

## St Paul's Methodist Church, Crawley

### *Extraordinary Times*

*a magazine to help us through COVID-19*

**Issue 34**

**November 15th 2020**

*From your minister...*

I know I mentioned last week that it was my birthday, and I don't want to keep banging on about it but I did get a very nice present from my wife Adele. It's a new Bible – the latest 2011 edition of the NIV Study Bible, in fact.

There are quite a number of copies of the Bible kicking around our house, which we've acquired over the years. They're mainly used by people who come to our homegroup who have forgotten to bring their own copy: occasionally I have the opportunity to give one away to someone who is new to the faith (which is an awesome experience). Several of them are officially "lost property", which have been handed in to me from various churches along the way and never claimed. But I have pretty much used the same Bible for the last 29 years. You'll be used to seeing it, because I bring it to church with me to preach from. It's the 1990 edition of the same NIV Study Bible which I've just received for my birthday, and it was presented to me when I was accredited as a Methodist Local Preacher back in 1991. There's an official looking sticker inside the front cover to record the event.

So this bible has been pretty close to me for a long time now, and it's seen some action. Some of the pages are torn and crumpled; I've written notes in the margins, I've drawn rings around bits of scripture in pen or pencil, and highlighted some passages in vivid coloured highlighter pens. It's a big book, a Study Bible, and it has often been dropped on the floor or squashed into a guitar case – to the extent that the maps have all fallen out of the back (who needs them anyway?).

In recent times I noticed that the whole binding has come away from the spine, which means that really the only thing that is holding my Bible together is the rather severe looking black leather case which it lives in – a case which I bought years ago when I was leading the worship at Cliff College in Derbyshire.

But now I have a groovy new Bible! It's essentially the same as my old one, but it's a newer and more refined translation; there are more pictures (which are now in full colour). The concordance is more comprehensive, and for the first time in a Bible that I have owned, all the words uttered by Jesus are printed in red type, which is cool. I started using it immediately.

I know what you're thinking though: what about his old Bible? All those years he's used it, it must be so special to him?

Well here's the news – it isn't special at all. No, not even with the presentation plate in the front and all the scribblings. Because the Bible is not an object of veneration. It's a material object, it's a tool. It's the living Word of God: it isn't confined to the pages of a specific tome. The worst that we can do with a Bible is to turn it into a lucky charm or a political statement. Do you remember when Donald Trump stood outside St John's Episcopal Church in Lafayette Square, Washington DC, silently holding up a Bible? I remember someone I know

on Facebook remark at the time that “perhaps he should try reading it”, and they’re absolutely right.

There is no power or wisdom in a closed book. It’s when we open the book and read the living Word of God, that the power and love are revealed. And it doesn’t matter which version of the Bible it is, or whose hands it may have passed through.

As long as I have a Bible, I have the Word. But I have no emotional or spiritual attachment to the specific book that has accompanied me these last 29 years of ministry.

Some time ago I was going through some drawers in the hallway of my home, and I came across a car key. It was the spare key to a Suzuki Vitara, which I forgot to hand over when I traded in the car in 2003 and bought a new one.

There was a little surge of memory and sentimentality when I discovered it, but that was all. What good was this key to me now? What door can I open with it? I now have a new key to a better car. I now have a new and better Bible. Life is a journey – as you travel you have to keep letting things go before they over encumber you. In Luke 9:3 Jesus tells us:

*"Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra shirt."*

You see? You don’t need any duplicates of anything.

In Luke 6:29 he goes even further:

*"If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them."*

If you were talking to someone about Jesus and they asked you for a Bible, would you give them yours? Your special copy? Yes, the one with the presentation plate in the front? The one you’ve owned and read for years?

Yeah...course you would.

God bless, *Ralph*

## **Sad news**

We have heard from Allen Butcher that Faye, his wife who was on our prayer list in recent weeks, died on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November. Her funeral will be held in Hong Kong on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> of November at 2pm. Friends of Allen and Faye might like to remember her at that time.

## **In your prayers**

**Pray for** Allen Butcher as he comes to terms with the death of his wife. Faye. **Continue praying** for Barbara Fleming, Geoff Ridgway, Jean and Geoff Rose, and for others you know who need prayers at this time.

**Send** your prayer requests to [ask.stpauls@gmail.com](mailto:ask.stpauls@gmail.com)

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

## **What’s On**

**St Paul’s is closed** for the duration of this second lockdown. Hopefully, services in church will resume in December. In the meantime, join us online.

**Sundays throughout November 10:45am**

Live streamed worship with Rev Ralph Ward from our [Facebook page](#)

**Every Wed 7:30pm** Online Alpha course with Rev Ralph

## Good news

We are delighted to be able to announce that the Revd Gillian Baalham has accepted our invitation to join our Circuit team from 1st September 2021. She will have pastoral charge of Horley and Redhill churches. At present Gillian is serving in the North Bedfordshire Circuit.

The Circuit has also been accepted as an appointment suitable for a probationer Presbyter, and so hopefully this will mean that in January we will receive the name of a Probationer Presbyter who will have Pastoral oversight of Reigate Methodist Church and work a day a week at Trinity, again from 1st September 2021.

This will also initiate a further change is how the Circuit Staff will serve the Churches and communities of the Circuit with myself moving to have Pastoral charge of Trinity and St. Paul's.

I would want to place on record our deep appreciation to our Circuit Stewards for the tireless work they have put into preparation of profiles, and all involved in the stationing process this year.

Please do continue to hold the families and ministers involved in stationing in your prayers.

Blessings, *Melvyn Cooke* (Circuit Superintendent)

## DIY Advent rings

In last Sunday's streamed service, Rev Ralph was encouraging everyone to make their own Advent ring this year. The idea is that we could all share in the Advent services together even though we are not necessarily able to be in church. You can find ideas for making one of you look in the Messy Church attachment sent out last week. The first Sunday in Advent is November 29th. Enjoy!! *Jill Mason*



## Love in a Box



We recognise that many of our Church Family would have liked to participate but were unable to do so this year because of the restrictions and difficulties arising from the Covid-19 pandemic. However, we will be taking 8 boxes to East Grinstead on Sunday and 8 deprived children will have something to open on Christmas day.

A huge thank you to everyone who donated money and boxes this year.  
*Martyn and Carol Ofield*



### Dial-a-Prayer



FREE phone lines for prayers and news from the Methodist Church

**Listen to a prayer: 0808 281 2514**

**Listen to news: 0808 281 2478**

Content is updated weekly on Thursday afternoon

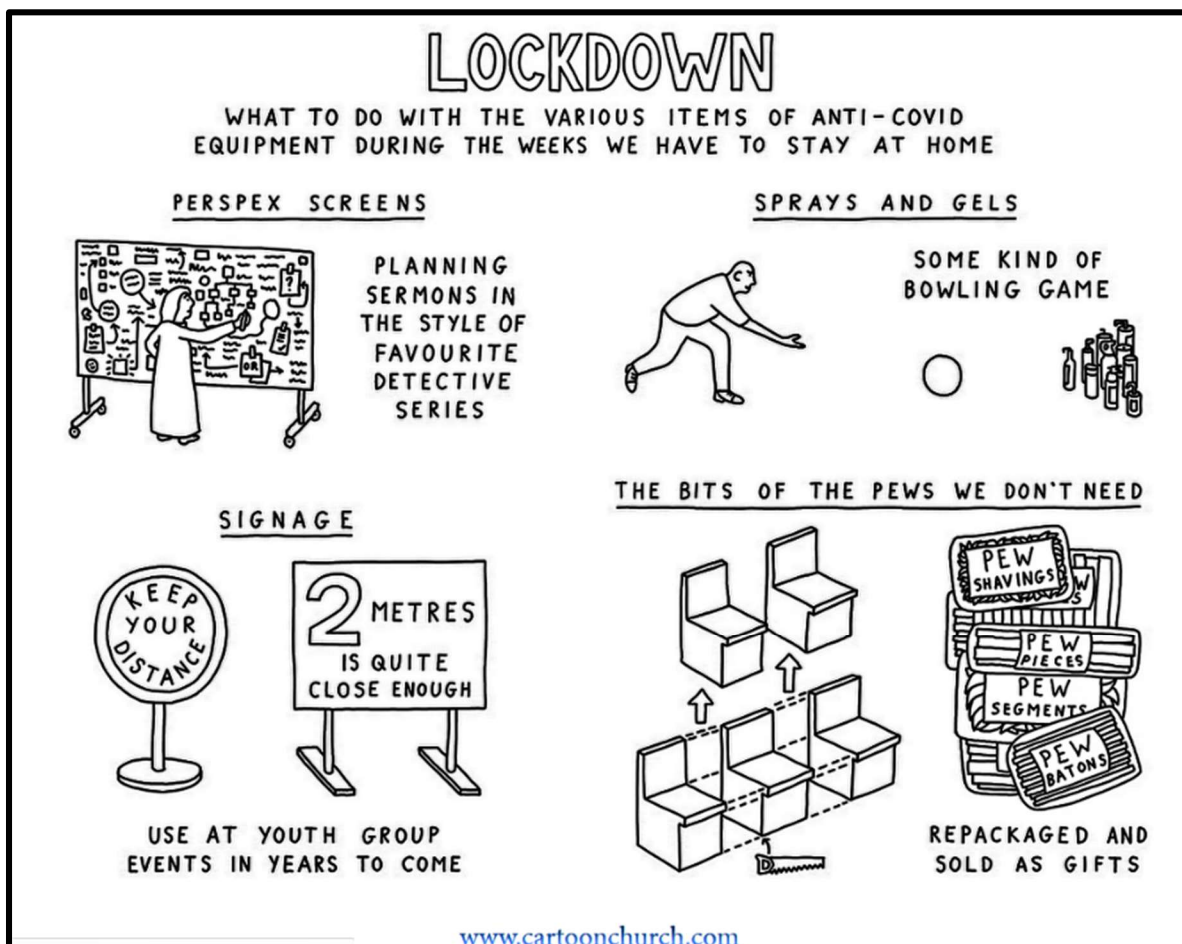
Dear God,

Thank you for breathtaking landscapes and tranquil oceans, for expansive tropical rainforests and stunning beaches, for majestic mountains and kaleidoscopic coral reefs. Please forgive the mistakes we have made in caring for your world.

Forgive us for all the fossil fuels we are burning that lead to high temperatures, awful forest fires and other disasters. We are sorry for changing the climate so much that the ice caps are melting. We are sorry for polluting your once-glittering ocean with vast expanses of plastic waste. Please forgive us our trespasses on your world.

Help us to find different ways and resources to solve the problems we are causing and give us the strength to make a positive difference to your world. Amen.

A prayer by Year 6, Trinity and St Michael's C of E/Methodist Primary School, Croston  
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**St Paul's website** [www.crawleymethodistchurch.org.uk](http://www.crawleymethodistchurch.org.uk)

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