

NEWS & CHAT Thursday 10 September 2020

Welcome to the joint weekly newsletter of Christ Church and the Bridgwater Drive Church.

Sunday 13 September, 10am will be posted 'live' to the CC Facebook page (not pre-recorded) as I used to do at the beginning of lockdown. It will be a **Communion** service so please have elements ready (this was changed from the 3rd Sunday, 20th, because we were anticipating opening the church on the 20th and Communion in person with COVID restrictions is complicated and needs further planning – see below).

News

Church re-opening At their meeting on Tuesday, 8 Sept., the Christ Church Elder's agreed that we should open the church for Sunday Worship from 20th September, abiding by all the government restrictions (limited numbers, distancing, face coverings etc), and that service with limited congregation being live-streamed via Facebook for those unable to attend. And of course, the written service would still be sent out. However, early on the morning of 9 Sept. the government announced new rules saying that groups of more than 6 will be illegal from Monday 14 Sept, and the only exemptions would be school, work, weddings and funerals. We are waiting for the written guidelines to be released to see if this really does include places of worship, but it does not seem wise to start the process of opening on Sundays given this new restriction, so for now things will stay as they are with the Elders and Minister constantly reviewing the guidance.

This is a very sad development, especially given that the infection rate in our area is fairly low. We were looking forward to being able to open again for Sunday worship albeit in very different and restrictive circumstances. I want to make it clear that these are government rules, and do not represent the wishes of the Minister and Eldership.

At the time of going to press, it remains to be seen whether Tuesday and Thursday meetings can continue or need to be limited to 6 people or suspended. We will inform you as soon as we have studied the written government guidance (not out yet). For now:

Tuesday Church, 10.30am EVERY Tuesday at the Bridgwater Drive Church, for a time of prayer and reflection, led by the Minister (MB on 15th, 22nd and 29th Sept.)

Thursday Church, 10.30am EVERY Thursday at Christ Church. Next week, **17 Sept. Taize**, led by Penny.

I (the minister!) will be on annual leave 21 Sept to 4 Oct. inclusive. For any urgent pastoral matters during that time, please contact the relevant Church Secretary – Jean (CC), Margaret (BDC).

Due to this holiday, the anticipation of opening, and some special events happening in October, I had planned the services for September and October – see list below for details. **There will be no News & Chat for those two weeks, nor daily online prayers.**

Christ Church has a new website! The content will be mostly the same, but it looks newer, brighter, and easier for non-church people to navigate. The address remains the same, but it is now hosted by iChurch, the URC website provider and therefore looks similar to the new Bridgwater Drive website.

13-19 Sept. Naomi & Sandy are doing the Ration Challenge. Eating the same rations as a Syrian refugee for a week to raise funds for food and medical supplies for refugees. Funds are taken online. If you don't do online, please give cash or cheques to either me or Sandy and we can pay it in. THANK YOU!

<https://www.rationchallenge.org.uk/naomi-young-rodas>

<https://www.rationchallenge.org.uk/sandy-brown>

On **September 13**, the Revd John Bradbury, General Secretary of the URC, and Steve Tomkins, Editor of *Reform* and author of [Journey to the Mayflower: God's Outlaws and the Invention of Freedom](#) will feature on **Songs of Praise on BBC One at 1.15pm.**

Christ Church, Rayleigh (CC) and the Bridgwater Drive Church (BDC)

The World Council of Churches is encouraging Christians to pray and act in solidarity with people living in the Holy Land, especially during the **Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel from 13 Sept.**

The URC has spoken out over Israel's deal with the United Arab Emirates. In July various international humanitarian and development organisations urged the international community to put pressure on the Israeli government over its annexation plans. Also, two global Kairos coalitions issued a call for action in solidarity with Palestinian Christians – "We cannot serve God while remaining silent about [this] oppression." More information, including prayers, here: <https://www.cryforhope.org/>

Following on from our Zoom service on 30 August, Singing on Zoom and various other meetings on Zoom, this slightly irreverent picture sent in by Phil amused me!



Services & themes, September – October

Some special things are happening in October, so since I will be away the last two weeks of September, I thought I would highlight them now. For the foreseeable future, all Sunday services will continue to be online, in some format (probably live-streamed/pre-recorded at 10am on the CC Facebook page) and the printed service will continue to be sent out weekly. **Please continue to think of Sunday services as joint (CC AND BDC) regardless of where the minister might be, or what format the service takes.**

Sunday 20 September – 'normal' online service led by the Minister (not Communion)

Sunday 27 September – 'normal' online service led by Robert

Sunday 4 October, using the URC Daily Devotion material plus we will be praying for Commitment for Life, particularly Central America, the region supported by Christ Church. Bridgwater people – before lockdown, as part of our 'year of review' which we have been unable to start due to the pandemic, we were going to consider whether the BDC would like to become a Commitment for Life church and which region we might like to support. Maybe take some time in October to think about that and we will re-visit the issue when we can meet properly again. This will be an audio and written service only (at the time of writing).

Sunday 11 October Harvest, led by the Minister. 'normal' online service, however if possible, I will try to pre-record at least some of it at the church showing donations given:

We will be supporting **HARP** and **Hopeworx** with donations of non-perishable food (packets, cans etc, no fresh items). **CC people** – if you are able, please take goods to the church or directly to Hopeworx. If not, please contact Helen who can arrange to collect. If you are not able to donate food, but wish to send money, please send a cheque to Keith, or make a bank transfer, specifying that it is for Harvest and he will split the amount and make the donation to the charities. **BDC people** – if you wish to donate, please do so directly to HARP or contact Jan.

Christ Church, Rayleigh (CC) and the Bridgwater Drive Church (BDC)

Sunday 18 October, 'normal' online service with **Communion** led by the minister. The **preacher** (video and text) **will be Ruth Wilde, National Coordinator of Inclusive Church.**

Sunday 25 October, on ZOOM - a short service and **Q&A / discussion about Inclusive Church** with Ruth Wilde.

In my absence, a paper giving (again) more information about Inclusive Church will be sent out.

DEVOTION

Several people have said that they would like more well-known, traditional hymns in our online services so that people can sing along at home. I apologise, that for the last few weeks I may have focussed more on the words than the singability. I always try to link the hymns as closely to the Bible readings and sermon as possible, which means sometimes we get a 'new' hymn or unfamiliar tune. That said, I also like a traditional tune, which is partly why I am a 'fan' of John Campbell's hymn book which tries to marry new words with 'old' tunes. All that to say that this devotion from the UCC struck a chord (no pun intended!) with me – not only for the obvious message about singing, but for the more subtle message about how we need the new as well as the old and well-loved. Now more than ever, as we were on the cusp of opening on Sundays, and have had that taken away from us, I think we need to accept that Church will never be quite the way it was before. We need to accept that, grieve for that, but also move on and make plans for the future:

News Songs, by Rachel Hackenberg

Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song, God's praise in the assembly of the faithful. - Psalm 149:1

I used to sing. Not shower singing or holler-in-the-car singing or hum-to-myself singing, all of which I still do. But once upon a time, I sang in trained, auditioned choirs. It was an exhilarating activity that I walked away from years ago, for a variety of perfectly fine reasons, but I miss it. Even before Covid-19 ground congregational singing to a halt for health reasons, I was missing the choral experience: The practice of tuning your ear and voice to be part of one sound. The acute awareness of breath and diaphragm and body. The rapt attention to a conductor's slightest change in expression or flick of wrist that could change the tide of the music. The miracle of harmonization. The joy in being pushed by the efforts of those around you to bring your best work – your best voice – to the moment.

Community, at its most harmonized, elicits our best selves. Invites our best presence. Strengthens and multiplies our gifts. Teaches us new songs, studies them with us, practices them together, sings them together. All of which prompts me to wonder if I'm missing singing only, or perhaps I am also missing the discipline of learning new songs. All by myself, I have a habit of singing the same songs. Rehearsing the same worldview. Repeating the same prayers. Breathing at the same intervals, but not really drawing breath down to my diaphragm. Not really using the fullest extent of my range.

Sing to the Lord a new song, but how can we sing something new if we are not listening closely to one another? Sing to the Lord a new song, but how can we sing something new so long as we are determined to be our own conductors, our own producers, our own one-person bands?

We would sing you a new song, O God Most High, but first we must set down our batons, practice our deep breathing, and tune our spirits to the community's ever-evolving harmonies and what Your Spirit is willing us to sing in these strange times. Amen

TIPS & IDEAS - From 64 Million Artists

From the 13th-19th September, many people are taking part in the '[Ration Challenge](#)' fundraiser from Concern Worldwide. For one week, we'll eat the same rations as a Syrian refugee living in a camp in Jordan, and raise money to make a practical difference to the lives of those living in the camps. The Challenge also offers a small chance to see things from someone else's perspective and help deepen people's understanding of this global issue.

Activity - The bulk of the ration pack will be rice - and you are invited to get creative with rice, and whilst you do - to learn more about and reflect on this fundraising initiative. Could you make a new dish with rice? A picture? A sensory toy? You could write an acrostic poem using the letters RICE, LONG GRAIN or BASMATI...? Paint with rice water?...



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CHILDREN'S SPACE – see attached Children's & Families News

RESOURCES

New weekly reflections from St Paul's Cathedral: <https://mailchi.mp/93dd18767f93/coming-up-from-st-pauls-cathedral-1341596?e=e30a1f608a>

Resources for 'Creation Season' Observed from September 1 to October 4, the Season of Creation is an annual celebration of prayer and action embraced by the wider ecumenical community to protect and care for our common home. This jointly-produced Celebration Guide provides resources for Christians worldwide to pray, reflect, and respond with bold action as stewards of God's creation : <https://www.cwmission.org/resources-for-this-years-season-of-creation-are-now-available/>

Walking the Tightrope - A short film (running time 30 minutes) explores important issues for Christians engaging with the Holy Land. <https://www.fodip.org.uk/walkingthetightrope>

PRAYER CORNER

I invite all of you to set aside time daily to pray for our churches and members but also for the whole nation and world. I am praying 'live' with a short devotion every day, Monday – Friday, on the Rev Naomi Facebook Page, then shared with both church FB pages. Due to increasing other commitments, this may not now happen every day, but I will endeavour to do it most days.

Particular prayer requests this week:

Bill and Jenny, friends of Phil T.
Audrey
Margaret D., following the death of Samantha
Lauren
Michelle & family
Barbara

Barbara says, "I have had my first chemotherapy treatment – and all is going as planned. Thank you for all the lovely messages and cards – it is very kind of you."

We give thanks for:

Grace and Phil who celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on 12th September.
Kim and George Searle celebrating their 30th wedding anniversary this week.
Joan who is 91 on the 13th.



You may remember a couple of weeks ago I asked for possible captions for this picture:



We only had one –

'I wish He wouldn't keep feeding the birds and bees, their poop gets everywhere!'

Last minute announcement just in:

Contrary to what it says in the September CC magazine, both Easyfunding and Smile Amazon support Christ Church (if you set up your account). So please feel free to sign up for both. Every little helps!

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