

Christ Church News (17)

by and for the Christ Church Family
28th June 2020 4th Sunday after Pentecost



What comes to mind when you see the word 'Church'? A beautiful building with a worship centre and sanctuary, a group of faithful Christians coming together in joyful fellowship to sing hymns, say prayers and listen to the word of God? If that is the case, in what sense can Christ Church still be called a church? We have had no minister for the past year and no building to meet in since March. How is it possible to be 'Church' in these unusual circumstances? These were the questions that have confronted our church's leaders over the past twelve months. Now, as we look back, we can be profoundly thankful for the many people who have stepped forward and played their part to keep our church in being in spite of the restrictions confronting us. We are thankful to the visiting preachers from the Methodist Circuit and the United Reformed Church who have stepped in to lead our services from August of last year until March 2020.

In March we had to close our building to conform to the pandemic safety regulations. Since then it has not even been possible to meet, so we have had to find new ways of doing things. 'Zoom' has come to the rescue of the Elders, Trustees and our house groups. We have discovered the joy of 'virtual meetings'. We can now meet while remaining at home! Many one-to-one pastoral conversations have taken place on the phone or by e mail. Each week a church bulletin - with worship material, news, information and even the occasional joke - has been circulated to our membership on line, by phone or delivered by hand. With the easing of 'lockdown' our pastoral visitors have been able to have garden meetings with their members. In these, and other ways, we have found new avenues to enable the life of our fellowship to be maintained. Our thanks are due to everyone who has stepped forward and played their part to minister the Word and reach out in care and support to our church community in these difficult days.

Now we are on the threshold of a new chapter. This week the Rev Helen Higgin-Botham (pronounced the same way as the cricketer Ian Botham), moves into the Manse with her husband Colin. We rejoice to welcome them both and look forward to working with them in our mission to be "Church", a Christian presence in our city. 'Rev. Helen', (as she prefers to be called), will be introducing herself in the next edition of 'Christ Church News'.

We hope and pray that the danger of the pandemic will continue to recede - eventually enabling us to meet physically again, hopefully having learned valuable lessons from our lives in 'lockdown'.

God bless and stay safe.

Ian Field

Word for Today Romans 7 vv14-25

Reflection

Have you ever tried opening a new leaf? I have - again, and again, and again.

Every morning I wake up and say, "Today is going to be different!" And every night I lie down with the knowledge that it wasn't! For all my good intentions I make the same mistakes I always made, a constant cycle of failure. Why does it happen? I just can't work it out, for I want so much to be faithful - more than anything in the world. Yet, somehow, before I know it, I find I've fallen again, unable to do my own will, let alone God's. It's as though there are two selves within me - one intent on good and the other on evil. Can it ever change? I'd like to think so, but I doubt it; for, although the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak. Yet I shouldn't lose heart for, despite it all, God still loves me - not for what one day I might be, but for what I am now, with all my sin sticking to me. That's why he sent his son into the world - not to save the righteous, but to rescue people like you and me. It means that, when I fall, He'll be there to pick me up and set me on my feet, cleansed, restored, forgiven and ready to start afresh, through His grace, a new creation!

Prayer

Merciful God,

unlike us, you don't dwell on our failures.

Instead, you invite us to acknowledge them openly before you,
to receive your pardon and then move on.

Teach us to do just that – to accept your offer for what it is
and, rather than wallow in our guilt, to rejoice in your mercy.

Help us, not simply to talk about new life,

but to live it joyfully, receiving each moment as your precious gift.

through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Effect of Covid-19 on Church Life

The church times is carrying out a survey on the effect of Covid-19 on church life. All are invited to take part. To take part, google 'Church Times Survey' or click on the link below:

<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2020/8-may/news/uk/survey-coronavirus-church-and-you>

For your prayers

Please uphold Wendy Corney and her family in your prayers following the sudden death of Wendy's husband in a car accident.

We have just heard that Professor Jimmy Dunn died on Friday, 26 June. This is how Derek Wales introduced him to the Christ Church congregation at the 10:30 am service on 1st March this year when Jimmy preached the sermon.

"We welcome, as our preacher this morning, Professor Jimmy Dunn, (or James J D Dunn as he is known in the world of New Testament scholarship), Emeritus Lightfoot Professor of Divinity in Durham University, vacating his seat at St Paul's to be with us this morning".

Please, hold his wife, Meta, and her family in your prayers.

Welcome to our new minister

Welcome to Rev. Helen and husband, Colin, who moved into the manse this week. We hope they will soon settle into their new home and assure them of our prayers and support as they anticipate their ministry to Christ Church.