

## Weekly Newsletter (53)

by and for the Christ Church and Paghams URC Families

7<sup>th</sup> March 2021

### Musings from the Manse

Dear Friends,

Maps can be very useful things when going to an unfamiliar place – although the Satnav seems to have taken over most car journeys nowadays. Still, road maps do feature in our lives, and none more important (at the moment) than the Government Road Map out of Lockdown! Since its airing on the 21<sup>st</sup> February it has been poured over and debated by many - not least the Church. The four step guidance which indicates how and when we might get back to some sort of normal life is, however, dependant on the data coming out of our NHS and Vaccination programmes and, all the while, we must bear in mind that COVID19 will remain part of our lives for some time to come.

So, where does this leave our churches? Both Christ Church and Paghams URC made the decision, back in January, that we must close our doors once more and, as frustrating as that was, it was for everyone's safety. Now that vaccinations are being taken up and many of us have had the first instalment does that make it right to begin discussions on how and when we can begin to worship together and allow groups and organisations to use our premises once more?

To date, there has been no official guidance on this, from either the Methodist Church or the United Reformed Church, and Government guidance is also not very decisive when it comes to churches. Discussions which took place this week at the Circuit Leadership Meeting resulted in Ministers not wanting to even think about opening up for worship until the end of May at the earliest. Whilst Easter Sunday and Pentecost would be ideal Sundays to rejoice in a coming together for worship, there would still be some weeks before full lockdown is eased and, therefore, it puts Church Councils/Trustees and Elders in a very difficult position.

In all the deliberations we will need to assess the risks whilst keeping each other's safety our priority. As this statement from the URC Equalities Committee states:

*'When restrictions start to be lifted it is essential to recognise that people are in different places on their own journeys out of lockdown. We currently have a population of those who are vaccinated and those who are not, those who have disabilities and those who do not, those who are suffering from mental ill-health and those who have good mental health, those who look forward to greater freedom and those who are wary of it. We may make assumptions that people are able and will be willing to do what they did before lockdown, but this will not always be the case. If so, care must be taken not to prevent them from giving of their service and ministry. An individual's response may well be influenced by their age or disability. (These are protected characteristics under equality legislation). To avoid unfair treatment, it is important that individuals are treated with consideration and respect. What can be done to enable that individual's participation and service? For some the wounds of the pandemic will take a long time to, or may never, heal. We must continue to support and love everyone for who they are and their own individual situations.'* (February 2021)

Whenever we are able to meet once more, and whatever precautions we must continue to make, I pray that God will guide our deliberations and our decisions so that we move forward as one family, united in Christ our Saviour.

Yours in Christ, Helen <><

### Word for today John 2: 13-22

Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a market-place!" (John 2:15,16)

### Meditation of Nathanael

Why was he so annoyed, we wondered?

All right, so those money-changers and the like were charging top whack, but there was nothing new in that – any trader would do the same. 'Business is business', as they say. We all have to make a living. Yet, as we came eventually to realise, it wasn't the prices Jesus objected to, nor the idea of selling goods in the Temple; it went much deeper than that - to the very heart of our faith. He was challenging the whole system, the idea that God's pardon depends on anything we might do.



“No”, he said, “*that’s not how it works*”. God forgives because it’s in his nature to do so, because he simply can’t help loving. Our part is simply to respond and receive. No need for sacrifices - whether doves, pigeons or anything else. Whatever was asked for, he would do on our behalf. Faith, in his eyes, is as extraordinary and simple as that.

Yet, there in the Temple, people were expected, not only to perform the required ritual, but to pay for the privilege of doing so - as though God’s favour is something that can be bought and sold.

Those traders were stunned, I can tell you, when he stormed in and overturned their tables like that. But not half as stunned as we were when we realised what he was getting at – that **the whole law is summed up by the command to love**. We had been brought up to believe that following every commandment to the letter is vital, the key to salvation. He showed us, instead, a better way - too wonderful for words.

We can’t earn God’s blessing - still less deserve it. It’s his gift, generous beyond measure, offered freely to all. It doesn’t depend on anything **we** might do, but entirely on what **he** has done!

## Prayer

Almighty God, forgive us, for we are false and faithless in so much.

Through ignorance, weakness or wilful disobedience we abandon your way,  
resisting and rejecting your guidance.

We lose sight of what you really want and of what you offer to all –  
a life lived in the light of your love – turning faith instead into outward show,  
a matter of observing rules and regulations rather than of enjoying a right relationship with you.

In your great mercy, show us the error of our ways  
and teach us, joyfully, to receive the blessings you long to lavish upon us,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. 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=R3BEQ3pPV0ZJNndRWVVKwWdvand6QT09>

Meeting ID: 574 272 2693

Passcode: xsX5UM

## Lent Study Group on Zoom

The fourth in the series ‘Holy Habits – Following Jesus’ will be tomorrow evening, (**Monday 8th March**), when 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=NXpMTVNkRnRlRQitlenVVK1FINVR1QT09>

Meeting ID: 820 7921 4648

Passcode: 167580

## News from Pagham URC

### Beryl English

We were very sad to hear of the death of Beryl English on the evening of Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> March. She was 91 and had been in poor health and struggling for some time.

During her long career Beryl was a teacher and had a particular gift with younger children. Her last job was running a nursery school of her own and many parents and young adults around Bognor Regis still remember her for this. She ensured nearly all her 4 year olds started school able to read and write.

In Church, Beryl was, for many years, a member of Bognor Regis URC and, latterly, of Pagham URC. She was an elder, led both Sunday school and youth groups at Linden Road and was pulpit supply secretary in both Churches. At the time of her death she remained a non-serving elder and the Pagham link person for the World Day of Prayer and the Bible Society.

She will be much missed by her family and friends.

Beryl’s funeral will take place on **Friday, 19<sup>th</sup> March at 2:30 pm** and will be conducted by Helen at Chichester Crematorium. Numbers at this event will be small due to current restrictions. There will be a webcast for people to watch and Beryl’s niece will send me the link when she has it. If you would like to receive this link please let me know. [penny\\_t@talktalk.net](mailto:penny_t@talktalk.net)

*Penny Thomas (Church Secretary)*

## Christian Aid Collection

As I mentioned to the Church Meeting, the Chichester Christian Aid committee is exploring the idea of raising funds in Christian Aid Week in May through the use of envelopes, which are delivered door-to-door as usual. However, they also bear an address to which the donor is invited to return their gift.

This **eliminates the need for knocking on doors** but still invites contributions from people outside the churches and keeps Christian Aid Week in the public eye. The response is likely to be small but, in the light of COVID and COVID restrictions, and of the growing reluctance to be involved in door-to-door collections, this does offer a way forward. The named address could be the collector's home or perhaps the church, if that is agreed.

Please consider whether you would be willing to deliver some envelopes - perhaps in the streets or flats around your home - and let me know if you wish to be involved. **I need to know before 23<sup>rd</sup> March** when the committee next meets so that we can put in an order for the envelopes before the deadline of 31<sup>st</sup> March.

*Derek Wales 01243 527291 or [dnawales@gmail.com](mailto:dnawales@gmail.com)*

## A Poem from Bognor Regis Methodist Church

*submitted, (but not written), by Hugh and Linda Hawker*

### From the Organ Bench

The Masked Organist of BRMC writes:

The hymn tune St Denio, originally a Welsh secular ballad "Can mlynedd i nawr" ("A Hundred Years from Now"), was first used for religious purposes in a Welsh hymnal of around 1840 and has become firmly associated with Walter Chambers Smith's verses 'Immortal, Invisible, God only Wise.' We have been challenged to find new ways to worship together this last year, so here is my 2021 update version, offered for all those grappling with the complexities of computer communications!

Church portal's invisible! I'm not tech-wise.  
Website's inaccessible, hid from my eyes.  
Most stressing, laborious, and in all my days  
Whoever would think that we'd download e-Praise?

Undoing, unmuting, still silent as night,  
Nor cutting, nor pasting, I can't get this right.  
It's like climbing mountains! High soaring above  
The Cloud's storing fountains of hymns that we love.

On smart phones and PCs, device great or small,  
Our livestreaming Rev Dan - can't hear him at all.  
I've 'logged off' then 'logged on' - ah, now I can see!  
(You don't get this hassle on the BBC).

Great change to our worship, we're seen in new light,  
(Just look at Maud's curtains, well aren't they a fright!)  
We're passing the peace online from room to room,  
With décors displayed to the world, thanks to Zoom.

This new byte-size worship, it's hard to adjust  
When you're techno-phobic, but try it I must.  
My internet's gone down, Lord help us to see,  
Our broadband may perish, but **NAUGHT CHANGETH THEE.**