

**St Paul's Methodist Church, Crawley**  
*Extraordinary Times*  
*a magazine to help us through COVID-19*  
**Issue 10** **May 24th 2020**

*From your Minister*

Lockdown is really starting to bite now in many places. Some people are finding it hard to stay away from family members and friends, and the warm sunny weather makes it very tempting to go to the coast and sunbathe. The problem comes when everyone else has the same idea, and you end up with cars parked close together and crowds forming. The more people re-interpret the guidelines to suit their own preferences, the more others look at them and say "Well they are having a barbecue, why shouldn't we?"

This is indicative of our human nature. Despite the best science and sensible advice, we have a tendency to do as we please in the naïve belief that everything will be fine, or that somehow the issue doesn't apply to us. We have an amazing ability to do the stupid thing, even when we know what the sensible thing is. We may not yet have a herd immunity, but we certainly have a herd mentality.

Temptation is a powerful thing. It is prepared to take enormous risks in order to achieve the self-gratification that it desires. There is as big a thrill in "getting away with it" as there is actually giving in to temptation: and temptation is all about stealing really. Stealing someone's wallet, stealing someone's wife; stealing someone's freedom, or their dignity, or even their life. Temptation urges us to seize the thing, or the opportunity, which is not ours to take.

If you know me at all well you will be aware that I believe Christianity to be fundamentally liberating. One of my favourite quotes from Jesus is in John 10:10, where he says that he has come that we may have "life in all its fullness". My testimony tells of how trapped I felt by life until Jesus set me free. But scripture is clear when it says:

"You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love." (Galatians 5:13)

And also:

"Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves." (1 Peter 2:16)

We are living in times when our personal freedom has become limited, and it doesn't sit well with us. But let's continue, as far as possible, to stay free of the temptation to selfishly indulge, or to deceitfully subvert the rules. They are, after all, for the benefit of everyone.

God bless and stand firm, *Ralph*

*A prayer...*

*For our freedoms and pleasures, we thank you Lord.*

*For our health and safety, we praise you for your grace.*

*We confess our temptations, irritations and sense of worthiness*

*When you alone are worthy*

*We repent of our feelings of entitlement*

*When we deserve nothing*

*And we thank you that you came to our world to break the chains that bind us,*

*So that even in the current crisis we may stand strong in faith and love.*

*Enable us by your Spirit to love and respect all those around us in society*

*Whether they know you or not.*

*And bring us safely through these times so that we may worship and serve you*

*With a renewed passion and wisdom.*

*We ask it in the name of Jesus our Saviour*

*Amen*

## What's On This Week

### Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> May – Aldersgate Sunday or Wesley Day

**10am Taketime Live** join in a meditation in real time, or later by pasting <https://mixlr.com/taketime/> into your Web browser

**10:45am live worship** with Rev Ralph

### Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> May

**2pm live prayer and bible study** with Rev Ralph

Links to the services will be on St Paul's Facebook page and website and also sent by email so that everyone who has internet can participate.

## Prayers at 6 & 8

**During this week** pray for help in remembering to keep our social distance as we move around more freely, and for patience with others. Continue praying for the NHS and all public service workers who keep our lives running smoothly.

## Please pray for

**Geoff** who is now seriously ill in East Surrey Hospital and for his wife Jean, unable to visit him. Ask for comfort and strength in their fear and anxiety.

**Jessie**, Lyn and Richard's daughter, who is going into hospital this weekend for the birth of her and George's third baby. This is an anxious time for all the family

**Faye**, Alan's wife, seriously ill in hospital in Hong Kong.

**Continue praying** for Heather, David and their family; Maria, Emma, Linda, and others with needs known to ourselves.

**Send** your prayer requests to [ask.stpauls@gmail.com](mailto:ask.stpauls@gmail.com)

*Methodist Church Guidelines state that permission must be received from a person before their name is put on the Church prayer list. Please ensure that you have such permission.*

## Getting back to normal or a 'new normal'?

People are talking a lot about 'When we get back to normal'. With that in mind, Martin B sent us this quotation by Grace Murray Hopper (1906–1992), a Rear Admiral in the US Navy and a pioneer of computer programming at Harvard.

*"The most damaging phrase in the English language is 'We've always done it this way' "*

We're warned that normal is a long way off but, eventually, what do we want 'normal' to be, I wonder. Would you want a return to the old normal with everything back as it was? Or do you hope for a new normal with the good things continuing that we've seen coming out of what is, in most respects, a truly awful experience?

For myself, I'd like to keep the silence, the clarity of colours, the freshness of the air

and the time to be more truly myself in mind and spirit. What about you? Are there things you are appreciating which you would be sorry to lose? And what are you desperate to get back? Feel free to share your hopes and fears by sending an email to [ask.stpauls@gmail.com](mailto:ask.stpauls@gmail.com) *Joyce*

## Barry's Isolation Diary week 7 – permission to adjust the rules

This week has been the hardest so far to find something to write about. I am not sure if that's because nothing has happened (has anything much happened in these weeks of lock down) or I have just run out of inspiration.

On Thursday last week received a text from the NHS informing me that my "shielding" had been extended to the end of June and that I should continue with all aspects unless advised otherwise by a health professional.

Fortunately, the day before I had been told by my specialist oncology nurse that she saw no reason that I couldn't go out for a daily walk. Obviously, I should be extra careful about social distancing, and not to go anywhere enclosed or crowded. Oh, and preferably in the early morning or late evening. I had already pretty much decided that in the spirit of Ralph's sermon last week rules are for *the obedience of fools and the guidance of wise men* and that I could see little risk in just going for a walk when no one else was around. So I have taken this as official permission, in line with the instruction in the text from the NHS.

As a result, I have been going for a walk just after 7am most days since last Wednesday, which in the last few hot days has been very pleasant. However even at that time in the morning there are still odd walkers, joggers and cyclists about.

Sheila has met very few people on her daily walks just after lunch so, using her experience and with careful planning to avoid any narrow paths, we have also been out for a couple of walks together. When I say together this means following the same route either walking side by side but six feet apart where possible or walking six feet line astern, and in extremis on opposite sides of the road, so conversation is very limited.

On the downside I received a text the day after being given permission to go for a walk informing me that my "shielding" had been extended to the end of June.

We have all become more aware of nature around us in this time of lock down, including in our garden a suicidal Magpie, which delights in teasing our semi-resident fox as it sunbathes on the grass, by hopping as close as possible until the fox reacts and in one case creeping up behind it and pecking its tail!

Keep safe and well, God bless, *Barry*

## Christian Aid collection going well



Our experiment with using *Just Giving* as a way of raising funds for Christian Aid while our church is closed is so far quite successful. At the time of writing, we have raised £760 which includes £140 Gift Aid. The appeal runs for a few more weeks so there is still time to donate if you can. It would be so good to hit our £1,000 target and know that the Lockdown didn't beat us. Just go to

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/st-pauls-methodist-church-crawley?>

★ **HAPPY** ★  
**BIRTHDAY!**

**To Sheila Jones on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> May**

## Raise funds for St Paul's with minimal effort and no cost to yourself

In less than 24 hours I was able to raise £20 for St Paul's with very little effort and at no cost to myself. I simply signed up to *easyfundraising*. I had reached the end of my current energy contract, so instead of going directly to *uswitch* I went via *easyfundraising* and chose a new energy contract with a new supplier. It only added a minute or two to the process and raised £15 for St Paul's.

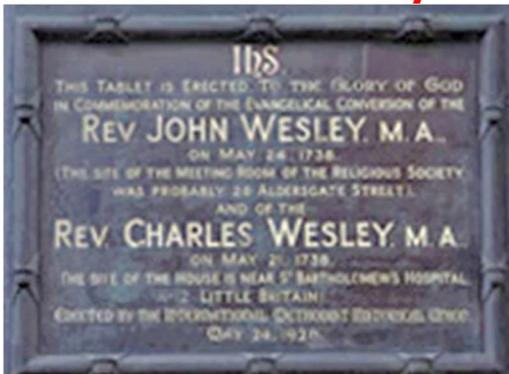
When I signed up to *easyfundraising*, I was offered the opportunity to install a reminder app which recognises when you go to online stores and reminds you to go via *easyfundraising*. I didn't bother to install it. *Easyfundraising* then sent me an email advertising the reminder app, with the incentive to install it of a £5 donation to St Paul's. It seems that you get the £5 simply for installing it and trying it out. It only took a couple of minutes to install it. If you don't like the app (or if you object to the privacy settings) you can easily uninstall it.

My wife has also raised funds for St Paul's simply by doing some shopping with an online store and going to the store via the *easyfundraising* website. She was also sent a questionnaire by *easyfundraising* and raised some more for St Paul's by completing it. It only took her a couple of minutes.

If everyone at St Paul's, who has access to the internet, went via *easyfundraising* to do their online shopping, we could raise large amounts. The amounts raised per transaction are only a small percentage of the cost of the purchase, and may only be a few pence, but it soon mounts up if everyone is doing it. What's not to like? Go on, give it a whirl!

Ctrl+Click here  (The author wishes to remain anonymous)

## Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> May is Aldersgate Sunday



On 24th May 1738, John Wesley unwillingly attended worship at a Moravian Society meeting on Aldersgate Street in London. It was here that he felt his "heart strangely warmed", as he experienced God's love in a most personal way. Now he understood the value of a personal experience of God that would bring assurance of salvation to the believer.

**Please note** that the email address for prayer requests, newsletter items and general queries has changed to [ask.stpauls@gmail.com](mailto:ask.stpauls@gmail.com)

### Contacts

**Rev Ralph** phone 01342 325877 email [rlphwrd@gmail.com](mailto:rlphwrd@gmail.com)

**Deacon Irene** phone 01293 38512 email [deaconirene@gmail.com](mailto:deaconirene@gmail.com)

**Prayer requests** & newsletter items [ask.stpauls@gmail.com](mailto:ask.stpauls@gmail.com)

**St Paul's website** [www.crawleymethodistchurch.org.uk](http://www.crawleymethodistchurch.org.uk)

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