

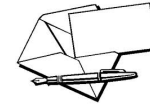


Silver Sorbet Dahlias

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

September 2020 Newsletter

Message from the Manse



Dear Friends,

The cat is well and truly out of the bag - come August 2021, me and the family will be on the move. To where, we don't yet know. Who will be replacing me? Again, we don't yet know. Over the next three months, my profile - along with those of every Minister seeking an appointment, and every Circuit seeking a Minister - will be collated, sent out, and pored over before, in early November, the First Round of Stationing when Ministers will visit Circuits, and decisions will be made. The process then repeats, and then repeats again, until as many Ministers and as many Circuits as possible find a match.

What adjustments COVID-19 will make to this process remain to be seen. Can visits still be face to (masked) face? Does this mean I can conceal my beard until it's too late? Are we going to have to do a Virtual Manse Tour, carrying a Laptop from room to room? If so, can I avoid having to tidy up the Study? Joking aside, it's going to be a time of even more uncertainty than usual.

It's all part of finding what you might call the "New Normal". We still face restrictions, and can't say for certain when they will ease; so in the meantime, Face Masks, open doors, and no singing are still the order of the day. I'm learning all the time about how different it is leading Worship in current circumstances; including how to make sure that all people can feel part of worship at St. Johns; I know there are already some things that I need to improve.

Then again, that's in some ways the Christian - and particularly Methodist - way. We are saved by Grace, offered to us by our Father God through Jesus Christ; but that doesn't mean we are immediately perfect. Grace is all that is necessary - but inspired by that Grace, we strive to do better, to reach higher, to be the people God wants us to be. In all of this, the Holy Spirit is our guide and companion. And even in the midst of change, uncertainty, and doubt - the Spirit still calls us onward, ever deeper into God's Grace.

God Bless

Rob

Property News

As some of you will know we recently had the porch roof to the long room renewed & an amount of tiles on the church roof replaced. This was at a cost of 2,998 pounds.

I am pleased to tell you. I have managed to get a grant of 1,500 pounds towards the work, from Shropshire Historic Churches Trust.

This is an organisation that we support every September when we hold a coffee morning & Chris would do a sponsored sing, and the church would be open to visitors & Tom Kelly would do a sponsored bike ride.

This year it is different because of Covid. There will still be a Ride & Stride event so if you can find a way to support it please do so.

Pete (Property & Finance)

Rob and Sue Spinks, two of our most recent members, have moved to Wem. We thank Rob for his contribution to the church with his Lego and Puppet ministry. They were in the early stages of organising the flower rota. Rob has bravely gone out on a number of Fridays and/or Saturdays offering unsuspecting shoppers a bunch of flowers with a Blessing from St. John's. Although I hope we have not seen the last of Rob & Sue, they may well feel guided to join a church in Wem.

We wish them a blessing in their new home.

STEWARD'S LETTER



Last Sunday (16/8/20), I was able with others from St. John's to participate in the first physical act of Worship for five months. This is the longest time in living memory that I have been prevented from being in Worship. We had a good turnout. Our building has many disadvantages but in these times, the size of the building enables all to 'Social Distance'.

Thank you to Vic and Pete for providing the Risk Assessments and to Elizabeth and Gwen for preparing the Church.

Not everyone (due to various circumstances) is able to return to church. We are looking at ways of providing recordings or some form of printed service.

The last five months has made us all much more aware of loneliness and lack of fellowship. We, as a church, should be looking at ways we can respond to these needs.

Many in the church besides the Pastoral Visitors, have made telephone calls and sent emails to keep in touch. Thank You.

Thank you to Chris and Pete for the physical distribution of the Newsletters and those who have compiled and printed these, enabling most of us to remain in some contact with the church.

Brian

Services for September

6th 10:30am: Brian Faulkner

13th 10:30am: Rev. Rob Weir

20th 10:30am: Rev. Brian Acty

27th 10:30am: Rev. Rob Weir





Update from Whitchurch Foodbank

The Foodbank in Whitchurch has continued to operate from Bargates, supplying food parcels to people in Whitchurch and beyond and over 500 deliveries have been made by teams of volunteer drivers in the last 5 months, taking food to 674 adults and 513 children. This is 3 times as many as for the same period last year.

The food in each parcel is intended to cover 3 days i.e. 6 meals which means that we have supplied food for 3000-4000 meals over this period.

In recent weeks, the number of deliveries has dropped to a more usual level of 15-20 per week. At the height of the pandemic it was 5 times this number.

New processes have been set up to enable a small team of volunteers to work at Bargates twice a week, making up parcels and processing food items while observing social distancing and we have been very fortunate that we haven't needed to clear everything away between shifts.

It is still not possible for clients to visit the foodbank for a cup of tea and support at present and all requests for food are received by email from referrers including GPs, Social Care organisations and Schools.

We have been so thankful for the wonderful donations both in produce and money that we have received. Please continue to support us with your prayers, food donations and money gifts. They are all greatly appreciated and make the foodbank in Whitchurch a truly team effort.

Briony

When Things get back to Normal.....

I wonder how many times you have heard that in the last few months? What is “normal”? Will we ever see it again? Will we ever get back to life as it was before March this year – before Lockdown?

I don't suppose you can remember the last time you were in church for a “normal” church service? I will refresh your memory. Our last Sunday Service was on 15th March, 21 weeks ago when Graham Dimelow preached! Wow, what a long time ago – it seems ages!

I got to thinking about all the changes which have happened since that time. Our church has seen many changes since then, mainly to our church family – sadly, there have been so many changes. I go back to the beginning of the year when Janet Lees, Jenny Marston and Katy Johnson left with their families to join the Beacon. We, of course, wish them well. Lucy Chidlow followed shortly afterwards. We wish Lucy well if she continues to seek to qualify to become a local preacher.

Lockdown was very cruel to our church as several good friends of the church died. I think, in particular, of Freda Hanlon, Gordon Davidson, Derek Morris and Albert Minshall. Some of these friends had attended worship at St John's for many years, so we shall miss them greatly. The really sad part is that we were unable to celebrate their lives properly because of Covid-19. I feel particularly sad about this. Please let us try to hold services of remembrance for these dear friends as soon as we can.

Most of you will have filled in a survey/questionnaire which Briony circulated a few weeks ago. The survey asked you how you felt about returning to church after all those weeks away. Sadly, there was no clear consensus about what we should do. How do you feel about it? Personally, I am disappointed with all the rules and regulations being imposed on us, but I suppose they are for the good of all. I shall particularly miss the singing, but we will have to see how it goes. This week I had an email from Neil Barnett from Winterley Brass Band. He reminded me that Harvest was only ten weeks away and that they were due to come and give a concert at St John's, on 3rd October. As they were unable to rehearse at present, this concert is now cancelled. We shall celebrate Harvest as best we can.

When you look around our community it is hard not to become despondent and down hearted. I look at all the shops in Whitchurch which have closed, Poundstretcher, Healing Thyme and M&Co and wonder if our community can cope with all these lost shops and amenities. I feel that our faith is being tested during this pandemic. Where am I going to get my sustenance from if I can't go to church and have a good sing?

My main message is that we must not give up! Please continue coming to church, despite all the restrictions and hurdles put in our way. Our faith must remain strong and resolute. Let us sing and rejoice in our hearts even if we can't do it in church!

JRW

General Church Meeting.

This was not able to take place as planned (17/5/20). Briony kindly collated and distributed the reports that were submitted.

This meeting has two important items of business :-

Appointing Church Stewards & Representatives to the Church Council.

In the foreseeable future your Stewards can not see how a meaningful meeting, when the majority of you can be present, can take place.

Stewards. Avril Bradfield has stepped down as a Church Steward after serving for 7 years. We thank Avril for her quiet leadership. Amongst the many tasks, Avril has ensured that when the Plan has shown an L.A. that she or others have ensured that Worship has taken place to a high standard. Avril has also been very aware of visitors to the church and ensuring that they are looked after. A ministry I hope she will continue in.

Andrew Fawcett has agreed to join the team, having served in this capacity before.

Rob Hewson having stepped back two years ago has agreed to step forward again.

Therefore, if you were able to vote for Church Stewards, this would be Maurice, Pete, Brian, Andrew and Rob.

Church Council. Through various circumstances the Council have lost five members. Lynn Fowler, Sarah Lunt and Brenda Aumeer have agreed to stand to represent you, the congregation, on the Church Council.

As this meeting is not able to take place, the next Church Council will co-opt these three people on to the Council, until such time as a General Church Meeting can take place.

Many departures have brought sadness and some despondency for those who are left.

However, in these difficult times, I remind you that the church is not the building. It is not about whether we sing the latest hymns, have pews or chairs.

What really matters is the presence of Jesus in your life and mine. Do we reveal the character of Jesus as we care for one another, our welcome, our desire to be a friend just as Jesus is our friend.

The building tends to be our focus. Jesus said to Peter (Matt Ch 16 v 18) 'I will build my Church'.

Note the 'I' in our struggles and efforts let's remind ourselves that it is **JESUS** who will build the church. Let's trust and be guided by him.

Brian

Dear all,

It is with sadness that I have to let you know that. Mrs. Mary Scott, a long-standing member of St. Johns, passed away this Thursday afternoon (26th). While she has always - even in my time - been a very active person, some ill health in recent months was compounded by her feeling unable to go out at all during Lockdown; her health had deteriorated rapidly, and for the last two weeks she was being cared for at Edgeley House, where she passed away.

Funeral details are being confirmed, but look likely to be sometime on either Tuesday 8th or Wednesday 9th September, with a service at St. Johns followed by interment with her husband, Ted, at Whitchurch Cemetery.

Please keep Mary's family in your prayers at this time.

God Bless

Rob

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

Give thanks for all those serving St John's in these difficult times.
Pray that our church family will be guided by the Holy Spirit
as we gradually emerge from lockdown.

Our Town

Give thanks for the work of the Foodbank, which has been
especially challenged by the consequences of COVID-
19. Also give thanks for the generosity of people who have
donated to the Foodbank at this time.

Pray for the Town Council as they try to steer our town
out of the pandemic back to "normality"

Our nation

Pray for wisdom for our leaders as they make decisions on our behalf
managing the current pandemic.

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.

Our world

Pray for those parts of our world where there is conflict and famine,
and for the work of aid agencies and governments, especially in
places where lack of water, soap and adequate health care make
the pandemic especially difficult to deal with.

Pray for understanding and compassion amongst world leaders and
people of all nations on issues such as immigration, refugee
status, political prisoners, racial inequality, unequal trade
rules and other divisive issues.

Christian Aid



Christian Aid is extremely important in these difficult times, as there is a greater than ever need for support for the very poor as they now feel the full force of the Covid-19 pandemic in refugee camps and in desperately poor communities in many parts of the world. Also they are the very same people who are suffering the devastating effects of climate change.

Therefore as a committee this autumn, we have decided to support Christian Aid's campaign for Climate Justice and do some fund raising for the Corona virus Emergency Appeal. Briony has written an article about the 'Global Prayer Chain' which is part of the Climate Justice campaign, and you can find it further on in this newsletter.

For the Corona virus Emergency Appeal, we are enabling people to order Traidcraft Christmas cards and hosting online zoom coffee mornings.

Christian Aid Christmas cards will be on display on the Traidcraft stall at the Friday market towards the end of September. Orders can be placed with Judy at the stall.

Also an email including photos of the cards will be sent out at the end of September to everyone who has agreed to receive emails from us. Orders can be sent to Briony, Brenda or myself, via email.

Then on Monday 28th September and also on Saturday 3rd October from 10.30 am, there will be a chance to make yourself a coffee or tea, and sit down to have a chat with friends on zoom, and see some of the Traidcraft cards and gifts. We will email the zoom links the week before.

We do hope you are keen to learn about the Climate Justice campaign and are able to support Christian Aid, at this time of crisis in our world.

Helen Trigg



Praying for Climate Justice

(From Briony) This year, the UK was due to host the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (**COP26**) for the first time in **Glasgow** in November 2020.

Due to Covid-19, this meeting has had to be postponed until 1st to 12th November 2021.

We are at a crucial time in the struggle for climate justice. To rise to the challenge, we must underpin it in prayer.

Prayer that will amplify prophetic voices and transform us and the actions that we take. Prayer that will help us to understand God's care for those who are most affected by the climate crisis, acknowledge our role in causing it and start anew. Prayer that will act as a deep source of energy for the struggle ahead. At the start of Lent, Christian Aid, alongside CAFOD and Tearfund, and people all over the world, pledged to fill every day with prayer for a world where everyone can flourish and creation can breathe easy again.

This prayer will continue every day until the start of the UN climate talks (COP 26). We need to pray that whether the meeting happens as expected or not, governments make the right decisions to increase their urgent actions to stop the climate crisis.

We have signed up to take part in this Global Prayer Chain and have booked a slot to pray and act for Climate Justice each Monday from 3pm to 4pm beginning on Monday 7th September.

We hope you will join us with your prayers for part of that hour each week. More information can be found on the Christian Aid website.

Father of creation, thank you for all that you have made; For the stunning diversity of humankind, for the beauty of every flower head, the abundance of a healthy harvest. Help us to tread lightly and live wisely, remembering our place in the great web of creation. Challenge us where we need to change our lifestyles, convict us when we need to speak out to amplify the voices of those who are so often ignored. Give us the courage to speak truth to power. Send us out to play our part in your work of restoring your world, healing broken relationships, working for justice and loving all people. Amen

October 2020 Newsletter

Please let Chris Crowther have all your submissions for the next Newsletter by 21st September.

Taxi!

The Taxi service is not running in the usual way.

However, if you require a lift to church, then please telephone me and I or someone else will pick you up.



Brian Faulkner

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Harvest

Advance notice: our Harvest Festival will take
place on Sunday 4th October. More details nearer
the time.



*Belated Birthday wishes to Mary Hayward who celebrated
her 90th birthday on the 22nd August 2020.*

*"It is a sad moment when the first phlox appears. It is the amber light
indicating the end of the great burst of early summer and suggesting
that we must now start looking forward to autumn. Not that I have
any objection to autumn as a season, full of its own beauty; but I just
cannot bear to see another summer go, and I recoil from what the first
hint of autumn means."*

Vita Sackville-West: English poet, novelist, and garden designer

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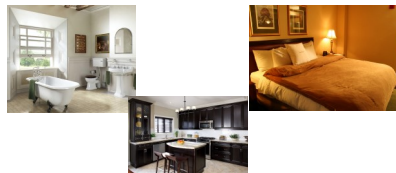
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