

Wantage & Abingdon Circuit

CHILDREY, GROVE & WANTAGE SECTOR



# CGW NEWS

March 2021

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Contributions for the **next Newsletter** should be sent to the editor by email, phone or in writing by **Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2021** to  
[wantage.sector.newsletter@gmail.com](mailto:wantage.sector.newsletter@gmail.com)  
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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.**

**There is a Circuit Zoom Service at 10:30 each week:**  
(for access to these please contact Rev Keith Underhill)

**Texts for Services at home for each Sunday are posted 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.....**

The other day, I was very kindly sent a copy of a newsletter for Seascale Methodist Church from May 1990 - which included my "From The Manse letter" for that month.

After initially wondering where those 31 years had gone, to see what I had written all those years ago brought back many happy memories of my probationer's years spent in the North West and of the people that accepted me so readily as a 'wet behind the ears' Minister.

Eight months into my first appointment I begin my letter saying; "By the time you read this the Easter eggs will have been long eaten and forgotten, the visiting relatives will have arrived back at their own homes, the holidays and days off will be finished and life will be getting back to normal, or will it?"

I then pondered the question as to whether life could ever get back to normal after the events of Easter - concluding towards the end by saying "we need to be reminded that there is no such thing as 'getting back to normal'."

The person who sent me this newsletter commented on the fact that my last paragraph was very prophetic!

As the numbers of people being vaccinated against Covid-19 continues to rise and a clearer 'road map' out of lockdown and restrictions brings some much needed hope, our thoughts naturally turn to what happens now? We have been saying for a long time that we cannot go back to where we were before, to what was once seen as being 'normal', for the landscape has changed and in ways both large and small, things have moved on and we are in a different place.

When I wrote that letter to the Church at Seascale in May 1990, I wasn't for one minute trying to be prophetic inasmuch as trying to predict the future, but rather to remind us all of the fundamental truth regarding who we are and our faith. That in seeking to be disciples of Jesus, we are constantly being challenged, transformed and changed as we allow God to work in and through us. 'Back to normal' suggests standing still, staying put, business as usual, maintaining the status quo.

Responding to Jesus' call of "follow me" is all about discipleship. It is about being on a journey where each new step takes us further away from where we started.

The question we face, as we seek to begin to emerge from the events of the last twelve months or so, is what kind of Church is God calling us to be now? What good things have we discovered that are now part of who we are, that should continue and be developed even further? What things were we unable to do, and consequently need to pick up once more, but in the light of where we now find ourselves? What things do we simply let go of and leave behind.

These are questions that we face together and together we will discover the way forward as we continually find ourselves "changed from glory into glory!"

With love and God Bless

*Keith*

## Lent Study Group

During Lent there is a Circuit wide **Lenten study group via Zoom** with the sessions lasting for one hour from **7:30 pm - 8:30 pm on Tuesdays**

We are using "Woven", a Lenten study written and compiled by Rev Michaela Youngson, a former President of Conference. Everyone is welcome to join in and take part.

Each study will follow the pattern of :

A short act of opening worship and setting the scene.

Presentation and input.

Break Out groups (each with a small number of participants for guided conversation and discussion).

Short plenary and closing devotions.

The themes are:

Tuesday 9 <sup>th</sup> March	Week 3	Turning the tables
Tuesday 16 <sup>th</sup> March	Week 4	No condemnation
Tuesday 23 <sup>rd</sup> March	Week 5	A grain of wheat
Tuesday 30 <sup>th</sup> March	Week 6	Passion: Anointing and betrayal

If you currently do not take part in the Zoom services but would like to be part of this initiative or if you are aware of others who might like to join in, please contact Keith directly so that he can add you / them to the list.

## WGCP Plan for Easter

A "Stations of the Cross" walk through Wantage and Grove is being prepared. More details will be available later in March.

It has been agreed that it would not be appropriate to attempt a gathering of any kind in the market square given the current Covid restrictions. However, a board or notice could be considered, promoting the WGCP "Stations of the Cross" walk through Wantage and Grove, and explaining that the traditional market square gathering at Easter could not take place this year.

## Tea and Taize

Jocelyn says that "this is an idea from the chaplaincy at Warwick University – a monthly time of worship and prayer in the tradition of Taize, using music, words, images and prayers. At prayers on Friday people thought this would be a good idea for us to try, and I would love to lead it. We thought that an hour from 4 to 5 pm might work, although it may be that some people would appreciate it as an evening event.

The first one will be on **Tuesday 16th March on zoom at 4:00 pm.**

If you would prefer an evening one, then please let me know and I can schedule in a repeat of the afternoon event." Please contact Jocelyn directly if you'd like to take part in this or find out more [jocelyn.bennett@methodist.org.uk](mailto:jocelyn.bennett@methodist.org.uk)

## A Methodist Way of Life

You may well be asking, what is A Methodist Way of Life?

Well, a Methodist Way of Life is a way of living. It is how we try to live our lives in response to God's love, made known to us in Jesus. Like the early Christians (**Acts 2.42-47**), we seek to express what it means to follow Jesus in the regular, practical actions of worship, learning and caring, service and evangelism.

In this sense, A Methodist Way of Life is both new and old. It is new, in that Methodists first discussed such a way at the 2018 Conference, although it is based on **Our Calling**, agreed in 2000. That, in turn, was built on what Methodists have always done, since the days of John Wesley, in trying to follow Jesus and live out the Christian faith – just as those first followers in Acts did.

The **commitments** of A Methodist Way of Life remind us of, and provide a compass for, Christian living.

There will be an open Zoom meeting for anyone in the Circuit on **Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> April at 7:30pm** to find out more about this exciting new venture. The event will be led for us by Michael Wadsworth from the Methodist learning network.

Please **let Keith know** if you'd like to join in so that he can send you the Zoom link.

### Guided meditations

Rev Eileen Appleyard is a retired Methodist minister recently moved to live in Abingdon.

She is interested in Spirituality, and in the first lockdown she qualified to lead a meditation group under the auspices of a group called TakeTime ([taketime.org.uk](http://taketime.org.uk)). It is what is described as a 'Fresh Expression' of the Methodist Church. This particular group itself is sponsored by All Saints Methodist Church Abingdon.

A first Introductory meditation Course has now come to an end and a follow-up has been arranged for the after Easter period. It will be using some of the Easter stories as the focus of what we do. There will be **five or six meetings** in this series beginning on the **15<sup>th</sup> April** at 7:30 pm on Zoom.

The meditation lasts about 40 minutes. The style of the group is centred around a time of quiet Ignatian style meditation in which we each have chance to imagine being with Jesus, based on a Gospel reading, and to have time in his presence to simply 'be' there.

Prior to the meditation itself there is a time of approach in which we are invited to relax and many find that also serves to quieten our minds of some of the clutter and worry we carry especially in these strange times. Each evening is complete in itself so it's OK to miss an occasional one if necessary.

To register please contact Rev Eileen Appleyard by email:

eileenappleyard13@gmail.com .

If you can do that **as soon as possible** we shall know that the group will be viable.

# **WORLD CHURCH NEWS**

## **World Day of Prayer 5<sup>th</sup> March**

Theme : Build on a Strong Foundation - praying this year with Vanuatu.

Background to Vanuatu is provided below to inform prayer.

### **VANUATU**

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On the other side of the world in the South Pacific, 2000 miles east of Australia, lies an archipelago of 80 islands called Vanuatu.

With black and white sandy beaches, beautiful coral reefs, tropical coloured fish, forests full of lovely birds, abundant flora and fauna, and spectacular cascades these are wonderful islands.

There are no large mammals, poisonous snakes or poisonous spiders. The climate is temperate and the soil fruitful, but this region is prone to natural disasters including earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and many destructive cyclones in the hot and humid season from November to March.

To the Ni-Vanuatu, the people of Vanuatu, land is very important. It is not viewed as a thing to be owned, but as vital to the existence of humans as a mother is to a child. The traditional Vanuatu family took care of each other and was self-sustaining, and respect was shown for the environment. Modern technology is changing life – although the internet is scarcely available in the outer islands, mobile phones are almost universal. But the islands, which vary greatly in songs, dances and customs, are proud of their cultural identity.

### **HISTORY**

In 1606 Spanish explorers named the largest island Espiritu Santo. In 1774 Captain James Cook renamed the Islands the New Hebrides. In the 1800s came the traders, followed by 'blackbirders' who kidnapped, tricked or coerced South Pacific islanders into working on the cotton and sugar plantations in Queensland, Fiji and Hawaii.

In 1906, France and the United Kingdom, having both claimed parts of the archipelago, agreed to jointly manage it as the Anglo-French condominium of New Hebrides. The natives found themselves stateless – neither French nor British nor New Hebrideans and with no land rights. They remained stateless until 1980, when the Republic of Vanuatu was founded as a parliamentary democracy. Vanuatu means 'country that stands up', and the motto adopted was 'In God we stand.'

Traditional staple foods include yam, taro, banana, coconut, sugar cane, tropical nuts and greens, pigs, fowl, and seafood.

The national ceremonial dish is lap-lap – a pudding made of grated root crops or plantain.

The preparation and drinking of kava is an integral part of ceremonial occasions, when pigs are exchanged and eaten.

The coconut tree is viewed as the tree of life because all its parts are useful. The demand for cash crops has now limited the amount of land available for traditional food.

## VANUATU TODAY

**The people** of Vanuatu are mostly Melanesian, with a Polynesian minority. The population is around 300,000 of whom nearly a fifth live in Port Vila, the largest city.

**113 languages** and numerous dialects were spoken until recently – more languages than anywhere else in the world. Bislama, which is widely spoken, French and English are the official languages.

**Education** is not compulsory or free. Most families can only afford to educate their firstborn child, and boys get priority. However, in the past 20 years there have been changes and the gender gap in literacy and education has narrowed.

**Health** of women and children are key national priorities of the government.

**Malnutrition** is a growing problem, accounting for most of the deaths in children under 5. Malnutrition has been aggravated by the introduction of processed, western foods.

**Violence**, physical and/or sexual, affects approximately 60% of women and girls.

**Safe drinking water** and adequate sanitation facilities are major concerns. In rural areas people may have to walk up to an hour to find water.

## THE FLAG



Adopted in 1980, the lower portion is green to represent the richness of the islands, whilst the upper part is red symbolising the blood of wild boars and men. The black triangle is for the Ni-Vanuatu people. The Y-shape is yellow and represents the light of the gospel shining through the Y-shaped archipelago which makes up the country. The emblem is a boar's tusk representing prosperity; inside the curve are crossed leaves of the namele tree signifying peace.

## ECONOMY

The government is the largest employer. Vanuatu's economic growth is based on tourism, construction and offshore financial services but the proceeds from foreign-owned big hotels and resorts primarily leave the country. The current system has led to a huge gap between the haves and the have-nots.

Young people are migrating to the towns of Luganville and Port Vila hoping for jobs that are non-existent, so therefore many find themselves without enough food, water or proper housing.

Women represent 40% of the labour force but are rarely in leadership positions. Opportunities for women to set up businesses are limited as they lack access to capital, financial services and markets. The Constitution supports gender equality but there is no political will to implement it.

## RELIGION

Originally, each island had its own gods, customs and culture. The Vanuatu people did not worship animals or plants but believed there was a creator somewhere in the heavens.

Christianity and colonisation had a significant impact on island society. Formerly, throughout the archipelago, chiefs were the custodians of the land, language and heritage, and determined the norms of the societies under their jurisdictions. In the Farea (village meeting house) issues were debated and although men were generally the decision makers, women had ways to bring their concerns.

Christianity changed a decentralised system of life in the villages to a centralised form of governance, and the role of women in decision-making was much reduced. Missionaries opposed cannibalism and regarded local religion as witchcraft. Currently 83% of the population is Christian.

### **Mozambique: A Response to Cyclones, Covid and Violence**

Since 2017, Mozambique has endured, cyclones, storms, drought, the COVID-19 pandemic and a resurgence of violence. Persons are suffering displacement, trauma and injury or death.

The Mozambique Synod of the Methodist Church in Southern Africa is responding to the needs of the community with practical assistance. In February 2021, the World Mission Fund supported this work with a grant of £10,000.

Please continue to keep the people of Mozambique in your prayers.

#### **Methodist Church in Mozambique responds to the national challenges, supported by the World Mission Fund**

#### **Humanitarian support for Mozambique victims affected by cyclone Eloise and Islamists insurgents - £10,000 General Grant from the World Mission Fund.**

Mozambique has been hit by a series of natural disasters in recent years, with a situation probably worsened by the climate change.

In 2018 the central region was terribly devastated by IDAI Cyclone, at the same time the country was facing floods and Kenneth Tropical Cyclone in the northern region of the country and terrible drought in the south, where some people and cattle died as result of this.

Whilst coping with the COVID 19 pandemic in January 2021, large storms have again crossed Mozambique, affecting hundreds of thousands of people, with the prospect of more storms to come in early 2021. The psychological effects of these disasters have been huge. Many people have recently lost their loved ones and while they were trying to recover, storms have once again affected poor and vulnerable people in a similar way.

Whilst dealing with storms and pandemic there has been a resurgence of violence within Mozambique. Since 2017, more the two thousand people have been killed



with houses and infrastructure such as schools, hospitals and churches burnt. People have fled their homes to safe areas in the city of Pemba and also in other provinces in the North of Mozambique, Nampula, Niassa and Zambézia. The journey to find safety has meant many families spending days and nights in bushland without food or shelter. Some families in places like Namialo in Nampula are hosting about 60 other families in their own family compounds. There are more than 560,000 displaced people living in tents in overcrowded camps. Government, some religious communities, NGOs and people of goodwill are trying to provide some assistance, but the need is so huge and the victims of the attacks perpetuated by the insurgents have been displaced and scattered to various places.

**The Mozambique Synod of the Methodist Church in Southern Africa is responding to these multiple situations of need, and this is being supported from the World Mission Fund of the Methodist Church in Britain with a General Grant of £10.000.**

1. Due to the psychological effects caused by the above-mentioned situations, the Methodist Church in Mozambique intends to provide psychosocial support, pastoral counselling and spiritual care to affected people. This will be done in conjunction with its ecumenical partners throughout the country, seeing that the Methodist Church clergy alone cannot reach all who are in need.
2. The Methodist Church once again intends to do fact finding in terms of the ground needs of people and provide assistance with agriculture inputs as a way for a rapid production recovery.
3. It will provide food and mats (sleeping carpets), assistance that is necessary for houses hosting a large number of refugees families.
4. It will provide mosquito nets and medication that are necessary to the displaced people, victims of war and cyclones.
5. It plans to provide educational material to students.
6. It will support the displaced families from villages with food, hygiene items and psychological support following the violence in northern Mozambique.
7. It will conduct public health campaigns to reduce the spread of COVID-19 as positive cases increased since December 2020.

The Methodist Church in Mozambique has launched a campaign to its members, aiming to collect clothes and goods to assist those who have lost all that they possessed, because of Cyclone Eloise. Providing essential relief to the victims will help reduce the spread of COVID-19, in addition to reducing hunger and malaria. The assistance should offer some support, comfort and dignified well-being during perpetual hardships.

The Methodist Church has provided assistance with food parcels to 1,400 people with extreme food needs because of the COVID 19 Pandemic in Maputo, Gaza, Manica, Sofala and Nampula Provinces. These food parcels were distributed to beneficiaries in two phases, the first in September and October 2020 and the second phase in December 2020 and January 2021.

Together with local Youth Peace Clubs, the Mozambique synod of MCSA also intends to engage the Young People for Peace to build awareness and increase understanding of the harmfulness of fundamentalist doctrines and armed actions. The church also plans to engage professionals to work with the youths to prevent them joining the terrorists.

In terms of Covid 19 Pandemic response, the Methodist Church is still providing public awareness to church and community members for the prevention of coronavirus disease spread. For some elderly and poor people, the Church intends to provide PPE (Personal Protection Equipment) and create the required conditions for the re-opening of its worship places.

**Please keep the Mozambique Synod of the Methodist Church Southern Africa in your prayers as they seek to respond to the needs of their communities.**

## **Cuba: A Growing Church during the Pandemic**

**The Methodist Church in Cuba has experienced strong church growth and has consistently made new disciples of Christ since the 90s. While the pandemic has slowed this growth, it has by no means stopped it. The head of church, Bishop Ricardo Pereira, shares this news about the situation in Cuba:**

“In Cuba, we have had a sudden increase in COVID-19 cases. Last year, between 40 and 50 cases a day was deemed alarming. Now we are experiencing between 500 and 700 cases per day. The hospitals are at breaking point. The government has implemented very strict measures to control the rate of infection.

In the midst of all of this, the church continues to be active in the work of the Lord. We continue to grow, even if not at our usual rate...we continue to pray for all our brothers and sisters in the UK and in the world”.

**Please join us in praying for Cuba:**

*God of hope, we thank you for the way in which your church continues to grow throughout the entire world, despite this global pandemic.*

*We thank you that your love can touch the heart of anybody who has an ear to listen to you and believes in the saving name of Jesus Christ.*

*We thank you for continuing to use our Methodist brothers and sisters in Cuba to reach out to their neighbours and communities and that many Cubans are coming to Christ in the midst of these troubling times.*

*Please strengthen your church in Cuba and the entire Cuban nation as it experiences a second wave of infection.*

*We pray that in your goodness the measures implemented by the Cuban State will quickly bring down the rate of infection and death.*

*In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

## **ACTION for CHILDREN**

### **Supporting parents through lockdown**

The demand for parenting support during lockdown has grown as families have struggled to balance home schooling, childcare and work. Ruth Stokes from Action for Children reports on how the charity has responded.

***“She offered more help to me in our short conversation than I’ve had in years of trying to get help for my son”***

#### **- a parent's review after using the Parent Talk service**

In the middle of the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic, children’s charity Action for Children launched a new service for parents. The advice website and one-to-one chat - [Parent Talk](#) - was a response to a growing number of parents needing help and guidance.

In June the charity and YouGov asked more than 2,000 parents how the coronavirus pandemic was impacting them and their families. More than one in three parents said they felt out of their depth. Over a third said they were struggling due a lack of usual support.

This reflected what the charity was seeing in its own services: in the first three months of lockdown, there was a surge of 417% to its existing digital parenting advice.

#### **Down-to-earth advice, when it’s needed**

Parent Talk offers down-to-earth parenting advice, when it’s needed. Parents can browse articles on the most common parenting questions, or talk one-to-one with a qualified parenting coach about anything that’s worrying them.

The charity sees parents come to the service with a range of needs: from emotional wellbeing and mental health to behaviour, development and co-parenting.

The Parent Talk website builds on the charity’s successful one-to-one chat service, which has supported more than 450,000 parents since its pilot in 2018. This includes more than 11,500 one-to-one chats.

#### **Developing essential, continued support**

Recent data shows that 90% of parents rate the support from one-to-one conversations at 4 or 5 out of 5, while 79% of parents say they feel supported after accessing the information, advice and guidance content on the website.

The site is reaching a large number of parents around the UK - between July and December 2020, it helped 233,647 families. And the need for support remains high. That means that a priority for the team is now working to ensure the service is sustainable for the long-term, to allow them to reach more parents when they need support.

Alongside this, they’re using parental feedback and data to develop the service and help people find what they need as quickly and easily as possible.

This feedback also helps the team see the difference they're making. As one parent said, "She [the adviser] offered more help to me in our short conversation than I've had in years of trying to get help for my son. I cannot thank her enough."

## **From JPIT**

### **Reset The Debt News**

By the end of 2020, over 900 people had written to their MP about Reset The Debt. 425 MPs have been contacted, and the campaign has been featured in the national news. But we're still calling on the Government to recognise and respond to the mounting Covid-debt crisis weighing heavily on low-income families.

Last week, both the Scottish and UK Government's announced an extension to the evictions bans introduced in 2020. But hidden in the detail was bad news for families who fell behind on rent because of the pandemic in England and Wales, as lockdown rent arrears now count as grounds for eviction.

This week, it was reported that County Court Judgements (CCJs) have risen dramatically. This means that people who have fallen behind on a non-priority payment (such as a car or utility bill) can be chased for the debt through bailiff action. This rise in CCJs has occurred much earlier than we expected, and signals a surge in problem debt.

THE BEST  
OF ALL IS  
GOD  
IS WITH US.

## Smiles and Groans

*Thanks to Rev Tony Buglass on Facebook*

This bloke said to me, do you want a game of darts? I said, okay, nearest to bull starts. I said 'Baa', he said 'Moo', I said 'you're the closest.'

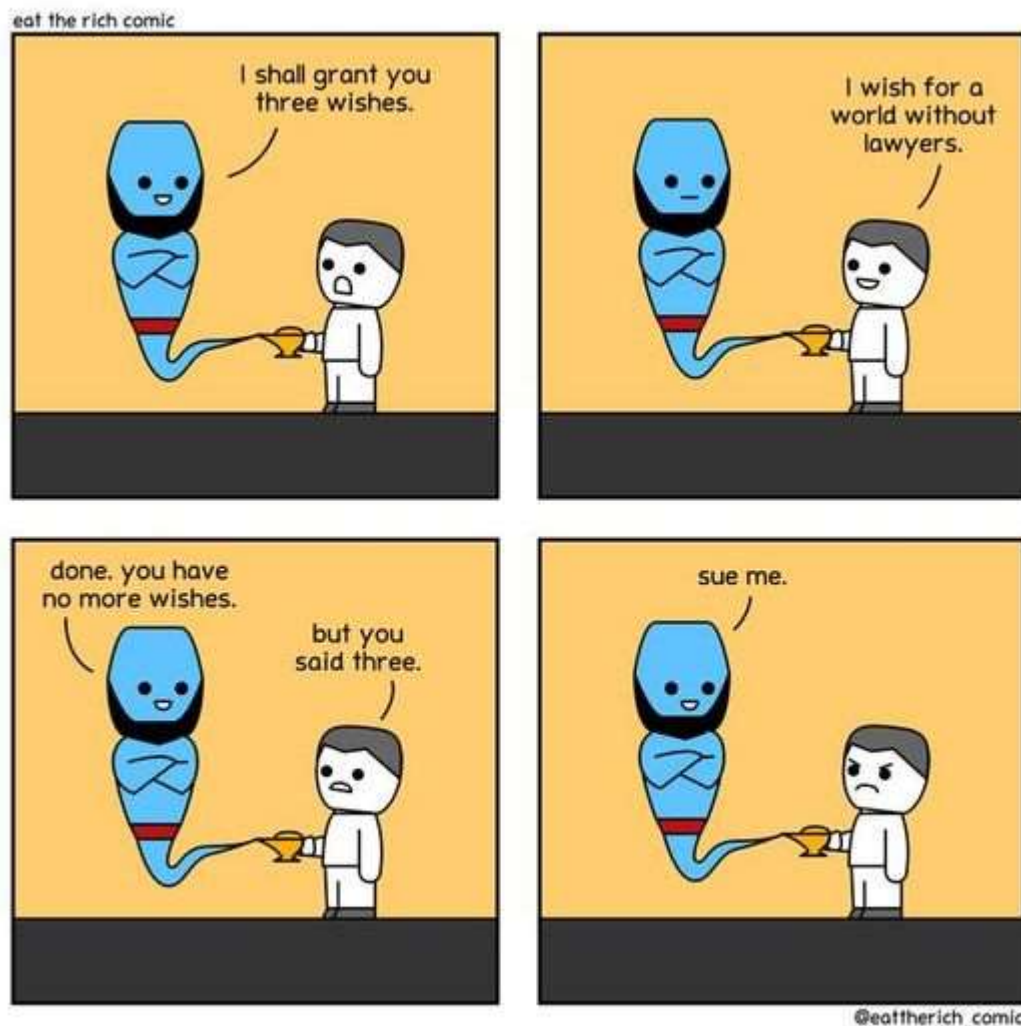
I went to the Chinese restaurant. I said 'These noodles are a bit crunchy.' He said, 'You're eating the chopsticks.'

I ordered and this duck walked up to me. He gave me a red rose and said 'Your eyes sparkle like diamonds.' I said 'Waiter, I ordered aromatic duck.'

I bought some Armageddon cheese. On the packet it said 'Best before End'.

Did you know if a stick insect lays its eggs in a jar of Bovril, it will give birth to a litter of Twiglets?

I was gonna play my drums today but someone stole them. Bongos that idea.



## Childrey

### **Prayers:**

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

Christian Love to all.

## Grove

**Handmade cards for sale**, proceeds for Freyja's Fund. Judith is having a sale of handmade cards, suitable for Easter, birthdays and anniversaries, on **Saturday, 20<sup>th</sup> March** from 2:00 to 4:00 pm at 121 Mayfield Avenue, Grove. It will be held in her garden or in the conservatory if wet. If you would like to contact Judith about it or to arrange a different time to go along, please phone her on 07887 995530.

During this "pandemic year" the **support and friendship** of all the members of our church community has been very much appreciated. We continue to remember all those who are in poor health or have other difficulties and problems compounded by the coronavirus situation and all who are missing close contact with their family and special friends. Hopefully as lockdown is gradually being eased and the weather turns warmer, we will see more people out and about to exchange greetings with.

You are invited to be part of the **Wednesday Zoom Coffee mornings** which Keith arranges. They are a good opportunity to keep in touch, find out news, share your thoughts and listen to what other people have to say. We usually spend some time all together, then are put into smaller groups for a short while, which makes conversation easier. If you would like to join us on Wednesday mornings (usually 10:30 am) please let Keith know. You will then receive a weekly invitation by email and can join in as and when you are able to.

**Weekly collection envelopes:** Judith would like to know if there is anyone who no longer wishes to receive their weekly collection envelopes. During lockdown, they may have found a different way of paying their contribution and may prefer to continue with it. If so, please would you let her know by **31<sup>st</sup> March** (07887 995530). Thank you.

### **News of Yotam and appeal**

*Ian Sturt*

Some of us at Grove are still in touch with Yotam in Malawi. He is continuing to travel all over the country encouraging and building up the church. Malawi is a very poor country and most people subsist on what they can grow on small gardens. Purchased food is very expensive and food security is very tenuous. The staple diet

is a maize porridge called Nsima eaten with a relish of whatever is available or in season. Yotam has his own garden and struggles to afford fertiliser for it (a 50kg bag of fertiliser costs around £20). He also struggles to afford the travel costs necessary in his ministry. This year he has at least one trip a month planned to visit churches and train his pastors. The average yearly wage in Malawi is around £1000. I would estimate he needs double that in order to finance his travels and expenses.

Many of his churches endure hardship, for instance in the rainy season in December, the roof blew off the church in Old Maula and they have to wait until the dry season to repair it. But at least they had rain and are hopeful they will have a good harvest.

The latest news from Yotam is that he is suffering from malaria so please pray for him to recover well.

Many people in our churches have contributed to Yotam in the past and I would like to invite all who wish to make some contribution this year towards his upkeep and also towards his truck. You may remember helping to buy a truck for him in 2014 but it has gasped it's last and he now needs another. He has asked us to save up what we collect until December when he hopes to have enough to buy one.

If you would like to contribute, please send your donations to your treasurer marked for Yotam.

Please note that in order to claim Gift Aid in this financial year, all contributions for Yotam need to be with Roger by **Sunday, 28<sup>th</sup> March** at the latest so that they can be banked before the Easter weekend. Anything after this date will go towards next year's gift aid.

### **Grove coffee mornings**

*Ian Sturt*

Over the years Grove church has raised a lot of money with our Saturday coffee mornings. We would obviously love to meet in person, but have instead talked about resuming these once a month online via Zoom. I have offered to facilitate them. The first will be on **Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> March** at 10 am in aid of Yotam. I'm planning the next for **Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> April** at 10 am in order not to clash with Easter weekend.

If you would like to attend either event please let me know at [isturt56@gmail.com](mailto:isturt56@gmail.com) and I will reply with the Zoom link and how to send your contributions.

# **Wantage**

## **Wantage Church Council**

An emergency meeting of Church Council has been called for **March 17<sup>th</sup>** at 7:30 pm on Zoom to authorise the opening of an individual bank account for Wantage Methodist Church and to agree the signatories for this account. This has proved necessary to allow the winding down of the banking system the Circuit has been using for many years (Circuit Giro).

## **Wantage Annual Church Meeting - Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> April at 7:30 pm.**

Again this will be on Zoom and Keith will issue access information in due course.

In preparation for this, an **Annual Church Report** will be published and **contributions** for this should reach Gordon Skidmore **by March 14<sup>th</sup>** at the email address [wmcannualreport@gmail.com](mailto:wmcannualreport@gmail.com)

We would like to hear from anyone who would be interested in finding more about the role of Church Treasurer, Church Council Member or Church Steward. If you are prepared to consider any of these opportunities and would like to know more, please contact Keith or one of the Stewards.

## **Where next?**

Last Tuesday, the Government outlined a four stage programme outlining the path towards the removal of all legal constraints on our activity. This does not, of course, excuse us from thinking through what is responsible behaviour. It does offer the possibility that restrictions will be relaxed to the point where we can resume public worship in church buildings.

The outline plan suggests that limited association indoors will be permitted from the middle of May (Step 3) and this seems the nearest equivalence to the situation in October last year. We will therefore prepare to hold services in the same way as we did in October. Through the following period, we would reduce social distancing and increase the seating as demand increases over the summer with the intention of restoring wider church activities from September. We are expecting to maintain Zoom transmission of services.

Regular lettings will be reviewed and, with some possible exceptions, we would look to consider regular bookings from September in so far as that proves practical.

It is intended to retain the provision of hand sanitation facilities for the indefinite future. The compulsory use of face masks will be reviewed over the summer.

## **Fund for Human Need**

Thanks have been received for the donation of £250 to the Fund for Human Need from Wantage Methodist Church . “Your support for the work of the Fund in helping the homeless, refugees and others in real need, particularly in these difficult times, is greatly appreciated.”



As we continue our journey through Lent, our entry into the month of March enables us to welcome the lengthening days, the abundance of Spring flowers, fledgling birds coming into our gardens and birdsong which is unmissable, especially early in the mornings. We cannot help but be thankful for these natural signs new life and new hope, even as we continue to contemplate on the cruelty of Jesus's suffering and death before we celebrate his glorious resurrection on Easter Day. Alongside our most joyous Christian celebration, we are most likely looking forward with increasing hope of soon being able to safely venture a little further outdoors, and to meet with a few more people in more places. At the heart of our Pastoral system lies our support for one another through prayer, through practical assistance and through direct contact with each other. Hopefully we are moving towards the time when we can supplement the phone calls, emails, cards and electronic messages with actually seeing each other and enjoying 'real' conversations. In the meantime, we'll continue to do what we've done so well for almost a year – upholding each other by praying, continuing to care despite being apart, and knowing that God's love for us all is the one certainty which we all share. That has been, and will always be able to overcome whatever restrictions limit our usual opportunities for offering pastoral care, love and support to each other.

**Praying for each other:**

In March the following people on **Diane Barton's Pastoral List** will be included in the prayer time at Eileen Rennie's house-group: June Coppock, Glenis Deval, Rodney Deval, Hilary Rewcastle, Mary Trotter, Rosemary Rae, and Ruth Manning, and on **Alison Brown's list**: June Grunwald, Alan Grunwald, Jane Robinson, Judith and Michael Skinner and Geoffrey Stokell.

In addition to the names listed above, those in our church family, who through frailty or ill health can no longer worship with us on Sundays, will also be prayed for by name at Eileen's house-group

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**Prayer list***Eileen Rennie*

Loving God, we thank you for the beauty and joy of your wonderful Springtime world. New life all around us reminds us that amidst the many troubles that may surround us you are still at work in your love and care for the world and for each one of us. As we journey through Lent help us to concentrate on your message of love and forgiveness and teach us to put that message into practice. Faithful Lord, fill us afresh with your Holy Spirit, that we may bring glory to you and Jesus in all that we do. Amen.

Please pray for:

Jean M, Bethan Grant, Jane, Alan Bunn and family, Carol Mackinder, Anne, Betty, Emma Wright and family, Alex and Brian, Gordon & Marina, Caroline, Adrian, Jenny, Kathy, June Coppock, Sarah Holt, Jinnie Brown and sons, Alastair Wright and family, Sharon and family, Pauline Hawkins, Charlie Webb, Eric and Judy Thomas and family, Nigel, Julie and Jill, Alan Smith, Doug, Michael Clegg, All at Bullingdon Prison, staff, prisoners and visitors, Our Ministers, Deacon, Local Preachers and Worship Leaders, 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 April Newsletter, please let Eileen know by **Friday 19<sup>th</sup> March** in order for her to meet the newsletter deadline.

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

## GOOD NEWS

Richard George's Grandson Matthew's wife Vicky gave birth to a baby girl, Melody, (7lb 5oz) in Coventry on 18<sup>th</sup> January. All are well.

### Knit & Chat

*Carolyn Roche, 01235 764310*



The group have decided that it would raise people's spirits to yarn bomb (decorate) the outside of the church for Easter Sunday with knitted/crocheted flowers. We hope to decorate the side gate and the hand rails at the front of the church, although this will depend on how many flowers we can make. Some of us have already started trying out different patterns and photos of the results can be seen on the church website. Angel knitting is still carrying on but with flowers and personal projects there is no chance of getting bored. If you would like to join in and would like a pattern please contact June G. or myself. Also please let me know if you need wool.

Do call me if you have any other queries or just fancy a chat.

### Tuesday Afternoon House Group

*Eileen Rennie*

The sun is shining, Spring is here with all the new life and we have so much to be thankful for.

Although we are still not able to meet physically as a group, we have been able to keep in touch with each other in many different ways. One real positive has been our uniting in prayer each Tuesday in our own homes praying for people and situations locally and globally.

With the help of lockdown and the continuing success of the rollout of the vaccine we are slowly moving in the right direction. If we all play our part in sticking firmly to the restrictions we can look forward in faith to schools re-opening on 8<sup>th</sup> March. If this goes smoothly and everyone remains faithful in adhering to guidelines we can

then hopefully advance to the next stage. Eventually we will be able to meet again and rejoice together.

We continue to pray for the current situation and that we will all act responsibly and so look forward to a brighter future ahead. All our NHS Staff and Support Services still need our prayers as they still face overwhelming workloads as they fight to support all in need of additional care.

I will continue to email the group each Monday with details for our prayer time for the current week when each Tuesday, although apart, we will unite in prayer at 3:00 pm. Please let us know if there is someone or some situation you would like us to pray for.

It is good to have the availability of Zoom Sunday Services, Reflective Worship Resources, YouTube resources and our Church Website as well as Zoom Tea @ Three on Tuesdays.

We will all have to keep careful watch on updates from our government to know how we can continue to plan.

In the meantime as we get out for a little exercise, we hope that we will meet up with some familiar faces to catch up whilst still socially distancing.

We do all look forward to the time when we can all meet together again. In the meantime please be assured that you are all held in prayer.

If you have any queries you can contact me (Eileen Rennie) by telephone on 01235 224284 or email: [m.rennie50@ntlworld.com](mailto:m.rennie50@ntlworld.com)

### **Community Drop In Café**

*Eileen Rennie*

Well, this month there does seem to be some hope on the horizon as the Government has announced the Road Map for the way out of lockdown. We can look forward to the first stage as schools reopen on 8<sup>th</sup> March. If everyone continues to play their part and stick to the rules and the vaccine programme continues successfully we can hopefully then look forward to the next stage being implemented.

We have much to be thankful for meantime and so with a little more patience I am sure that we can look forward to eventually being able to meet together again. That will be a day to rejoice and be glad!

We are always pleased to be able to keep in touch with some of you through phone calls and also to see you sometimes when we are out for our daily exercise when we can have a socially distanced chat. We know from these contacts that many people are missing the joy of their Monday morning weekly visits. Please be assured that as soon as we have some definite news on re-opening we will be letting you know.

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 willing volunteers waiting in the wings to be able to resume service again. They too have missed seeing your friendly faces and hearing your news. When normal service is resumed we look forward to welcoming you all back.

For further information contact either Eileen Rennie or June Grunwald.

## **Users**

We remain closed to our community users. We shall not reopen before Easter and more probably September for our community users.

## **DIARY**

### **MARCH**

Sunday 14<sup>th</sup>      **DEADLINE for WANTAGE ANNUAL CHURCH REPORT**

Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> 7:30 pm      Emergency Wantage Church Council on Zoom

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup>      **DEADLINE for APRIL NEWSLETTER**

### **APRIL**

Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> 7:30 pm      Wantage Annual Church Meeting on Zoom

Sunday 25<sup>th</sup>      **DEADLINE for MAY NEWSLETTER**

### **MAY**

Sunday 16<sup>th</sup>      **DEADLINE for JUNE NEWSLETTER**