

St Paul's Methodist Church, Crawley
Extraordinary Times
a magazine to help us through COVID-19
Issue 11 **May 31st 2020**

From the minister...

Every year during June I like to encourage people to participate in four weeks of themed preaching, along with weekly Bible study notes for use in homegroups. The idea came originally from the Methodist Church and in the past we have taken the month of June to study books like James and Jonah: short enough for us to cover thoroughly over a four week period.

This year the book of choice is Ruth, and I will commence preaching on Ruth this Sunday, taking a chapter per week to lead us consecutively through the four chapters which the book contains. I've also produced some weekly study notes, which I would normally do for the use of homegroups. I acknowledge that most homegroups are unable to meet currently due to the Coronavirus lockdown (though some are continuing via "Zoom"); but I see no reason why these notes can't be used for individual bible study at your convenience during the week following the Sunday morning live streamed service, should you wish to participate.



If you are able to access the church Facebook page, you will see that I've opened a "Group". If you click on the button with the "Book of Ruth" title banner on it, you should be taken to the group page where you can download a pdf copy of the notes for week 1. You are welcome to use these during the coming week in your private studies. It's an open group, so anyone can join.

In terms of the content, I've steered away from the LWPT material on the Methodist website (which focuses on a different character in the book of Ruth each week). Instead I've been introduced to an excellent study book written by Mark Greene and produced by the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, so I've basically transcribed this material into the weekly notes with a few tweaks and contextual changes to reflect our current lockdown situation.

If you require a paper copy please ask Joyce or email me and I'll be happy to send you one either by email or in the post. I hope you enjoy delving into the book of Ruth with me over the next four weeks.

Stay safe and well, God bless, *Ralph*

A prayer...

*Thank you Lord for your Word.
When times are tough we turn to it and find comfort
We praise you that it is a Living Word,
And that you speak directly and clearly to us through the text
Just as you have spoken to mankind throughout history
We praise you that your Holy Spirit is present in our reading
To challenge us, to strengthen us, to teach us and to heal us
And we trust in your unfailing grace and wisdom
That you will safely deliver us through these current times to a safe haven
As you have promised
Thank you that you never leave us nor forsake us
In the name of Jesus
Amen*

What's On This Week

Sunday 31st May - Pentecost Sunday

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 3rd June

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 as more people are out and about, pray for help in remembering to keep our social distance, 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 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.

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.

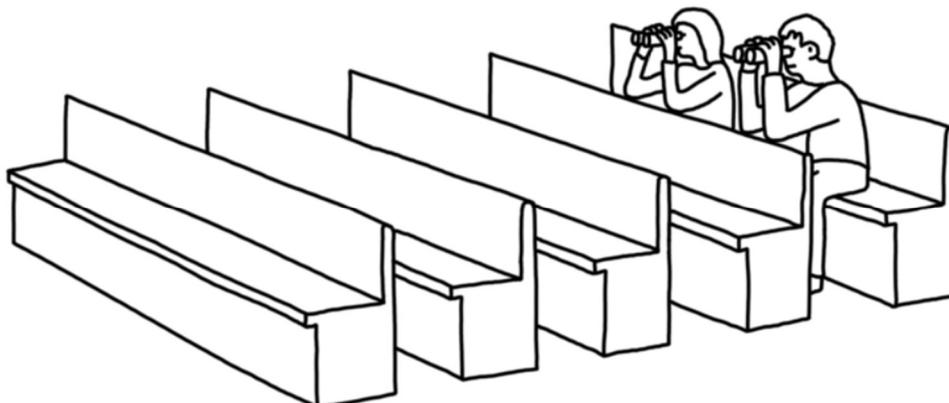
Send your prayer requests to ask.stpauls@gmail.com

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.

When will church be open?

The Methodist Church has given some indication that ministers will soon be allowed back into church premises to lead streamed or recorded worship. This will have to be in accordance with strict Government guidelines. There is no date known for the further re-opening of church buildings and, when the time comes, it will be within an extensive framework of inspection and change to ensure everyone's safety.

"The overriding priority remains to save lives" (The Methodist Church)



Barry's Isolation Diary week 8

"Ta Da! another amazing meal prepared by Sheila"

In case I should ever forget that I don't cook, this reminder is now emblazoned on the front of Sheila's new apron, which she received as part of her birthday present from our daughters last Sunday.

May being one of our two birthday months (Victoria and Sheila 14th & 24th) the other being October (Barry & Abigail 28th & 30th) we normally go out for a family meal somewhere. This year of course it wasn't possible. So, instead our daughters organised a virtual cakes and cream tea. During Saturday morning we received a box containing a selection of cakes, three scones jam and cream. Abigail reckoned her cream wasn't enough for three males and so went out and bought extra, we were more abstemious and settled for the amount supplied.

At 2.30pm all three families logged onto Zoom, made cups of tea and watched each other consume the food. Then at 3 o'clock we all logged in again (Zoom only lets you have 40 mins for free) and took part in "Mums Birthday Quiz". Fifty five questions in all, compiled by Abigail. These included questions like "Is this Victoria or Abigail accompanied by a baby"? photograph. This has left one of our sons-in-law totally traumatised as he failed to identify his own child correctly. I think all of this lock down is affecting Sheila's and my brains as we came last behind everyone else, including three of the grandchildren each playing independently!

Joan Collins once said that the secret of a successful marriage was separate bathrooms. Subsequently, I understand, that this view has also been expressed by others including Michelle Obama and Michael Caine. As part of my "shielding" Sheila and I have been putting this to the test since 28th March along with separate bedrooms and maintaining 2 metres separation as best we can at all times. Having recently celebrated 50 years of marriage and shared bathrooms, it clearly hasn't been a deal breaker in our case. It has however resulted in the answer to two mysteries.

The first was highlighted when we sold our motorhome with the valuer reducing his offer due to the damage to the surface of the hand basin. The second has to do with the splashes on the tap of the basin in our normally shared bathroom. It seems from observation of the state of our now completely separate washing facilities are both down to me. Nothing new there then....

Our lettuces continue to flourish and after what has seemed like an endless wait the beans have, at last, broken the surface and are growing daily.

Stay well and God bless, *Barry*

Christian Aid – can we hit our £1,000 target?



Our page on *Just Giving* is now showing that St Paul's has raised £885 for Christian Aid, including Gift Aid. The appeal runs until the end of June so there is still time to donate at

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

Looking up and looking out in a time of crisis

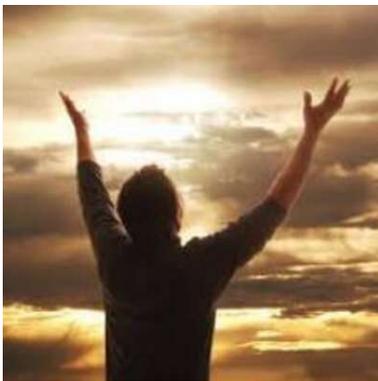
Last Thursday was Ascension Day which marks Jesus' ascension to heaven. In Acts 1.10, we read that the disciples 'were gazing up towards heaven' as Jesus was going. In John 17.1, as Jesus explained to his disciples what would happen to him, it says that Jesus 'looked up to heaven' and spoke to his father.

While many Bible scholars suggest that only a matter of several weeks separated these two instances of 'looking up', there are numerous references in the Bible to prophets, priests and kings looking to the heavens for inspiration, guidance and signs. Indeed, some climbed mountains in the hope of getting closer to the one from whom they sought answers.

Unless you're a farmer or meteorologist, the idea of 'looking up to the heavens' tends to be a metaphorical one. We speak of 'looking up' the answer to a question or pondering whether things are 'looking up' – showing improvement.

However, in both readings, 'looking up' meant focusing on a God who has all the answers. In John 17.1-11, Jesus asks his heavenly father to protect his disciples and all those who seek to follow him. We can see this as an indication to us that, as we look to God for guidance, we should also be reaching out to others, especially at this time.

In Caribbean culture, people often talk about 'looking up' someone, which means visiting a person to make sure they are alright. Currently, this is still difficult, despite the easing of the lockdown. Yet, one of the most inspiring developments of this crisis has been the way people have been 'looking out' for one another and showing a hitherto unknown form of neighbourliness.



So, as we slowly emerge from lockdown, may we also continue 'looking up' to God for the inspiration and ideas as to how we can better look out for those who will be unable to take advantage of the easing of these restrictions.

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Congratulations

to Jackie and Martin Bower who celebrate their 59th Wedding Anniversary on 3rd June

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