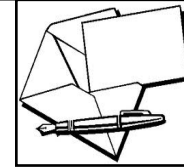




***St. John's Methodist Church
Whitchurch***

***Newsletter
May 2020***

Message from the Manse



Dear Friends

The last four or five weeks have been challenging for us all, and the next few look likely to be similar: maintaining our distance, unable to meet face to face, unable to go and do the things that we would normally do. I'm sure many of us are longing for a return of something like normality.

And yet, we can't deny that this will - and probably should - change attitudes across our world. Air Pollution levels have plummeted; the waters of Venice are so clear that you can see Jellyfish swimming along the canals; the importance of the jobs many do, sometimes for lower monetary rewards than others, have been highlighted; many have found ways to offer what they can to help others.

And for those of us who have faith, we have seen God at work in a myriad of ways - both small and big.

So how will this change our Church? How can the Church speak into this situation? When we are confronted by those who have lost livelihoods, have had to rearrange major events such as Weddings, been subjected to isolation from their loved ones, or even lost people close to them, how do we respond? There are no easy answers - and there shouldn't be. But we can still point the way to God - the eternal, unchanging one who still calls us and claims us through Jesus Christ His Son, and comforts and guides us through the Holy Spirit. As Henry Francis Lyte's great hymn reminds us:

"Change and decay in all around I see;

O Thou who changest not, abide with me!"

God bless

Rob

Freda Hanlon passed away in Prospect House on Thursday 23rd April, at the age of 90. There is to be a private funeral on 15th May - please remember the family in prayer, especially that day.

Steward's Letter

Dear Friends

I write this letter at very difficult times for all of us, I hope it finds you all well & in good spirit. A lot of you may be under instructions to stay at home for 12 weeks, for others only to go out for shopping, exercise or health reasons. I am sure this leaves you feeling very frustrated & possibly lonely unable to see family or friends, missing that cup of coffee & chatting to people you only see in the local cafe, not to mention that fellowship after worship on Sunday mornings. Thankfully we have had a nice spell of sunny warm weather which meant when out on our exercise walks or sitting in our gardens we are able to study the sounds & sights of nature which we would have normally missed due to traffic noise & the rush to get our jobs done. I don't know how you feel, but when I am out walking & move to leave more space for others they suddenly cross the road, it makes me feel like a leper, a very strange sensation. Hopefully in a few days we will see the relaxation of restrictions & once again be able to meet up, & do other things except gardening.



It was with great sadness that we learnt of the death of our member Gordon Davidson, our thoughts & prayers have been with Joan at this very difficult time for her. I shall miss his smile & hand shake on Sunday mornings.

Thank you to all of you who have taken the time to ring around to make sure others are safe & coping with the situation. A big thank you to Rob & Fiona for their time spent recording their reflections.

When this is all over we, as a church, will need to sit down & work out the way forward financially. We will have lost a lot of opportunities we normally have to raise funds to cover the work of the Church & need to come up with more ways to cover our losses. If you feel you can help in any way whether by donations or ideas please talk to the Stewards.

Until we meet again let us spend time in prayer for the lives lost & give thanks to all those wonderful people working in all aspects of the NHS & social care.

God bless you all & stay safe.

Pete.

FEELING ALONE?

A verse that sometimes people quote when only a few people attend a service / prayer meeting is Matthew, Ch 18 verse 20 'for where two or three gather together in my name there I am in the midst of them' Ian Morris writing in the Methodist Recorder offers another translation 'where anyone is Self- Isolating, there am I with them'.

One of the Bible words I like to quote is Immanuel, which means 'God is with us'.

Whatever you are doing during this period, remember God is with each one of us.

Brian F.

It comes to something when we get excited about our Tesco delivery.

It is the only thing we have on the calendar! **(ML)**

A tribute to a 'nice chap!'

I would like to pay a tribute to dear Gordon Davidson who died recently. Gordon was a stalwart worker for the church, being in charge of our sound system, gardening, helping with church cleaning and many other jobs around the church.

Both Joan and he did many things together and Joan helped with the family committee for many years when we had celebration meals. They had many happy summer holidays together in Wales and enjoyed walking.

They were a couple who always supported each other. Gordon was an unassuming and sensitive soul and always willing to help anyone. He nursed Joan through her recent illness and looked after her so very well.

He always produced the rotas for the sound on time and kept everything ticking over each week. He was never into technology but did things in his own way which worked well.

We shall miss seeing his cheerful smile each week – he will be sadly missed. Our love and best wishes go out to Joan who has lost a dear husband and friend. Thanks Gordon!!

Sheila Walwyn

PS Gordon would ring the “Sound Team” each month to see when we were available. I can hear his calm unflappable voice now! The list would be posted up, written in the most immaculate copperplate handwriting! RIP Gordon. Nice Fella.

JRW

LOCK-DOWN

As I write these few words, the Christian Calendar tells me that we are in the Sundays after Easter.

What happened to Lent? For we had hardly entered Lent when the media focussed our attention on the Coronavirus, with Social Distancing followed very quickly by Lock-Down and Self Isolation.

I want to suggest to you, that you consider this period (now to be at least 6 weeks) as being Lent. For the Israelite people, it was the period that they journeyed through the Wilderness, not really knowing where they were going, crying out for food and water. In the case of the British people, it was toilet rolls, baked beans and hand gel. God provided for the Israelite people Manna, with the instruction to just take what they needed for one day (except for the day before the Sabbath, when they could take two days). God took care of the people and guided them on this difficult journey. 'By day the Lord went ahead of them in a Pillar of Cloud to guide them and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light', Exodus Ch 13 v 21. However, not all were to make it to the promised land.

For Jesus this was the period of Self isolation, Jesus was to spend time alone except for the interruption of the temptations. However, Jesus knew that his Heavenly Father was taking care of him and he will have had many conversations with him during this period.

In this period of lockdown and self isolation, let us look forward with anticipation to the stone being rolled away, to freedom, to the Resurrection. Thanking God for bringing us through this very difficult period in our lives.

Brian F.

HOW THE VIRUS STOLE EASTER

by Kristi Bothur – with a nod to Dr Seuss

Twass late in '19 when the virus began bringing chaos and fear to all people, each land.

People were sick, hospitals full, doctors overwhelmed, no one in school.

As winter gave way to the promise of spring, the virus raged on, touching peasant and king.

People hid in their homes from the enemy unseen. They You Tubed and Zoomed, social-distanced and cleaned.

April approached and churches were closed. "There won't be an Easter the world supposed.

There won't be church services and egg hunts are out. No reason for new dresses when we can't go about."

Holy Week started as bleak as the rest. The world was focused on masks and on tests.

"Easter can't happen this year", it proclaimed. "Online and at home, it just won't be the same".

Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, the days came and went.

The virus pressed on; it just would not relent.

The world woke Sunday and nothing had changed. The virus still menaced, the people estranged.

"Pooh pooh to the saints," the world was grumbling, "They're finding out now that no Easter is coming. They're just waking up! We just know what they'll do,

their mouths will hang open a minute or two and then all the saints will all cry boo-hoo."

"That noise," said the world "will be something to hear." So it paused and the world put a hand to it's ear.

And it did hear a sound coming through all the skies. It started down low, then it started to rise.

But the sound wasn't depressed, why, this sound was triumphant!

It couldn't be so! But it grew with abundance!

The world stared around, popping it's eyes. Then it shook!

What it saw was a shocking surprise!

Every saint in every nation, the tall and the small, was celebrating Jesus in spite of it all!!
It hadn't stopped Easter from coming! It came!
Somehow or other, it came just the same!
And the world with it's life quite stuck in quarantine stood puzzling and puzzling.
"Just how could this be?"
"It came without bonnets, it came without bunnies. It came without egg hunts, cantatas or money."
Then the world thought of something it hadn't before.
"Maybe Easter," it thought, "doesn't come from a store.
Maybe Easter, perhaps means a little bit more."
And what happened then?
Wellthe story's not done. What will YOU do?
Will you share with that one or two or more people needing hope in this night?
Will you share the source of your life in this fight?
The churches are empty – but so is the tomb, and Jesus is victor over death, doom and gloom.
So this year at Easter, let this be our prayer, as the virus rages all around, everywhere.
May the world see hope when it looks at God's people.
May the world see the church is not a building or steeple.
May the world find FAITH in Jesus' death and resurrection.
May the world find JOY in a time of dejection.
May 2020 be known as the year of survival.
But not only that – let it start a revival.
(Contributed by Mike N.)

What surprises you most about coronavirus?
It's done what no woman has ever been able to do.
Stop all sports.
Shut all restaurants.
Shut all pubs.
Keeping men at home!
(From M.L.)

Our Father

I cannot say, "our," if I live only for myself.

I cannot say, "Father," if I don't try to
act as his child

I cannot say, "who art in heaven," if I am
laying up no treasure there.

I cannot say, "Thy Kingdom come," if I am not
doing all in my power to hasten that event.

I cannot say, "give us this day our daily bread,"
if I am dishonest or seeking something for nothing.

I cannot say, "forgive us our trespasses," if I bear
a grudge against another.

I cannot say, "lead us not into temptation," if I
deliberately place myself into it's path.

I cannot say, "Thine is the Kingdom, the Power
and the Glory," if I do not give the King the loyalty
due to him from a faithful subject.

I cannot say, "for ever," if the horizon of my life
is bounded completely by time.

This was read in church during a member service by Barbara Francis, who some of you know; and it was typed for the Newsletter, sometime in the early 1990's, by our much loved Jane, who in those days willingly typed all the material that was given to her for the newsletters. When I discovered it, I thought it would be good to print it again.

Elizabeth J

Christian Aid Week May 10th – 17th

As this virus spreads across the world, love rises up in response. Your love protects from storms, from drought, and now from coronavirus. Your love protects our global neighbours battling the spread of this illness. Your love protects. By supporting Christian Aid in May you can reach out and protect more of your neighbours today.

Please join the virtual events either nationally during Christian Aid Week :

Christian Aid Website: Live-streaming worship every day.
Also a fun daily quiz. (Can be found on St John's website by clicking the links : 'Daily live-streamed worship' or 'Daily fun quiz'.

Or more Locally – Links and details on St John's website:

From Sunday 10th May a Whitchurch United Act of Worship on U-Tube available to be viewed at any time during the week.

Join in with a Whitchurch Christian Aid Quiz

All Donations via 'Whitchurch Christian Aid Just Giving page'

A Christian Aid Prayer

We pray for and with communities across the world who are most vulnerable to coronavirus.

We pray for people living in refugee camps and city slums, with limited sanitation facilities, who are unable to wash their hands regularly, and have little opportunity to isolate from others.

We pray for Christian Aid partners working to provide soap and buckets, communicating clear, accurate information, raising the voices of the most vulnerable and ensuring they are kept as safe as possible.

Helen Trigg

From darkness into light!

By the time that you read this hopefully the virus will be coming to an end and our darkness of the lock down is past. All have found this period in our lives very difficult obviously, and I have personally found things mentally very hard. I get so depressed easily and this has brought old ailments and memories to the fore.

I had about thirty years of anxiety and agoraphobia when I could not go outdoors - just what I was afraid of who knows! It was totally illogical, but it was so real and true to me, and eventually I wasted so many years of my life not going out. So being confined to the home made me feel more anxious than ever, naturally.

I wandered out into the garden recently and noticed our Christmas tree which had been on display at the Christmas tree festival in church last year. I was puzzled to see golden blooms coming through the tree's branches. On looking closer I saw the most beautiful tall daffodils had pushed their way up through the tree! The darkness of the tree now relieved by the sunshine blooms peeping through.

To me it was a promise of better things of sunshine to come of happier times for all It was a sign that bad times can be overcome and that the dark December days of the Christmas tree can welcome the spring and summer time flowers!

We have all been through a time of hell - it will long be remembered and told to our children and their children - the great coronavirus remembered in history like the plague!

I saw in that moment the promise of Easter and realised that all things pass.

I think we have all learned a valuable lesson from

this terrible disease though, how to help each other, how to manage with less material things, and to start to love our fellow man together. Our world had become a selfish place with greed everywhere and rules of life totally ignored.

May we never give up on life and triumph over evil because we all have the ability to do that if we only listen to the inner voice of our souls!

Gardens are magnificently tidied, houses cleaned, and cupboards sorted and children realising that nature can be so wonderful and just as interesting as our electronic gadgets!! Also, there are many budding cooks due to experimenting with left - overs!

Wonderful work by selfless people of the NHS who deserve a medal for all that they did- and are still doing.

Yesterday a box of wonderful colourful flowers arrived for me, it was from a dear friend from the Potteries who sensed that I was very down and posted me a box of sunshine!!

Good friends, good neighbours and our lovely families have become even more important to us now - so maybe we have learned a lesson from this time and hope for a joyful, golden harvest to come.

Sheila Walwyn

The words of the song 'Bless the Lord oh my soul' have been to the front of my mind during all of this and it comforted me and spurred me on, especially the verse that says 'Whatever I am and whatever lies before me let me be singing when the day is done'. How inspiring is that!

Not an Easter Egg but lots of Sweets

(The Answers to Last Month's Quiz)

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Where all refined people live? | Quality Street |
| 2. Edible fasteners | Buttons |
| 3. Middle Eastern pleasure | Turkish Delight |
| 4. Home for alcoholic dentures | Wine Gums |
| 5. Theme | Topic |
| 6. Planet not too far away | Mars |
| 7. Singing insect | Humbug |
| 8. 100% precious metal | All Gold |
| 9. Before nine | After Eight |
| 10. Between the two | Twix |
| 11. Complete but not the bolt | Whole Nut |
| 12. Tiny precious stones | Midget Gems |
| 13. Millie's boy | Lollipop |
| 14. Goods from France | Bon Bon |
| 15. Bookies talking backwards | Kit Kat |
| 16. Thief in "SS" | Snickers |
| 17. A Galaxy | Milky Way |
| 18. Wobbly little children | Jelly Babies |
| 19. Eating outdoors | Picnic |
| 20. Put an end to the talking | Gobstopper |

Once Again, Spring

by Elaine G. Brock

Oh, the beauty and refreshment that nature brings
When the earth, once again, breaks into spring.
The birds, in their song, with excitement sing,
All hail to the Creator, Christ the King!

This Month's Quiz -(taking you on a trip to Scotland)

1. Which Scottish lake is famous for its monster?
2. Which football team plays at Ibrox?
3. Where was 'The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie' set?
4. What was the Flying Scotsman?
5. What did John Loudon McAdam improve?
6. Elgin is a town in Scotland – where are the marbles kept?
7. In which mountain range is Aviemore?
8. To which island group does Skye belong?
9. Where would you find 'The Burrell Collection'?
10. What is the name of Scotland's Rugby ground?
11. What is known as the 'Granite City'?
12. What is the highest mountain in Scotland?
13. What is its height? (*feet or metres*)
14. Where in Scotland was Robbie Burns born?
15. Which Scottish explorer discovered the Zambesi river and Victoria Falls?
16. What were known as 'The Ladies from Hell'?
17. Who was Robbie Burns faithful wife?
18. In World War II which ship was sunk in Scapa Flow?
19. Which Royal prince was killed in a plane crash in Scotland in World War II?
20. What was illegal in Scotland from 1745 till 1782?
21. On which Scottish island would you find Stornoway?
22. Between which two firths does Inverness stand?
23. For what song was Harry Lauder famous?
24. What is the national flower of Scotland?
25. Which is the only 'lake' in Scotland (the others are all lochs)?

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However, not all were to make it to the promised land.

For Jesus this was the period of Self isolation, Jesus was to spend time alone except for the interruption of the temptations. However, Jesus knew that his Heavenly Father was taking care of him and he will have had many conversations with him during this period.

In this period of lockdown and self isolation, let us look forward with anticipation to the stone being rolled away, to freedom, to the Resurrection. Thanking God for bringing us through this very difficult period in our lives.

Brian F.

Rev. Rob invites you...

to join him **daily at 11am** with the following prayer:

God of all hope we call on you today.

We pray for those who are living in fear:

Fear of illness, fear for loved ones, fear of other's reactions to them.

May your Spirit give us a sense of calmness and peace.

We pray for your church in this time of uncertainty. For those people who are worried about attending worship. For those needing to make decisions in order to care for others. For those who will feel more isolated by not being able to attend. Grant us your wisdom.

Holy God, we remember that you have promised that Nothing will separate us from your love—demonstrated to us in Jesus Christ. Help us to turn our eyes, hearts and minds to you.

Amen

May the Grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us now and forever, Amen.

Rev. Rob is also publishing regular reflections which you can access online through the Church website. If you haven't got a computer then you can hear the latest one by phoning the following number: - 01948 522419

Weather Lore—please take note, gardeners!

It is not safe to plant your crops before the ice saints - Mamertus (11th May), Pancras (12th), Servatius (13th) and Boniface (14th May) - have done their work!

(In the 20th century, 60% of years had unusually cold spells in mid-May!)

PRAYER REQUESTS

Pray for those known to us personally who are in need of God's comfort, particularly the family of Freda Hanlon whose funeral is on 15th May .



Covid-19

Pray for those who are caring for the seriously ill in hospital or at home; for all those caring for people at home; for those who are working to find a treatment for protecting us against the virus.

St John's

Pray for all our members who are facing self isolation or who are supporting relatives and friends.

Whitchurch

Pray for our town that it may face the difficult times with loving care and respect for others

Our nation

As God works out His purposes in our nation, pray that in His mercy, truth and good sense will prevail so that the current crisis can be tackled in a spirit of order and calm

Our world

Pray that the nations of this world having faced a common threat will learn to live in harmony and that the loving power of our Saviour will fill the hearts of their leaders.
Thanks be to God!

The Volunteer Organist

The preacher in the village church one Sunday morning said:

'Our organist is ill today, will someone play instead?'

An anxious look crept o'er the face of every person there,

As eagerly they watched to see who'd fill the vacant chair.

A man staggered down the aisle whose clothes were old and torn

How strange a drunkard seemed to me, in church on Sunday morn

But as he touched the organ keys without a single word,

The melody that followed was the sweetest ever heard.

(Chorus) The scene was one I'll ne'er forget as long as I may live,

And just to see it o'er again, all earthly wealth I'd give;

The congregation all amazed, the preacher old and gray,

The organ and the organist who volunteered to play.

Each eye shed tears within that church, the strongest men grew
pale;

The organist in melody had told his own life's tale.

The sermon of the preacher was no lesson to compare

With that of life's example who sat in the vacant chair;

And when the service ended not a soul had left a seat,

Except the poor old organist, who started toward the street.

Along the aisle and out the door, he slowly walked away:

The preacher rose and softly said, 'Good brethren, let us pray'

(Chorus)

The service o'er, the Parson from his pulpit hurried down

And sought the poor old organist 'ere he had left the town

'Friend come with me,' he kindly said, 'You have my sympathy

God's love is yours, and all I have is his and yours this day.'

The organist the Parson's hand pressed firmly and through tears

In broken accents told his tale, in sympathetic ears

'My only brother, can it be? So long we've lived apart

Henceforth shall we united be in service and in heart.'

(Chorus)

by W. B. Gray

(Contributed by Mary Scott)

From the Archives

In June 1877, the Leaders of the Wesleyan Church in Whitchurch, who at this point in time were meeting in the building many of you will know as the Whitchurch Heritage Centre in St. Mary's Street, (note that this was a smaller building than at present), made an application for a new Chapel to be built on the site we now occupy.

In 1877, Whitchurch had a population of 3,500.
The St. Mary's Street Church had a membership of 130.
They had 300 'Hearers', what we refer to as a congregation.

The new church was to provide seating for 560 people (485 adults and 75 children).
The church intended to rent out seats at £63 per year.
The cost of the site was £300.

In the town, there were two other churches St. Alkmund's and St. Catherine's. Also a Congregational Church in Dodington, a Baptist Church in Green End, now the Antique Emporium and a Primitive Methodist in Castle Hill, now the Masonic Hall.

Brian F.

What surprises you most about coronavirus?

It's done what no woman has ever been able to do.

- Stop all sports.
- Shut all restaurants.
- Shut all pubs.
- Keeping men at home!

From M.L.

MEMBERSHIP LIST

The situation with the Coronavirus and “lockdown” has highlighted the need to keep information up-to-date in order that anything which needs to go out to our congregation gets to the right address, telephone number or email address. Last month’s Newsletter was a good example as it couldn’t be handed out in church.

I keep, or try to keep, contact information on Members and Adherents up-to-date so I wish to make a plea that if you change address or telephone number you let either myself or your Pastoral Visitor know. I also have email addresses for a number of people but I’m sure there are other people in the congregation who have an email address which I don’t have on my list. If you are happy for your email address to be added to the contact details we have for you could you please email me with the details.

My email address is: hazel@heritagewalk.co.uk

Thank you.

Hazel (Nimmo)

Church Annual General Meeting

At the Church Council Meeting on 5th February 2020, it was agreed that the Annual General Meeting this year would be held on Sunday 17th May, after the morning service. In light of the current situation, this meeting has now been postponed. However, I will be issuing the booklet of Annual Reports in the middle of May as usual, so please could anyone submitting a report send it to me by Monday 4th May.

If anyone would like to be a representative on the Church Council for next year, please could you let one of the stewards know.

Many thanks

Briony

Prayer *Squares*

At the moment we are all living our lives separately, thinking about family and friends, and praying for everyone affected by Covid-19.

No one knows when we will be worshipping at St John's again, but we thought we would like to use some of our unexpected time at home to create a wall-hanging to hang up in church when we are altogether again. We've not made anything like this before and we hope that as many of you as possible will join in by making one (or more!) squares which we can then sew together. Your square could be a simple square cut from a favourite fabric or piece of old clothing, or it could be more elaborate with a sewn, stitched or glued design. If you are better at knitting or crocheting than sewing, then we can attach your square to a piece of plain material to include in the final hanging.

If you would like to join us please

Cut out a square of fabric **20cmx 20 cm** (A piece of A4 paper is 21cm wide) If you don't have any material but would like to join in, please let us know and we will drop a square round. If you are knitting or crocheting please make your square slightly smaller eg 18cmx18cm

Decorate your fabric square with your design and remember to leave a 1cm border around the edge which will be used to attach it to the next square.

Bring it to church when we all meet again.

As you hold your square of fabric, please pray for our church, our nation and our world. When it is complete, our wall-hanging will be a powerful reminder that God is with us in times of trouble and listens to our prayers.

Briony, Brenda & Helen

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June Newsletter

Please let Vic Trigg have all your submissions for the June 2020 Newsletter by 24th May.

**The Most Famous Bread & Cake
Makers in Whitchurch!**

WALKERS



“Olde Worlde Charm”

BARLOWS

**Your local electrical
store**



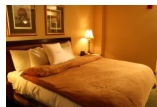
**High Street
Whitchurch**

Call in and talk to one of
the team.

**SPLISH SPLASH
“Olde Worlde Charm!”**

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project! Or re-vamp your existing
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