

St Paul's Methodist Church, Crawley
Extraordinary Times
a magazine to help us through COVID-19
Issue 29 **October 11th 2020**

From the minister...

It was good last Sunday to share in the Lords Supper at St Paul's for the first time since lockdown began. Thank you to those who came and shared with us. I hope that the experience of breaking bread strengthened your confidence in these uncertain times. It is also worth noting that this service was successfully live streamed on the St Paul's Facebook page for the first time, and subsequent Sunday services will also be made available for those of you who are unable to return to church in person just yet.

In the book of Acts chapter 27 we find the apostle Paul adrift in the Adriatic Sea aboard a ship. For fourteen days and nights everyone aboard the ship had endured a terrible storm which had left the vessel crippled and at the mercy of the elements. The crew had been obliged to throw much of the cargo overboard, and provisions were in short supply. They now sensed that they were being driven towards land and were fearful of being dashed against the rocks.

In this time of imminent peril, not know if any of them were going to survive the events of the next day, Paul urged them all to eat something together (there were 276 people on board). As they shared food, just before dawn, Paul broke bread and gave thanks. The Spirit spoke a word of prophecy through him at that moment, as he had previously, that none of them would lose their lives. If you read the remainder of the chapter, you will see that they did indeed all survive their ordeal and were washed ashore the following day on the island of Malta.

What this serves to teach us in our current situation is to trust in God however chaotic and uncertain our situation may be. As the Coronavirus starts to escalate again many of us are feeling more nervous and anxious. We must do as Paul did, and bring Jesus into the very centre of our predicament. It is notable just how calm Paul was during the storm at sea: the sailors had previously attempted to make off in the lifeboat, and at the time that the ship was eventually beached, the soldiers tried to kill the prisoners (before the centurion in charge stopped them).

In the midst of all this confusion and panic, Paul appears to be able to keep his head and reassure everyone. We know that he did not achieve this through his strength of character alone – he brought Jesus to the centre of the situation. As the storm raged about them, he reminded himself of the sacrifice of his Lord: he remembered that Jesus had promised never to abandon him, and that the power of the Spirit was freely given to him. He had undoubtedly heard the disciples tell him the story of when Jesus was caught in a boat on the sea of Galilee during a storm. He knew that Jesus was not afraid of the tempest, because he had been sleeping through it until the panic-stricken disciples woke him up! Paul also knew that Jesus had calmed the storm with a wave of his hand

and the voice of authority. As such, Paul had no fear of what was happening around him. He knew that Jesus held him tightly in his hand.

We need to be the same in the face of the pandemic. Continue to trust in God. So many people in our nation have forgotten God, have turned away from Jesus in these modern times. With all of our material securities many people have foolishly imagined that they no longer have need of him. The spread of Coronavirus has reminded all of us just how vulnerable we truly are. How much we need to trust and rely on God. How much we need to bring Jesus into the heart of our situation: to break bread with humble and thankful hearts, and to trust in our Rock, our Fortress. In Him we will trust. *Ralph*

A prayer...

When the storms of life rage around us

And the waves threaten to push over our tiny boat

Lord, be our strength and fortitude

Help us not to fear the howl of the wind

Or the lash of the spray

Gift us, we pray, with the security and confidence of your Holy Spirit

That we may fear no evil

For you are with us

And if our God is with us

Then we need fear nothing

Thank you Jesus. Amen

In your prayers

Please pray for Geoff Ridgway, for Jean and Geoff and for others you know who need prayers at this time.

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

What's On

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| Sun 11 Oct | 10:30am at St Paul's with Deacon Irene |
| | 3:30pm All-age family worship at St Paul's with Rev Ralph |
| Sun 18 Oct | 10:30am Worship Preacher TBA |
| Sun 25 Oct | 10:30am Worship with Rev Clive McKie |
| Every Wed | 7:30pm Online Alpha course with Rev Ralph |

Please remember



Our Harvest offerings

Unfortunately we omitted to start the Harvest Thanksgiving collection last Sunday. From this Sunday, for 3 weeks, there will be a basket ready for your offerings by the door as you leave the sanctuary at the end of the service.

The money raised will be split equally between the *All We Can* appeal for victims of the Beirut explosion and, more locally, *Christians Against Poverty*.

If you're not coming to services, please consider making a donation directly to the Beirut Explosion Emergency Appeal on the *All We Can* website

<https://www.allwecan.org.uk/give/current-appeals/beirut/> or to *Crawley Christians Against Poverty* at <https://www.crawleycapcentre.org/donate>

Crawley Christians Against Poverty



In the past I was in the habit of posting CAP's monthly newsletter and prayer requests on the noticeboard in the Welcome Hall for your attention.

I'm pleased that, now I can't do that, Crawley CAP has launched a website where you can keep up to date with their news <https://www.crawleycapcentre.org/>. St Paul's has supported Crawley CAP in various ways for many years. Whilst this is now more difficult for us as a church, anyone wanting to support them can do so via this new website. *Joyce Jordan*

NHS Track and Trace

If you come to the church, you will notice this sign on the front door. It is the QR code for the new NHS Track and Trace App. If you've downloaded the app onto your phone, you can use the QR code to show where you've been. However, even if you are using this app, we are still legally required to take your name and contact details as part of the new 'normal'. Don't worry, we will be deleting the information after 3 weeks. *Carol Ofield*



Day of Prayer for Taketime on Saturday 17th October, 6:00 – 18:00

Taketime listening figures grew by 92% last year yet the challenge is to continue to hear what God is saying to this pioneering Circuit project and follow where God leads.



There are live broadcasts, prayer briefings and information about fasting. Just visit

<https://taketime.org.uk/> and follow the link for the *Day of Prayer* on the Home page. Will you join us for the day or just dip in for 5-minutes? Whatever

time you can spare, your prayers will be much appreciated. *Clive McKie*

Coming back to church – 4th October

I just wanted to say how happy I was to take part in today's service. I have enjoyed the live-streamed Sunday worship every Sunday since lockdown and also the two trial runs in church during September. It is just so good to meet folk, albeit masked. David Brown's playing of favourite hymns before and after the service was superb and I'm sure I wasn't the only one singing into my mask with joy. Distanced Communion went well. Grateful thanks to Ralph for the service and also everyone who made sure all Covid restrictions were in place to make us feel safe. I do hope that the excellent on-line provision hasn't stopped others from making the trip to get the real thing. *Stephanie Bagshaw*

Thoughts During Lockdown

The garden is tidy, the house is too,
I've walked miles with the dog - What next is there to do?
A quilt needs finishing, but indoors to sew.
The sun is shining - outdoors I must go
Loving my garden, tending the flowers
Time flashes by and I'm out there for hours.
Snipping, cutting, trimming and feeding,
Watering, planting, tending and weeding.
Busy baking cakes, flans, biscuits then dinner
Working harder, eating more and not getting thinner
Some say they're bored with not much to do
But there are so many things - just look around you
We are safe. Thank you God. Many are not.
Offer help to others, not just sit on the spot.
A vicious virus here with no cure yet, it would seem.
Let's hope it'll be found and it's not just a dream.
Phoning, emailing, Facetiming dear friends
Talking and seeing them gives such joy no end
Hearing news from the family both abroad and at home
Making plans for the future and reunions to come.

J F, Bosham WI (used with permission)

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Prayer requests & newsletter items ask.stpauls@gmail.com

St Paul's website www.crawleymethodistchurch.org.uk

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