

NEWS & CHAT - Thursday 3 September 2020

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



Climate Sunday

Sunday 6 September is Climate Sunday and will be our 'normal' pre-recorded service posted to the CC Facebook page, including contributions from members of the CC Faith in Action Group.

Tuesday 8 September – CC Elder's meeting. The government COVID rules have not changed, except we are now allowed to have a small number of singers (no congregational singing). At their meeting the Elders will be discussing if and how we can re-open for worship on Sundays. If you have any strong feelings on the matter, please contact me or one of the Elders before next Tuesday.

Tuesday Church, 10.30am EVERY Tuesday at the Bridgwater Drive Church, for a time of prayer and reflection, led by the Minister

Thursday Church, 10.30am EVERY Thursday at Christ Church. This week **3 September, Space for Prayer led by Jean.** Next week, **10 Sept. Needles & Natter.**

A REMINDER: Whenever we meet, including mid-week meetings, we should not be standing around chatting/socialising at the end. This has been slipping somewhat. This is government guidance we must abide by, so please leave the building as soon as the meeting has ended and do not stand around chatting. Thank you!

Music – Gerald, and usually two colleagues, is playing the organ at Christ Church every Wednesday lunch time from about 1pm if anyone would like to drop in to listen for a while.

Singing for Joy on Zoom is back, Wednesdays at 1.45pm. Contact Sandy if you would like to receive the Zoom invitation.

RATION CHALLENGE

I am doing the Concern Worldwide 'Ration Challenge' which means for 7 days – 13-19 September, I will eat the same rations as a Syrian refugee living in a refugee camp. The more money I raise, the more extras I can get. I have already earned, one spice (the same one, I can't pick a different one each day), salt, and 170g of one vegetable (again only one, not a mix up to 170g) to add to my meagre rations of mostly rice with one can of beans, a little oil, flour, lentils and chickpeas. I can only drink water, although I can also 'earn' teabags, so I will have one teabag per day which I'll have to re-use!!

If you would like to sponsor me, my fundraising page is here:

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

If you don't do online, you can give me cash or a cheque (payable to me) and I will sort it out. One year's worth of rations for a refugee family is £942 so I have set my goal as £1,000.

Sandy is also doing the Challenge, so please support her too. No doubt you will get tired of hearing about this, especially on Facebook – but not as tired as a refugee would be living on so little food!



DEVOTION

With us reviewing again if and when we can open the church(s) for Sunday Worship, I feel like I have been reading lots of guidance and writing lots of papers and emails for the Elders' meeting, so this devotion struck a chord. The two questions at the end are good to ask of ourselves as individuals and as the church; and reflect on the positive and negative aspects of our 6 months of pandemic living.

31 August UCC (United Church of Christ, USA) reflection by Molly Baskette (abridged)

"And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: 'I know your works; you have a name of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is on the point of death, for I have not found your works perfect in the sight of my God.'"- Revelation 3:1-2 (NRSV)

Some of our churches, as Revelation puts it, have a name of being alive, but they are dead. Or mostly dead. Coronavirus – and the adaptive challenges it poses (How to do virtual church and Sunday school? How to automate giving?) – is make-or-break time for a lot of our communities. Here at month six of a pandemic that could wear on for years, some of our churches may be looking to the future and not seeing one at all. They just can't make the changes needed to survive. They don't have the know-how, or the money, or the will. Some of our churches are dying despite having done everything "right." But some of our churches are dying because of imperfect works in the eyes of God: neglecting true hospitality, or holding on to low-key homophobia and other heresies. Some are afraid of innovation, afraid to confront bullies and old conflicts, or afraid to be truly vulnerable and real with the people next to them in the pews. God sometimes corners us so that we have to change – our institutions and ourselves. Now is just such a moment for us, individually and collectively, as people of faith. We're a full six months into this pandemic, and here is the final exam. There are only two questions:

Where are you feeling almost dead?
Where are you coming alive for the first time in years?

God, wake me up, and wake up my church. We long to live. Amen.

Social distancing looks set to stay for a long time, so we will have to be creative and 'think outside the box' for how we conduct services and other church activities with a limited number of people.

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Tying in with the rations for refugees theme –

The sculptor Marc Quinn, who made the headlines by creating a sculpture of a black woman protestor in Bristol and putting on the plinth where the slave-trader, Edward Colston, statue had been pulled down – has a new exhibition 100 Heads.

"The project comprises one hundred concrete portrait busts of refugees living today, whose plaques are each inscribed with the sitter's name, birthplace, current residence and one-line thought. *100 Heads* therefore challenges the perception of refugees as undifferentiated masses; instead emphasising their strength, uniqueness and individual identities.

Developed in collaboration with refugees of all genders, ethnicities and ages, living all over the world, *100 Heads* presents a cross-section of the global refugee population."

Sales of the heads will raise funds for refugee charities.
See more at <https://www.100heads.org/> Or in the September issue of *Reform*



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

TIPS & IDEAS

This week these relate to climate issues –

Oxfam has a campaign to only buy second-hand clothes during September (more details here: <https://oxfamapps.org/secondhandseptember/>) “Every week 13 million items of clothing ends up in UK landfill. And did you know it would take 13 years for one person to drink the water needed to make one cotton T-shirt and a pair of jeans? Choosing to shop second hand can help.” I can’t help much with this one, as I only buy clothes about once a year anyway!

BBC1, Monday at 8pm (31 Aug), *Planet Earth: A Celebration* narrated by David Attenborough. I think this was a one-off, so if you missed it, look for it on iPlayer.

ECO-CHURCH & THE ENVIRONMENT

Sunday is Climate Sunday and Churches Together in Britain are also encouraging us to observe Creation Time a period of reflection on climate issues from 1 September to 4 October.

Here are some numbers to consider (from *Solve* the University of Portsmouth magazine)

8 MILLION TONS of plastic waste enter the world’s oceans each year (Source: UNEP)

1 MILLION PEOPLE die per year in developing countries from mismanaged plastic waste (Source: Tearfund)

500 BILLION – the world produces more than 500 billion plastic bags per year (Source: plasticoceans.org)

855 BILLION sachets (like for ketchup) are used every year (Source A Plastic Planet)

And, with COVID, now single use face masks are finding their way into our oceans and seas...



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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, especially children, teachers and parents as schools re-open. I am praying 'live' with a short devotion every day, Monday – Friday, on the Rev Naomi Facebook Page

Please send your memories of Stella to Jean by the end of September. Thank you.

Particular prayer requests this week:

Barbara & Richard
Chris, a neighbour of Judy C
Barbara (BDC)
Celia & Geoff
Cherry as she goes back to school

We give thanks for:

Judy & George Clark's 25th Wedding Anniversary on 2 September.
Derek S who has been given the 'all clear'. Derek and Ian are grateful for our prayers.

House Group questions/topic – for Monday 7 Sept. at 3pm (CC) and 7pm (Zoom)

Last time we discussed Bregman's rule #3, and 'treat others as you would like to be treated' which we agreed did not always work. So we jump to rule 6 as it relates to that. **Do we think this rule works better?**

6. Love your own as others love their own

We (all humans) care more about those who are like us than those who are different. It makes us more human, but we also have to remember that others, distant strangers, also love their families as much as we love ours. We are all made in the image of God. (Gen 1:27)

4. Temper your empathy, train your compassion

Empathy is exhausting. Compassion asks you to feel *for* someone, not *with* them, not put yourselves in their shoes. It involves feelings of care and concern, but at a distance. It is more controlled, remote and constructive. Empathy saps our energy. Compassion injects us with energy.

Through meditation we can train our compassion. This is something Buddhists do, **but are there parallels in Christian thought?**

I only found one Bible verse that exhorts **us** to have compassion, rather than talking about God showing compassion – "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with **compassion**, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience." Colossians 3:12

Does this mean the ancients thought 'compassion' was too hard for us? Like only God could forgive sins; maybe only God could act compassionately?

Do we think Jesus showed empathy or compassion?

Try to think of some examples.

We may not get to rule 5, but I'll put it here as rules 7-10 are quite different, whilst 5 fits with 3,4 & 6.

5. Try to understand the other, even if you don't understand where they are coming from.

Understanding someone on a rational level (rather than emotionally) is a skill, which we can also train. I think it ties in with asking questions, rather than assuming someone else wants the same things we do (rule 3), treating others with compassion, and remembering we are all made in God's image, even if we are very different. Bregman says we should use our capacity for reason to suppress from time to time our desire to be 'nice', because that can get in the way of standing up for truth and justice.

Discuss! Think of examples of Jesus (and others?) sometimes not being 'nice' because of standing up for what is right.

