

## Weekly Newsletter (70)

by and for the Christ Church and Pagham URC (St Ninian's) families

11<sup>th</sup> July 2021

### Musings from the Manse....

Dear Friends,

It seems as if everything is up in the air at the moment – both literally and figuratively! As I write, day two of the Goodwood Festival of Speed is under way, with a fly past of the Red Arrows to look forward at 12 noon. So, the peace of Beth Salem will be shattered for a few days and the traffic and parking around Chichester will be in chaos, whilst those, who enjoy these events, get their fill of speed machines!! It may sound like I'm not a fan but - on the contrary - I love to see the planes flying overhead; I'm just not a big admirer of the constant noise of racing around a track - much akin to the swarm of a giant bee colony, (mind you this also depends on which way the wind is blowing!), - or the added traffic on the roads getting in and out of our City!!



However, it is good to know that these events *are* able to now go ahead, albeit under the auspices of a 'Covid Secure Pilot Event' – and the feeling that some sort of normality is resuming. With the Government poised to present the easing of lockdown on 12<sup>th</sup> July and the new guidelines due to be put in place on 19<sup>th</sup> July, we are all waiting to hear what we will, or will not, be allowed to do. Will social distancing be scrapped? Will we be allowed to sing!? Will wearing a face mask be a matter of personal choice or continue to be a necessity to keep others safe? Will we be able to gather together in greater numbers?

All these questions, and more, were discussed at our Trustees meeting on Thursday evening, as they directly affect what will happen in our church services and in opening up the church fully, so that we can once again meet for coffee and open up the other groups that meet. On the one hand, the media are saying that we should just get back to 'normal' now that the vaccination programme is well under way – on the other hand, we see infection rates rising in some areas and note that there are still some people who are resistant to having the vaccine. What's clear is that Covid is something we are not going to get rid of and, most likely, it will be something we must learn to live with – much like the annual 'Flu' or 'Norovirus' which plagues the winter months. We can do our bit to keep others safe, but, in watching the Tennis and Football the past few weeks, all semblance of this seems to have gone out of the window! These 'test' events might give the impression that all is well, but what consequences will we face in the days and months ahead?

What is clear is that both Industry and Retail businesses are at breaking point – our mental health has suffered during lockdown – and I, for one, feel that we can't hide ourselves away forever. There are plans afoot to fully re-open the church towards the end of July and the 'Christmas in July' Service is poised to go ahead, providing the guidelines are favourable. This is also the case at Pagham URC, who had their first in-person service of worship since Christmas and are planning to have more events in the coming months, which, I hope, we will be able to fully support.

There will always be the voices of social media warning against 'too much too soon' and those who would do their own version of scaremongering (which can be counterproductive and dangerous). As churches, we must be mindful of who we are and what we do as 'beacons of light' to our communities – and must never forget the sacrifices and losses we've all endured during the pandemic. For some Christian Communities across the globe, these continue unabated, as vaccine programmes are slow in progress and often unaffordable. Persecution still abounds and ruthless governments ensure their people remain downtrodden.

As we move forward, they continue to be in our thoughts and prayers – as do all God's children. So, in all that we seek to do in God's name and in the ways of Jesus, may the Holy Spirit guide us and empower us to do what is right.

Yours in Christ,  
Helen <><

## Word for today Mark 6: 14-29

King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known. Some were saying, 'John the baptiser has been raised from the dead; and, for this reason, these powers are at work in him.'  
But others said, 'It is Elijah.'

And others said, 'It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old.'

But, when Herod heard of it, he said, 'John, whom I beheaded, has been raised.' Mark 6: 14-16

## Meditation of Herod

Who is this Jesus fellow? What sort of man is he?

Everyone's talking about him, but none can agree who he is.

Some say he's a prophet, others, Elijah; but it occurred to me today that he might be something else: my old enemy, John the baptiser.

Only he *can't* be, surely, for I had him executed, remember – his head brought before me on a plate – and, believe me, you don't get much more dead than that!

Could he have come back to life, though – returned to haunt me, bet his revenge?

That's what I'm starting to wonder. And I've a disquieting feeling I may be right; for, though I feared and resented him, I knew, also, he was a man of God, speaking words of truth.

I never wanted him killed. It was my wife who saw to that, enticing me - through that wretched daughter of hers - to finish him off.

And now, it seems, I must pay for my crime ...

Enough! Pull yourself together man! The dead don't come back to life; it can't be done!

No, this Jesus is just another tub-thumper from Galilee, a religious fanatic intent on stirring up the crowds.

Well, bring it on, that's what I say.

I'll have him despatched like John, if necessary - snuffed out once and for all – unless, of course, this guy really can cheat the grave.

I can't see it somehow. Can you?

## Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,

we try at times to evade your searching presence,  
for it disturbs us, unsettles, asking questions we'd rather not face.

We strive to silence your voice,  
to shut out unwelcome questions,  
but, try though we might, we can never succeed,  
for nothing, and no one, can keep you down.

Teach us that, though running away may seem the easy option,  
in reality, it is no option at all,  
for we will find no peace until we face up to your challenge.

Help us, then, to be honest with ourselves  
through being honest with you,  
and, so, find inner quietness,  
the tranquillity of spirit we crave.

Amen.

*Word for today, Meditation and Prayer taken from 'A most amazing Man' by Nick Fawcett*

## Gathered for Prayer....

...meets at **9 am and 7 pm each Wednesday, until the 21<sup>st</sup> July** when we will break for the summer.  
Please do feel free to come and join in this time of prayer and space to rest in God's presence.

Here's the link....

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5742722693?pwd=R3BEQ3pPVOZJNndRWVKeWdvand6QT09>

Meeting ID: 574 272 2693 Passcode: xsX5UM

## Other news....

### Stepping Up!

A huge thank you to Nikki Wales and Christine Rowlands.

Nikki and Christine have recently agreed to take up new roles at Christ Church. Nikki will be heading up the Parent & Toddler group and Christine will be the new Art Class leader; they will both start in September. Dates to be confirmed. Both these groups have so much to offer our community and our own church members. How about becoming a helper at Parent & Toddlers? Nikki and the team would really welcome a few more people so that a new rota can be set up. Please contact Nikki on [nbwales@hotmail.com](mailto:nbwales@hotmail.com)

Thank you again Nikki and Christine, we pray for God's richest blessings on all involved in both groups - great outreach opportunities! Spread the word!

*Doreen and the Outreach Team*

### Please, More Foodbank Support...

Emerging from lockdown, our local foodbank continues to be vital to many families. School holidays bring special demand and there will be increased pressure at the end of September. <https://chichesterdistrict.foodbank.org.uk/>  
The Bankuet link is among aid options – see <https://www.bankuet.co.uk/chichester>

### Prayer Chain

Gilly Hansford is happy to resume her role as the contact for the church Prayer Chain. Thank you to Elizabeth Manson for taking the role while Gilly was unable to do so.

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#### **N.B.**

This service very much depends on the Government Guidelines  
due to come out on 12<sup>th</sup> July and put in place on 19<sup>th</sup> –

So, more information will be forthcoming  
as soon as we know the form easing of lockdown will take –  
*Christ Church Trustees*

#### **25<sup>th</sup> July - Late Christmas!**

Lockdown meant we missed some of our Christmas services  
at Christ Church in December. So, not to be denied, we are having  
a Christmas Family Service on Sunday July 25<sup>th</sup>.at 10:30 am.  
The precious gift of the baby in Bethlehem can be celebrated at any time!

With rules relaxed, we can come to church without booking!  
We can leave our masks at home (if you want to)!  
We can, sing!

So, come and enjoy your favourite carols. Hear the joyful Christmas story  
and meet your friends again! Come and help make it special for all the  
people who have been missing you for so long! Bring the children.  
There will be something in it for everyone. See you there

*Ian Field*