

## NEWS & CHAT Thursday 8 October 2020

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

**Sunday 11 Oct, 10am** service in Christ Church. The service will also be live-streamed on the CC Facebook page. This is our Harvest service, so if you are attending please bring non-perishable food items (see below). Please contact Pat, as usual, if you are planning to attend, or Margaret if you are planning to watch the service at Bridgwater.

We will also sign the Action on Climate Change Letter to the Rayleigh MP Mark Francois (attached) – in person if you are at church, or please email Sue to give your consent to add your name. It is expected that Rayleigh Methodist and some other members of Rayleigh churches will also sign the letter before it is sent.

**Upcoming Services** – a reminder that:

**18<sup>th</sup> Oct** will be a **pre-recorded Communion** Service put out on the Christ Church FB page (and paper). The preacher will be Ruth Wilde, National Coordinator of Inclusive Church.

**25<sup>th</sup> Oct**, will be on **ZOOM** – a short service, followed by a Q&A and discussion with Ruth about Inclusive Church. The document sent out at the end of September will be circulated again that week and the Zoom link and password will be in N&C and emailed out by Sue and Margaret on Saturday. **If you are not able to Zoom, please contact Pat or Margaret, to arrange to watch the service and discussion at CC or BDC at 10am in the church building.** If you do not do Zoom, and want to ask a question, please send it to me (email or call me) and I will ask it.

This is a one-off special Zoom service, so please try to participate – if necessary, ask a friend or relation to set up the Zoom connection for you. The service can be recorded, and we will do that, but I'm not sure how we could send that recording to people!

### News

Next week, **12 to 18 October, is Challenge Poverty Week**, linked to the End Hunger Campaign. This is a fantastic opportunity for people all over England and Wales to stand up and highlight the need to tackle poverty in their communities and to show the work that is already being done at community level. Lots of events are planned. Sadly, due to the pandemic, most if not all of them, are online. Check here: <https://challengepoverty.co.uk/> for more information and to sign up for events.

We are playing our part in challenging poverty by collecting food and money for Hopeworx and HARP as part of our Harvest festival. **CC people** – if you are able, please take goods to the church or please contact Helen who can arrange to collect items. 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** - harvest gifts of goods and money for HARP can be brought to The BDC on Tuesday mornings from 11.15 - 12.00 (after Tuesday Church). Val will be there at that time if you want to also support BDC funds by buying any of her Christmas novelties. Please ring Margaret or Val if you can't get to church on Tuesday mornings but would like to donate to HARP or buy Christmas novelties.

**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. Next week, **15 October, Taize** led by Penny.

**HOUSE GROUPS:** Next at the Church (CC), Monday **12 Oct. 3pm** Next Zoom – Mon. 19 Oct. 7pm

**October is Black History Month – see below in 'Resources'**

**The Eastern Synod meeting is this Saturday 10am – 1pm online, which means anyone can join in.** The details and Zoom link can be found here: <http://www.urc-eastern.org.uk/synod-meetings>

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### **Inclusive Church seeks Trustees:**

Could you serve the Inclusive Church Network as a trustee of the national charity? The Board invites applications/nominations of enthusiastic and dedicated supporters of inclusion of all kinds to join in governing our growing network. The Board would especially welcome applications from people with lived experience of exclusion — particularly Black and Asian people and people of other ethnic minorities, women and minority genders, and non-Anglicans. For more information, please contact Inclusive Church: [office@inclusive-church.org](mailto:office@inclusive-church.org)

**Bar 'n; Bus** are expanding their work into Basildon and increasing their existing work in Rochford and Castle Point. So, they **are looking to build their volunteer team** and are running both the Introduction to Youth Work and In-School Mentoring programmes very soon. Both programmes are running from St Andrews Church, 3 Fremnells, Basildon, SS14 2QX.

Details as follows:

Introduction to Youth Work Training – Mondays 12<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> October 7:30-9:30pm – Book at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/introduction-to-youth-work-course-tickets-123313394683>

School Mentor Training – Fridays 16<sup>th</sup> October, 23<sup>rd</sup> October, 6<sup>th</sup> November 10:00am-Noon – Book at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/school-mentor-training-basildon-tickets-123330190921>

Sessions are open to all with no commitment to volunteer at this stage, so people are welcome to explore their involvement as they complete training. For more information, email Jamie at [ceo@barnbus.org.uk](mailto:ceo@barnbus.org.uk) or call 07935 222 113.

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

#### **DEVOTION**

I can't believe it (said in a Victor Meldrew voice!) on Sunday it will be only 8 weeks to the first Sunday in Advent! And judging by how fast the rest of the year has flown by, that will be gone in the blink of an eye, so forgive me if I mention the C word (Christmas) and am slightly political (I'm sure you expect nothing else by now!)

After an announcement, which thankfully I missed by listening to minimal news while on holiday, in which the Prime Minister said he was considering suspending the rule of 6 at least for Christmas Day, this did the rounds on Facebook:

'No Boris Johnson! No! You can't suspend the Rule Of Six for Christmas Day. The night before Eid you effectively cancelled families' observance. As a Church Minister I have to speak out and say that you can't treat Christians differently.'

Not to mention that it makes a mockery of the rules to suspend them for one day! This got me to thinking (as I often do) about what is the real meaning of Christmas, and what does it mean (or not mean) for the majority of the people in this country to celebrate it, without going to church or even realising it is a Christian religious festival. If you put all my immediate family (siblings and their children and grandchildren) together in one room, it would be considerably more than 6. However, that rarely happens. For the last few years, it has been just myself and Claudia for Christmas, and we don't give each other presents, preferring instead to give to charity (but that's a separate issue). If you believe the many magazine articles which start to appear from November onwards, the big family Christmas is torture for many people. Deciding which family (parents or in-laws) to spend the day with likewise. Who gets the children on Christmas day, if the parents are separated?, etc. So why are so many people saying, or more precisely why is the media complaining, that Christmas is 'cancelled' because you can't be with more than 6 people whose company you may not enjoy that much anyway! I know it is British nature to complain about family Christmases while secretly enjoying them, but it surely cannot be beyond the wit of most people, for one year, to space out the gatherings over a few days to stick within the rules. And certainly after the government managed to offend virtually all Muslims by announcing restrictions on the eve of Eid, they should not be contemplating relaxing the rules for Christians, practicing or not.

And should we not spare a thought for all the many people who this year will be spending Christmas alone, like they have maybe for many years previously. What about the people who might normally go to a Christmas meal organised for the homeless, or to a neighbour, who now probably can't go anywhere?

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Christmas this year will be different, but it is definitely not cancelled. But perhaps like the different Easter we had, that will help us focus on the real message – that God was made incarnate in a small, vulnerable baby – born to the lowest of the low, an unmarried woman, soon to become a refugee... That the real message is not the gifts the Wise Men took, but the gift God gave us.

We are starting to plan some exciting things, so watch this space. But in the meantime, dust off your pen and paper and send some actual paper Christmas cards this year, or better still a handwritten letter. Maybe write a letter to a prisoner via Amnesty. Think about what charities you might be able give to. Rather than lamenting the lack of a good sing song at the Carol service, savour the words of the carols anew as you listen on radio or TV. Think about what it means for the Creator of the universe to have come to us as a vulnerable infant. And I'll promise not to mention Christmas again until December!

PS apparently in in Colombia they have already started playing Christmas songs – we listened to the inaugural radio programme two weeks ago! And you can guarantee the decorations will be up by November!

### **TIPS & IDEAS - From 64 Million Artists**

This week 64 Million Artists is focussing on World Mental Health Day on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> October.

The campaign **#HelloYellow** supports young people's mental health. I know many people gave to the Ration Challenge, so I am wary of highlighting raising money, but perhaps you can help raise awareness by supporting Yellow Friday, this Friday, the 9<sup>th</sup>:

To celebrate **#HelloYellow** and to help spread the word, get creative with the colour....yellow! Find it, capture it, play with it and use it! Could you wear an entirely yellow outfit? Could you cook a meal using only yellow ingredients? Could you paint, doodle, craft, knit, or make in yellow - or find and photograph a yellow scene?

And if videos are your thing, here is a very short (40 seconds) video about the project:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DY1Sh2ALnrM&feature=youtu.be>

### **RESOURCES**

New weekly reflections from St Paul's Cathedral: <https://mailchi.mp/27f32c8b9b72/coming-up-from-st-pauls-cathedral-1350100?e=e30a1f608a>

A reflection (video) from St Paul's Cathedral on the novelist James Baldwin for **Black History Month**: <https://youtu.be/HLtJ-oAIPQ>

Revd Dr Calvin Samuel (minister of Rayleigh Methodist) is leading an anti-racism book group. The first meeting, online, is on **15 October at 7.30pm**. You can find out the book to read, and book for the event here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/antiracism-reading-group-tickets-119338264963>

There is a new programme 'Enslaved' about slavery starting on BBC2 on Sunday night. It looks like it is already available on iPlayer - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000ngdz/broadcasts/upcoming>

I'm including this again, even though the season is finished, because this Sunday is our Harvest celebration - 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/>

### **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. **Daily prayers on Facebook are back!**

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This week please pray especially for those living with mental health issues or conditions, their families, carers and support organisations as Saturday is Mental Health Day. And for all those living in poverty in the UK at the start of Challenge Poverty Week.

**Particular prayer requests this week (and last week):**

Barbara and Richard  
Chris, a neighbour of Judy C  
David – Bill and Beth's son  
John, Michael B's cousin.  
Della and Alan  
Malcolm, a friend of Di  
Edie aged 7 – Grand-daughter of Martin, Thora's partner  
Gerry, Margaret and family

CC People – if you would like a copy of the new **URC Prayer Handbook**, please contact Lionel - [lpryor98@talktalk.net](mailto:lpryor98@talktalk.net) or phone 01702 540100, or 07904919952

Price incl p&p £5.49

Lionel can deliver if necessary.

Before our holidays, I passed on an idea from the Synod Minister's meeting – write the Gospel in 50 words. Here's mine:

**Treat everyone as though they are made in the image of God - they are.  
(love God; love your neighbour – all the world is your neighbour).**

**Take care of the marginalised and oppressed, as Jesus did.**

**Actively care for creation.**

**Remember, nothing can separate us from the love of God.**

Did anyone else have a go?

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**House Group Discussion** – Rule 7 from Rutger Bregman's *Humankind* :

7. Avoid the news.

This needs unpacking a bit. I', a bit of a news junkie (though less than before) and I go along with the misquote of Bonhoeffer that we should have the Bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other – in other words our faith should be relevant to what is going on around us, and if we don't keep up with the news how else will we know about topics like climate change that we need to do something about. BUT,

many people get their news from unreliable sources – social media, 'red-tops' (Daily Mail etc) which skew their view of the world. It also tends to generalise and stereotype people into groups and pit them against each other (particularly social media, which garners more interest and thereby more advertising income by promoting contentious content that people will argue about). Our appetite for news and media has been proven to be addictive and the people at places like Facebook and Google know that and take advantage.

Rutger suggests avoiding TV news (I'd make an exception for Channel 4 which does go in depth) and social media and read more nuanced Sunday papers with in-depth features. Think carefully about how you feed your mind. Find out if your usual paper is independent or who it is owned by; know its political bias.

What does this have to do with the Bible and faith you might ask? Well, you tell me! What do you think Jesus would do? There weren't newspapers, radio or TV in 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine, but Jesus did speak out against the authorities – religious and the Roman Empire. And there are Bible verses about seeking the truth and it setting you free.... Discuss – as Christians how informed do we need to be?