

Christ Church

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NEWSLETTER

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PASTORAL LETTER

I write this as we have just finished our last (at the moment) Zoom prayer meeting and are preparing for an in-person Easter Day service. We are also over a year into online services, and so much has changed in our lives. Some of us have lost loved ones, some have lost jobs, we have probably suffered at some point from feeling isolated from family or friends and certainly from our church community.

You may be wondering – where is God in all this? – you may have leaned into prayer, or felt that God is distant, how can we be reassured? Sometimes starting a daily prayer/bible study time, or changing it, can help us – I am terrible at this! But this year for me is a year where my key word is habit. So, to try and try again is the way forward for me.

I was reassured recently by God's love. You will know that I, along with Clare and Pennie, are part of the Life and Mission choir. At the beginning of 2020, we were rehearsing for the 20th Anniversary performances of Time for Jesus (T4J). At the time, I remember that one of the churches we were to be presenting at was having building works and we were not sure it would go ahead. Then came the Covid news, and all the presentations were cancelled.

Fast forward to 2021 and Paul (our choirmaster) comes up with the idea that we should do T4J online, and for the last couple of months we have been singing the songs again – in our homes – with laptop, headphone, and cameras, wearing a black top with a plain background. It wasn't till the final song – O Jesus I have promised (this part was to be filmed as ourselves – our own clothes and somewhere different) when I found I couldn't get through it without being just so full of emotion and realisation and crying. Here I was in my kitchen, with headphones on, my laptop and phone clamped to a dining chair, the words I couldn't get through...

Oh, Jesus you have promised,
You'll always walk beside me -
Your loving hand will guide me -
You reign in Glory
Saviour
and my friend. (1)

God is always there in the depths of our doubt and despair, even if we can't feel Him. He is there in our anger at injustice and in our joyful celebrations. If we look at our bibles, we see that Jesus had the same emotions. Jesus – God's son – wept at the death of his friend Lazarus, got angry at the temple, and turned water into wine at a wedding feast, and he is with us now.

God Will Save His People Again

The Lord says, "Forget what happened before.

Do not think about the past.

Look at the new thing I am going to do.

It is already happening. Don't you see it?

I will make a road in the desert.

I will make rivers in the dry land. (2)

So back to the beginning, we are all now thinking about the future and what that will be looking like, maybe God has given us a chance to completely re-think our lives – by being thrown almost overnight into a completely different world of homeworking, technology, zoom, and virtual this and that.

Maybe we have to think about the challenge of a different way of being church, more inclusive, and deeper – after all we have been praying together in groups every Sunday instead of just chatting and our Lent Bible Study is the biggest that I remember.

My prayer as we continue to grow as a church is that we let go of our past ways of doing things, and look to the future of what God wants us to do.

Blessings

Diana Bensted

(1) Excerpt from Time for Jesus Musical - Epilogue: O Jesus I have promised. Words by JE Bode (1816-74) additional words by Paul Wardrop-Day

(2) Isaiah 43v18-19 (International Children's Bible)

LIFE AND MISSION CHOIR – TIME FOR JESUS

The Life and Mission Choir were unable to present TIME FOR JESUS, an Easter musical last year and so this year they have gone online.

Songs will be released to YouTube on the appropriate day for the Easter story on their YouTube channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCPZqhB-qpH933zwzh4XUfgA>

Diana, Pennie and Clare have been involved in recording videos for this and would love you to listen in.

(Please also look at the web site www.lifeandmissionchoir.com)

SERVICES AT CHRIST CHURCH

Thursday 1st April – Maundy Thursday 8pm. Zoom Service

Friday 2nd April – Good Friday 11am. Online Service

Sunday 4th April – Easter Sunday 11am. In-Person & Online
including Communion

Sunday 11th April – In-Person & Online

Sunday 18th April – In-Person & Online
including Communion

Sunday 25th April – In-Person & Online

Sunday 2nd May – In-Person & Online
including Communion

FAMILY NEWS

Whilst Spring has sprung and we all proceed cautiously along the Government Roadmap out of Lockdown, we are happy to be able to return to Church for Sunday services.

We think of Members and Friends who remain unwell and particularly those in hospital. They remain in our prayers and we wish them a speedy recovery back to full health.

THE MISSION GROUP

Happy Easter everyone. So, looking forward to going to Church again on Easter Sunday. However, as my farmer grandfather used to say; “Be Easter come early, Be Easter come late, It’s, bound to make the old cow quake! Usually true but Spring is here, the birds are busy and Spring flowers are abundant.

Easter Food Hampers

On Wednesday 24th March, Tanya and I went to Tesco to buy 20 x £20 vouchers for the Family Resource Centre. I could not imagine having £400 in donations at Christmas repeated, at Easter – But we did! Out of your sheer compassion and generosity we had £400 in cash and through PayPal.

Tanya and I took the vouchers, which said “Happy Birthday” on them, as the only large amount of card choices in Tesco, to the Family Resource Centre. The vouchers were gratefully received by the lovely staff in the Centre, promising they would be writing to thank everyone. It was a brilliant effort again, thank you all.

Hosanna in the Highest!

Anthea Denham

CHRISTIAN AID WEEK 2021 10th – 16th May

Some of you may be wondering what is going to happen about the Christian Aid street collection this year. Last year, we were in the throes of the 1st Lockdown and there was no way that we could collect door to door in the local area. People gave online or sent cheques.

This year a similar scenario! Sara Skinner and I discussed any other way we could do to raise money but a Church event or even climbing Snowdonia in Wales was out of the question!

I rang Robert Wright, our area secretary and organizer of Christian Aid locally and ordered some posters advertising the Christian Aid Week for outside and inside Church.

Meanwhile Diana will assist by giving information about how to donate online direct to Christian Aid (www.christianaid.org.uk), or send a cheque yourselves, if you are able, to Christian Aid. Income Processing Team, P.O. Box 100, London SE1 7RT.

So, no volunteers needed to collect so in a way that's a relief though it used to be lovely to see regular people in our community who do not come to Church when we visited door to door.

Thanking you for considering this.

Yours in Christ,

Anthea Denham



DON'T QUIT!

More than 27 years ago my father sent me this poem. I still keep a copy permanently in my kitchen. It was a time of deep anxiety for me – a confusing wilderness stage of my life. This is what it says:

When things go wrong, as they sometimes will,
When the road you're trudging seems all uphill,
When the funds are low and the debts are high,
And you want to smile, but you have to sigh,
When care is pressing you down a bit
Rest if you must, but don't you quit.

Life is queer with its twists and its turns,
As everyone of us sometimes learns,
And many a failure turns about
When they might have won, had they stuck it out.
Don't give up though the pace seems slow,
You may succeed with another blow.

Often the goal is nearer than,
It seems to a faint and faltering man,
Often the struggler has given up
When he might have captured the victor's cup;
And he learned too late when the night came down,
How close he was to the golden crown.

Success is failure turned inside out
The silver tint of the clouds of doubt
And you never can tell how close you are,
It may be near when it seems so far;
So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit,
It's when things seem worst that you must not quit!

I'm dedicating this to all those who have lost their jobs or their businesses or unable to feed their children, without going to a food bank. Things are surely changing gradually and we pray that there will be true relief from those pressures.

Our hope is in Jesus Christ, our Lord, always.

Anthea Denham

CHURCH GIVING – GIFT AID

Around this time of year, we usually remind everyone about Gift Aid. When you pay the same amount or more in Income Tax or Capital Gains Tax in the tax year that you wish to donate to the Church, then we can benefit by claiming back from the HMRC the amount of 25p for every £1 you give. If you are able and want to complete a Gift Aid declaration form, please contact Gladys Townsend at arthurtownsend@aol.com.

Should you wish to make regular weekly donations then we can let you have envelopes to use for your weekly offerings when attending Church. Also, if you are able to contribute to the work of the Church, you can donate via PayPal, you can pay by card, or PayPal account, donate once or set up a regular payment. Please see our Church web site for our PayPal link (www.christchurchnsfb.org)

We thank all who give regularly but are aware that not everyone can afford to make such donations, particularly in these difficult times, so please don't feel obliged.

There is another option for those who are able and want to make regular payments to the Church and that is to pay by "Standing Order" direct from your Bank Account. Again, if you are able to "Gift Aid" then the Church can benefit greatly. If you want to set up a regular Standing Order then we can let you know the Bank details to use.

Please get in touch with Gladys Townsend as above.
Thank you all.



CHARITY GIVING

All Charities need our help. If you are able, please consider making a small donation to your favourite Charity.

As Christian Aid celebrate 75 years of real change, perhaps you could make a payment to their “Lent and Easter” Appeal or their “Give thanks for your Vaccine” Appeal – see their web site for full information (www.christianaid.org.uk). Please also read the article herein regarding Christian Aid Week.



The United Reformed Church also have an article on their website (www.urc.org.uk), to similarly raise funds and “Give thanks for your vaccine”, in support of Christian Aid (Click on the Coronavirus Advice logo and scroll down the page to this news item and the link to their Online Giving Page).

To sign the petition and donate to the BMS Campaign for a Covid-free World go to www.bmsworldmission.org/appeal/campaign-for-a-covid-free-world/

It’s also not too late to donate to the Comic Relief – Red Nose Day Appeal and make a massive impact to the lives of people in the UK and Worldwide - www.comicrelief.com/rednoseday/



WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Our minister, Revd. Ruth Moriarty recommended ‘Worship in the Wilderness’ personal devotions, by Sarah and Sam Hargreaves for our Lent study. The booklet was on how to cope when we find ourselves in some sort of wilderness. This could be due to the loss of a loved one or job or not getting what we crave from God.

Wilderness it said, is a time to worship and draw closer to God. A spot-on booklet for Lent in my opinion, considering the difficult time we had all endured due to the pandemic.

Some of the suggestions it gave for coping when in the wilderness were to try and remember God’s goodness in the past, praise and thank Him for them. To sacrifice more of our time and money for those in need. To be compassionate and try to point others to God’s love and salvation. The Pandemic will hopefully be in the past soon.

Easter represents a new beginning. We may not get back what we have lost but we are assured of something far greater than anything we want, need or had lost. An eternal, joyous life because Jesus has risen from the dead. Jesus has conquered all and will make all things new. He loves us deeply and will never abandon us. This Easter, ask Jesus to breathe new life into you. Start afresh and move forward with our Lord Jesus.

Hebrews 13:20-21 (ESV).

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. **Amen.**

***Jesus has risen! He has risen indeed!
Happy, Blessed Easter.***

Ola Lawal