

Weekly Newsletter (67)

by and for the Christ Church and Pagham URC families

13th June 2021

Musings from the Manse

Dear Friends,

As I write this week, the sun is shining and there's not a cloud in sight as I gaze out of my study window. It puts me in mind of this time last year when Colin and I were preparing to leave Gosport and move to Chichester – and what a year it has been!



On the 22nd of June 2020, we arrived at Beth Salem (our House of Peace) and began to unpack and make it our home. The first Covid lockdown was easing and I eagerly looked forward to the time when I could get to know people and see Christ Church and Pagham URC function. Little did we know of the difficulties that lay ahead or the fact that we'd have to go through a tier system, which felt like a second lockdown, and a further lockdown, which has still not come to an end. Church life has been anything but normal! After briefly starting services in September, we found ourselves once more having to call a halt to them at Christmas and - whilst we are now back worshipping together, (albeit on reduced numbers) - we are still having to be careful and respect the fact that not everyone is eager to get back to worshipping together.

Back at the start of 2020, phrases like *'Hands, Face, Space'* and *'Social Distancing'* had never been heard of – and, if someone had said that we wouldn't be able to sing in church, (even when we could meet), we'd have been amazed – and not in a good way. Now we face the fact that so many people have suffered the loss of loved ones (and not just Covid) and not been able to grieve properly; so many have not been able to get the hospital treatment or the operations they badly need. Our NHS has been stretched to almost breaking point and so many other areas of society have suffered because of a virus few of us knew anything about. There are so many other professions who have suffered through lockdowns and our children and young people have face disruptions to their education that have been unprecedented. It just feels like one big unholy mess at times and the pain of loss can hit us like a steam train when we least expect it.

On the whole, 2020 is probably a year we'd like to forget, but we can't. The first half of 2021 has not really been what we hoped for but the vaccination programme gathers pace and, for many, that has meant good news and a return to some sort of normality. Yet, many do have real fears about getting vaccinated or cannot have the jabs because of health risks and the tragic loss of those, who have had adverse effects to the vaccinations, has seemed to heap more suffering onto an already hurting world.

On a more personal note, moving to a new church pastorate during Covid restrictions and lockdown was not exactly what I had planned – but I am a great believer in *'when something is right, it happens'*. So, I knew that God would be with me and would guide me through these uncharted waters. Both Colin and I feel truly blessed to be where we are and to have begun to make inroads into getting to know people and trying to understand how both Christ Church and Pagham URC work. But it has, by no means, been an easy transition and there have been times when I've really struggled. I've not been able to meet people as I would normally have done and I've had to rely heavily on the Pastoral Visitors to let me know of any pastoral needs. Since the meet and greet sessions last September, I've found it very difficult to remember names and faces - mainly due to half your face being covered by a mask - and the fact that I am not blessed with instant recall when it comes to remembering who someone is. Fortunately, for you, there is only one of me – and I am not trying to make excuses when it comes to the fact that there may be some who feel let down by their 'new minister' and don't really feel as if they know me. I am longing to get to know you and both Colin and I would love to be able to welcome you to 'Beth Salem'. So, with this in mind, (Covid restrictions and weather permitting), we are going to have a series of 'Open House' sessions - starting in July on the first and third Sunday afternoons from 2-5 pm. So, please come and enjoy some refreshments and a chat! We hope there will be no need to 'book' – just come along!

I know that, in the past, you lovely people at Christ Church have been used to have 100% of a minister – but this changed when you became vacant last time. You now have only 75% of me and the lovely folks of Pagham URC, only 25% - and I will endeavour to split my time as best I can. Once the Coffee Mornings start up again at Christ Church, my plan will be to be at church Monday to Thursday mornings each week - so that I am available for anyone to chat to - and to be at Pagham each Friday for coffee and chat as well. But you know that the best laid plans don't always work as we'd like them to and there will be times when I will have to be elsewhere. Saturdays are my day of rest – but, as with other things, this doesn't always work out and I have to take a day off at another point in the week. This is all part of 'best practice' for Ministers – along with not working from dawn till dusk – but, again, this doesn't always pan out and there have been times when I've had to sacrifice quality time with Colin in order to fulfil my calling.

He supports me in so many ways but, as some of you will know, Ministry is not an ordinary job and sometimes the 'minister's spouse' has to go above and beyond the call of duty!!

Throughout my time here, so far, I guess that there are things I could have done better, but I'd like to think that I am approachable and willing to listen to those who feels less than happy with things. However, try as I might, I cannot please everyone all of the time and, if I do not know that there is a problem, I cannot do anything about it. I have tried to be honest with you and I hope that you will be able to be honest with me.

Yours in Christ, Helen <><

Word for today Mark 4: 26-34

He also said,

"The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground and would sleep and rise night and day and the seed would sprout and grow - he does not know how. The earth produces of itself - first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head."

He also said,

"With what can we compare the kingdom of God or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet, when it is sown, it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."

(Mark 4: 26-32)

Meditation of Andrew

It was clear enough what he was saying: the kingdom of heaven grows from small beginnings. And that was music to our ears ... at first.

We'd assumed, you see, that those small beginnings meant **him** - his presence being the catalyst for change, the seed that would finally bear fruit. Only, of course, there was more to it than that: he meant **us** too.

In fact, after his death and resurrection, in a sense we were on our own - called to scatter the seed ourselves. And that was a sobering thought; for what chance had we, nobodies from Galilee, of helping to change the world? It seemed laughable, the stuff of fairytales, and, indeed, it would have been just that, had we been right. But we **weren't** on our own; we were working with God.

It was he who gave the seed, he who nurtured it, he who caused it to grow and he was to do so in ways we could never imagine - let alone begin to fathom.

There are believers, now, here in Jerusalem and far beyond and, I truly believe, there will be countless others - the good news of Christ spreading throughout the world, just as he said it would do.

Remember that, next time you feel unable to make a difference. Remember that, in God's hands, a little goes a long way - that, from small beginnings, come great results and so, whatever you're able to do, feeble though it may seem, step out in faith and do it.

Prayer

Almighty God,

whatever we're up against,

whatever you call us to do,

teach us to look at the situation not from a human point of view,

but from yours,

recognising that you are able to do more than we can ask or even imagine.

Teach us that a little, in your hands, is much,

that from the smallest of beginnings you bring astonishing results.

So then, may we attempt great things **for** you

and expect great things **from** you,

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

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

Gathered for Prayer...

...is taking a break on **Wednesday 16th June** – due to Helen being on Holiday!
It will resume on **23rd June at 9 am and 7 pm until 21st 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=R3BEQ3pPV0ZJNndRWVVKZWdvd6QT09>

Meeting ID: 574 272 2693 Passcode: xsX5UM

Refugee Sunday

Being part of the Welcome Churches network means that, not only is it Father's Day on Sunday 20th June, but also Refugee Sunday – something that I will be focusing on in the Morning Worship at Christ Church. Hope to see you there!!

But, during the week before, as part of Refugee Week (14th-20th), you can tune in to this event, 'Refugees, Jesus and Justice', booked through the link in the picture.

Helen <><



REFUGEES, JESUS AND JUSTICE

Is justice possible for refugees in the UK today? What does Jesus and the Bible have to say about how we welcome refugees in the 21st century?

Krish Kandiah (Social Entrepreneur), Sir Simon Hughes (Former MP and Chancellor of London South Bank Uni), Emily Holden (Welcome Churches), Joanna Mwansa (Welcome Churches), Sue Butler (Welcome Churches)

Hosted by: Patrick Regan OBE (Welcome Churches Patron and Kintsuigi Hope CEO)

Wednesday 16th June, 8pm
refugees-jesus-and-justice.eventbrite.co.uk

WELCOME CHURCHES

Please note...

There will be **no Newsletter next week** as I will be away in Devon. But my thoughts and prayers will be with you on Sunday as Jack Delbridge takes the service for MHA Sunday – and I will be sure to have a Cream Tea or two on your behalf!!

God bless you and keep you safe – Helen <><

For 20 June...

The service on 20 June is on Fathers' Day. Please bring a picture of your Dad if possible.
Also, for your use on 20 June, there is a Refugee Sunday Prayer Guide resource attached to the email with this newsletter.

Booking for the service (on 20 June) – please **send your booking by 6 pm this evening (13 June)** to chichristchurch@gmail.com or phone 01243 531594 and leave a message.

If required - (depending on the COVID-19 restrictions and the guidance of the Methodist and URC Churches) -
I will now take bookings for the July services (4th, 11th, 18th & 25th)