

**St Paul's Methodist Church, Crawley**  
*Extraordinary Times*  
*a magazine to help us through COVID-19*  
**Issue 13** **June 14th 2020**

*From the minister...*

It felt strange this last week, when I went into church for the first time in nearly three months in order to record a short message of encouragement to post on the church Facebook page. There aren't many occasions when I've previously arrived at church on a weekday when there hasn't been someone else there as well – whether it's a letting, or people in the café, or just one of the stewards mooching around doing something. But this Tuesday afternoon was different: the empty car park, the eerie silence when I entered the café area.

The sanctuary itself was the strangest. You may have taken the opportunity previously to pop into church for a quiet prayer sometimes, but there's usually something going on in the background, like the clinking of cups and saucers, or the voices of conversation (however restrained). But it now feels completely silent. And the weird thing about complete silence is that you start to hear little noises that you hadn't noticed before.

I went to both St Paul's and Trinity on Tuesday afternoon to record basically the same material, and both churches were so silent inside, except for now and again when the building seemed to creak, like an old oak-built galleon on a slight sea. At first it was a little alarming – I found myself looking over my shoulder, thinking there must be someone hiding somewhere. I imagine that if for some reason I had chosen to enter the building at night and not bothered to put the lights on, the combination of ambient creaking and darkness would have appeared quite spooky – in such circumstances some people start believing they see ghosts (though ghosts absolutely don't exist – let's get that straight).

It felt just as peculiar to start recording myself speaking. One doesn't normally speak out loud in a space where there is no one to listen or reply, and it felt as if I was breaking the peace of the place like a pebble dropping into a pond. But I knew I was addressing people back in their homes, so it was fine. I wonder if the isolation of lockdown has made you start talking out loud to yourself as you move around your house? Perhaps you did it anyway, if you live alone. If that is the case, don't worry, it's completely normal!

Being alone in a church that has been closed for three months is bizarre. You become aware that the shell of the church is there, but the heart and soul is not. Forgive me for taking a morbid example for a simile, but it felt like the body of a person who has recently died. I remember when my dad passed away, in his own bed at home. I stood by the bed as he breathed his last, and had an overwhelming (and not at all frightening) sense that my dad had left for heaven; and all that was left was the empty shell in which he had lived his life up until that point.

Church felt the same. An empty shell. The living breathing church had left the building. It's no surprise – we all understand that the Church, the Body of Christ, is made up of living breathing souls, not bricks and mortar. Life will return to our church when we are all allowed to meet there again in fellowship. In the meantime, as we endure our time in exile, let's take hope in knowing that one day soon we will return with rejoicing. What a day that will be! *Ralph*

*A prayer...*

*Thank you Lord that you never leave us nor forsake us  
We praise you that you call us to unite in fellowship  
And in this way we can truly be called your "church"  
In this time of exile from our place of worship  
Enable us by the power of your Holy Spirit  
To cling tightly to the hope you have placed within us  
That we may desire and look forward to the time  
When we can enjoy true "Koinonia" again, To lift our voices in praise  
And to pray to you, not as individuals, but as One Body  
We stand firm in You, Amen*

## What's On This Week

### Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> June

**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 - *Ruth in June 3 Loving Through Risk*

### Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> June

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

### Prayers at 6 & 8

**8-14 June is Carers' Week** Pray for those who have taken on a care role during Covid-19. Pray for carers juggling care responsibilities with their usual work. Pray for young carers trying to study while schools are closed as well as caring for a family member. Pray for carers who have chosen to move away from their usual home to self-isolate with another family member who needs their care. If you are a carer, don't forget to pray for yourself and your own needs.

### Please pray for

**Geoff** who is in Crawley Hospital and for Jean, still unable to visit him.

**Continue praying** for Faye, Maria, Emma, Linda, and others with needs known to ourselves.

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

*Permission must be received from a person before their name is put on the Church prayer list.*

### Carers' Week 8-14 June

This takes place every year to raise awareness of the contribution millions of unpaid carers make in the community. Because of Covid-19, there are now an estimated additional 4.5 million unpaid carers, bringing the total in the UK to 13.6 million. You can read more about Carers' Week on their website

<https://www.carersweek.org/>

### Black Lives Matter

From a *Statement on Racism* by Rev Dr Jonathan Hustler, Secretary of the Methodist Conference.

*We welcome and endorse the call of the 'Black Lives Matter' movement for radical action in addressing the causes of this injustice. The Methodist Church in Britain believes that racism is a denial of the gospel. However, we have to recognize that we have not eradicated the problem from our Church, despite the excellent work of many over several decades; in the last year we have redoubled our efforts to do so and are actively working on the implementation of our 'Inclusive Methodist Church' strategy which commits to challenging all forms of discrimination and creating a Church where people from every background are welcome and are safe from abuse and discrimination.*

You can read the full statement at <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/news/latest-news/all-news/statement-on-racism-from-the-revd-dr-jonathan-hustler-secretary-of-the-conference/>



**to Johann Prinstan Jeyaraj who celebrates his 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday this Sunday, 14<sup>th</sup> June**

## Barry's Isolation Diary week 10 – signs of change

So, lock down is being eased for most of you, although what recommendations will be made for those of us who are "shielding" remains to be seen, as our last instruction was to continue until at least the end of the month.

Normal activities when one family member is shielding turn simple tasks into major planning exercises. The car need petrol, which used to mean a quick trip to the garage. We considered Sheila filling the car up as she is still allowed "normal" interaction with the world, but quickly discounted it as we would have then had to clean the inside of the car before I could use it. So, in the end, we settled for me driving the car to the garage just after seven o'clock in the morning to hopefully have the forecourt to myself complete with disposable gloves to handle the pump.

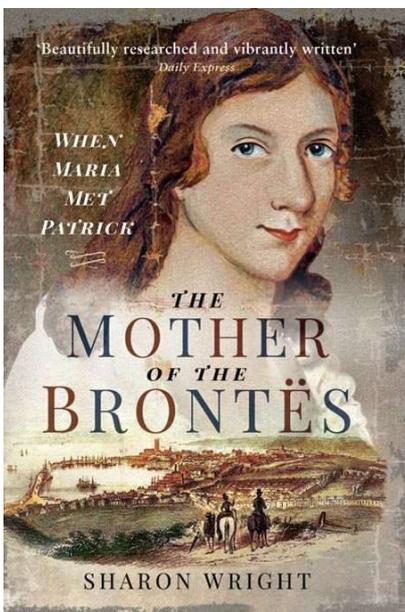
Signs of lock down relaxation could be seen on my drive to Guildford this week, in the increase in traffic levels, the fact that part of Harlequins Rugby Team were training on the Surrey University playing fields, suitably distanced, and that the Nursery opposite the Hospital was alive with little children playing outside.

One change probably many of you will have noticed is the increased use of telephone calls in the place of face to face medical consultations. My last two routine oncology outpatients appointments have been over the phone as well as my next planned one in July. Maybe this will be the new "normal" in the future or at least for some time. One benefit at Royal Surrey Hospital is that for the first time in the past five years there were a large number of spaces in the main car park at eleven o'clock in the morning when normally it is just a continuous slow moving crocodile of cars nose to tail all looking for a space.

I heard Bob Geldof last weekend saying he was enjoying being locked down at home with his family as it is "guilt-free enforced idleness". This might explain why I am happily doing jigsaws, playing my keyboard and other non-productive activities and at the end of the day wondering where the time has gone..

Stay safe and God bless, *Barry*

## Looking for something to read?



Maria Brontë, mother of Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë, came from a prominent Cornish Methodist family. Until now she has been a shadowy figure in the story of the remarkable Brontë sisters but this well-researched biography, by Sharon Wright, shines a light on her fascinating life and her strong faith. There are intriguing connections with the Wesleys, a whirlwind romance and a scandal in Shropshire resulting in an itinerant Methodist preacher in the family being thrown out of the Methodist Conference.

*The Mother of the Brontës* is published by Pen and Sword and is available from Amazon. The hardback is £19.99 and the paperback £10.65. If you have a Kindle reader, that version is only £3.32.

## Greetings from Anisah

Anisah Cooper, a member of St Paul's for many years until she moved to Hassocks 6 years ago, celebrated her 87<sup>th</sup> birthday last Wednesday. Anisah sends this us this message, '*Greetings from Anisah. God bless you all.*'

## A message from Rev Ralph

You may have heard Boris Johnson announce this week that churches are to open for private prayer from Monday June 15th. Before you get too excited, please note that Methodist regulations are unlikely to reflect this until after the Methodist Conference on July 2nd. We will keep you updated on any developments.

There are 30 books of the Bible in this paragraph.

Can you find them? (answers next week)

This is a most remarkable puzzle. It was found by a gentleman in an airplane seat pocket on a flight from Los Angeles to Honolulu keeping him occupied for hours. He enjoyed it so much he passed it on to some friends. One friend from Illinois worked on this while fishing from John's boat. Another friend studied it while playing his banjo. Elaine Taylor, a columnist friend was so intrigued by it she mentioned it in her weekly newspaper column. Another friend judges the job of solving this puzzle so involving, she brews a cup of tea to help her nerves. There will be some names that are really easy to spot. That is a fact. Some people, however, will soon find themselves in a jam, especially since the book names are not necessarily capitalized. Truthfully, from answers we get, we are forced to admit it usually takes a minister or scholar to see some of them at the worst. Research has shown that something in our genes is responsible for the difficulty we have in seeing the book in this paragraph. During a recent fund raising event, which featured this puzzle, the Alpha Delta Phi lemonade booth set a new sales record. The local paper, The Chronicle, surveyed over 200 patrons who reported that this puzzle was one of the most difficult they had ever seen. As Daniel Humana humbly puts it, the books are all right there in plain view hidden from sight. Those able to find all of them will hear lamentations from those who have to be shown. One revelation that may help is that books like Timothy and Samuel may occur without their numbers. Also, keep in mind that punctuation and spacers in the middle are normal. A chipper attitude will help you compete really well against those who claim to know the answers. Remember there is no need for a mad exodus, there really are 30 books of the Bible lurking somewhere in the paragraph waiting to be found.

**Thanks to Ray Bullen for this - he found 29 books; can you find all 30?**

### Contacts

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

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