows that Methodists have a variety of understandings of how we become disciples and what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

John Wesley played great emphasis on reason and in this experience, he had to learn what his father had tried to tell him, how very few things of consequence in this world are decided by reason alone. He came to see that no one can come to faith by reason alone. He came to realise and it was hard for him that all his willing and striving could not put him right with God. It was as the Moravians and Luther had taught him: 'A person is not justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ' (Galatians 2 v 16).

We do need to note that when Wesley refers to the 'heart strangely warmed' he is not talking just about emotion. Deep religious feelings were no doubt involved; but when Wesley used the word 'heart' he used it in a biblical sense, to denote the central core of a person—mind, will and feeling. It invites a person to offer every part of themselves to God—the whole person.

At Aldersgate Street, Wesley's heart was made new. He acknowledged that before 1738 he had only "the faith of a servant" afterwards he had "the faith of a son". May 24th did not give him complete peace and joy for he still had to contend with doubts and darkness yet he received great gifts in that night's encounter with the living Christ. He knew a deepened experience of forgiveness; an assurance of faith and a new personal freedom. These gifts not only changed his inner life but transformed his ministry. What does the warmed heart mean for you?



Real Easter Egg dropped by pandemic-hit supermarkets

The 2021 Fairtrade Real Easter Egg range has moved online as supermarkets have failed to make space for the UK's only egg which shares the Easter story. David Marshall, from The Meaningful Chocolate Company said: "We have supplied supermarkets since 2010. Last year, with Easter at the start of lockdown, the supermarkets had a disastrous time as people stayed away from high streets."

- Out of the 80 million chocolate Easter eggs sold each year in the UK, The Real Easter Egg is the only Fairtrade egg to share the Easter story.
- The Real Easter Egg has been on sale since 2010 and involves thousands of churches, schools and groups. It crosses all denominations and offers a simple way to share the Easter Story while supporting Fairtrade.
- The Real Easter Egg continues to be the UK's top mail order egg.
- More than a million have been sold and more than £300,000 has been donated to charitable causes.
- The Real Easter Egg was voted 'Gift of the Year' by Fairtrade supporters.
- Reviewers have placed The Real Easter Egg above eggs from Hotel Chocolat, Green and Black's and Ferrero Rocher.

The 2021 Real Easter Egg costs £4.50 and includes a new 24-page Easter story activity book with a rainbow design reminding us of the importance of working for the common good, and a prize competition worth £200. If you usually buy a Real Easter Egg from Tesco, Waitrose, ASDA or Morrisons, or if you want to try it this year, then go online and order direct from www.realeasteregg.co.uk



To Frances Spencer

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

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