

Wantage & Abingdon Circuit

CHILDREY

GROVE

WANTAGE

**SECTOR**

**NEWS**

  
**The Methodist Church**

July 2020

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Contributions for the **August Newsletter** should be sent to the editor by email, phone or in writing by **Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> July 2020** to  
[wantage.sector.newsletter@gmail.com](mailto: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](http://www.wantab.org.uk)

**Wantage web site** [www.wantagemethodist.org.uk](http://www.wantagemethodist.org.uk)

**Circuit web site** [www.wantab.org.uk](http://www.wantab.org.uk)

**Circuit YouTube channel**

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBpMj71hDzpMhVj6t\\_ZQt0w](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 the last full week of June, Liz and I became proud tenants of our first ever allotment plot! I have to say it is all very exciting.

Having been told we were on a waiting list, the phone call from the Town Council came relatively quickly inviting us to have a look at a plot on the Grove Road site that had just become vacant. We went to inspect it that very evening. Needless to say, the plot was overgrown, but not excessively so and as we walked around it seemed obvious to us that it had been well cared for until relatively recently. This was confirmed by a couple of conversations we had with other tenants who were on site at the time watering and tending their own plots.

We emailed the Town Council back the very next day, paid our £25 bond by Bank Transfer and within 24 hours were told it was ours and we could begin cultivating it.

As I went back to take some measurements and have a closer inspection, I was struck by a few things as I surveyed what had now become ours, (albeit in trust).

First, how friendly everyone is. We had a number of conversations with those we met in person offering encouragement and advice. Likewise, similar conversations via social media, with suggestions and video links informing us how to double dig and the benefits of green manure. We have been welcomed with open arms.

Our plan is that it won't be that long before our plot looks very different to how it does now, undergoing something of a transformation that will be obvious to all those who walk past. This second thought is 'earthed' in the reality of how we constantly see signs of transformation all around us. 'Changed from glory into glory', is not exclusively for use in church and is as applicable in the seasonal pattern of a garden or an allotment as it is when singing 'Love divine all loves excelling' marvelling as we do on God's love and grace as like Simon, son of John, we find ourselves transformed from 'you are' to 'you will be'.

Lastly, we have been told by a number of our new allotment neighbours that the chap who had the plot before looked after it really well and was renowned for his onions. No pressure then! Actually when you stop to think about it, there isn't any at all - because we are not him and we will play to our strengths and do things our way (no doubt making many mistakes along the way). As in gardening, so too in faith, church and the rest of life, for we need to be true to ourselves and not try to be someone else. For we are loved and valued for who we are and not for who we'd rather be!

So, we have books to read, 'YouTube' videos to watch, lessons to learn and hands to get dirty.

We will keep you posted!

With love and God Bless

Keith

## **A personal message from the President of the Methodist Conference 2019, the Revd Dr Barbara Glasson**

It is with outrage and deep sorrow that we have witnessed the recent brutal killing of George Floyd in the United States.

But outrage and sorrow are not a sufficient response to racism and inequality in society. How to begin a process of change? It starts with self-examination and listening to the people whose lives are affected by discrimination and hate.

This week I received these words from a Methodist living in south London:

"The young people whom I have worked with for over the last 15 years have felt the impact of racism in every institution they have been part of from schools, to university, to various work places, and other than local support and informal church networks they have not found the Methodist Church as a place that speaks up for them."

As your President, I start by saying I am sorry. Sorry for being silent when we should have spoken out against the everyday injustices that affect BAME communities. I am sorry that, despite our efforts, we have not done enough for those who feel excluded and we need to do better. We know this includes people of all ages from the Windrush generation to the very young. I am sorry when we have not listened carefully enough and not challenged the assumptions of white privilege and bias.

Repentance can lead us to change, to embody a gracious, loving spirit of inclusion and understanding. There is no excuse for racism. All people are made in God's image. We are one body in Christ Jesus.

I hope we can listen more carefully to the voices of BAME members, especially younger people, who face racism, discrimination and violence on a daily basis. Then our Church must be brave, speak out, speak up and challenge racism wherever we find it, especially when we find it in ourselves.

I have been in contact with the Vice-President who joins me in supporting this statement.

The Revd Dr Barbara Glasson, President of the Methodist Conference

The Methodist Church 'believes that racism is a denial of the Gospel' — standing orders, SO 013B.

The Methodist Council is undertaking a substantial piece of work to shape the Methodist Church to be an inclusive church. More details of the background and measurable proposals to bring about attitudinal, cultural and systemic change are

[https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/17139/counc\\_mc20-51-edi-task-group\\_mar-2020.pdf](https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/17139/counc_mc20-51-edi-task-group_mar-2020.pdf)

## **Statement on racism from the Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler, Secretary of the Conference**

The brutal killing of George Floyd, who died at the hands of police officers in Minneapolis, has prompted a wave of anger and revulsion around the world. As Christian people, we are appalled that someone could die in such a fashion and appalled also at the continued injustice which many Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people experience in many parts of the world, including the United Kingdom, and in many institutions, including, shamefully, the Methodist Church in Britain.

We therefore welcome and endorse the call of the 'Black Lives Matter' movement for radical action in addressing the causes of this injustice. The Methodist Church in Britain believes that racism is a denial of the gospel. However, we have to recognize that we have not eradicated the problem from our Church, despite the excellent work of many over several decades; in the last year we have redoubled our efforts to do so and are actively working on the implementation of our 'Inclusive Methodist Church' strategy which commits to challenging all forms of discrimination and creating a Church where people from every background are welcome and are safe from abuse and discrimination.

Such a Church will celebrate and not be afraid of diversity; it will be disciplined and uncompromising in its refusal to tolerate any form of racism; it will work to encourage the vocation of those from minority groups to serve in positions of senior leadership; and it will be one in which all people can be confident of the welcome that they will receive as they share in worship and ministry with us. We repent of the ways that we have fallen short of that in the past and of our slowness in changing our ways and we continue to look for ways in which we can witness to the all-encompassing love of God and become the transformation that we long to be. 'Only the Spirit's power can fit us for this hour': we pray, 'Come, Holy Spirit, come!'

## **Church leaders urge UK government to help deter annexation of West Bank**

**Church leaders from the United Reformed Church, Church of Scotland, the Quakers in Britain, the Methodist Church, Church of England and Catholic Church have called on the UK government to help deter annexation of the West Bank, which could begin from 1 July:**

"We stand alongside the Holy Land's Christian leaders, who have warned that the Israeli Government's plan to annex parts of the West Bank after 1 July 'would bring about the loss of any remaining hope for the success of the peace process'."

"All our Churches are committed to promoting justice and peace for everyone who calls the Holy Land their home. If annexation proceeds, it would gravely undermine international law with serious consequences for the common good of our global society."

“The UK Government should do everything in its power to deter annexation. Only a robust response, working alongside others in the international community, can help to prevent this tragedy.

“We remain united in prayer that plans for annexation will be abandoned, allowing for renewed efforts towards a negotiated solution that upholds the human dignity of Palestinians and Israelis alike.”

**Derek Estill, Moderator of the General Assembly, United Reformed Church**

**Rt Rev Dr Martin Fair, Moderator of the General Assembly, Church of Scotland**

**Paul Parker, Recording Clerk, Quakers in Britain**

**Rev Dr Jonathan Hustler, Secretary of the Methodist Conference**

**Rt Rev Christopher Chessun, Bishop of Southwark, Church of England**

**Rt Rev Declan Lang, Bishop of Clifton, Catholic Church**

## **New President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference elected and inducted online**

The **Revd Richard Teal** has been elected and inducted as the new **President of the Methodist Conference**, taking over from the Revd Dr Barbara Glasson. The induction took place on Saturday 27 June at Cliff College in Derbyshire, as part of the Methodist Conference which is, for the first time, taking place online.

During his lifetime John Wesley chaired the Methodist Conference but after his death the Conference determined to elect a President annually.

Richard Teal comes from a farming background, having grown up in the Yorkshire Dales. He has spent the majority of his ministry in rural areas, including 11 years as Chair of the Cumbria District. He is now Superintendent of the Beverley Circuit in East Yorkshire.

In his Conference address Richard Teal focused on how the last few months of coronavirus and lockdown had affected the Church:

“Who would ever have thought a few months ago we would have had to close our doors and lock them, even at Easter! Many of our congregations are feeling totally disorientated, fearful and cut off from the fellowship we enjoy with each other.”

Looking ahead at how the world can adapt to the impact of the pandemic, the President said:

“Not a return to the same old same old but a church which has the reputation for transformation, for recreation and for empowerment of what we are living through in the present in response to a faithful God who redeems history and promises the brightest of futures.”

The President chose the final words of John Wesley as his theme for this year, 'The best of all is, God is with us'.

The **Vice-President, Carolyn Lawrence**, was also elected and inducted this afternoon. A teacher by training, Carolyn was an educational mission partner in Guyana and has worked in a voluntary capacity within the Methodist Church as a preacher and leader. More recently she has worked with the Global Relationships team of the Methodist Church helping to engage people with our worldwide network of Partner Churches. She is also part of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women.

Carolyn spoke of her passion for the world church in her address to the Conference:

“One thing that I find awe inspiring about the church is that you can be anywhere in the country or the world and know that you can find family.”

“I have had the experience of worshipping with Christians in lots of different places in the world, most recently on my visit to the Methodist Church in Brazil. Here the church is growing at an amazing rate and I was blown away by their passion for God’s word, their commitment to prayer, their systematic and strategic approach to evangelism, theological training and pastoral care and the exuberance and joy of their worship. During the year to come I hope to share some of the key principles of church growth that I have learned from the church in Brazil as I believe they can also be applied to our church here in Britain.”

*The full text of their addresses to Conference can be found on the National (Connexional) and Circuit websites*

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-conference/conference-2020/presidency/>

[www.wantab.org.uk](http://www.wantab.org.uk)

*and hard copies are available on request from Gordon Skidmore*

## From our website

### Masks — a reflection from Local Preacher Stephen Atkinson

I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the LORD your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the LORD swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. Deuteronomy 30:19-20

Ruth has been making masks, sixty nine so far, and still counting, all cut out and sown in four layers, using material from a wide variety of garments of different colours and patterns.

As I put it to her, we're expected to wear our T shirts round our mouths and our armpits up our noses.

Sewing can be a perilous business.

One morning, as I moved a chair back under the table, the sewing machine leaped into action within millimetres of Ruth's fingers. Having recovered from the shock, we discovered one leg of the chair sitting on the foot control.

Masks get a bad press in the bible, in the few places where they are expressly mentioned. Job speaks of the adulterer who waits for twilight saying, 'No eye will behold me', and then puts a cover on his face. There are indirect references to masking one's face, disguising wrong, hiding truth.

Through the ages masks have been associated with ritual, war and the world of spirits and festivity. But these days the mask has a concrete purpose which ought to redress the balance of its reputation.

I used to assume that mask-wearing groups of tourists, often from the far-east, covered their faces for protection from polluted air. I realise now that the practice is also an act of generosity: it seems that a mask gives more protection from disease to passers-by than to the person who wears it.

The choice to wear a mask (for as long as it remains a choice) is just one unlikely way in which we can confer a blessing on other people. It is a simple, down-to-earth act of thoughtfulness, which can be done in a spirit that we may call 'sacramental'. Christianity is a sacramental religion, which means that God speaks to us through the ordinary, tangible and perceptible things of our world, the world that God has redeemed in our midst.

John the Baptist calls his generation to turn to God for forgiveness and marks their repentance by immersion in the waters of the Jordan. Two disciples travel to Emmaus in the company of a stranger, and when he breaks the bread for supper are astounded to find themselves in Jesus' presence.

Water as a sign of repentance, bread and wine in remembrance of Jesus' last supper; in these ordinary things the church recognises special signs of God's grace: grace conferred in special rites of the church that we call sacraments. But apart from the sacraments, other things may be called sacramental.



A woman wanders in a garden, lost, inconsolable because Jesus is dead. She is astounded to find herself in his presence when one she has taken to be the gardener whispers her name.

Sometimes ordinary things bring unexpected blessings; hearing our name spoken by someone we hardly know; gazing into the upper arms of a beech tree; finding our values challenged by something we read; catching the evening song of the blackbird.

Ordinary things may leave us feeling that whatever happens now or in the future, we are blessed by God and are called to be a source of blessing for others.

The ordinary act of wearing a mask may be a sign of God's grace, something sacramental, for it confers a blessing on other people through simple generosity.

Even where the law requires us to wear a mask, we may choose to do it in a generous spirit.

Daily life brings choices, and by making choices that bring blessings on other people, we choose life.

## **Minister's Musing - The wheelbarrow, graffiti and God!**

Like many of those who are fortunate enough to have a garden, this period of lockdown has seen us getting round to tidying it up and transforming into our own design. After a long wait, the 850kg of shingle that we ordered eventually arrived and was safely and carefully left on a pallet in front of our garage door. We then of course needed to get the shingle through the side gate into the back — and we do not possess a wheelbarrow.

Fortunately, our neighbour does, although she usually keeps it in her shed on her allotment. There would be no problem whatsoever in borrowing it, she told me, but she did warn me that it had been vandalised.

One night, the said shed was broken into and persons unknown defaced the wheelbarrow with some lurid graffiti. Although she tried to remove the graffiti, the image still remains, albeit slightly fainter than originally. Whether it be spray painted on the wall of underpasses or scratched centuries ago into church doors and pews, the mark left by the one defacing lives on. Graffiti artists are often known by their style and have their own 'Tags', the equivalent of a signature.

Of course this is not a new phenomena and indeed there are 1st and 2nd Century examples of Christian graffiti that have been discovered — messages that had been scratched into surfaces, that can still be clearly seen today.

The fact is that graffiti is very hard to get rid of and you will see faded messages sprayed on motorway bridges, railway arches and elsewhere that refer to a person or an event only remembered by a few and now unknown to most. You would need to be of a certain age to remember the "George Davis is innocent" messages that appeared all over the place in London during the 1970's.

Graffiti leaves its mark.

Thinking of the wheelbarrow, I was reminded of the permanency of marks and inscriptions. Some of you will know that I have two tattoos. One, on my right shoulder is a small Celtic symbol of the trinity, whilst the one on my upper left arm is very much larger, featuring an eagle and some words based on Isaiah 40:31.

Needless to say, much thought and careful planning went into this before the tattoo artist got to work. There is nothing worse than a tattoo that you later regret.

In the sacrament and act of baptism, after splashing water onto the baby's head three times, I make the sign of the cross on the child's forehead with my right thumb. Once the water has evaporated though, there is no visible sign, no indelible mark to prove and bear witness to what has just taken place. Nonetheless, that person will always and for ever, be marked as a child of God and carry that symbol to the day they die.

Of course, the proof of being marked with the sign of the cross, is nothing to do with any ecclesiastical graffiti or eternal etching and everything to do with how we live our lives. The acid test of being known and seen as people of God is in the way that we live, in the way that we act and speak and in who we are.

So may all that we say and all that we do be as indelible and long lasting as the graffiti that is left behind. Amen.

## **Wantage & Grove Food Bank**

After a very hectic three months the number of requests for food parcels has settled down to a more manageable level, but donations of food and money are still very much welcomed.

If you are shopping in Waitrose or Sainsbury's, donations of toothpaste, fruit juice, tinned fruit & puddings, dog food, hot chocolate (make with water) and sugar are those most needed just now. If you are not going to the shops but would like to donate, then please go to the website

<https://www.wantageandgrovefoodbank.org.uk/>

or get in touch with Helen Carter, who can give you the information you need to make a financial donation. With grateful thanks for the continuing support.

## **Little People**

Please see the weekly notices and separate notice on the Wantage website.

## **Cornerstone Coffee Shop**

*John Hogston : Board member*

The board continues to meet virtually. We do not expect to open before September.

The **Fund for Human Need** is a Methodist Charity whose aims are the relief of poverty and distress. We work to offer help to those throughout the UK who have no recourse to public funds, the homeless and any in distress.

### **Busier than ever!**

When we went into this strangest of times, here at FHN we knew it was going to be busy. After a small 'breathing space' in March when many of the support agencies closed their doors because of the lockdown the impact of the Covid-19 really started to show in April as payment applications steadily rose. They reached record levels in May/June, and at one point we received 100 application emails in 24 hours! There was also a dramatic reversal in the ratio between organisation and personal applications, as those organisations struggled to stay in touch with clients and adjusted to less face to face working.

The flood of applications and the restarting of organisations have meant we are now only taking applications through organisations many of whom have contacted us for the first time. The number of applications from NHS trusts and local council support agencies has also risen.

Things are unlikely to change for us in the near future as we hear about the pressure on the economy and the benefits system. Unfortunately, there are going to be many families and individuals who are going to be considerably worse off even when we do get back to the 'new' normal.

**Like most Charities we have had a serious drop in our income. As churches try to adapt, with worship and meetings in different forms, we know many are wondering about their own financial future but can you help?**

**Ways to Help: Resources-** Our film, copies of this news sheet and other resources are available on the website – [www.fundforhumanneed.org.uk](http://www.fundforhumanneed.org.uk)

**New Leaflet-** When we can meet again, is there a space where you can display our information?

**Electronic giving-** We are on 'Just giving'. Search for us or use the button on the website.

**Home shopping-** We are on Smile Amazon and Give as you live, if you nominate us a percentage comes to us with no cost to you.

**Standing Order-** Regular giving is so valuable and, for tax payers, gift aiding donations enables us to add 25p to every £ donated. Details on the website.

**The backbone of any charity is its fantastic committed supporters who, whatever the amount they can donate, give regularly. Is this something you can consider?**

**Keeping in touch-** We send a newsletter regularly, by post or email, to all supporters and interested parties. We will get in touch to find out your mailing preferences. If at any time these change, please let the administrator know. Mrs Gill Mason: [fundhumanneed@gmail.com](mailto:fundhumanneed@gmail.com). Tel: 01325 244992. Post: 6 Newlands Road, Darlington, Co Durham. DL3 9JL. [http://fundforhumanneed.org.uk/?page\\_id=111](http://fundforhumanneed.org.uk/?page_id=111)

## **Wantage & Grove Street Pastors – Annual Report 2019-20**

*The following is a summary of the full report which can be found on the Circuit and Wantage Church websites:*

**Thanks** to all members of Wantage and Grove Street Pastors; volunteers and churches.

Grants and donations were gratefully received from:

Oxfordshire County Council,                      TVP Property Act Fund,  
Penuel Trust,    Wantage & Grove Lions Club  
Grove Village Hall Afternoon Teas

### **What we achieved**

We have been operating on the streets of Wantage and Grove for 10½ years. We offer the love of Jesus through practical help and prayer to needy and vulnerable people on the streets.

We patrolled on two Friday nights and three Saturday nights each month. During the year we made contact with over 480 people, were able to calm 11 potentially aggressive situations and support 52 vulnerable people.

We have the respect and support of the police, who consider our presence invaluable.

### **Award Nomination**

As Mayor of Wantage, Major Jim Sibbald nominated us for the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service (QAVS). Deputy Lieutenants Jane Cranston and Marion Stevenson visited us in Wantage in October to audit our work to ensure that we are well run and carry out excellent work. They informed us that they would be recommending our nomination to the Independent National Assessment Committee, whose job it is to assess all the nominations and provide a shortlist that will go before the Queen for approval.

We will have to wait until June 2020 to find out who has won the award.

### **Changes from the previous year?**

At the August Bank Holiday weekend we moved one of our Saturday patrols to the Sunday night.

In December we moved one of our patrols to, what is sometimes known as 'Black Friday'; the last working day before Christmas.

We also added a patrol on New Year's Eve, which passed without major incident.

Numbers of available Street Pastors and Prayer Support Volunteers is broadly in line with 2018/19. Visiting partner churches throughout the year has led to one or two recruits. We will need to continue to recruit Street Pastors and Prayer Support Volunteers throughout 2020/21 to maintain our current level of patrols. We do not have enough people to patrol every weekend each month. We would like to get back to having patrols out every weekend.

## Coronavirus

The Management Committee met on 17 March 2020 and decided to suspend patrols until further notice with the aim of protecting our volunteers and preventing the spread of Coronavirus.

## Afternoon Patrols

Managing the hundreds of pupils who leave King Alfred's on foot or on bike and make their way through the town on their way home at the end of the school day is no small task and we have been asked for some help with this. In response, we are trying to introduce an afternoon patrol on one or two afternoons each week during term time. Currently nine people have expressed an interest in the SP role and two people in the PSV role. We are now looking for those interested to complete an application form. If you are available for up to 2 hours on a Friday afternoon, monthly, fortnightly or whenever you are able, and are interested in either of these roles, please do contact us.

## Who we are :

**Wantage and Grove Street Pastors** is a member organisation; all our regular volunteers are members of the charity, and there are other members who help, donate or take an interest in other ways; at present 151 in all.

### Teams - SPs and PSVs

We have 16 Street Pastors (10 female, 6 male) who regularly patrol in five teams. In addition, two Street Pastors act as reserves.

We have 13 PSVs (Prayer/Support Volunteers) who mostly work in teams sharing shift times with a Street Pastor team. Also, a few members have committed to pray for the teams from home and at other times.

### Coordinator and Prayer Coordinator

Nigel Watt is our part-time Coordinator. He manages the rota for patrols, arranges training, liaises with key stakeholders and other organisations.

We are looking for someone to take on the role of Senior Prayer Partner. If you would like more information about the role, please do contact us.

### Trustees

The trustees (seven at present) meet with the Coordinator monthly as the Management Committee for the work.

At least three of our members must be voluntary trustees, and we aim for the most allowed which is seven. At present the seven trustees are:

Dave Coombs, Wantage Community Church (Chair)  
Michael Elliott, Wantage Community Church (Treasurer)  
Marj Lunn, Wantage Baptist Church (Secretary)  
Helen Carter, Wantage Methodist Church  
Stephen West, Wantage Parish Church  
Hilary Moore, Wantage Baptist Church  
Sarah Goodall, Vale Elim Church

Trustees take on different roles and responsibilities within the Management Committee. These include: grant applications, fundraising, event management, health & safety, safeguarding, recruitment, publicity & social media and liaison with other organisations, among other things.

## **Quarterly News**

In January 2020 we published our first edition of Quarterly News, an A4 colour news sheet.

## **Events**

10th Anniversary            5th October 2019.

A 'thank you' tea, at which Eustace & Sharon Constance from Ascension Trust, who ran our first training sessions, presented us with a Glass Plaque commemorating our 10 years of ministry, was followed by a celebration service with guest speaker Rev Jonathan Aitken, now a prison chaplain at Pentonville prison, speaking from Matthew 25 v 31-46. His talk shared his heart for the vulnerable and encouraged us to appreciate our opportunities.

AGM at Cornerstone, local Christian Coffee Shop on the Wednesday 9th October. 22 members attended. We thanked David Law, who stood down as a Trustee after serving in several roles since the very first meeting.

### **Fundraising**

The following events helped raise funds and our profile in the community:

An Impossible God – The Passion Play (April)  
Grove & Wantage Extravaganza (June);  
Quiz & Curry Night (September);  
Christmas Tree Festival at Wantage Dickensian Evening (December);  
and carol singing in Wantage (December)

Thank you to everyone involved in these events.

Street Pastor Sundays are a really exciting way we have of engaging with the local churches that partner with us.

## **Community involvement**

Wantage & Grove Street Pastors is a member of :

**Wantage & Grove Community Alcohol Partnership (CAP).**  
**Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG)**  
**Friends of Sweatbox**  
**Youth Challenge Oxfordshire (YoCO)**  
**PubWatch.**

We took part in:

**OX12 Health Care Solutions Building** event  
**Tackling Violent Crime Workshop, Breaking the Cycle**  
**Wantage & District Business Breakfast.**

## Looking ahead

### Goals for 2020

Recruit more volunteers to build resilience within our teams and to extend how we serve the community.

Start some afternoon patrols to support King Alfred's Academy at the end of the school day

We need people to join as Street Pastors and Prayer Support Volunteers to maintain and improve our level of service in Wantage and Grove, and to branch out into new opportunities.

We need to raise about £15k per year. We are very thankful for individuals and churches who regularly contribute. Grant income may not be sustainable in the future.

Continue to hold a Street Pastor Sunday in each church this year.

We also plan to hold other events this year, which seek to increase support in prayer, volunteering and finance.

We will continue to arrange for some of the village church communities of the area to participate on the same basis as those actually in Wantage or Grove; that is, for people of those communities to become members and volunteers.

We wish to create a new way for people to connect with us. This could be for individuals or organisations for whom membership is not appropriate. We would call these people "Friends". Friends would not have any voting privileges nor be able to volunteer as Street Pastors or Prayer Support Volunteers, but could be encouraged to support in other practical and/or financial ways. We propose that anyone that has moved out of the area or who no longer meets the criteria for membership, be transferred from being a member to being a friend.

This matter will be formally proposed and dealt with at the 2020 AGM in October.

We are grateful for the support that we receive from members, the public and charitable bodies. Our work continues to be recognised and valued at all levels within the community. Thank you!

## Wantage & Grove Street Pastors

**Website:** [www.wantageandgrove.streetpastors.org.uk](http://www.wantageandgrove.streetpastors.org.uk)

**Email:** [wantageandgrove@streetpastors.org.uk](mailto:wantageandgrove@streetpastors.org.uk)

**Mobile:** 07554 655 594

**Facebook:** [facebook.com/wantageandgrovestreetpastors](https://facebook.com/wantageandgrovestreetpastors)

**Registered Charity:** 1134429

## **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.

We also pray for the continued success of the "Open the Book" Project where the teachings and stories of the Bible are taken into the Ridgeway C of E School in Childrey on a weekly assembly basis by a dedicated band of leaders from local churches using our premises as a base.

Christian Love to all.

## **Grove**

Greetings to all the Tuesday Fellowship Group. We hope that all are keeping well and we are looking forward to when we can meet again.

Family news from Kath to you all: Our Helen (Gourlay) is now a Doctor of Science in Education. And news of the new pear tree, which we bought this year. It has produced 6 pears. Starting off well.

### **Grove Coffee morning**

Keith is organising a virtual Wednesday coffee morning from 10.30 for about an hour. If you would like to join please contact him.

## **Wantage**

### **Keeping in Contact**

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 web site.

<https://wantagemethodist.org.uk>

We are looking at 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 15:00 every Tuesday - a chance to see people for a chat. Please contact Keith for access.



## **Pastoral**

It's good to have some happy news to record. On a very warm and sunny day at the beginning of June, Geoffrey Stokell's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday was celebrated with a small group of friends from church who gathered in his garden in a safe and socially distanced fashion. It was a greatly appreciated surprise for Geoffrey, and he has embraced his nonagenarian status with his usual enthusiasm and bonhomie. The decorative folder bearing messages for Geoffrey from many church friends, was also a surprise and it has delighted him to read all of the greetings it holds.

The second special birthday in June was at the Manse. Unfortunately, the initial plans which Keith had made for celebrating Liz's 60<sup>th</sup> had to be re-arranged to comply with current rules, but Liz was delighted to receive a digitally prepared card from the church family. Keith's comment was that he and Liz both felt "very loved and supported by everyone at WMC" – so mission accomplished! We also wish Liz a very happy retirement when it occurs at the end of this particularly challenging and demanding school term,

There's another special occasion for two of our church family coming up this month. On 18<sup>th</sup> July Gill and Gordon will have been married for fifty years. Unfortunately, their planned celebrations have had to be put on hold for the time being, but we all offer them our warmest congratulations on their Golden Wedding Anniversary, and wish them much future happiness together.

## **Praying for each other:**

In July the people listed below, who are on Alison Phillips' pastoral list, will be included in the prayer time during which all of the members of Eileen Rennie's House-group, join together to pray in their individual homes:

Jan Abrahall, Jill Bunney, Rob Charles, Janet Charles, Ann & Doug Hatto, Marion Jones, Jane & Brian Soffe, and Evelyn Osei-Akouwah,

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, we thank you for being with us at all times especially during the unprecedented times we are experiencing at present. We praise you for your faithfulness through good and bad times. Lord, help us to hear, read, mark, learn and personally respond to your living Word day by day. Help us to experience in all its fullness the wonder of your love, forgiveness and peace in all that we do. Lord God, may your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven; may your peace dwell in us now and keep us safe for eternity, through Jesus Christ. 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, Deacon Tracey Hume, The Symons family, Linda, Kathy, YMOSES, kids@church, Street Pastors and all at Bullingdon Prison, staff, prisoners and visitors.

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 August Newsletter, please let me know by Friday 24<sup>th</sup> July 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. Our usual summer visit to St. Mary's Convent in July sadly had to be cancelled because of the current Coronavirus situation.

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 p.m. It has also been good to see some of the group on the Zoom services we have already had and now the added opportunity to see friends on "Tea@Three". People have really appreciated these times as well as all the material on the Church website and on [youtubewantageandabingdonmethodistcircuit](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...). 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 email: m.rennie50@ntlworld.com

## **Community Drop In Café**

*Eileen Rennie*

Regretfully 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. We continue to look forward in faith to when we are able to meet again. 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*

Four months since we were last able to meet together but thanks to the church website and our Facebook page we are still able to keep in touch and to see photos of current projects. Especial thanks to June for keeping in contact with those who do not use the internet.

I had to stop angel knitting during the very hot weather but am looking forward to starting again. Hopefully new wool colours will inspire me to create some different designs for bodies and wings. Please let me know if you are short of anything and let's keep on being creative.

## **Church lunches.**

*Julie Horton, 07812 370796*

As I have now returned to work and coming to Wantage for 1 or 2 days a week I am happy to provide dinners and desserts, also cakes, quiche etc. and deliver them to you as required until we can return to our Church lunches. My days differ each week so would need to let you know each week which day I will be down.

From 1st July the cost of the food will be as follows:

Main course.	£4.00	Dessert	£2.50
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If you wish to take advantage of this please let me know.

## **Church Finances**

*Clive Phillips*

Thank you to all those church members and friends who have been able to continue to contribute to the church finances while the church buildings have been temporarily closed over the last three months. Although the church is closed we still have to pay some very significant expenses including: the Circuit Assessment, which pays the stipends and related costs associated with the church ministers; utility bills, although these have been reduced to a minimum; and other non-optional costs including leasing of equipment, website and copyright. We have managed to reduce almost completely any optional costs. We have, however, temporarily lost a significant amount of our income. This includes, most importantly, fees from organisations hiring our rooms; some income from lunches; some money from cash offerings at Sunday services and, eventually, the gift aid which would have been reclaimed on this through the gift aid small donations scheme.

Fortunately many members and some friends have continued to support the church financially through monthly, bank standing orders; regular or occasional bank transfers; and by sending me cheques, some gift aided with their blue gift aid envelopes.

At present we do not know when, or to what extent, the church buildings will reopen for church services or for external user groups. Currently the church finances are reasonably sound but it would be premature of me to comment on how the balance of our expenditure and income is affecting our reserves. The church reserves are intended to help us through an unexpected time like this but are also necessary for the

refurbishment of the church hall agreed by Church Council last year. Our accounting year ends on August 31<sup>st</sup> and I expect to be able to provide a more considered statement of the church's finances in September.

Meanwhile can I please remind everyone that if you are not contributing to church funds and would like to do so you can do this in several ways:

- Setting up a regular standing order from your bank account to the church bank account.
- Occasional bank transfers.
- Sending a cheque made out to Wantage Methodist Church to my home. Please do not send cash unless it is the only way you can contribute. If you use the blue envelope scheme please include one envelope with your cheque.

Please feel no compulsion to donate. We all know that some are struggling financially. Close to home, one of my sons-in-law lost his job last week due to the effect of the pandemic on business.

If you need the church bank account details please e-mail or telephone me ([candaphillips@gmail.com](mailto:candaphillips@gmail.com) or 01235 760335). I know that several members who donate through the blue envelope scheme do not yet have their envelopes for this financial year because they could not collect them before the church buildings closed. If you would like me to deliver yours to your home please let me know.

Again thank you to everyone, whether you are able to contribute or not. It is good to see some of you at the weekly "Zoom" service and to catch up with other friends by telephone or Facetime, or even through accidental, socially distanced, encounters while out walking or shopping. It is strengthening to know that we remain part of an active church family and that we will, in God's time, be able to meet together again, hopefully soon.

## **What is the way ahead?**

*Gordon Skidmore*

We need to start planning the journey to the "new normal" as it is called when we can start meeting together on our premises. As with any journey we shall need a road map or plan to know what we have to do to make that journey and what we can do when we get there, and a timetable or diary to see when we are going to do it.

At present we do not have a view on when we are going to start the journey, but we do need to start thinking about what will be needed to be done in preparation for and during the journey. Fortunately we are being given good generic information on what will be needed, certainly in the early stages of the journey. The challenge is to apply this to our own situation. In the next few weeks, we shall be identifying the obstacles that we need to negotiate in order that the church buildings can safely be used again, what we need to do, when we can sensibly aim to start on the journey and in what sequence we can support resuming activities – both for church and external users.