

## **St Paul's Methodist Church, Crawley**

### *Extraordinary Times*

*a magazine to help us through COVID-19*

**Issue 32**

**November 1st 2020**

*From the minister...*

Okay, so I'm going to talk a little about something that I have never mentioned before, especially from a pulpit. That thing is Hallowe'en. Hallowe'en is this Saturday October 31st, and even with the Coronavirus pandemic I bet there are some people who will be taking their children out "trick or treating". Christians react to Hallowe'en in a variety of ways – some of us put notices in our windows asking trick-or-treaters not to call (sometimes mentioning that the reason for this is that Christians live here). Some churches organise "Light Parties" or such like: parties for children at church where Hallowe'en style fancy dress is banned, and all of the focus is on Jesus.

I used to do this very thing in my earlier years as a minister and youth worker. It seemed like a good way of responding to the celebrations of Satan and all his demons. But then my attitude changed. I was running a highly successful Christian youth event that met monthly in local schools throughout the year – it was very popular and used to attract audiences of 200 – 300 each time. Word spread across the local area and I ended up doing it (along with a team of helpers from local churches) across four different schools. So it was happening somewhere every week, and as a result we used to share the Gospel with around 1,000 young people per month. The project lasted for 10 years – it was quite a thing.

Anyway, early on in the project Hallowe'en loomed on the horizon and I went to talk to the head of one of the schools which was involved in hosting my youth event. This headteacher was an evangelical Christian, so I asked him if he'd like me to do a special version of my event for Hallowe'en, in the form of a "Light Party". "I'd rather not" he said. I was surprised; but he went on to explain that after many years as a Christian in education he had come to the conclusion that alternative Christian Hallowe'en parties only served to draw further attention to the actual Hallowe'en. "Plus," he said, "If we have such an event in school then half the kids will turn up dressed as demons and witches anyway." He had a point. "I just ignore Hallowe'en completely," he told me. "I simply never mention it – I banish it completely from the life of my school and don't give the Devil a chance to have any influence."

I was convicted by the wisdom of this approach. And I've never done another "Light Party" as a result. If you go around telling everybody that something is evil and wrong and they should have nothing to do with it, human nature (especially amongst the young and impressionable) makes them want to know all about it and get involved in it. Satan himself is of course behind this as well, it isn't all human nature – what a gift Hallowe'en is to him! He doesn't even have to try tempting us – there is a multi-million pound industry set up to do his work for him!

If we set up an event in opposition to Hallowe'en, it only serves to remind everybody that there is something else going on which the Christians are apparently trying to suppress, which immediately becomes attractive. "Why don't they want us to celebrate Hallowe'en?" they say. "Could there actually be something in it?"

Well, as a quick trip to Wikipedia will tell you, the history of Hallowe'en is tied up with Christianity anyway. Historically Christians have celebrated "All Saints Day" on November 1st (which this year does actually fall on a Sunday): and on the previous evening (All Hallows Eve) churches would hold services of vigil for the souls of the departed saints. Over time this was hijacked by superstitious beliefs and became more of a celebration of the dead than anything else, giving birth to Hallowe'en as we know it in modern times. So basically it's something that has been nicked from the Christians and turned to the dark side.

But here's the kicker: what are "Saints" anyway? They are dead people who have been venerated by the Church. The rules of the Church state that in order to be made a Saint you have to have been dead for at least five years even for the process to begin.

When I lived in Lincoln I sometimes used to go to choral evensong in the amazing cathedral in the city. The intercessions were very strange – we used to pray for "the Saints" who had died on that day throughout history. Sometimes I recall that we used to pray for people who had fallen to their deaths from the roof of the cathedral as they were working on building it in the 12th century! I mean, isn't it a bit late for that now?

Why do we need to pray for the dead? They have passed from this life into eternity. We should devote our time to praying for the living. There is no prayer that you can make for someone who has already left this world that will have any effect on the fate of their soul in eternity. Even at funerals we don't pray for the deceased person – we pray for those who are grieving their loss.

The real problem comes when we start venerating dead people and praying to them instead of to God. I'm not suggesting that any of you do this, but it is important to realise that the Bible specifically warns against attempting to contact the spirits of dead people.

There are around twenty references in my NIV Bible to the word "Saint". When I looked them up, every instance referred to people who were currently alive, not dead. In the latest edition of the NIV the word "Saint" does not appear at all in the entire Bible! In every case it is translated more accurately as "God's People". Saints is a word used to refer to the body of believers alive in the world today; who are doing their best, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to resist the temptations of the Evil One and live a life of faith and integrity, sanctified by the blood of Jesus. So when, in the Creed, we refer to the "Communion of the Saints", we are referring to ourselves and all our brothers and sisters. If you belong to Jesus, you are a Saint! Because Jesus has officially declared you as such! Wow, what an honour.

So let's pray for the Saints, all of those people in our church family both at our home church and at every church across the world. In 2020, we need those prayers as much as we ever did. God bless, *Ralph*

## In your prayers

**Please pray** for Faye Butcher, seriously ill in hospital in Hong Kong, and Allen, her husband. Allen and Faye usually spend several weeks here each summer and join us in worship at St Paul's. Allen says they missed being able to do that this year because of the pandemic and he knows that his friends at St Paul's will hold him and Faye in prayer at this anxious time.

**Pray also** for Barbara Fleming, Geoff Ridgway, Jean and Geoff Rose and for others you know who need prayers at this time.

**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*

## What's On

<b>Sun 1 Nov</b>	<b>10:30am</b> Worship with Communion with Rev Ralph Ward
<b>Sun 8 Nov</b>	<b>10:30am</b> Remembrance Sunday with Deacon Irene Tafirenyika
<b>Sun 15 Nov</b>	<b>10:30am</b> Worship with Mr Edward Pender
<b>Every Wed</b>	<b>7:30pm</b> Online Alpha course with Rev Ralph

***Please remember***



## Love in a Box

As you are aware, this year we are combining with Trinity for our *Love in a Box*. We will be taking any boxes to Trinity on 15th November. If you have boxes you would like included, we will be at the church to collect them at the following times:

Monday 9th November – 2-2.30pm

Wednesday 11th November – 11.30-12.00am

Thursday 12th November – 8.30-9.00pm

**Please note**, we will not be able to take any boxes that are left after the Thursday collection slot and we cannot take any responsibility for any boxes left at the church at times other than the three collection slots above. *Carol Ofield*



## Methodist Church joins call to address child hunger

Richard Teal, the President and Carolyn Lawrence, Vice-President of the Methodist Conference, are signatories to a letter from faith leaders to the Prime Minister that calls on the government to address the issues of child poverty and hunger.

[You can read the letter here](#) .

They have also written on the subject in their blog for this week, saying "We have seen in the past week how the Methodist people have responded with an abundance of care for the millions of children who face half term without enough to eat. [Read the whole blog here](#)

## We could do with some help

Since we started holding services at St Paul's again on Sunday mornings, we have had a lovely new team of stewards to welcome us and make sure that all the Covid rules are being observed. This means that 2 stewards are needed each time. This new team are very keen to serve St Paul's in this way but 4 out of the 5 of them have jobs that entail working on some Sundays. For one of them it also means being on call for emergencies which adds to the complications. So, we do need a few more people willing to join the team of Sunday Stewards to ensure proper cover every week. If you could help on an occasional Sunday, and are not in a vulnerable category, please let Eddie Madakudya know or email [ask.stpauls@gmail.com](mailto:ask.stpauls@gmail.com)

## What is a mast year?



If you've been out walking where there are oak trees lately, you will have noticed that it's pretty crunchy underfoot. There is a real abundance of acorns on the roads and footpaths, occasionally hitting us on the head and even hitting car windscreens. [The Woodland Trust](#) says, "Every few years, some species of trees and shrubs produce a bumper crop of their fruits or nuts. The collective term for these fruits and nuts is 'mast', so we call this a mast year." Wonderful news for animals such as squirrels, mice and badgers, and birds, particularly jays, as they stock up their winter larders.

## Congratulations



to Robin Webb (Sandra & Terry's son) and Leila Marshall who are getting married next Saturday, 7th November, and to Sandra and Terry on gaining a new daughter-in-law.



## And finally

*"You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream"*  
*CS Lewis*

## Contacts

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

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