

St Paul's Methodist Church, Crawley
Extraordinary Times
a magazine to help us through COVID-19
Issue 18 **July 19th 2020**

From the minister...

I've been speaking to a variety of people in recent weeks by phone, email or sometimes in person, if I've happened to meet them in the supermarket or out walking in our local area. We've discussed various aspects of the effects of lockdown; and I suppose I shouldn't have been surprised to hear that some members of our fellowship are in no particular hurry to return to the church building for services. There is still a killer infection out there with no known antidote, and people are nervous about meeting for worship in person. So we press forward slowly and with all due care, and we will keep you posted on developments.

We may be nervous about meeting together because of Covid, but this lockdown period has certainly made us all think about our priorities. Many of us have really missed our friends from church, and we've realised just how much we value the opportunity to meet together in prayer, worship and fellowship under normal circumstances. I really look forward to meeting in person with the members of our fellowship again. Many of us have also realised how important our friends and family members are, simply because we haven't been able to see them for so long. You don't always realise how important something is until it is denied you – it makes us want to return to church (once we can safely do so) with renewed faith, renewed vigour, and of course a great sense of joy and relief.

The lockdown may have also served to remind us of some of the little routines and habits in our life that have been taken away. Now that we have been forced to take a break from them, we have started to wonder why we ever did those things – and we may resolve not to start doing them again once we are at liberty. For instance, some people who used to commute to work every day have now realised that it is so much easier to work from home. Some people who went to the supermarket for their shopping may now have decided that they much prefer to do it online.

We have been broadcasting live services online during lockdown, and many people have found this really helpful and encouraging. But there's no comparison for me between something on a screen and being there in person. I look forward to joining you back in church as soon as we are able.

In the meantime, stay safe and stand firm in your faith.
God bless, *Ralph*

A prayer...

Lord we uphold to you those who have suffered in any way as a result of the Coronavirus.

We pray for the victims who have lost their lives.

We pray for those who mourn the loss of loved ones.

We praise you for those who have suffered with Covid but you have delivered back to health.

We pray for all those doctors, nurses, care workers, retail workers and many others who have placed themselves on the front line in order to help and serve others.

May we not forget the sacrifice that so many people have made in love.

And thank you Lord that you forget no one.

Deliver us safely we pray from this current trial.

In Jesus name

AMEN

What's On This Week

Sunday 19th

10am *Taketime Live* join in a meditation in real time, or later by pasting <https://mixlr.com/taketime/> into your Web browser

10:45am live worship with Rev Ralph

Tuesday 21st

During the afternoon sometime Live message from Rev Ralph in St Paul's

Wednesday 22nd

2pm Wednesday worship with Rev Ralph

All will be linked on St Paul's Facebook page and website

Prayers at 6 & 8

Please pray for the gradual safe opening up of our church for worship.

Please pray for

Renee and Palau in Canberra, Australia, whose 36 year-old son has sadly died, and for his brother, Nimalan

Geoff being cared for at home by his wife Jean and the family

Continue praying for anyone we know who has needs known to ourselves.

Send your prayer requests to ask.stpauls@gmail.com

Permission must be received from a person before their name is put on the Church prayer list

News of Friary lunches

Over many years people from St Paul's have been involved with serving hot Sunday lunches at The Friary to homeless people in Crawley. We have now heard that the organiser will be standing down and the Friary has been unable to find a replacement. Sadly, this means that Sunday "Friary Lunches" are not going to be available for people in need in Crawley until another leader from the Friary willing to take over this huge responsibility can be found. Please pray for all those who are involved with this really worthwhile scheme and ask God to inspire a new leader to volunteer their services. *Jill*

Remembering the Tolpuddle Martyrs



The Tolpuddle Martyrs were farm workers who became early trade union activists. Most were Methodists, three being lay preachers. In the 1830s life in villages like Tolpuddle was hard and getting worse. Farm workers could not bear yet more cuts to their pay. Some fought back by smashing the new threshing machines but this brought harsh punishments. In 1834, farm workers in west Dorset formed a trade union. Unions were lawful and growing fast but six leaders were arrested and sentenced to seven years' transportation for taking an oath of secrecy. A massive protest swept across the country. Thousands of people marched through London and many more organised petitions and meetings to demand their freedom. The annual Tolpuddle Festival takes place this weekend - online this year. Find out more here: <https://www.tolpuddlemartyrs.org.uk/festival>

Barry's Isolation Diary week 15 – Scouting problems

What to write about this week? Normally by Wednesday I have always had something, not necessarily of interest, to tell you about. This, the sixteenth week of semi-isolation, nothing notable has come to mind. Perhaps this is just a reflection of the fact that after all this time life has truly settled into a new normal. The highlight of this week has been a visit to the National Trust gardens at Standen. Booking opens each Friday at 9am. I waited for 30 minutes in the queue online to try and book Nymans, eventually giving up and changing my request to Standen whereupon I had a wide choice of times and days. The house is closed but the cafe is open for take away drinks and cakes as is the shop, and it was not crowded due to the limits on numbers.

As Chair of Crawley District Scouts we have been wrestling with the problems associated with a return to face to face Scouting, albeit currently only outdoors and restricted to a maximum of 15 young people. Every venue and planned activity has to have a separate pre-approved risk assessment. Across Crawley there are twelve venues, not counting public open spaces and, if every section meets once a week, there will be a minimum of thirty seven meetings per week. So you can, I hope, see the size of the administrative problem. As an example you would think it would be simple, with a 28 acre woodland campsite split into 10 fields with four separate toilet blocks, to meet all the social distancing rules etc. The problem is that the moment you think you have covered everything, you almost immediately think of another "what if"...

The next phase, as restrictions are lifted, will be for larger outdoor groups and small indoor meetings. We have to hope that this occurs before the nights draw in and also that the weather remains clement. Never will the phrase "if wet" take on a more significant meaning!

Then there is the tricky question of ensuring that none of the leaders are put at risk due either to their underlying medical conditions, or worse, their age. Would you fancy telling a leader of many years that due to their age we can't allow them to take the risk of mixing with the young people at present.....

It just goes to show how life has become far less spontaneous, with almost every activity needing to be planned and booked in advance.

Keep safe and God Bless, *Barry*

Easy money

St Paul's has benefitted by £52.84 in the first 2 months of raising money through [easyfundraising](https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk). During

lockdown we are losing income from room lettings and the café so every penny we can raise is welcome. So far we have 7 supporters signed up and helping our funds grow. The more supporters, the more we will earn so, if you ever shop online, please consider joining. It's easy and there's no cost to you.

<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/stpaulsmethodistchurchcrawley/>



Finding new ministers

Two weeks ago, in ET issue 16, Rev Melvyn Cooke, our Circuit Superintendent, wrote an account of the complicated process of finding and appointing new presbyters (ministers). With both Rev Ralph and Rev Felicity moving on in September 2021, the Circuit Invitation Committee held a Zoom meeting last week to start the process. Our discussions largely focused on the difficulties we face at a time when there are simply not enough new candidates coming out of college to fill all the vacancies in circuits around the country.

Two years ago we had to recognise that we could no longer have the luxury of each of our five churches being in the care of its own minister and we moved to the situation where Redhill and Horley 'share' Rev Felicity, and Trinity and St Paul's 'share' Rev Ralph. We're used to this now and it is working well.

We are also mindful of the new experiences of digital church that have come our way during the lockdown and have proved in many ways beneficial to opening up our mission to a wider community.

We are trying hard to find the best ways forward in challenging and changing times. We would hope to find two new presbyters, or perhaps one full presbyter and a probationer, but nothing is guaranteed. Please pray that whatever ideas and intentions we have, they are part of God's plan for us. *Joyce*



Going shopping?

Don't forget that from Friday 24th July you must wear a face covering when you go into a shop.



If you're making your own, send in a picture. No prizes but it would be fun to see the most attractive or imaginative results.

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