

Weekly Newsletter (54)

for the Christ Church and Pagham URC Families

14th March 2021

Musings from the Manse

Dear Friends,

Following on from my 'musings' last week – there has now been some guidance from the URC Synod Moderators on re-opening of churches. This can be found on the national website, should you be interested. Hopefully, the Methodist Church will follow soon with an equivalent document but, in the meantime, we are still being urged to be cautious. Information about new variants to Covid and how they are spread continue to pop up in the news and we are warned that the pandemic is not over - nor will it be for some time to come.

In addition to following the government 'Roadmap out of Lockdown' we, as churches, need to decide what is best in our local context. The Synod Moderators remind us of 1 Corinthians 10:23 which says, *'all things are lawful but not all things are beneficial, and not all build up.'*

There is a fine balance between who we will be protecting by remaining closed for public worship, and who we will be excluding – as the URC document says, *'You might just find, as in God's kingdom, that you need to turn your thinking upside-down. Those you thought safest to be out and about might now be the most vulnerable. Those you have included through online worship now may again find themselves outside your fellowship.'*

This point brings to mind something which has been troubling me for some time – how do we reach out to those who are not able to watch our recorded services? This pandemic has almost forced some to become more 'tech-savvy' and embrace their computer/laptop/iPad as their lifeline to the world outside – but others, who do not possess such gadgets, are they perhaps feeling as though they've been cast adrift?

I would not like to think that there is anyone who has been forgotten about or left out because they are not able to remain in contact with the fellowships at Christ Church and Pagham. In both churches we have Pastoral Visitors who are a priceless link between the housebound/vulnerable/elderly folks - and their respective church family - and the Minister! Since my arrival in Chichester I have been unable to really get to know people and their stories, so I do rely on Pastoral Visitors to let me know when someone would appreciate a call or doorstep visit or if there are any concerns they have about a member of their group or, on a more general basis, just how their group is doing.

All of us long for the day when we will have more freedom to live as we used to and begin to socialise in our churches and church groups but there may be some who still fear coming back to church or those, who come back to church, but still feel lost and vulnerable.

Regardless of which date is decided upon to re-open for public worship, safety must be our priority – but, when that day comes, I pray that we will all feel able to come and to encourage others to come to worship God together in celebration and thanksgiving.

Yours in Christ, Helen <><

Word for today John 3: 14-21

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. *John 3:16*

Meditation of John the Evangelist

It took me a long time to grasp it - a lifetime of reflection on what his life, death and resurrection actually mean but, finally, the truth crystallised in a few simple words:

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone, who believes in him, may not perish but may have eternal life.

It's simple, isn't it, yet somehow - with the best of intentions - we make it so complex.

To hear some people talk - believers included - you'd think God feels just the opposite: that he's concerned to judge rather than bless, condemn rather than forgive, punish rather than redeem.



'Believe this' they say, 'believe that', commitment becoming a matter of jumping through the right hoops and woe betide if we don't.

But that's **their** message, not his; a reflection of how much we struggle to accept his sheer grace, his wholly underserved love and pardon.

He asks merely that we **believe** in him – no more, no less. Do that and we will discover the secret of eternal life and, ridiculous though it may seem -contradicting our every sense of justice and fair play - we will receive that gift, not because **we** love **God**, but because **he** loves **us**.

Prayer

Sovereign God,
the words trip off the tongue easily enough –
that yours is the way of love,
that you loved the world enough to die for it,
that you are love itself –
but, though we dutifully repeat such ideas
and though we accept them in theory,
in practice we struggle to accept the wonder of that message,
instead setting human limits to your grace and goodness.
Our own love is partial, flawed, conditional,
- as much about ourselves as others -
and we subconsciously expect yours to be the same,
somehow dependent on us doing, saying or being the right thing.
Open our hearts to your gracious mercy that accepts us as we are –
to your love that will never let go.
Amen.

Adapted from 'A most amazing Man' by Nick Fawcett

Gathered for Prayer....

Gathered for Prayer meets on Zoom every **Wednesday at 9 am and 7 pm** Here's the link....

To join the Zoom Meeting -

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5742722693?pwd=R3BEQ3pPV0ZJNndRWVVKwWVdand6QT09>

Meeting ID: 574 272 2693

Passcode: xsX5UM

Lent Study Group on Zoom

The fifth in the series 'Holy Habits – Following Jesus' will be tomorrow evening (**Monday 15th March**)

I will be opening the meeting **from 7.15 pm so that we can make a prompt start at 7.30 pm**.

To join the Zoom Meeting -

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82079214648?pwd=NXpMTVNkRnRQitlenVVK1FINVR1QT09>

Meeting ID: 820 7921 4648

Passcode: 167580

Photos please..

The Outreach Group is looking to update the welcome leaflet in anticipation of the return to in-person worship in the near future and we need some photos for that purpose. If you have any photos of recent Christ Church events - such as Rev. Helen's induction - please send them to me by email (Daniel Dei yawdei@yahoo.com).

Christian Aid back to catch up

Good news - **Christian Aid Week (10-16 May)** returns aiming, with your help, to pass the 2019 Christ Church total of £1,723 – but, this time, with a simpler, more congenial system: delivery-only envelopes with space for details for householders to return them to drop-off points - possibly a volunteer's home address or a nearby church venue. Thus, a huge time-saver for distributors. Offers please to terrytimblick@gmail.com (537812) by 28th March.

Also, Derek Wales would love to hear from anybody else who would be glad to volunteer to develop deliver these envelopes. (01243 527291or dnawales@gmail.com)