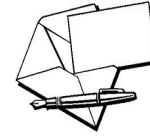


February 2021 Newsletter



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

Message from the Manse



Dear Friends,

Lockdown affects all of us in different ways and at different times. I don't think I'm alone in finding the current period particularly trying; with the weather cold and wet, it's difficult to even escape over the fields with the dog as I sometimes did over the summer. I feel a sort of claustrophobia, having to justify every trip out, and once again a tank of petrol will probably last weeks if not months. I'm sure some of you are feeling the same.

I will admit that at times it's felt quite hard to remain hopeful and optimistic. The fact that the world outside is cold, damp and grey does little to lift my mood. Winter seems a cruel time to have to remain isolated and apart from others; there's a reason why pretty much every culture outside the Tropics has come up with some sort of midwinter festival, even before the Church began to celebrate Christmas. We long for light, warmth, and the companionship of others.

And yet, Spring will come. There will soon be shoots questing through the dark soil; all that now seems dormant will soon be springing into verdant new life. Birds will return from the south once more, and the promise of a brighter and better season to come will grow day by day. "Summer and Winter and Springtime and Harvest" as the hymn goes - reminding us that the seasons are God-given, as is all that is good in this world we live in.

At the moment it feels like we are in a metaphorical winter: waiting for the first signs of hope. They are there - even if sometimes they are hard to see. Our Spring will come; and then, there will be the fulfilment of our promise of liberation, an echo of the liberation from the power of death shown to us through Christ's death and resurrection. And when it comes - for I believe it is when, not if - how ready we will be to celebrate.

God Bless

Rob

Steward's Letter

On behalf of your Church Stewards, I wish you a happy and blessed New Year.

I am writing this in early January. Christmas is all but over; well it seemed like that on Boxing Day! Christmas with family and friends was limited to one day. No extended Christmas celebrations, the diary was empty.

As a Church, many of us were able to share in the Advent theme for 2020, even if confined to our homes and living alone. See my reflections elsewhere in this Newsletter. I do want to record thanks for all those who ensured that the message of the Angels 'Be not afraid' and 'God is with us' was delivered. Whatever you contributed, my sincere thanks.

A New Year, the Coronavirus has not gone away, in fact it is worse. Therefore, we have felt in the interest of safety and to encourage you to stay at home, we have suspended church services for the time being. We hope that by mid February, most in our congregation will have been vaccinated. We did offer the church for use to the Health Authority and the local G. P. Surgeries, as the building could make a suitable venue.

The year ahead brings many challenges and changes. Our Minister (Rob Weir) will be moving to North Yorkshire. The Rev. Donna-Marie Broadbent - Kelly, husband Dave and 3 children, one 18, Hannah 11 and William 9 will be moving into the manse in Greenfield Rise. Rev. Donna as she wishes to be known, will have a ministry to the farming community in this part of the Cheshire South Circuit and Pastoral charge of St. John's and other churches in this area.

As a church we want to focus our attention on Mission, providing a message that people can identify with, not only in the church fellowship but also in the town.

The world has changed drastically over the last ten months, the church is also affected. Many churches in our Circuit have not met physically during this period. As a church we will have to make adjustments. If you feel left out, please talk to your Pastoral Visitor, our Minister or the church stewards. Conversations will assist us all as we lead the church in 2021.

God be with you in 2021.

Brian.

SERVICES in FEBRUARY

Services in our church were paused, following the announcement of the 3rd Lockdown. These will be resumed in the building as soon as the Church Council feels that the local infection rate has reduced. Vaccinations have started.

In the meantime, Rob is leading a short time of worship on a Sunday morning at 10.30 via Zoom. Access to this can be gained via a normal telephone, if you need help with this, speak with Rob or one of the Stewards.

Join together with friends from Brown Knowl, Malpas and Tallarn Green, you can even sing in your own home!

Free Telephone Message

The Methodist Church is concerned that some people may be left out with church services cancelled and not having any internet access. The President and Vice President of Conference will be placing a pastoral message on a Free phone line. Just call 0808 281 2695. This will be updated every Monday.

Goodbye to Jim & Sheila Walwyn

Today 18th January 2021 is end of a chapter in the life of St John's as we say good bye to Sheila and Jim Walwyn. Covid 19 permitting they will be on the move to their new home in Cambridgeshire I am sure you will all wish to join me in thanking Jim and Sheila for all the work they have done in the 14 years they have been attending St John's Church.

This month of January 2021 we are in our third lockdown which means we are not able to have a farewell get together. When Sheila and I first began to become regular worshippers, Jim was Church Steward and it was not long before Rev Parrott and Jim were hovering around saying I should be on Church Council. It was not long before I was persuaded to take on my first job.

At about that time, Jim had some spare tickets for the Big Sing in the Albert Hall, London. What an experience it was, singing with 5,000 people in the audience. I also remember the Mini bus driver wandering around somewhere in the Midlands looking for a fuel station that was open in the early hours of the morning. Arriving home at 4.30 A.M. It was almost time to go to work. It was with great sadness as we said our Goodbyes, we will be able to keep in touch via Email and phone. and wish them every happiness in their new home and I am sure they will soon make new friends.

God. bless.
Maurice and Sheila.



How can we respond to the Climate Emergency?



Everyone is hoping that 2021 will be a better year than 2020. There is still some way to go before the end of the coronavirus pandemic, but with the vaccine rollout beginning in the UK, plans are being drawn up for life post-Covid. Yet the rush to return to normal risks leaving many of the world's problems unsolved. So this year Christians everywhere are campaigning to reclaim our common home – making sure the recovery from the pandemic includes everyone and tackles global poverty, injustice and the climate crisis.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, has said that responding to Climate Change is an essential part of our responsibility to safeguard God's creation. Pope Francis has told Catholics that climate change is the greatest threat to life our Earth has ever seen – and that it is caused by humans. As CAFOD says, *Climate change affects our health, our homes, our heritage and our beautiful landscapes. Our community centres where we meet, our sports fields where we play and our places of pilgrimage where we reflect. It also ruins the work we do to fight poverty. Enough. Together, we can turn the tide. We can call our politicians to go further and faster with emission cuts. We can treat our common home with respect and choose to live sustainably.* The Methodist Church has said together we can raise our voices to call for ambitious change nationally and internationally, as well as seeking it in our own communities. Together, churches can commit to the kind of future we want to see.

Cont;

Why the eyes of the world will be on the UK in 2021

The UK government will be hosting two major international meetings this year. The **G7 summit** will bring together the heads of government from seven of the world's richest countries and will take place in summer 2021. The UK will also be hosting the **UN ‘COP26’ climate talks** in Glasgow between 1-12 November 2021. This will be the largest gathering of world leaders ever to take place on British soil. Both of the conferences will be crucial moments for leaders to tackle the climate crisis and cancel unjust debts for developing countries. And with the UK taking on the G7 and COP26 presidency, Prime Minister Boris Johnson will be under pressure to make sure world leaders at the talks show the ambition needed for a transformative global recovery from the pandemic.

2021 is the year to reclaim our common home

All of our lives have been turned upside down in the past year and we all want to go back to normal as soon as possible. But the last thing we want to do is to go back to the injustices and inequalities of the ‘old’ normal which have made this crisis even worse. We in the UK have a massive part to play in building a better normal, calling on Boris Johnson to show the leadership we desperately need at the key meetings the UK is hosting this year. We are all in the same boat as one global family. If we’re going to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past, that is the crucial lesson we need to take forward into 2021.

p.t.o

Cont;
What Can we Do?

We hope that some of you are making time to join us in prayer each Monday to pray for Climate Justice until the COP 26 Climate talks in November. We can also take part in practical action to urge the Prime Minister to make sure communities hardest hit by the climate emergency are listened to at COP26. If you are interested please contact us and we will share more information about how you can be involved by signing a petition raised by Christian Aid, writing to your MP or watching films about the Climate Emergency and reflecting on what is being done to help communities that are affected.



You can also take part in **Show the Love**, a campaign supported by the Churches, Christian Aid, the Womens Institute, the Climate Coalition and many others, by making a green heart to decorate your home and remind you that all actions you take, however small, can help to safeguard our planet. More information, including examples of felt hearts and a pattern for knitting hearts can be found on our church website under our new group Justice and Peace (see elsewhere in this newsletter). We plan to put a green heart on the noticeboards inside and outside our Church.

God of love, show us our place in this world as the channels of your love for all creatures of this earth. Enlighten those who possess power and money that they may love the common good, advance the weak, and care for this world in which we live. Fill us with your power and light, help us to protect your creation, and build a world of justice, peace, love and beauty. Amen.

Briony Myles-Hook & Helen Trigg
(With thanks to Christian Aid and CAFOD for some of the text in this article)

NEW TELEPHONE NUMBER FOR Mike and Ruth Mulliner

Can everyone please take note that Mike and Ruth's new phone number is

01948 *****

Thank you

Christmas Quiz Answers from Mike Nimmo

- | | |
|--|-----------------|
| 1. You may dream of this (5,5) | White Christmas |
| 2. Turn the tables (6) | Stable |
| 3. Main attraction on the bill (4) | Star |
| 4. It is silent round the Christmas tree (6) | Tinsel |
| 5. Finding old coins (4) | Gold |
| 6. Nuts! (8) | Crackers |
| 7. Time for a punch up? (6,3) | Boxing Day |
| 8. The ship was sailing out of harbour (7) | Wassail |
| 9. Need an umbrella my love? (8) | Reindeer |
| 10. To copy (4) | Crib |
| 11. Many shelves were found in Santa's workshops (5) | Elves |
| 12. Detective at the window pane (4,5) | Jack Frost |
| 13. GC, MM and DSO (11) | Decorations |
| 14. To kill say (6) | Sleigh |
| 15. Eat in France (6) | Manger |

ADVENT

A message of Hope to Whitchurch and beyond.

These are my own personal reflections of Advent.

The Worship Committee met in mid October and as part of the agenda we talked about Advent and having a Theme. With the country in a crisis, we thought that the church needs to bring a message of Hope.

The Walking Nativity that was being organized by Churches Together, indicated that our church may have the scene of Angels appearing to Mary.

Over the coming weeks and further meetings we agreed that Angels would be our Theme.

Our preachers on the four Sundays of Advent preached on the Angels appearing to Zechariah, Mary, Joseph and the Shepherds. Daily devotions prepared by Rob, were sent out to all our members. Daily messages were posted on the Town and Church facebook pages.

People in the church, schools and in the community were encouraged to knit, make and paint angels. These decorated the church, were displayed in shop windows and over 30 were given out to people who were on their own or faced a difficult Christmas. Our Minister received request for Angels from people in the town and one was even sent to Shifnal!

The Whitchurch Herald provided good coverage over many weeks. A Banner hung outside the church showing an Angel with the message 'Be not afraid, God is with us'.

Chocolate angels with the Christmas story were given out to children visiting our church on the 12th December. More people visited the church on the 19th December, some having never been in the church before.

To enable actual Carol Singing and to provide a greater virus free zone, an additional Carol Service took place outside on the afternoon of the Candlelight Carol Service day.

A virtual Carol Service, Carols and a Cuppa and advent reflections took place on Zoom, which was also available on the telephone.

This is MISSION.

Cont;

The theme enabled our members to:
Talk to neighbours about our Theme.
Talk to shopkeepers.
Children in at least one of our schools participated.
A message clearly displayed outside the church.
Enabled people on the fringe of the church to use their skills in making Angels.

As with the Harvest Theme, the message was one that people in the town could relate to.

The church intends to use a Theme that people can relate to outside the Church 3-4 times a year. This will enable us to fulfil our Mission to Whitchurch and beyond.

If you wish to be involved or want to contribute or have any ideas, please speak with our Minister or myself.

Brian F.

A Methodist Way of Life

During February you should receive a booklet produced by the Methodist Church, which is being distributed to all its members. It's entitled 'A Methodist Way of Life'. With Lent fast approaching (1st Sunday 21st February), Rob will be writing to us all, to invite us to read the booklet, keep the card and discuss together. Watch for yours coming through the door, later this month.

Rev. Dr Roger Walton, ex President of Conference suggests that we think of the information on the card, as being like a trellis, a trellis provides structures for plants to grow on. The card ends with, 'how can we support each other in our way of life'.

Thank You!

Thank You to everyone who helped to decorate the church over the Christmas period. There was a lot of effort by a number of people in difficult circumstances and the church looked lovely.

Well Done All!

Reg Hall.

Sheila and I spoke to Reg on Saturday 23rd January--his 101st birthday.

He seems to be keeping well and last week he traveled to Gobowen hospital to receive his vaccine injection.

When we phoned his carer's were helping him eat his birthday cake.

They are looking after him very well.

Maurice and Sheila.

Lent Lunches and Christian Aid

Lent begins on the 17th February. However this year we are unable to hold any Lent lunches and so not able to raise money for Christian Aid in this way.

If you would like to support Christian Aid at this time, we are suggesting that you could give the money you would have spent on one meal each week during Lent, to Christian Aid. You could decide to Fast for that meal.

Alternatively you might like to follow the Christian Aid 'Count Your Blessings' series of readings which links giving with everyday facts/events. You can find this on the main Christian Aid website under 'Count Your Blessings 2021' or on St John's website in the 'Christian Aid' section. When Lent comes to an end would you give/send your donations to Helen Trigg or Briony Myles Hook. Thank you on behalf of Christian Aid.

Justice & Peace

A new group at St John's

Following the positive response to our articles on praying for Climate Change in the church magazine, we are starting a new group at St John's to pray and campaign for areas of injustice highlighted by the Methodist Church including

the Climate Emergency,
Racial Injustice,
Debt Relief,
Food poverty
Homelessness.

You are all invited to join us as we learn more about these and other issues and pray and campaign that they are resolved.

We want to develop a framework for living our faith in accordance with the Methodist Way of Life to create a fairer world and highlight the fact that people at St Johns believe strongly that as Christians we should speak out on social issues. This might include acting as individuals to raise awareness of issues with our local MP and taking part in local actions in a way that complies with Methodist Guidelines.

You can find out more on our website stjohnswhitchurch.org.uk or by getting in touch with us and we will keep you all updated in the newsletter each month.

Briony Myles-Hook & Helen Trigg

Aide-memoire

Thirty days has September,
April, June and November,
Unless a leap year is its fate,
February has twenty-eight
But all the rest have three days more,
Excepting January,
Which has six thousand,
One hundred and eighty-four.

Brian Bilston

Found in local church magazine.

Wedding Drama.

At a wedding ceremony the Minister said "If anybody has anything to say concerning the union of the bride and the groom it is time to stand up and talk or forever hold your peace". The moment of utter silence was broken by a beautiful young woman carrying said "If anybody has anything to say concerning the union of the bride and the groom it is time to stand up and talk or forever hold your peace". The moment of utter silence was broken by a beautiful young woman carrying a child, standing up and walking towards the Minister. Everything then turned to chaos. The bride threw the bouquet and burst out crying then the groom's mother fainted. The groom's friends started giving each other looks and wondered how best to save the situation. The Minister asked the lady, " Can you tell us why you have come forward? What is it you have to say?" There was absolute silence. The woman replied, " We can not hear you on the back row. All's well that ends well !.

Supplied by Maurice Latham.

My Lockdown. 29th January 2021

This third lockdown has seemed harder as January is always a month I find hard to get through. With lockdown it's seemed even harder. Bob and I have continued with our hobbies although there isn't much to be done at the allotment at this time of year. Bob has been writing and doing some art and I have continued with my sewing and knitting. I try to recycle material if I can and I bought 3 second-hand duvet covers recently on the Facebook page, 'items for sale in Whitchurch'. My favourite one has pink flamingos on it and I plan to make a summer dress out of that one maybe?

My new 'hobby' of baking bread has really taken hold and we rarely buy bread now, I've made French bread and flatbread, sweet bread and wholemeal but we especially like our pizza nights. I make and shape the dough and Bob prepares the fillings. Bob says they're as good as Etzio's but I'm not sure about that. My latest loaf recipe is one I got from a friend on Facebook and it's a no knead loaf so it's very easy and I'm adding the recipe for you here in case you'd like to try it.

Today Bob had his first dose of vaccine in Crewe and when we got home there was letter inviting me to make an appointment for mine. Spring is on the way and I'm really looking forward to seeing friends and family again.

I'm feeling optimistic about the future. I'm looking forward to seeing you all in Church again and, when we get some sunshine, I may even be wearing my pink flamingo dress?

God Bless All.

Dot Charlesworth

No Knead Bread

The recipe says this is made in a Dutch oven but a strong casserole with lid will work just as well, don't use Pyrex glass though as it may shatter. I use a large clay casserole.

405 grams (or 3 cups) Strong bread Flour
1.5 teaspoons salt
2 teaspoons dried yeast
1.5 cups of warm water

Sieve flour into a bowl and add salt and then yeast. Mix with a knife to a soft dough with the water (it will be very soft). Cover the bowl with a plate and leave on worktop for at least 2 hours but you can leave overnight.

Set oven to 230 degrees (fan) or equivalent. Put your Dutch oven or strong casserole in the oven with its lid.

The dough will have bubbled up and will be soft but elastic. Scrape out onto a floured worktop (it will still be soft but that's ok), and coax it into a round shape. I use a pallet knife. Then gently slide it onto a large square of greaseproof paper, but sprinkle the paper with flour first. Take your hot pot out of the oven and remove the lid, gently pick up your loaf with the four corners of greaseproof paper and put in your pot (with the greaseproof paper), pull the corners of paper to the edges and put on the hot lid. Return to the oven and bake for 30 minutes, remove the lid and bake for another 15 minutes.

You need to leave it to stand for 10 minutes before cutting.

ENJOY!

PS; I buy my yeast at Refill Your Boots in the high street loose and keep it in a jam jar. It's economical and good for the planet.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING – Tuesday 9th February 2021

The next Church Council Meeting will be on **Tuesday 9th February at 7pm. The meeting will be held on zoom** with online and dial in access. Rob Weir will send out the details nearer the time. If you would like to attend as an observer, please contact Briony so that you receive an invitation. Only Church Council Members will be able to vote if a decision is required.

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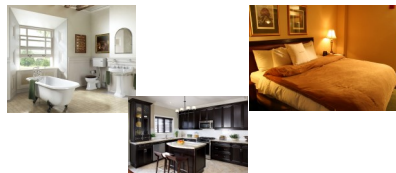
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