

St Paul's Methodist Church, Crawley
Extraordinary Times
a magazine to help us through COVID-19
Issue 53 **April 4th 2021**



From the minister...

Can I take this opportunity to wish you all a very happy and blessed Easter. It has been a challenging year, when we have all been held in the grip of restrictions and regulations which have limited our movement and social interaction to a great degree. It has been a year of sorrow and anxiety for many people, with an overwhelming feeling of uncertainty which has not yet receded.

But as I write we are starting to see changes taking place, as we follow the Government's road map for recovery. After a long hard Winter when all of us have suffered to a greater or lesser degree, the Spring sunshine has begun to appear again: the flowers are appearing, the colour is returning. As I write we have enjoyed a couple of lovely warm Spring days – there are birds on the feeders and the magnolia trees are coming out in all their glory.

Easter is a time when we always celebrate the new birth of Springtime: but this year it seems more dramatic and significant than usual, given the coincidence of our gradual deliverance from Covid. When Jesus lay in the tomb from Friday to Sunday, all of his followers must have felt that all hope was gone. But they had forgotten Jesus' words in John 12:24:

"Very truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds."

Even through the darkest of experiences, new hope can be reborn. Jesus has proved this. If you have found your hope draining away over the Winter, come to the Lord in prayer and allow him to revive you through his Holy Spirit. As you are permitted, venture outside once more to experience the world being revived by God's creative power. Whatever your experience of the Coronavirus pandemic, this Easter is the time to start looking forward with hope, rather than looking back with sadness.

When Jesus returned to life on Easter Sunday, the effect of his victory was not immediate in the hearts of his disciples. For a while, even though they could see their risen Lord face to face, they struggled to believe that it was true. Despite being able to touch him, eat with him, hear him speak to them once again, it took them some time to regain the confidence to step out in faith as they had before. But as time passed their boldness increased.

Have you noticed that two of the significant dates in the Government's easing of lockdown (April 12th and May 17th) have some degree of proximity to

two of the major dates in our Christian calendar? Easter Sunday is on April 7th, and Pentecost on May 23rd. As we take our first tentative steps to freedom this month, let's anticipate the arrival of Pentecost this year with more optimism and vigour than usual. Because it was at that first Pentecost that the Holy Spirit arrived in power, and a whole new chapter of life began. May that be true for all of us as we faithfully await our deliverance.

As previously announced, I will be taking a three month sabbatical with effect from Thursday April 1st. This means that I am not contactable at all until July 1st. So please don't be tempted to send me emails or post which you think should merit my attention upon my return – this will create a huge backlog which I will find it impossible to address. Instead, should you require ministerial assistance I would urge you to contact Rev Clive McKie during April, and from May 2nd onwards contact Rev Melvyn Cooke. Melvyn, as well as being our superintendent minister, will become minister of our church from September 1st onwards. Here are the contact details:

Rev Clive McKie (acting superintendent during April)
Email: clivewmckie@tiscali.co.uk Phone: 01737 770197

Rev Melvyn Cooke (Circuit Superintendent, returning to duty from May 2nd)
Email: melvyncooke@me.com Phone: 01293 973847

And keep a close eye on this publication for news on our church and circuit. I will look forward to seeing you all in July.

Take care and God bless, *Ralph*

What's On

Easter Sunday 9am in the church Communion with Rev Sue Conroy

Easter Sunday 10:30am online worship with Helen Greaves

Sunday 11th 9:30am in the church spoken word service with Geoff Ridgway

10:30am online worship with Geoff Ridgway

Find all online services on [St Paul's Facebook page](#) and [website home page](#)

For Kids and young people

Sundays 12noon Zoom sessions for King's Kids and King's Teens. If you haven't had your invitation please contact Carol or email ask.stpauls@gmail.com

Fridays 7pm Young Peoples' Singing Group

In your prayers

Please pray for Neil Roberts and others you know who need our prayers.

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#

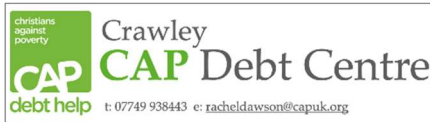
And the good news is . . .

Singing together in the outside space of a place of worship, as part of communal worship, is now permitted. We must, of course, maintain social distancing. We can gather in groups of up to six people or two households. A 'household' can include a linked support bubble. So, we plan to go outside the church following the Easter Day communion service to sing an Easter hymn together. Another step towards 'proper' church!

Young People's Singing Group is recruiting!

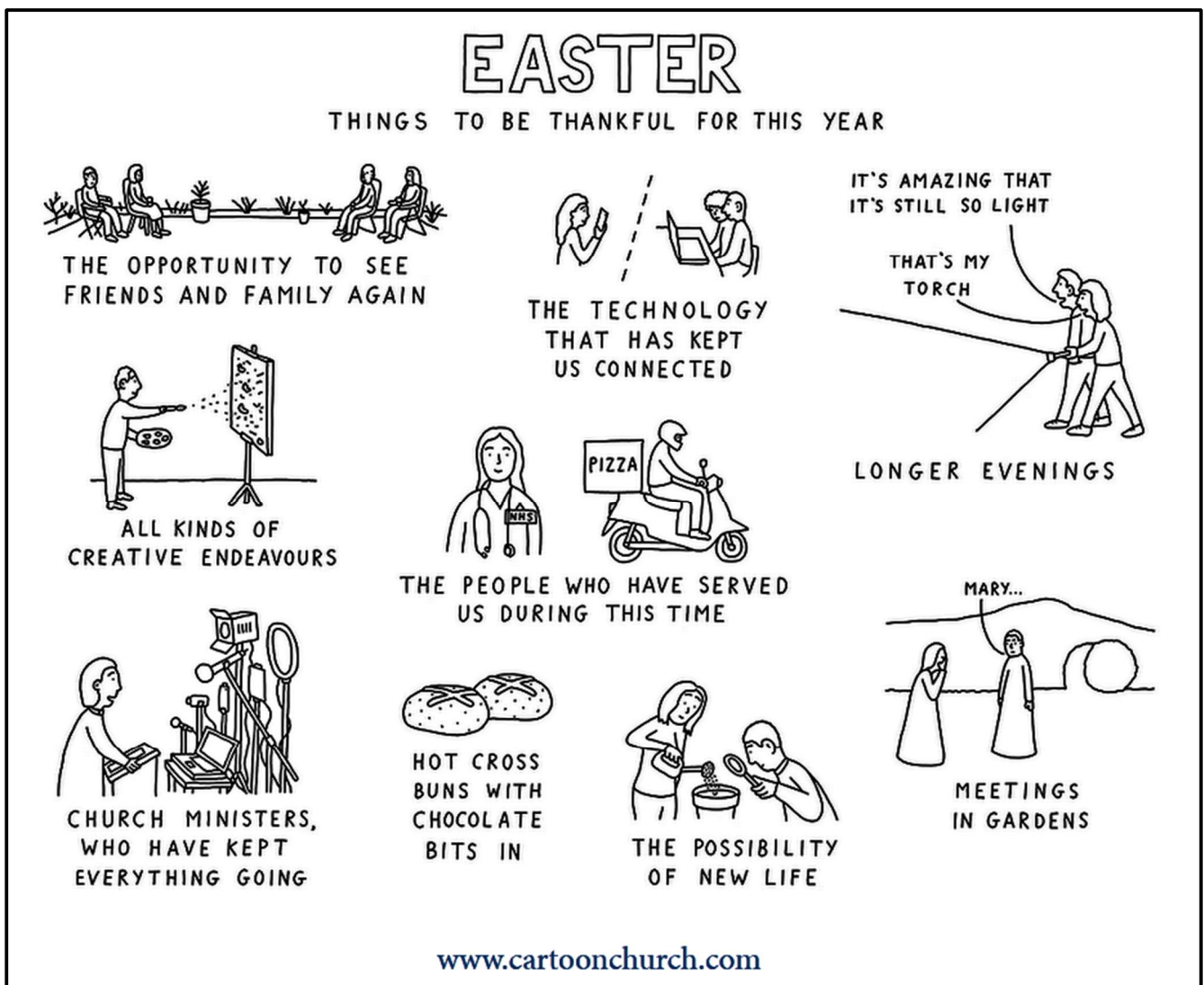
This group of young people from the age of rising 7 (year 2) upwards, meets every Friday during term time from 7.00-7.30 at St Paul's church. They learn to sing contemporary Christian songs, using microphones, which they perform or record for the worship services. If your child is interested, please contact Carol Ofield or email ask.stpauls@gmail.com

Crawley CAP Debt Centre celebrates 6 years in Crawley



In their April newsletter, Crawley CAP (Christians Against Poverty) report that in their first 6 years in the town, supporting people and families struggling with debt, more than 50 families have gone debt-free and over 100 individuals have taken the Money Course. They have also established Life Skills training, a Jobs Club and a Drop-In Café which will re-open in the summer.

There's plenty of other encouraging news and some job opportunities, some paid, some voluntary. The work of CAP is becoming even more important in our town as a result of people losing jobs during the pandemic. Please keep CAP and its clients in your prayers and consider whether you could make a regular donation to support their work. All details are in the CAP newsletter <https://mailchi.mp/9e5ef77bf758/c8ikdmy139-7540665?e=d434235b9c>



The ministry of welcome: Lovefeast loaf, bread church, curries, saffron buns and more

For many people the pandemic has meant more home cooked food but far fewer social meals. Church communities have continued to enjoy a chat over coffee and biscuits on Zoom after online worship but church teas or harvest suppers have not been part of the calendar. The Methodist Church thought this was a good opportunity to celebrate some recipes and stories around foodie get-togethers and hopefully before too long these events will make a welcome return.

They put out requests via social media and the Connexional team intranet and were inundated with contributions. The results make mouth-watering reading with enticing recipes, a run-down of cookbooks with a Methodist connection and many food-related memories. There's far too much to put in ET but you can find it on the Methodist Church blog page <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/news/the-methodist-blog/>. Methodists clearly love their grub!

And finally – some thoughts on eggs

It may be hard for an egg to turn into a bird: it would be a jolly sight harder for it to learn to fly while remaining an egg. We are like eggs at present. And you cannot go on indefinitely being just an ordinary, decent egg.

We must be hatched or go bad. (C S Lewis)

A hen is only an egg's way of making another egg. (Samuel Butler)

The key to everything is patience. You get the chicken by hatching the egg, not by smashing it. (Arnold H Glasow)

An egg is always an adventure; the next one may be different. (Oscar Wilde)

*A box without hinges, key, or lid,
Yet golden treasure inside is hid.*

(J R R Tolkien)

Remember, people will judge you by your actions not your intentions. You may have a heart of gold but so does a hard-boiled egg. (Maya Angelou)

Contacts

(During April) Rev Clive McKie 01737 770197 clivewmckie@tiscali.co.uk

(From 2nd May) Rev Melvyn Cooke 01293 973847 melvyncooke@me.com

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

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

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