

Wantage & Abingdon Circuit

CHILDREY

GROVE

WANTAGE

SECTOR

NEWS



August 2020

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Contributions for the **September Newsletter** should be sent to the editor by email, phone or in writing by **Sunday 23rd August 2020** to
wantage.sector.newsletter@gmail.com
Tel : 01235 766655 / 07710 214601
Editors : Gill & Gordon Skidmore

Sunday Services and Church Activities

All worship services, business meetings and church activities have been suspended for the time being. This means that until we are advised otherwise, there will be no Sunday services in any of the churches in our Circuit.

Texts for Services for each Sunday are posted on the websites.

There is a Circuit Zoom Service at 10:30 each week:

(for access to these please contact Rev Keith Underhill)

Keith is posting regular reflections which are on the websites.

Grove web site is found from www.wantab.org.uk

Wantage web site www.wantagemethodist.org.uk

Circuit web site www.wantab.org.uk

Circuit YouTube channel

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBpMj71hDzpMhVj6t_ZQt0w

Each week Wesley's Chapel in London will continue to live-stream worship, adapted for no physical congregation.

Service times: Wednesday 12:45, Thursday 12:45, Sunday 9:45 and 11:00.

All these services will be available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUAUqhmhevz5sqhh72LIMxA>

More information about all of this can be found at
<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/seasons-and-themes/worship-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/>

From the Manse.....

In Luke's Gospel chapter 4, Jesus publicly sets out his stall and states what he is all about.

Verses 18-19 (often referred to as his Nazareth Manifesto), finds Jesus reading from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Jesus is in his local synagogue as was his custom on the sabbath.

Jesus declares;

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.*

*He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."*

Then, on rolling up the scroll Jesus added, *'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'*

Have you ever wondered though where the Synagogue movement came from?

I am no Jewish scholar or historian but from my understanding the exile to Babylon plays an important part in its development.

Remember the words of Psalm 137, with its haunting opening lines;

By the rivers of Babylon - there we sat down and there we wept when we remembered Zion.

Those who were captive hundreds of miles away from home, from their temple in Jerusalem, were taunted by their captors. They found themselves being mocked by them as they said "Sing us a song of back home!"

Lost and lonely, those in captivity say to one another "How can we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?"

They feel their loss keenly, wondering whether their God could even hear or act when they were no longer in their own promised land.

Perhaps they wondered if prophecy and prayers were still effective far away from the proximity of the Temple where they had found great intimacy with God in the past.

Suddenly and violently everything had been taken away from them. The familiar landscape of home now replaced by a strange land of a foreign nation. All that they knew and had relied upon was no longer there.

So they had to discover other ways to experience the sense of intimacy they had known before. Over time, new ways of doing things and of being became important. Through the reading of the scriptures, by praying together and remembering their stories, by being instructed in their ways and in communal worship, they found God and rediscovered their identity once more.

They came to realise that they were not alone or abandoned and that God was to be found in all places. For as the writer of Psalm 139 exclaims:

*“Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?”*

These past few months we may well have felt exiled from all that we knew and living in a strange land, yet we take comfort from the truth proclaimed in Psalm 139 that there is nowhere we can ever find ourselves where God already isn't, even as we mourn for what we have lost.

May we also find and discover new ways of being, serving, witnessing and ministering in the landscape in which we now live.

With love and God Bless

Keith

Methodist Prayer Handbook 2020/2021: The Earth is the LORD's

The Earth is the LORD's, inspired by Psalm 24:1, recognises how human activities are having a major impact on the life systems of our world.

Use these prayers of thanksgiving, penitence and intercession to resolve that, with God's help, we may take responsibility for our actions and, as stewards of God's gift to us, participate in the healing of creation.

£4.50 each, **£4.15** each for 10 or more.

Publication date: August, 2020

To allow us to take advantage of the bulk purchase terms, please contact Gordon (07710214601) to order your copy. He will be placing an order on 19th August.

2020/2021: A Year of Prayer for The Methodist Church

The Conference has declared 2020/2021 a Year of Prayer to support the new Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth. Districts, circuits, churches, and individuals are invited to pray for the Methodist Church as we deepen our commitment to be a growing, evangelistic, inclusive, justice-seeking Church of gospel people. Simple guidance around different ways to pray, as well as information for a weekly online Churchwide prayer meeting, is available at

www.methodist.org.uk/yearofprayer.

This will draw on the rich diversity of Methodist traditions and leadership to help the whole Church journey deeper into prayer together.

A letter from Rev'd Keith Underhill and the Circuit Leadership Team

Dear All,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Circuit Leadership Team to thank and encourage you as well as to offer some further guidance at this time.

Thank you for all that you and your congregations have done and continue to do whilst our buildings have been closed.

For the ways in which you have strived to stay in touch with one another, helped out in the wider community, enabled resources to be shared, kept the faith and demonstrated that our churches are very much alive and continuing their work, thank you!

These have been difficult times and I do not for one moment underestimate the impact that this pandemic has had upon us as individuals, families, churches and communities. It is clear that how we “do” church will never be the same again and whilst the future will clearly bring us many challenges there will also be many opportunities that we should strive to embrace as we look forward.

The question that currently looms largest is whether or not we should re-open our church buildings for worship and if so, when? There will, no doubt, be a wide range of views and opinions about this.

Other denominations such as the Church of England operate in a very different way to the Methodist Church and the question as to whether we should re-open is one to be decided locally by each church. Our churches vary greatly, in size, context, numbers and age profile and what feels right for one church, might not for another.

When looking to re-open, the permission of the individual Church Council (or equivalent body) acting in their role as managing trustees must first be given. Circumstances dictate that these meetings may well have to be done in a different way than usual (via Zoom for example) and aim to allow as many to take part as possible.

We would want to stress that no church, or individual should feel under any pressure to do something that they are not comfortable with and that the hopes, fears, dreams, and worries of each and every person should be respected. The Connexion reminds us that there is no compulsion to re-open if Managing Trustees do not feel it can be done safely, or it is too soon.

Some conversations currently taking place around the Circuit are looking at the beginning of September as the earliest possible time to re-open, whilst also acknowledging the need to be flexible.

As a CLT we will do all that we can to fully support any church that decides to re-open for worship (subject to all the necessary risk assessments etc being adhered to) and encourage churches to do so, if they feel it is the right time. Opening for a one-off service to see how it goes might be a possible first step in this process.

As we have faced these difficulties together there has been a growing awareness of the fact that we are a Circuit and it would be good to build upon this. It would be helpful if feedback from any church that re-opens for a service, together with comments on lessons learnt, was then shared with others.

A sectional service would give the opportunity for resources from more than one church to be pooled, as well as help to encourage one another.

Through our Zoom services, the Orders of Service for use at home, weekly children's resources and services on CD, we are currently keeping in touch and supporting a large number of people.

These new ways of worshipping have also given us a wider flexibility than ever before that is proving helpful and useful for many people. It is important that we do not lose any of this as we move into a position where we start to re-open our buildings for worship.

We will need to be far more intentional about continuing these new ways of worshipping alongside and in parallel with worship in our buildings when we re-open. We are, for example, looking to see if our weekly Zoom service might take place in a service in church rather than from my study.

Where a church previously had two services on a Sunday, we would encourage there to be only one service for the time being to help reduce the pressure on those needed to open the buildings for worship and also the need to clean in between services.

It is still too early to produce a preaching plan - this will happen as time moves on and the picture becomes clearer. This has been discussed with the Local Preachers during a recent Zoom meeting.

With the easing of some of the restrictions that have been placed upon us, there is now the scope to be creative in how we seek to move forward. For example, now that we can socialise outdoors in groups of up to six people from different households, it would be possible for a small group of six people to meet in someone's garden to pray and study the Bible together.

Not only might this help those who have felt alone during this time of lockdown, but also be a positive step for any who, for understandable reasons, would be reluctant to return to a church service, where there would be greater numbers.

It goes without saying that if there is anything that you are unsure about, or want to talk through, please do contact your minister or myself.

Thank you for all that you have done, your on-going commitment and for all that is still to be.

Stay safe and keep well.

Love and God Bless

Keith

From our website

Little People

Some of you may have seen on Facebook that Little People are cutting back on their work. We do intend to continue to support families who we have been working with, but will not take on new clients. Please see the weekly notices and separate notice on the Wantage website for current needs.

Cornerstone Coffee Shop

We will be opening the cafe and bookshop on 1st September from 11:00 am – 2:30 pm, Monday -Thursday and Saturday. We are looking forward to welcoming our customers back. Please keep an eye on our facebook page & our shop window for updates as we get nearer opening. We hope to increase the hours by October.

We had to say goodbye to Anita after 18 years just before the start of lockdown, so we will be looking to recruit another member of staff soon after we open.

We have been delivering bible notes to regular subscribers during lockdown and if you have received your notes this way, we are happy to organise payment online, by cheque or in person when we open.

Clearly the challenge of having been closed for over 6 months by the time we re-open, has been difficult financially but we praise God for the continued donations by our loyal friends, for the rent holiday our landlord gave us and for the small grant we received from the council, without all of which we would not have been able to keep up our obligations for so long.

Wantage and Grove Church Partnership

Annual General Meeting

A gathering of members of the Wantage and Grove Church Partnership to reflect on the past year and to look ahead at what is to come.

- Refreshments
- Sung Worship
- Annual General Meeting of WGCP
- Guest Speaker

John Green, the Community Minister at Wantage Christian Fellowship, will share his experience of being a police chaplain.

Save the date!

**Sunday
20th Sept
Refreshments
from 4pm
Meeting starts
4:30pm
at St John's
Church, Grove
(or on Zoom)**

For more info
secretary@wgcp.org.uk

Wantage & Grove Street Pastors

WGSP Quarterly News

At the time of writing this, some people feel that we are coming out the other side of a nightmare, whilst others are feeling they have had the time to do something really valuable within the community. We will all have experienced these past four months in very different ways.

Many Street Pastors and Prayer Support volunteers, whilst not being able to undertake their 'normal' duties, have none the less been demonstrating their faith in action within the community during daylight hours as opposed to within the night-time economy.

I have heard some conversations based on questions such as "What is God trying to show us?" & "Is God challenging us to look at our faith through different eyes?"

Have those of us who profess to have faith been given a once in a lifetime chance to show others what our faith means to us? We know that God is with us every step of the way, and we know that God will use us to his glory when we allow his Spirit to work in us and through us. I perceive that many people in this community have allowed that Spirit to do some awe-inspiring work through them in these strange times.

There will, of course, be much need for a healing touch as we seek to find out what life is going to be like in the coming months. We may not be able to physically give a healing touch to those in need, but we can ask God to envelop them with his love.

I pray that as Street Pastors and Prayer Support Volunteers consider a return to their familiar duties, they will be acutely aware of God in their midst, guiding them to those in need. We go forward trusting in God's protective love.

Helen Carter, Trustee

Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

Wantage Mayor, Major Jim Sibbald nominated us for the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service back in the summer of 2019. This is the highest award given to local volunteer groups across the UK to recognise outstanding work done in their own communities. It was created in 2002 to celebrate the anniversary of The Queen's coronation. We were audited by Deputy Lieutenants Jane Cranston and Marion Stevenson and, following a successful audit, they recommended us to the National Assessment Committee, whose job it is to assess all the nominations and provide a shortlist that goes before the Queen for approval.

In May we received a letter from Sir Martin Lewis CBE, Chair of the National Assessment Committee to say that they very much admired the work we do, but that we had not been selected to receive the award this year. Sir Martin asked us to convey to our members their warm appreciation of the excellent work we do and the enormous benefit it represents to the local community. He said that to be nominated is a tremendous achievement and that everyone involved, and particularly our volunteers, should feel immensely proud of this, adding "*...particularly in these difficult times when your great community work is needed more than ever!*"

Although disappointed not to have received the award, we are proud to have been nominated and our thanks go to Cllr Major Jim Sibbald for his nomination and his support of our work. We are also grateful to all our volunteers, without whom we would not be able to serve our local communities together.

Our congratulations go to Aberdeen Street Pastors who received the award this year; and locally we congratulate Sinodun Players & Corn Exchange in Wallingford and Thames Path and Ridgeway National Trails Volunteers in Oxford. Well done!

Apparently, our name stays in the hat for another two years, so we could still receive the award, but we are sure there will be many more deserving charities next time around, especially in such difficult times for many people.

We do hope to return to Street Pastor patrols towards the end of August or beginning of September. We're working hard to put things in place to ensure we can do this safely. Watch this space!

Championing Prayer together

Communicate – Connect – Support – Build – Train

Prayer really is at the heart of what we do in Wantage and Grove Street Pastors and we would love to grow this important part of our ministry locally, and maybe you can help us do this - we are looking for several people to help us 'Champion Prayer'. There are five areas we would like help with:

Communicate: Draw together prayer points from various sources and keep our members, patrol teams and those who pray from home informed about prayer needs.

Connect: Connect with our partner churches and Ascension Trust to understand their prayer needs.

Support: Support our patrol teams and our members who pray at home in developing our prayer life.

Build: Grow our prayer base by bringing more people to the team and explore new prayer initiatives.

Train: Help us benefit from prayer training sessions locally and by training provided by Ascension Trust.

If you would like more information about championing prayer or if you feel you could help us in some way, please contact us. Nothing is cast in stone and so we would love to talk about how we can Champion Prayer Together.

Going CIO

Each year the Trustees set goals to help progress what Wantage and Grove Street Pastors does as an organisation. Many of these goals are about recruiting volunteers, Street Pastor Sundays and planning events to raise funds and awareness of our work. This year we also have a goal regarding progress towards becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation - CIO.

This new way of operating charities was introduced in 2013 to simplify how charities are run and to enable a charity to become a legal entity. The change enables the charity to own assets and it provides additional legal protection for trustees and members. Changing into a CIO is something which Ascension Trust encourages and their legal department will help us with our transition.

Before this change can start, the members of a charity would need to consider and formally agree to the change, and so the WGSP Trustees will be asking our members to consider this change and will take a vote at the AGM in October. More information will be provided to the membership well ahead of the AGM, but should you have any comments or questions, please speak to a Trustee or contact us using the details below.

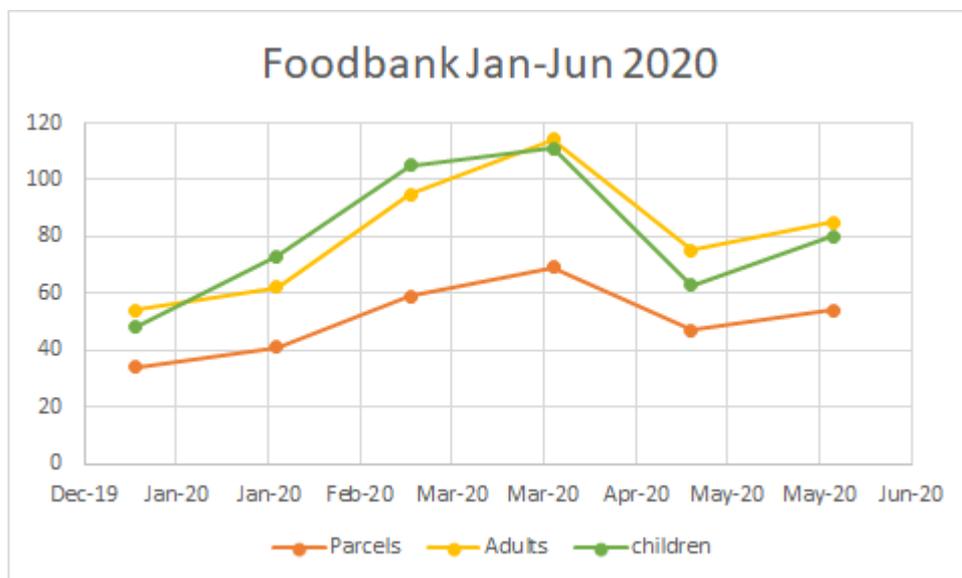
How our members helped during the pandemic

We have not been able to patrol our streets since the end of March but that hasn't stopped many of our members from helping in the community. Some continued their support of different local organisations during the lockdown and some took on new roles, often on top of what they were already doing. Here are some of the projects and activities that our members are supporting:

The Ray Collins Charitable Trust Coronavirus Support Group; A Helping Hand; The Mix Community Fridge; Foodbank; prescription deliveries; hot meal deliveries; shopping for those who have been self -isolating. And I'm sure there is more we don't know about.

Of course it is not just our members; there are lots of people around Wantage & Grove who are involved in many different projects and organisations that help to make life here better. We are so blessed by such a great community of people who put in so much effort. Well done everyone – keep up the good work!

As you know it has been an interesting year so far! Below is a picture to help sum up where we have got to.



We don't know what the rest of the year will look like - but there do seem to be difficult and uncertain times ahead for many people in terms of job security and health.

As you may know the government are continuing with their food voucher scheme for needy families, however we will be delivering a small number of summer food parcels to our most needy families. We have been incredibly blessed by the generosity of our local community and so have plenty of funds for this project.

We are looking forward to the possibility of Harvest Festivals in the Autumn - assuming they will be allowed - and below is a poster of the items we will be collecting. It would be helpful if you could let us know if (and when) you are planning your harvest festival to help with co-ordinating collection of the items.

We do have a website: Wantageandgrovefoodbank.org.uk and a facebook page - do visit those if you'd like to - or direct people there if they'd like more information.

D Townsend - on behalf of FoodBank

Harvest Festival suggestions:

Tins :- soup - fish - meat - vegetables - baked beans - rice pudding / custard - fruit

Packets :- rice - tea bags - sugar - biscuits - treats - cereals

Jars :- jam - pasta sauce - coffee - hot chocolate (make with water)

Cartons :- long life milk - long life fruit juice

Hygiene items :- sanitary products - shampoo - shower gel - deodorants - tooth brush - tooth paste

From JPIT - Joint Public Issues Team

Keep KITKAT Fair Trade

Nestlé has announced that from October 2020 KitKats will no longer contain Fairtrade cocoa and sugar. Instead, Nestlé is moving to the promotion of its own Cocoa Plan and the Rainforest Alliance certification. As a result 27,000 sugar and cocoa farmers will lose the Fairtrade Premium annually, to be replaced by funds promised over the next two years and an alternative premium without the same guarantees as Fairtrade.

Ghana and Cote D'Ivoire are the world's two largest cocoa producers. Farmers in these countries live a precarious existence. Shockingly, [a report last year from the Fairtrade Foundation](#) showed that a typical farmer's income was around [74p per day](#) while the extreme poverty line is around £1.41 per day.

[Fairtrade](#) helps farmers to earn a reliable and sustainable income in reward for their investment and work. Fairtrade is the only certification model to provide a minimum floor price. This is vital in the event of the sudden decline of world market prices for commodities; a regular occurrence in commodities such as cocoa. Nestlé states that the move away from Fairtrade is a part of its commitment to sustainable cocoa sourcing throughout the global supply chain. This involves expanding Rainforest Alliance and Utz certification criteria. Nestlé appears to recognise that farmers will lose out with respect to guaranteed income. It says it is looking to mitigate this with additional support over the next two years.

But ultimately, ending Fairtrade will mean that farmers will have less of a say in how they invest in their communities, and will be worse off and will be less secure when global prices drop. Fairtrade provides farming cooperatives with a Fairtrade Premium, about £190 per tonne of cocoa beans. It provides funding for community projects such as building schools or health centres, or for developing farms and cooperatives and improving cocoa productivity and quality. In West Africa, producer groups frequently use the Fairtrade Premium to train and empower women farmers.

Under Nestlé's Cocoa Plan, farmers will receive a lower premium and there is lack of clarity over possible restrictions on this premium and degree of control provided to producer groups. Importantly, under the Fairtrade rules, the producers' cooperatives themselves have the flexibility to spend the Fairtrade Premium according to the needs of farmers. Aminata Bamba, Head of Sustainability for the [ECOOKIM](#) group of cooperatives in Cote D'Ivoire, explains

"All the decisions are made together on how to use the Premium. Each cooperative decides how they want the Premium to be spent. All members have been part of the discussion. Fairtrade is about transparency and the way we make decisions together."

Join with us in supporting hard-working producers and their wider communities. Please ask Nestlé to reconsider its withdrawing from Fairtrade on cocoa and to make sure that KitKat in the UK remains fairly traded.

Take Action: –

1. Sign the petition at Change.org – <http://chnng.it/TzQPFYNCVS>
2. Write to Nestlé to ask the company to continue to support Fairtrade or otherwise to guarantee that farmers will not be worse off, either financially or in terms of their control over the premiums, now or in the future. If you can keep your message down to 1000 characters you can use the online form here: – <https://apps.nestle.co.uk/nestle/contact/>
3. Or [Tweet](#) to Nestlé using the twitter handle @NestleUKI

Covid 19 and your Community

The world as we emerge from lockdown and beyond will be very different. We have all been impacted by the pandemic, but for some the situation has been devastating. **What will this mean for local churches as they work out what mission within local communities looks like?**

‘What can you do differently to express more fully God’s love in word and action?’

New Reality, Same Mission – URC

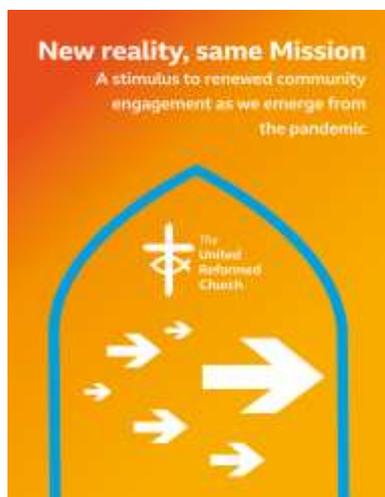
Covid 19 and your Community – Discussion Paper



This paper draws on emerging data as well as research conducted by the Joint Public Issues Team and Church Action on Poverty. It outlines some of the ways in which Covid 19 may be impacting on your community, and suggests five things which might be true for your community as we look ahead.

[READ THE PAPER HERE](#)

New Reality, Same Mission



Our partners in the URC’s Church Related Community Work, Mission and Discipleship teams, along with Church Action on Poverty, have produced the resource **‘New Reality, Same Mission’** to enable individuals and local churches to explore, in more detail, questions of community presence and engagement and social justice in the new reality which we all face.

[NEW REALITY, SAME MISSION](#)

Step One: Listen

Whilst we might all have experienced the same storm during the pandemic, we certainly haven't been in the same boat. Those who were locked in poverty before lockdown have often been hit the hardest.

Listening to the different lived experiences of the pandemic within our communities is the place to start, as we explore our mission.



During the pandemic, JPIT and Church Action on Poverty have been listening to and learning from experiences of poverty under lockdown as part of our **Gleanings** project. You can find out more about this by clicking on the picture below.

[GLEANINGS](#)

From Recovery to Flourishing

A YouGov survey in April 2020 found that 'only 9% of people in Britain want life to return to normal after the coronavirus outbreak is over'. Most people in the UK do not want to simply go back to life as it was before.

New Reality, Same Mission – URC



As Churches, we long for the flourishing of people and the wellbeing of our planet. As we emerge from the coronavirus crisis, we find ourselves at a critical moment where we could re-shape the economy to enable the wellbeing of all people and the planet.

How could our vision for an economy which supports us from recovery to flourishing play a part in shaping your mission as a church?

[FROM RECOVERY TO FLOURISHING](#)

Childrey

Prayers:

Prayers are asked for Amy Rose Legge and her family, Keith & Leonora, David, Barbara, Shirley, Jean and all those unknown to us who are in need of our help.

Christian Love to all.

Grove

Celebrations of note in and around the month of August

We send our love and best wishes to Sheila Hall on the occasion of her 90th birthday on 31st July and wish her a very happy day.

Alex and Katie King will be celebrating their Golden Wedding on 7th August.

John and Audrey Hogston's Golden day is on 29th August, and

Cedric and Judith Hopkins celebrate their Golden Wedding on 5th September.

We send you all our congratulations, love and good wishes. We hope you enjoy your special day and that your family and friends are able to be with you.

Prayers

We continue to remember Jim and Kathie Voller and David and Mirella Phillips in our prayers.

We ask your prayers for all the Thomas family. Paul had a 5-way heart by-pass operation on Friday, 24th July. It was a long operation but went well. News on Saturday (25th) continued good. Eric is due to have an operation for oral cancer on 3rd August. Our thoughts are with them both and with Judy, Jackie, Jenny and Dean and the girls at this worrying time for them all.

The **Wednesday Zoom Coffee** mornings are a good chance to keep in touch and if you would like to 'come along' please let Keith know and he will arrange for you to be included. You will then receive a weekly 'invitation' by email and can join in as and when you are able to.

Free for collection: A new green garden umbrella, 2.7m, with a crank handle to raise and lower it, needs a base. If interested, contact Jenny on 01235 767624.

Wantage

Keeping in Contact

We are trying to maintain various ways of keeping in touch.

There is always our internet website, and our Facebook presence, but it is understood that many of us cannot access the internet easily, if at all.

We shall continue to publish a monthly newsletter and weekly notices and post those on the website. We will also do our best to distribute copies to those who would wish to receive them.

Regular Zoom: Tea@Three at 3:00 pm every Tuesday - a chance to see people for a chat. Please contact Keith for access.

With the current situation with regard to the Coronavirus we have to cancel future events including the lunches. Up to date information will be posted on the website.

<https://wantagemethodist.org.uk>

What is the way ahead?

Church Council met (virtually) on Thursday 30th July in a very thoughtful, reflective and open meeting as those present shared their thoughts, hopes and concerns about how we should proceed.

We did not set any dates or time scale regarding the re-opening of the church building either for worship or for lettings and will meet again towards the end of August / beginning of September to review the matter.

This will be disappointing for some. In present circumstances, preparing to host people on site is not simple, particularly where it depends on volunteers to make things happen. We have to be conscious of our duty of care to all who use and look after the premises. The information emerging regarding the progress of the pandemic underlines the need for caution.

We did agree to go ahead and order some equipment that will be needed for the future, whenever we do decide to re-open. This includes hand sanitising appliances for the building and also digital hand held scanners / thermometers to enable us to take peoples' temperatures.

It was also agreed to install broadband in the building. This opens the possibility of broadcasting and sharing worship with a wider congregation.

At some time in the coming weeks, there will be a test broadcast of a trial Zoom service / event from church to see how that goes.

It was also agreed that Keith would write to all those who are part of the church family so that we can ascertain a) how everyone is doing and if there are any ways in which we can help one another feel better connected and b) gauge the feeling of how many people would be interested in attending some kind of act of worship in church when we do re-open.

Ordinarily there would be no Newsletter in August. This year, thanks to Gordon and Gill's keenness to help us all keep in touch, and their willingness to produce an extra edition, it's possible to add a pastoral reflection as the 2019 – 20 Methodist Year comes to its close. For most of us the worldwide events of this year have been beyond any of our previous experience. The older folk in our church family, who lived through the whole or part of the Second World War, will have encountered huge difficulties, and we wouldn't wish to diminish the painful memories of living through such hard times. For all of the post war generations, this has been a year unlike any other we have ever known.

Whatever our thoughts may be of the benefits or problems generated by so many different channels of electronic communication, we acknowledge the helpful ways in which it has enabled us to share together, especially in worship. We are thankful for Keith's expertise and enthusiasm to use all available technology, and for his hard work in setting up and managing Sunday Services for the whole Circuit, Tea@3 conversations and more formal church meetings. When restrictions brought all our activities to an abrupt halt, Keith responded instantly in setting up alternative means by which to 'meet together' for worship, and a little later for discussions and planning, and we thank him for all of that work.

As a team of Pastoral Visitors, it has been different in many ways too. We haven't been able to enjoy face to face conversations with those to whom we offer pastoral support – even if it's just when we take their monthly Newsletters. Delivery of those, like everything else, has been online for most. For the few people receiving paper copies, it's meant just dropping them through letterboxes. However, I believe that there are some ways in which we have been even more mindful of each other's situations. Recognising the prohibition of home visiting as our chosen way of offering support has been hard for us as Pastoral Visitors as well as for those on whom we like to call.

However, from the conversations I've shared, it's been reassuring to hear that our church family members feel well looked after, and that our pastoral system has been a much valued, appreciated and integral part of Methodist practice. Whilst we all wait for the time when we can enjoy being together again, and to share in our church activities, we're taking care of each other in different ways. Our pastoral objective remains that of demonstrating care, concern and love for each other. We are able to do this by holding the church family as a whole, and those on each of our pastoral lists in particular in our thoughts, by bringing our concerns for them before God in our prayers, and by assuring them of our readiness to help, our willing support and the warmth of our love

Praying for each other:

Ann Barber

In August the people listed below, who are on Eileen Rennie's pastoral list, will be included in the prayer time, during which all of the members of Eileen's House-group join together to pray in their individual homes: Janet and Richard Browning, Charlotte Browning, Joan and Ed Clipsham, Sue Haithwaite, Sharon Hayford, Jean Manners, Gill Morton and Gill and Gordon Skidmore. Also included will be Britzaida de Lozada and Barbara Porter who are not allocated to a specific Pastoral Visitor, but are prayed for as part of our extended church family

In addition to the names listed above, those in our church family, who through frailty or ill health would be unable to worship in church on Sundays, will also be prayed for by name during Eileen's house-group's time of collective praying in their own homes.

Prayer list

Eileen Rennie

Loving God, still our busy thoughts and make us fully aware of your presence in our lives day by day, whatever the circumstances. We thank you that we are able to bring all our concerns to you in prayer and our earnest prayer is that we will actually listen to your response. May we always be conscious of other people's needs and find time to spend with them in their need and listen and support them as best we can. We earnestly prayer for your world and all your people at this time. May we all spend time with you reflecting on what really is important and may we bring these values forward with us into the future to make your world how you intended it to be. Amen.

Please pray for:

Jean M, Bethan Grant, Jane, Alan Bunn and family, Carl, Carol Mackinder, Anne, Emma Wright and family, Alex and Brian, Gordon & Marina, Betty, Sheila Hall, Caroline, Adrian, John Morton, Jenny, Symons family, Linda, Kathy, June Coppock, All at Bullingdon Prison, staff, prisoners and visitors, YMOSES, kids@church and Street Pastors. Those members of our church family who, through frailty or ill health, can no longer worship with us.

If you or the person/people you have put on the prayer list would still like to be in the September Newsletter, please let Eileen know by Friday 21st August in order for her to meet the newsletter deadline.

Telephone: 01235 224284; email: m.rennie50@ntlworld.com

Tuesday Afternoon House Group

Eileen Rennie

The weeks during lockdown have meant we have not been able to meet on Tuesdays and at the time of writing it is still not possible to predict when that is likely to happen.

We are missing meeting together but we have been keeping in touch by email and telephone.

I email the group each Monday with details for our prayertime and each Tuesday, although apart, we have united in prayer at 3:00 pm. It has also been good to see some of the group on the Zoom services and on "Tea@Three". People have really appreciated these times as well as all the material on the Church website and on "YouTube".

As we are gradually able to get out more we hope that we will meet up with some familiar faces whilst still socially distancing.

We do all look forward to the time when we can all meet together again.

If you have any queries you can contact me (Eileen Rennie) by telephone on 01235 224284 or e-mail: m.rennie50@ntlworld.com

Community Drop In Café

Eileen Rennie

Yet another month has passed and due to the current Coronavirus situation we are still unable to open the Cafe and to date have no idea when that is likely to be. We know from messages and phone calls we have had that many people are missing the joy of their Monday morning weekly visits. It has been really wonderful in more recent days with the lifting of some restrictions in lockdown to actually have met some people as we are out walking and to have chatted while socially distancing! We continue to look forward in faith to when we are able to meet again and enjoy each other's company. Meanwhile be assured that you are being held in prayer. When we are able to meet again the donations will be going to Clean Slate, a low cost, long-term listening and support service for all victims of abuse and mental illness. Our sincere thanks to our 22 willing volunteers who have served us so well. When normal service is resumed, we look forward to welcoming you all back.

For further information contact either Eileen Rennie or June Grunwald.

Knit & Chat

Carolyn Roche, 01235 764310

This month I almost headed the article 'Sew & Chat'. Having been asked by my son and family if I could make them some cloth face masks, I was really pleased to acquire a second-hand sewing machine. I had hand sewn some masks for myself but didn't relish the thought of hand sewing enough for five. Anyway, with the aid of some Star Wars material, the three grandsons are now kitted out with masks – the grown-ups had the choice of navy blue or green with white polka dots. Now it is back to knitting and adding to the growing band of angels.

I do hope you are all managing to keep busy with different projects. It is good to see photos of them on Facebook or on the church website. Hopefully you are continuing to add to our host of angels. This year there will also be angels in Wallingford as the idea has been taken up by Wallingford Methodist Church. Deacon Maggie Blake came to visit me so that she could see the sort of labels we use. They are getting just as much joy out of knitting angels as we do.

Please let me know if you are short of anything and let's keep on being creative.

Wantage 175

June Grunwald

This year we planned to celebrate 175 years of Methodism in Wantage. We had planned various events, including an exhibition at the Museum. Instead I will post some memories on our church web-site from the past 175 years. Some memories have been taken from the booklet which Keith Robbins edited for the 150th Anniversary, with some added text and some photos. If you have any photos or memories you would like to be posted on the web-site, please get in touch with me.