

# St Paul's Methodist Church, Crawley

## *Extraordinary Times*

*a magazine to help us through COVID-19*

**Issue 37**

**December 6th 2020**

*From your minister...*

We are now in Advent 2020, and this is an Advent like no other. Everything seems leaner, there is a level of austerity to everything we do. The shops have only just reopened, but do we want to go back there? Do we want to risk the Christmas rush, the possibility of cross infection? Having been locked down for November, we are now being advised to maintain our self-discipline and respect one another.

We are aware how easily we might lose the progress we have gained (I'm led to believe that Covid levels reduced by 30% during November). The Government have placed most of the nation in tighter tiered measures than previously; this is certainly no time to be "taking our eye off the ball".

We know that when Christmas arrives the rules will be relaxed so that up to three households can get together to celebrate. But if you have a larger family, it presents us with a real dilemma: who do we invite this year? Are you facing the prospect of effectively having to choose your favourite children? Or your favourite in-laws? There could be trouble ahead...

Whatever happens, I'm guessing that Christmas this year could be a pale shadow of its normal self for many of us. We are permitted to return to church for Sunday services, and some of our Christmas services will be held in church and open to the public: but the wretched singing ban means that one of the real key features of our Christmas, the singing of carols, won't be allowed to take place this year in person. So our Carol service, for instance, will only be online. It's not the same; it's not going to be a classic Christmas. More of us than usual face the prospect of being alone on Christmas Day, and the challenge of Covid will damage our usual seasonal wellbeing.

But there is good news – very good news. You don't need me to tell you about the three vaccines that have been developed, in record time, by the amazing efforts of the scientific community. The development of effective vaccines has given us a renewed sense of hope – and the prospect that vaccination of our most vulnerable members of society, together with key front line workers, may begin as early as next week – well it is a huge relief to everyone.

But as we are being advised, this is no time for giving up the fight, for relaxing our behaviour, for fostering the impression that the pandemic is over. Rather it is a time to be resolute, looking forward with determination, and with hope in our hearts that as 2021 comes around we will gradually be able to let go of this dreadful virus and consign it to history.

Very much like the first Advent then. A time when the world lay in darkness and isolation, awaiting an antidote for the disease of sin that inhabited every heart. Mary and Joseph were struggling to follow the regulations that demanded they return to the town of Joseph's birth: it involved a difficult and dangerous

journey. The birth of Jesus must have been very frightening, taking place as it did in an animal shed.

We can take heart in our current situation that the first Christmas was a time of real hardship, yet love prevailed and lit a light of hope in our hearts which we have celebrated ever since during Advent. So as you light your candles this year, put up your decorations and prepare for perhaps a smaller more modest Christmas than usual, take comfort in knowing that hope is what drives us forward, perhaps this year more than any in living memory.

God bless, *Ralph*

## What's On

**Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> December 10:30am** Worship with Rev Ralph Ward at St Paul's and from our [Facebook page](#)

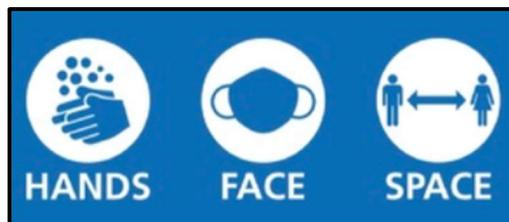
**Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> December 10:30am** Worship with Deacon Irene at St Paul's. Please note that, due to unforeseen circumstances, it will not be possible to livestream this service

**Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> December 10:30am** Worship with Rev Clive McKie at St Paul's and from our [Facebook page](#)

**4pm** Carol service with Rev Ralph Ward, online only.

**Every Wed 7:30pm** Online Alpha course with Rev Ralph Ward

**Don't forget**



## In your prayers

**Continue to give thanks** for the good news of vaccines against Covid-19 and for the scientists who have worked so hard to develop them.

**Pray for** Sumangali, Kaanji Thanmbipillai's sister-in-law, and continue praying for Howard Llewellyn, Jean and Geoff Rose, for everyone in our church community who is anxious about their health at present 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*

## DIY Advent wreaths

Are you making your own Advent wreaths to use at home? If you are, please send a photo to [ask.stpauls@gmail.com](mailto:ask.stpauls@gmail.com) so that we can share each other's brilliant efforts! If you have your wreath ready during the live streamed service on the Sundays in Advent, we could all light our candles together and feel more like being part of the whole congregation.



## Christmas cards for St Paul's

Sadly, because of the current Covid-19 safe rules, it will not be possible to have our usual Christmas card internal post to exchange cards with each other. We must also ask you not to use the pigeonholes in the church, or to pass cards to each other on the church premises. This year, please use the Royal Mail postal service to send cards to your St Paul's friends or, perhaps this once, send E-cards. There are some excellent online suppliers and you can even design your own with some of them.

The internal post has been one of our regular ways of raising funds for *Action for Children*. Last year, along with some of the church cash collections over Christmas and refreshment money, we were able to send them £151. So that we don't let them down in this most difficult of years, please consider making a donation on the [Action for Children](https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk) website, or by phone to 0300 123 2112 . Many thanks *Sheila Jones*

## A book to raise a smile and support *Action for Children*

A book of 32 cartoons spanning the period from the beginning of lockdown to Halloween, has been published in time for Christmas by Wesley Memorial Methodist Church in Oxford. Drawn by worship band leader Jim Godfrey, they are designed to be irreverent and amusing whilst being inspired by faith.

Methodist minister Lord Leslie Griffiths said: "*What an art! Here is a little offering that helps see the funny side of things without diminishing the seriousness of the crisis we are all in, to laugh at our own sillinesses without playing down the anxiety we all feel. Bravo!*"

*Trying Times* costs only £5 including p&p within the UK. Profits from sales will go to *Action for Children*. Orders can be delivered to you at home, sent to your friends and family or a mixture of both.

You can order at [wesleymem.org.uk](https://wesleymem.org.uk), or by phone to 07979 767630, or by email to [churchoffice@wesleymem.org.uk](mailto:churchoffice@wesleymem.org.uk)

Here's a sample to whet your appetite:

### TRYING TIMES WK 29



## UK church leaders urge PM to set bolder targets for cutting emissions

Nineteen church leaders and 57,000 others have written to Prime Minister Boris Johnson calling on him to set ambitious goals for cutting emissions. They want him to pledge to cut UK emissions by at least 75 per cent, from 1990 levels, by 2030 when he submits the UK's first climate plan under the Paris Agreement.

The letter to the Prime Minister was signed by the Church of England's lead bishop for the environment, Rt Rev Nicholas Holtam, the Bishop of Salisbury, as well as the Archbishop of Wales, and leaders from the Church of Scotland, the Baptist Union, Methodist Church, United Reformed Church and Quakers among others. [Read the full text of the letter here](#)

### News from the Leadership Team

As the promise of vaccines against Covid-19 looks like becoming a reality, St Paul's Leadership Team met via Zoom this week to share reports of work being done and to start looking ahead beyond Covid.

Our Property Manager, Isaac, has re-opened discussions with roofing contractors about replacing the Sanctuary roof. He is also planning redecoration of the Hall, as requested by the Church Council, before we need to use it for worship while the Sanctuary is out of action. Redecoration and refurbishment of areas of the building are on-going and Nicola and Nessa are completing a deep clean of the whole building. Many thanks to them all.

The first few weeks of streaming our services, before Lockdown 2, went well. New technical equipment and cameras have been purchased and are being installed which will improve our presentation. Thanks are due to Martyn and Peter for diving into this new technology – a steep learning curve!

Looking further into the future we are aware that the pandemic has changed the landscape for churches everywhere. While there seems to be a new spiritual hunger in many people, and streamed worship has reached many who do not usually attend a church, we need to build on this so that church becomes relevant to many more people into the future. This will be our focus from now on.

Streaming worship to reach more people will continue; it also benefits some of our members who, because of age or infirmity, cannot attend.

Our work with children and young people has been badly affected during this time and we will be seeking ways to safely revive it.

*Joyce Jordan* (on behalf of the Leadership Team)

### Contacts

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**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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