

NEWS & CHAT Thursday 13 May 2021

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

Pending a revised Risk Assessment and government announcements, we are still hoping to re-open for Sunday Worship at Christ Church on 23 May. Bridgwater Drive would re-open at the same time.

The same rules as last time the church was open will apply:

- Social distancing, which means a capacity of around 30 people (CC) and 12 (BDC) so you will need to 'book' a place with Pat Botfield (01245 320212, pat.botfield@btinternet.com) or Margaret.
- Face coverings need to be worn inside
- No congregational singing
- No socialising inside the building or in the area outside the door

Hopefully, if the government plans proceed, there will be no restrictions from 21 June onwards (with the possible exception of congregational singing) and 'normal' worship and all other church activities can resume after that date, but we must follow the government guidelines to keep everyone safe. We will let you know when worship can go back closer to 'normal' – it shouldn't be much longer to wait now!

The Minister will be attending the Synod Minister's Spring School (online) 17-19 May.

Sunday 16 May service led by Robert live on Facebook at 10am

Sunday 23 May back in the building – Pentecost, Communion, Ordination and Induction of Elders led by the Minister, at Christ Church and live-streamed on Facebook.

Sunday 30 May, the Minister will take the service at Bridgwater Drive, and the service will be live-streamed from there on the Christ Church Facebook page (as usual BUT at 10.30am). Joyce will lead the service at Christ Church.

NEWS:

This is Christian Aid Week

Helen and Robert are walking 300,000 steps in May to raise funds for Christian Aid. If you would like to donate, please go onto the just giving page <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/robert-dart1> or contact them if you are not online.

This is also Mental Health Awareness Week and the theme is nature.

During long months of the pandemic, millions of us turned to nature. Our [research on the mental health impacts of the pandemic](#) showed going for walks outside was one of our top coping strategies and 45% of us reported being in green spaces had been vital for our mental health. Mental Health Awareness Week 2021, will focus on the powerful benefits of nature for our mental health, looking at nature's unique ability to not only bring consolation in times of stress, but also increase our creativity, empathy and a sense of wonder. It turns out that it is not just being in nature but how we open ourselves up and interact with nature that counts. We will show that even small contacts with nature can reduce feelings of social isolation and be effective in protecting our mental health and preventing distress.

You can learn more here: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/campaigns/mental-health-awareness-week>

The new Moderator for the URC Eastern Synod has been announced as the Revd Lythan Nevard. We hope to invite her to preach/visit us soon. You can read more here:

<https://urc.org.uk/latest-news/3791-the-revd-lythan-nevard-nominated-as-eastern-synod-moderator.html>

TIPS & IDEAS

This week's idea from #64MillionArtists is provided by CALM the Campaign Against Living Miserably, for Mental Health Awareness Week:

Silver Linings - As we continue through Spring and adapt to the changes coming with it, take a moment to reflect on this past year. What are the things you have learnt about yourself, or others, that you will hold on to? What is your 'silver lining'? Perhaps it's a realisation or a hobby you have discovered. Or it could be a new perspective that you're going to keep hold of as we continue to adapt throughout the year.

This Mental Health Awareness Week the theme is 'Nature'. Could your silver lining be a connection you have made with the natural world? **Represent your silver lining in any creative way you would like to!** Paint a picture, write a poem, collect some wild flowers, count butterflies...

DEVOTION

Last Sunday's *Sunday Worship* on BBC Radio4 was led by the Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell on the theme of prayer. I have heard prayer described before as opening our clenched fists to God, the clenched fists of our worries and anxieties, and I like that image. The Archbishop used that image on Sunday (although it was on radio!) of praying with his hands:

Jesus says, 'For everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.' I invite you now to join with me in knocking on that door in confidence that God will hear our call. Sometimes it's difficult to find the words. So it's helpful to rely on some memorable ways of bringing your concerns before God. Sometimes, we need to make prayer more physical, to express in external signs and symbols the internal longing and desires of our hearts. The following strategy is based on what the Dutch theologian Henri Nouwen called 'opening up our tightly clenched fists' to pray. You take your closed fist, and gradually open it up, to receive the blessings and wisdom that God longs to give each and every one of us. In this way, your hands open before God, your hand itself can be a basic pattern and reminder of how to pray.

So I hold my clenched fist in front of me.
Now stretch I out my thumb. We begin with thanksgiving – count our blessings. Thank God for today and for the good things in our lives. For Christians this includes the resurrection of Jesus who destroys death and sin. We thank God for new life, for the hope brought by vaccines and medical care, and the relief felt by many as restrictions become more relaxed.



Then I stretch out my index finger. The finger we use to point. So we pray for direction in our lives, for the decisions we need to make, the things for which we are responsible. We pray for direction for the world and its people, for all those who are facing uncertainty and anguish, that they might find their path through the darkness.

I now add my middle finger, the tallest on my hand as we pray for those who have power in the world: for our Church leaders, for the Queen and her ministers, for other governments, and for local leaders. We pray that they are guided by justice, peace and truth in their decisions and leadership.

My ring finger is the weakest finger. It can't do much on its own. We pray for the people we rely on: our friends and family, the people we depend on and those that depend on us. We pray for all those in caring positions, give them the strength they need to support others.

Lastly, I stretch out my little finger and pray for those who desperately need help: the sick, the poor, the weak, the vulnerable, the bereaved and those who face violence. We remember those who have died and those who mourn. May the Resurrection bring hope to the hearts of all who suffer.

And finally we lift both our hands to God in thanksgiving, and pray for our own needs.

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

How Change Happens 'house group' sessions START TONIGHT at 7.30pm and then on Thursdays for the following 5 weeks on Zoom.

All sessions except next week, will be led by Naomi.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8334513513?pwd=OTN1UjFhZlNwQlF3OTZheUlwbnRUQT09>

Meeting ID: 833 451 3513

Passcode: 112886

"Have you ever wanted to make change but don't feel like you know enough to try? Perhaps you've recognised the biblical call to social justice but aren't sure how to put it into action? Or maybe you've been involved in campaigns in the past and are keen to be more effective going forward? Then we hope this resource will prove useful to you."

Session 1, tonight, will be an introduction. We will start by playing **Making Change Bingo!** Sadly, I'm unable to copy and paste that here, so you will have to come to the session to see how it works!

You may like to read James 1:19-27 before the session.

Discussion questions:

1. Look at **James 1:22-25** again. Where in the Bible do you see a call to engage in making political change?
2. In **verses 19-20**, James challenges "human anger". What role does anger play in change making? When can it be helpful and when can it be damaging?
3. James writes of the importance of putting faith into action. How do we see this played out in the case studies above? How does this vary?
4. What opportunities are there for Christian communities to influence political change in our society? What are the challenges?
5. What change would you like to see happen?



We hope more people than the usual house group members will attend. Members of the Church in Action Group will be attending.

**This event is for anyone from BOTH churches
and we hope some friends from Bridgwater Drive will join us.**

Next week's session will be more even more interactive with a short video to watch and an activity about using an unexpected windfall to the church accounts!

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

RESOURCES

Reflections for May from St Paul's Cathedral by Corin Pilling, who is the UK Director of Sanctuary, equipping the Church to support mental health and wellbeing.

<https://mailchi.mp/7fc11438c2c0/coming-up-from-st-pauls-cathedral-8250984?e=e30a1f608a>

If you missed it, you may like to listen to last Sunday's Sunday Worship on BBC Radio4, led by the Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell on the theme of prayer: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000vy18>

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. This week these prayers use the Christian Aid devotional resource.

This week we pray especially for those suffering from mental illness and those who care for them; for the work of Christian Aid; for the pandemic crisis in India, the situation in Colombia, and the people of Palestine and Israel.

This week's prayer theme (prepared by Gwyneth). **Outside.** As lockdown eases and the amazing vaccine rollout continues, we can start to re-join the world outside our bubbles and family groups. For some that brings trepidation, for others whooping joy. Please pray for confidence and gentle support for the anxious, and consideration of others for the exuberant. Thank You Lord.

Particular prayer requests this week:

Richard, Robert and Edward (Barbara's family)

Della

Brian, Jenny C's brother

Tim, Bob W's nephew

Beth

Joy

Audrey

Peter C

Irene

Eve

Rachel S & family

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Our holiday – thank you to Sandy and Robert for leading worship, to Phil G for doing last week's N&C and to Jean and Margaret for keeping everything going and not bothering me with any emails! We had a lovely time, in spite of rather mixed weather. Highlights – Bolton and Fountain's Abbeys, Ripon Cathedral, Aysgarth Falls, lots of shopping! And, Fat Rascals! Highlight for Dexter – eating sausage every day!!



Dexter practising to be the Virgin Mary – he's tired of being the donkey!!



Fat Rascals from Betty's