



**St. John's Methodist Church**

**Whitchurch**

**LOCKDOWN EDITION**

**August 2020 Newsletter**



## Message from the Manse

Dear Friends,

“When are we re-opening?” It’s a question that been easier to ask than answer.



Elsewhere in this issue you will find the results of a survey that many of you took part in, and part of that showed a concern that you want to know that we are taking precautions to keep you safe. That’s as it should be; the last thing any of us wants is to put anyone in danger.

So a lot of work has been happening behind the scenes, to produce a Risk Assessment (now on the Church Website) and consider how to safely use the building for worship. Hand Gel on the way in; pews roped off to help with Social Distancing; all cushions removed from the pews we can use; keeping the building ventilated—in our case by keeping the doors open; keeping a record of those attending in case it’s needed for “Track and Trace”; frequent cleaning; a recommendation that people wear Face Coverings. And then there are the things that are mandatory, such as no singing. Even so, we know that for some, following advice will mean that you shouldn’t attend at all!

The current plan is for us to meet for worship from Sunday 16th August, subject to approval by Church Council; albeit with many restrictions! No-one should feel they have to attend, and we will look to make Audio Recordings available for those that want them. In the meantime—“May God be with you ‘til we meet again”!

God Bless

Rob

## **STEWARD'S LETTER**

Dear All

It doesn't seem all that long when I wrote the last letter but never mind, here we go.



During this time we have lost 4 members of St John's community & we have been unable to say our goodbyes to them in a way we would have liked.

On Friday 10th July I Opened the Church for the Funeral of Albert Minshall - the first one that we could host in the Church. It was a strange occasion with half the pews taken out of use & people spread out. Knowing how well known & popular Albert was what a shame we were not allowed to fill the church.

Only 30 members of the family spread around the church. Albert was brought in to Gwen playing the tune How Great thou Art. The eulogy was given by Tony his eldest son giving an insight into his life. Rob read out part of a letter from Donald McDonald to the family. He left the church for his final journey to the cemetery to the voice of Frank Sinatra singing I did it My Way. Goodbye Albert.

The last few months have been very difficult for us all, a lot of you have had to shield so not been able to leave the house. Fortunately we have had some lovely weather, but that brought thoughts of where we could have been if allowed to travel. How many of you would have spent some time at the seaside enjoying paddles & ice cream, trips to the theatre or browsing around the shops. I know Elizabeth & I would have got in our motor home & crossed that stretch of water for a tour south.

Now that restrictions are easing I look at the news & start to wonder what way our society is going. We are asked to act responsibly yet we see incidents of drunken behaviour, attacking the police when asked to disperse, and social distancing going out of the window. Then we see piles of rubbish left in parks, on the beaches & the streets, is self respect dead? Does the younger generation feel they are invincible with no thought for others? Lets us pray that we can return to a society that cares for each other & have pride in the way we carry ourselves.

How have you found not having a Sunday services? Since I retired completely from paid employment, Sunday was the one constant thing I could judge time by, now I wake up & wonder what day is it, what can I do today?

Have you been watching or listening to some of the Services broadcast on radio or TV. We have listened & watched services from various places. It's been good to see how churches have overcome the difficulties of not meeting in the same place. Also the viewing figures have been far larger than people would have been seen in Churches. Will this be reflected in more people coming through our doors, I live in hope? Now that we can open the Church again I pray it won't be too long before we can all meet up again in Worship & Fellowship. Until then take good care of yourselves.

God Bless you all

Pete

### **The Organ**

Looking through some old files, as many have done during Lock-down, I came across a leaflet on the Organ. It told me that the Organ was installed in 1880 (actually it was slightly later than this, as it was in 1880. that the Church sought permission from the Connexion to install an organ) by Messrs Brindley and Foster. An electric Blower was installed in 1934, (previously it would be pumped). The organ was overhauled in 1970. Further restoration work took place around 1992 costing in the region of £14,000 and a Fund Raising group was set up to raise this amount.

The first Organist was Miss Francis Davies, later Mrs Pickard and then Mrs Lloyd serving in the role for over 50 years. Other long standing Organists were Mr W. Harold Smith, Mr A. J. Wood, Mr Burton, Mr Ray Moreland and Mr Bill Thompson. We can now add to this list Mr Derek Morris, who also served for nearly 50 years. That means that two people played for around 100 years of the last 140 years.

*Brian Faulkner*

### Life in Lockdown

We have been living in lockdown for the best part of 4 months now and it has come to be the normal way of life. We are still giving people a wide berth in the streets or out on walks even though the scientists say that we are unlikely to

pick anything up from walking past someone unless they cough or sneeze on us!

I think I have been luckier (in some ways) than most of you as I have not been stuck at home all the time. I have needed to go to my sister's in No Man's Heath every day at teatime for a couple of hours – making her tea and sorting out the lunch the carers will give her the next day, working in her garden and doing (occasional!) cleaning; I also go over every Tuesday and Thursday at lunchtime as she is no longer able to go to the Opal Club at Craddock Court in Malpas; Saturday morning is for her hair washing - so I have been getting out. At least my car is getting regular use and the battery won't go flat. However, it will be needing a service before too long!

Norman, Elaine and I have also been discovering footpaths round our neighbourhoods which we've not had time to discover before. Norman and Elaine have come and joined me (socially distanced of course) on a couple of these walks round Whitchurch and both times we have been able to offer assistance – firstly to a sheep which had got on to its back and was unable to get up (that was when we were walking along the canal). Norman and Elaine climbed over barbed wire into the field and were able to lift it up onto its feet whereupon it ran off, so we assume it was alright. The second time was when we were walking round Belton Farm and a milk lorry drove past down to the by-pass. Elaine

noticed it shedding a brake pad. I rang the farm and got through to the Cheese office where the Safety manager happened to answer the phone. Quite a surprise as it was a Saturday afternoon. He came down and collected the part and rushed off to contact the lorry driver, hopefully before anything drastic happened.

Other than those two bits of excitement, things have been fairly quiet – phone calls, emails, connecting up with all the family on Duo every two weeks. At least Sunday has seemed like Sunday with the service and Songs of Praise on TV and others to watch on the computer and Rob's meditations have been very welcome.

Let's hope it won't be too long before we can meet up again even if it isn't inside Church.

*Chris Crowther*

Rev. Rob's Audio Reflections continue to come out, usually twice a week, although there will be a gap in the first two weeks of August due to Holiday. Available online, or by ringing (01948) 522419. Rob usually sends an email and posts on the St. John's Facebook Page; if you'd like to be added onto the email list let him know at [robweir@albatross.me.uk](mailto:robweir@albatross.me.uk).

There's also a "Coffee Morning" on a Wednesday, that you can access via normal phone or over the internet—though this will also be taking a break for the first two weeks of August. Again—contact Rev. Rob if you'd like to know more.

**I lift up my eyes** by Martin Wroe (*submitted by Vic Trigg*)

(Writer, Journalist, and Assistant Vicar of St Luke's Church, Islington. Inspired by a conversation with Rev'd Capt Katie Watson at Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust about the life of hospital chaplains. )

I lift up my eyes from this lockdown  
Outside, I cover my face  
My friends become danger  
I become threat  
Inside, these walls close in  
This safety and this cage  
Inside, we're too close  
And, a little distant  
Inside, I'm alone, I'm scared  
Outside, I step aside from you  
Hold my breath as you pass

I lift up my eyes from this lockdown  
I thought plagues were the tantrums  
Of a petulant god, we no longer believe in  
So why can't I see my parents,  
Can't hold my grandchildren,  
Except on this screen  
That frees me as it captures me

I lift up my eyes,  
They are wet from my tears  
Why wouldn't I break down?  
We had our differences but, what I said,  
It came out wrong, I have these regrets  
My days slip through these dried out fingers  
Raw from washing, Wet from tears  
I lift up my eyes from this lockdown  
From where will my help come

I don't know if I believe in you  
You don't make it easy,  
I don't have the strength to carry much belief  
Is there someone who believes in me,  
Who might carry me, hold me  
Might be present in ways I never knew  
Might be looking toward me,  
As I lift up these eyes,



With Faith, with Hope, with Love  
Is that too much to ask?  
Is that a prayer?

My help comes in a window box  
The shy defiance of a yellow daffodil  
On a street, the mauve wisteria, showing off  
The discreet conversation of the trees  
– what must they say about us –  
The dance of every season, the dawn, the dusk  
How they carry us

My help comes hidden inside PPE,  
From those who heal, protect,  
Deliver food, run errands, who call me,  
On the phone, across a street,  
Can you believe this? How's your day?  
My help comes from those who sit and listen  
When I no longer make sense  
Who wash me clean, and break a broken blessing over me  
Who walk beside us when we die  
They neither slumber nor sleep  
No wonder they look exhausted  
How they carry us

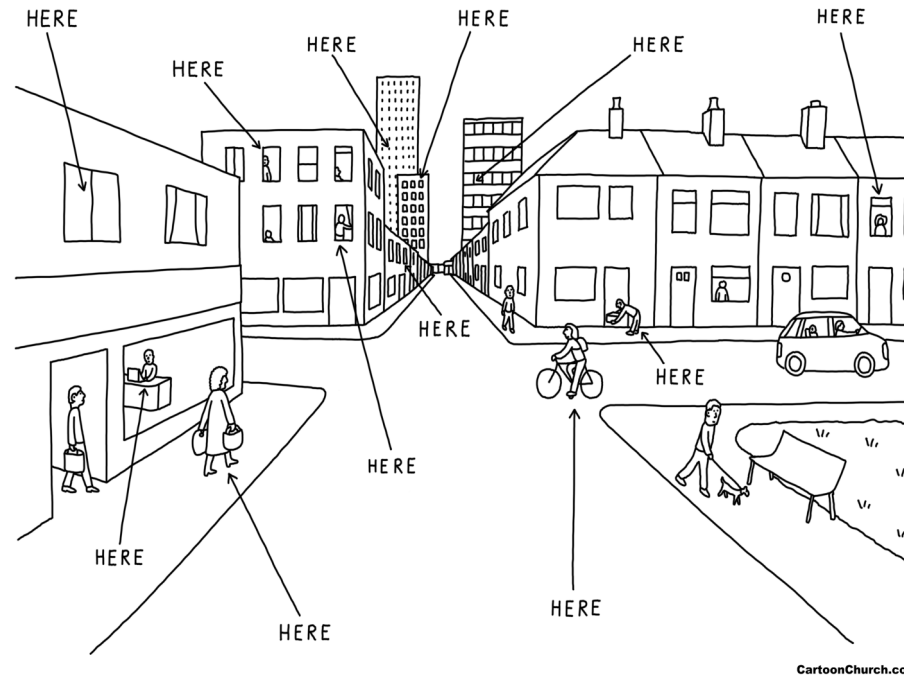
My help comes when I notice those who love me  
I hold them tenderly, in all this silence,  
The being held, the holding, the weighted joy  
That cradles all the sorrow, all the loss  
All this love in all this life  
How they carry us  
I hold them all, they hold me  
Wherever I go, they go with me  
At my going out and my coming in  
My end and my beginning  
From this time forth, for evermore  
Even when I cannot catch another breath  
Still they breathe my life that I  
May breathe easy again  
I lift up my eyes and find my help comes  
From knowing Love is present  
Against the odds, and carries us  
I lift up my eyes and see  
That Love will keep our lives

The following Prayer has been written by Stephen Poxon and appeared in the Methodist Recorder for private or church use.

Great God of love, we lay these days  
Low at your feet, to seek your ways;  
Praying from heartache's deepest well:  
Peace for our anguish, fears to quell.  
Wounded and scared, in disarray;  
Look on a world that's lost its way,  
Grant us your mercy, hope bestow;  
E'en though that be the faintest glow.  
Cradle the tears of those who mourn,  
Comfort the weak and weary-worn;  
Humbled and helpless, lonely now;  
Here, to your children, grace endow.  
Move with compassion, pardoning Lord,  
Teach us to hear your constant word,  
That, though confused, impaired we be,  
Still, Jesus reigns in victory.  
Hear us, we pray, and work in power,  
Rescue, redeem, this dreadful hour,  
Come as of old and prove your might,  
Vanquishing darkness, sharing light.

*Submitted by Brian Faulkner*

# WHERE THE CHURCH IS



CartoonChurch.com

## Prayer Trail

If you're looking for a little gentle exercise and a way to guide your prayers as well as your footsteps, there is now a Prayer Trail at St. Johns! Starting at the Tower Door, there are five Prayer Stations on the doors of the church as you move clockwise round the outside of the building. Each consists of a picture, and some ideas and points for prayer.

For those that may need to follow this in spirit rather than in person, contact Rev Rob who can provide you with a copy, either electronically or by post.

### **Albert Minshall Remembered**

Albert passed away on Friday 26th June, at the age of 86, and two weeks later I had the privilege of leading his funeral. Many of you of course knew him far better than I; however, it falls to me to write a few words of tribute.

I first came across Albert just after moving to Whitchurch seven years ago; I had already noted the name as St. Johns had received a generous donation following his 80th Birthday party! It took a little while for me to realise the connection with Hill Valley. Maybe that in itself says something about the man: while he was justifiably proud of his achievements, I never found him one to boast of them.

I soon discovered one of the many ways he was a benefactor to the town: he very quickly “booked” me to say Grace at the start of the Pensioners Christmas Party at Hill Valley. It became a regular fixture for me—though Albert always asked me, never demanded my attendance.

Albert’s humility shone through. He never claimed to be perfect, never acted the big “I am” - he may have driven a Rolls Royce, but he never pretended it was because he was better than others. He enjoyed his life, and the wealth his work had earned—but without the arrogance that can make some wealthy people unattractive companions, and he was generous to many people and causes over the years. When Minshall Court was named after him a few years ago, the initial reaction from him was almost embarrassment—though I never heard anyone say at St. Johns or around the town that the honour was undeserved!

At his funeral, we read 2 Corinthians 5: 1, 6-10—about how when this earthly tent is torn down, we have a building from God, and of our urge to please God in all things. We heard from Tony, his son, and had some words from Donald MacDonald; I then offered the following words:

“On a personal note and on behalf of this church, I am grateful to have known Albert. A line from Rudyard Kipling’s “If” springs to mind - “walk with kings nor lose the common touch” - Albert achieved so much, knew many people including many notable ones – yet I often used to bump into him at the Friday Market, buying some Tombo-la Tickets to support whichever charity Margaret Hewson’s stall was supporting that week, and more often than not putting the prizes back. He was a great supporter of us, and also of the Adventist Church in Shrewsbury where he went every Saturday; on a Sunday Morning he would be here, and always sitting against the back wall. We did get him to sit further forward for his Great-Grandson Stanley’s baptism a few months back – but that was about it! His faith was so much a part of him, and all those that knew him could see it. When it talks about us wanting to please God in the reading we had from 2 Corinthians – well, this humble, hard working and faithful Christian certainly did his best on that front, and his deep faith in God is an example to many of us.

I liked him greatly – though he never did persuade me to join him on his beloved golf course.”

God Bless you Albert—you will be missed.

*Rev Rob Weir*

## **Back to Church Survey**

Thank you to everyone who completed our first Church Survey. We had 46 responses in total, with 32 people answering the questions online through a link to [surveymonkey.co.uk](https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk) and 14 responding by phone.

Q1 We are now allowed to open our Church if we follow Government and Methodist advice. Some people are keen to come along and others are concerned about mixing with others. How likely would you be to come to a service of collective worship?

Only 12 people were definitely ready to come to a service as soon as the church is open, but a further 20 would consider it if they knew all the precautions that had been taken so the Church Stewards are looking into this option and will present plans for Church Council to approve in August.

30% of people asked are not ready to come into the Church building in the near future so we will look at ways in which any service could be recorded for them.

Q2. How likely would you be to come to church for private prayer ?

Fewer people wanted to come to church for private prayer than for a service, but this is something that could be considered if requested by individuals on an appointment system.

Please contact the stewards if you are interested.

Q3. Have you been watching any online services over the past few weeks?

Most people have been joining in with some form of worship during lockdown, including a range of services on Youtube and church websites and broadcasts on the Radio and TV as well as printed devotions and prayers.

Rob Weir's audio reflections were particularly popular and the sermons by our Circuit Superintendent at Wesley Place were also mentioned as a source of inspiration. Many of you enjoyed the opportunity to share worship with family and friends in other parts of the UK and the world and experience a range of worship and musical styles.

Q4. What else would you like St John's to offer as we come out of lock-down?

Most people were keen for Rob Weir's reflections to continue and 12 people would like the services at St John's to be recorded if possible for those unable to attend so the stewards will look into this. For those with a computer, links to other Methodist services are included on our website and elsewhere in the newsletter. Only 3 people were interested in a prayer group or book discussion group online and only 2 wanted the tea and coffee phone sessions to continue. The publication of the newsletter and pastoral phone calls will continue as normal.

Q5. Church Council Members only: We hope to reschedule the church council meeting that was planned for 17th June. Please indicate which of the following you would be willing to attend in the next few weeks.

Church Council members were split between those who would come to church for a meeting, those who would attend a zoom meeting and those who would not do either at present so the stewards are exploring all the options for the next meeting.

Q6. Would you be willing to answer another survey in a few weeks' time to see if your views have changed?

All but 3 people were willing to take part in another survey so we will be asking for your views again shortly.

Many thanks for taking part.

If you did not receive an email or phonecall about the survey please let the stewards know so you can take part in the next one.

*Briony*

## **What is a COMMITTEE?**

One of the things that people new to the Methodist Church find difficult and sometimes even frustrating is hearing that an idea needs to go to a ..... committee!

St. John's has four Committees with possibly another four unofficial Committees. Reading an article in the Methodist Recorder earlier in the year, the Secretary of Conference Jonathan Hustler explained what a committee is. The word he writes seems to date back to the late 16th century to denote a group of people to whom a larger group 'commits' certain functions on its behalf.

Therefore, the whole idea of a Committee is about trust. In our situation, the congregation of St. John's (not just the members) puts their trust in the Church Council (committee) to function on their behalf the running of the church, (Worship, Pastoral, Finance and Property). The latter three groups report into the Church Council. Other less official groups also meet: Church Stewards, Church Family and Junior Church.

Having established the workings of The Committee (Church Council), you appoint a good proportion of the Council members at your Annual Church Meeting. Church Stewards and people to represent you on this Council. We do have a few vacancies, please speak with our Minister, Church Stewards or the Council Secretary (Briony), if you would be interested in serving in this way.

*Brian Faulkner*



### **PRAYER REQUESTS**

Pray for those known to us who are ill, housebound, in care, lonely, bereaved or in any other kind of need.



#### **St John's**

Pray for the members of our church who have moved to the Beacon. We pray that they find spiritual satisfaction in their lives as they join their new church.

We pray for the friends and families of those dear friends who have passed on. We think of Philip Bowcock, and pray for Jean, and for Albert Minshall.

We think about those who are ill at the moment.

#### **Our Town**

As the Town Council try to steer our town of Whitchurch out of the pandemic back to "normality"

#### **Our nation**

Pray for wisdom for our leaders as they make decisions to lead us out of Lockdown

Give thanks for our NHS, care homes, our essential services and the dedicated staff serving in them.

Pray for all who grieve the loss of loved ones, especially through Coronavirus-related death.

Give thanks for the wonderful examples of heroism, kindness and care prompted by this crisis. The politicians may not always make the right decisions but we pray for guidance and wisdom as they strive to combat this disease.

#### **Our world**

Pray for those entrusted with leading us from the dark days of the pandemic towards the bright hopes for the future.

Hi Everyone,

Great to have the opportunity to share these words with you! They seem to describe so clearly what we have been going through in the last few months during “lockdown”. The words are taken from the hymn “Heavenly Father, Thou hast brought us safely to the present day” (which can be sung to the tune of “What a friend we have in Jesus”).)

“Shadows deep have crossed our pathways,  
We have trembled in the storm,  
Clouds have gathered round so darkly  
That we could not see Thy form:  
Yet Thy love hath never left us  
In our griefs alone to be,  
And the help each gave the other  
Was the strength that came from Thee”

Thank you so much to everyone for all your help, especially just for “staying in touch”. Special thanks to Rev. Rob and Fiona for your regular “Reflections” as well as everything else, which have been so appreciated. As Rob reminded us in his recent Reflection, as we look to the future, we have the assurance, “God is with us!”

“Mercies new and never-failing  
Brightly shine through all the past,  
Watchful care and loving kindness  
Always near from first to last,  
Tender love, divine protection  
Ever with us day and night;  
Blessings more than we can number  
Strow the path with golden light.”

Hester Periam Hawkins

(Matthew 28:20 “I am with you always!”)

*Beryl Posniak*

# **Coming back to the Heart of Worship?**

**Regular Worship at St Johns  
Whitchurch, resuming on  
Sunday 16th August at  
10:30am.**

**If you feel able to, join us for  
a time of spoken worship and  
prayer lasting between 30 and  
45 minutes.**

**Remember!  
Stay Alert,  
Control the Virus,  
Save Lives!**

Do not attend if you have symptoms of COVID-19;  
consider as well whether you are in a High Risk  
group when thinking about attending.

*A Little Humour to end with!*

Spotted from Notice Sheets and Church Magazines...

“The Seniors group will have a picnic on Saturday. Each person is asked to bring a friend, a vegetable, and a sweet, all in a covered dish. “

“The Rev. Merriwether spoke briefly, much to the delight of the audience. “

“A bean supper will be held on Tuesday evening in the church hall. Music will follow.”

“Helpers are needed! Please sign up on the information sheep.”

A Welsh Sailor was the only survivor of a shipwreck. Several years later, another ship arrived at the island that had become his home. He’d been busy—to help him stop being homesick, he had built a full street of shops and houses based on his home town, and he took the crew on a tour.

The Captain was confused though—while most buildings had been fully fitted out, the church was simply a shell. “Haven’t you had enough time to finish everything,” he asked. The sailor looked stern: “No, it’s just that I don’t know what it looks like inside. I’m Chapel, not Church!”

A passenger in a taxi leaned over to ask the driver a question and tapped him on the shoulder. The driver screamed, lost control of the cab, nearly hit a bus, drove up the kerb and stopped inches from a large plate glass window. For a few moments everything was silent in the cab and then the still-shaking driver said, "I'm sorry but you scared the daylights out of me."

The frightened passenger apologised to the driver and said he didn't realise a mere tap on the shoulder could frighten him so much.

The driver replied, "I'm sorry, it's entirely my fault. Today is my first day driving a cab... I've been driving a hearse for the last 25 years..."

A young man was attending his first meeting at a Pentecostal Church, and the leaders decided to pray that he would speak in tongues. Nothing happened however, and he left with a troubled expression on his face. Nevertheless, they continued praying; maybe he would burst into tongues on the way home?

The young man, already in a worried state of mind, discovered though that his beloved motorbike was not where he thought he had left it. In a state of some anxiety, he burst back into the meeting and stuttered, "Sss-s someone stole m-m-my K-k-kawasaki!"

"Alleluia! Praise the Lord!" cried the delighted leaders!

**September 2020 Newsletter**

Please let Vic Trigg have all your submissions for the next Newsletter by 20th August. Send material to:

169 Wrexham Road Whitchurch  
Tel: 01948 664210  
Email: vic@triggfamily.org.uk

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*“I believe  
in Christianity as I  
believe that the sun has  
risen: not only because  
I see it, but because by  
it I see everything else.”*

*C.S. Lewis*

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*Handy Hints for Spectacle Wearers! To avoid your  
glasses steaming up while wearing a mask, use a  
Pipe Cleaner or piece of Soft Garden Twine to  
mould the mask around your nose and cheeks.*

“The tulip and the butterfly appear in gayer coats than  
I: Let me be dressed fine as I will, flies, worms, and  
flowers exceed me still.” ~Isaac Watts

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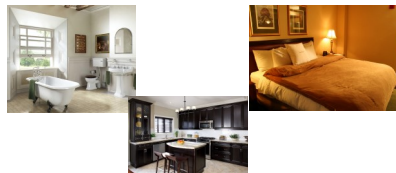
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## WALKERS

