

LINK PLUS++++

Special Edition – June 2020

Friends

It doesn't seem long since the April edition of the Link, but many things have happened over this month. In particular we have been faced with the government timetable for the easing of lockdown in England, a countdown to normality, whatever that will be. Whether the plans are achievable or not, these have given some hope for the future.

In these plans are suggestions that the church might be able to open its doors in July. Whilst legally this might be possible, we will all have to take individual decisions, as people and as churches, whether it is the right thing to do. The Preaching Plan is set up for a return but the actual return to worship and other church activities will have to be managed. I say this as I pray for all those who still have the virus, and those who fear the consequences of catching it. If you have any comments about how we should 'return to normal' then please let me know. Not everyone will agree about timings and decisions but please bear with your stewards and leadership teams as they seek to make difficult choices.

Several of our contributors have touched on this subject this month, but I am especially grateful to Geoff Stait (who has suffered from Covid-19) for agreeing to tell his story. It serves to remind us of the severity of the illness, but also the fact that people of all ages do survive it, and come out the other side. Thanks Geoff.

One thing remains, the love of God for all.
Steve

Brent Knoll

It goes without saying that as a church, we are still unable to physically meet together for worship and fellowship during this ongoing crisis, just as every other church in our Circuit. But we are very grateful to Rev Steve for organising regular Sunday morning worship via Zoom. Whilst some of our congregation are joining together via laptops and computers each week, others are using the weekly Order of Service which Steve has been sending around for private devotion and prayer.

We are keeping in regular contact with each other and we are all in agreement that not only do we miss the physical act of being in the same building together, we also miss the fellowship which comes out of that act of being together. Although phone calls, Skype and Zoom have been valuable resources during this time, somehow it's not the same as talking to one another face to face. I was chatting to a member of our church during the week and we both agreed that "we miss hugs". That's one of the cruellest things about this virus. When we could really do with a supportive hug from a dear friend, we are unable to share one as we still need to be utterly mindful of social distancing.

But we know that this will end. We don't know when - it may not even be this year - but it will end. And with that in mind, when our churches are able to safely open again, we are beginning to have discussions as to how this could happen. It may well be that our worship will take a different form for a while - but in a world where everything seemed to have been turned upside down virtually overnight, we have to be open to change in a world where the word "normal" no longer seems to apply to so many aspects of our lives.

The most important thing is that we stay strong in faith and hope and continue to hold one another in our prayers during this challenging time.

To all our friends within and without the Circuit who read this update, you are not alone. You are held in our thoughts and our prayers. And

for all who feel in need of one at the moment, we are sending you a virtual supportive hug.

Stay strong, stay safe and may God continue to bless us all.
Rosemary Krull

Burnham

Well as Ann said in the last Link it's a difficult time for us all. The stewards are trying to keep in touch not only with each other but also other members of our church. Most people seem to be coping well and just getting on the best they can. Some people have been finding life very difficult, they have been ill, in hospital or just feeling lonely. It was lovely to talk to Geoff Stait this week, he is recovering well and starting to sound more like himself. We heard about Linda James's accident and hospital stay. We are so glad she is now home. You are all in our prayers at this time.

Life is very different now. After a couple of weeks of our daughters getting our shopping, I discovered the Click and Collect from my local supermarket. It was brilliant, even if I had to book it at least a week in advance and managed to get four jellies when I only wanted two. We have been kept very busy these weeks. A request came from one of our daughters for some cotton bags with a drawstring top. All the police in Bridgwater had been told they must put their clothes in a cotton bag at the end of their duty and then put the bag and clothes straight into their washing machine, to lessen the risk of infection. Out came the sewing machine, which was my mothers and is fifty years old. Three hours later I hung three cotton bags on our gatepost for our daughter to collect for her evening shift. Lots of other people in the area rallied round and bags were sent to the police as well as some to a hospital. People were so kind, they just wanted to do their bit.

We have got used to talking to our family on our phones, iPads, and computers. So far, we have sung Happy Birthday twice, granddaughter Gracelyn was 4 last month and it was also our daughter Hannah's

birthday, a special one but I'm not allowed to say how old. This week our oldest grandson, Charlie, is 11 and a son in law is also having a special birthday, so we will be singing again.

Where we live is a quiet cul de sac but every Thursday evening we all go and clap at 8.00. We realised that every house has someone working as a nurse, a police officer, or another front-line worker. We have so much to be grateful for.

I miss our Sunday services and meeting other Methodists but hopefully it won't be too long before we can fling open our church doors with joy and announce that our Methodist Church is open again to spread God's word.

I hope you all manage to keep safe and healthy in the next few weeks.

I am half Welsh and love poetry, so have always been a fan of the poet and comedian Max Boyce. A friend sent me this poem that Max wrote for the NHS. I searched for the words online and found that some other churches had used it. I hope you like it. It made me smile, laugh, and cry. This is a shortened version. You can find the complete poem on the internet.

WHEN JUST THE TIDE WENT OUT. Max Boyce.

Last night as I lay sleeping, when dreams came fast to me
I dreamt I saw Jerusalem beside a tideless sea
And dreams like that sustain me, 'til the darkest times have passed
And chase away the shadows no caring night should cast
But times like this can shine a light as hardship often can
To see the best in people and the good there is in man
And I heard the seabirds calling as the gulls all wheeled about
When the shops were closed like Sunday and just the tide went out
And when these days are over, and the memories remain
When children painted rainbow and the sun shone though the rain
And the doctors and the nurse who stretchered all the pain

And I hope the carers never see a time like this again.
And when all this is over, and our fragile world survives
I hope that God is caring now for ones who gave their lives.
And I'll pray we find an answer for my faith is cast in doubt
And God draws back the heavens and all the stars come out.
And I'll remember mornings with nobody about
When the shops were closed like Sunday and just the tide went out.

Marian Foster.

Brean

Steve's Sunday service on Zoom seems to be growing, judged by the number of people who tune in. On Aldersgate Sunday (24th) there were 27 connections made and 6 of those were of couples, making 33 attendees in all. We would be happy with that number every week at Brean. And we have easily got enough cups for coffee afterwards, though it might be a bit of a squeeze round the table we normally use. There were eight of us from Brean at the service and it was good to see each other there, though of course, we miss our summer visitors. It is good to see everyone's face as we worship, too Normally it is the back of people's heads that we see, so we can't tell whether they are singing lustily, or whether they are concentrating so hard during the sermon that their eyes are shut!

After our service Judy and I turned to the service of Westminster Central Hall (where we had met 55 years ago). For the current minister, Rev Martyn Atkins, this was his last service before going on Sabbatical prior to 'sitting down'. In his address he referred to the 'broad camp' that is his multicultural congregation. At times, he said they showed their differences but in the end they were united in the love at the heart of God. It tied in nicely with our Steve's address noting our actions and relationship with one another and reflecting on what the Franciscan monk, Richard Rohr calls the Divine Dance of the Trinity. There is a technical term for that and I remember attending a lecture 30 years ago, by a Russian Orthodox layman, a professor at

King's College, London. He described the moment of Jesus' death, when he finally, from the depths of his agony, gave up his spirit to the Father. That was the moment, he said, of Perichoresis, the unity of love in the Divine Dance between the elements of the Trinity. And as our reading from John told us, that relationship is thoroughly bound up in our relationship with God in Christ.

But our experience of worship has left me with a question. We seem to have been satisfied by our half hour together, and that being so, do we need a full hour of worship in our churches when we return from our isolation. In our changing world, are we getting bored by a full hour of worship on a Sunday? Would it not be better to reduce our regular worship time to say 45 minutes and perhaps leave our congregations to want more? When I put this to Judy she said that we do need five hymns and two readings but (and here her tongue was firmly in her cheek, I hope) that the preacher could cut out the sermon perhaps. Well I ask you!!

What do you think? Is it a topic for Thursday's coffee morning?

Prayer

Rohr's book, *The Divine Dance*, has a forward by Paul Young, the author of *The Shack*, which was very popular a few years ago and which many of you may have read. This is his prayer at the end of his forward. Some of the wording may seem a bit difficult at first but stick with it until meaning emerges:

God you have never had a low view of Humanity.

May our eyes be healed, especially those of us 'born blind', that we might see what You do.

May our ears be opened to the music that heals, celebrating the entanglement of differences so that even in our discord, we hear that we ourselves are the melody embraced in Three-Part Harmony.

May our courage be emboldened to take the risks of trust, to live only inside the grace of one single day, to reach across Empire's borders and tear down the walls that mask our faces.

May we feel within us the eternal life of Jesus reaching through our hands – to heal, to hold, to hug – and celebrate the bread of our Humanity, the sanctity of the Ordinary and Participation in the Trinity.

Amen

Harvey Allen

East Brent

This arrived on my mobile phone a couple of weeks ago. It's a shame that I can't share the background pictures with you because they were very evocative, from the white colonnaded corridor to the room piled high with papers, to the stark empty room!

I dreamed that I went to Heaven and an angel was giving me a tour. We walked with each other down a vast corridor. My guide stopped at a doorway and gestured for me to enter. Inside was a massive workroom filled with angels bustling about. "This is the receiving room" my angel explained. "Here, all the world's prayers to God are received." I looked upon all the angels sorting petitions written on piles of scraps of paper from all over the world. I was impressed by both the order and the chaos of this busy workroom.

My guide and I continued down the corridor until we reached a second doorway. The angel turned to me and said "This is the packaging and delivery room. Here, the graces and blessings that the world's people requested are processed and sent for delivery." Again, I couldn't help but be impressed by how busy the room was. Angels were darting about, packaging the blessings for delivery to the people of Earth.

My guide and I continued on until we arrived at the farthest end of the corridor. To my surprise, only one angel was in this room sitting idly with nothing to do. This is the acknowledgement room," my angel guide quietly admitted to me. "How is it that there is no work

happening in here?" I asked. The angel seemed embarrassed, "It's very sad" he explained." "After people receive the blessings that they asked God for, very few send back acknowledgements." "How does one acknowledge their blessings from God?" I asked. "Easy "the angel answered, "Just say 'thank you, Lord'". "What kinds of blessing should they acknowledge?" I asked. The angel smiled and explained, "If you have food on your table, clothing on your back and a roof overhead, you are richer than 75% of the world. If you have money in the bank and in your wallet, you are among the top 8 percent of the world's wealthy. If you wake up with more health than illness, you are more blessed than those who will not survive the day. If you have never had to endure the fear of battle, the loneliness of imprisonment or the agony of torture, then you are better off than 700 million people in the world. If you can attend church without fear of harassment, arrest, or death, you are more blessed than 3 billion people. If your parents are still alive and still married, then your fortune is very rare indeed. If you can hold your head up and smile, you're unique to all those who despair."

When I woke, I pondered over how we can start to acknowledge our blessings. If you can read this message, you are doubly blessed. One is that someone was thinking of you as very special. The second is that you are more blessed than over two billion people in the world who cannot read at all. If you see this on your own device, you are part of 1% in the world who can afford that opportunity. Have a good day and always count your blessings.

Pass this message along to remind everyone how blessed we all are.

Best wishes and stay safe from everyone at East Brent.

Margaret Scott

PLUS +++ POEMS, PRAYERS and OTHER MESSAGES

The coronavirus or covid-19 are words that are now part of our everyday lives. We are all aware of the horrific number of folk that have lost their lives to this illness. We are informed every day via the government daily updates of the current number who are suffering. Those of more senior years were asked to stay at home to avoid catching the virus and thank goodness so many have been able to do just that although we are all missing friends and family. The experts tell us about the various things to check and look out for but what is it like first-hand?

Helen and I had worked at an Exhibition over the week-end of 14/15th March and we both returned home on the Sunday evening feeling slightly off colour and on the Monday and Tuesday we felt worse. Wednesday dawned and both of us felt so poorly that neither of us went to work.

Helen felt better and then returned to work but we decided I was too exhausted, so I stayed at home over the week-end. I got worse I was not eating and all I wanted to drink was water. Monday morning we made a call to the doctors I explained how I felt straight away the doctor said ring the 111 system We did that and again, after a further referral to another doctor he said "I rather think you have Covid-19".

I am extremely fortunate because I am now 75 years old and do not take any medication at all and when I informed the doctor he said could I self-isolate at home because he did not want to take me into hospital at that point. I had virtually no strength at all I struggled with breathing and in fact I had to stay in the bedroom because I could not manage to climb the stairs at home. I could only take three steps, take a while to get my breath back take the next three, and repeat the operation. My temperature was so high the 111 folk said that I was now bordering on Hospital unless we could get my temperature down. Helen was told to supply me with Paracetamol every four hours and check my temperature at the same time.

Notwithstanding the 'man flu' comments I can honestly say I have never felt so ill, in fact I was convinced that I was not going to recover from the illness. I was still eating very little and was getting weaker. I lost over a stone in weight! Looking on the bright side it turned out to be cheaper than Weight Watchers! Helen suggested that I try a milk shake for a change that turned out to be Complan; nuf said!

It took two and a half day's to get my temperature to start to come down. My breathing was causing Helen and I some concern so yet another call back to 111 for advice. They spoke to me for a few minutes and then they asked to speak to Helen. Nothing was said to me after the phone call but a few days later, as I started to feel a slight improvement, Helen admitted she had been told that if my breathing had got any worse or there was any sign of blueness on my lips then she was to ring 999 without any further delay.

I decided after a few days to come down stairs for the first time in over a week. I thought it would be a good idea to have a walk down the garden, we have a ninety foot garden but I could only manage twenty feet! It has taken quite a long time to recover and get my strength back. I am told that my breathing will take a long time, if ever, to get back to full strength.

I must finish by thanking each and everyone for your warm wishes and prayers I am extremely fortunate to have recovered and my heart goes out to all those still suffering.

Geoff Stait

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The following was posted on my Facebook page by a very good friend of mine from Lancaster

Luke 5:16 KJV.

A streamer, a zoomer or a prayer?

In these days of lockdown we have had to find new ways to communicate with our friends and family and one of the ways is to Zoom. It seems to be an ideal way to keep in touch but I have to confess that I find zooming very difficult and to be truthful even a little frustrating.

For a while I couldn't understand why it made me feel like that. (Please forgive me if you're a zoomer!) However having thought about it I think it's because I can see my friends but I cannot really have a normal one to one relationship with them.

Yesterday I at last got some clarity on the situation! I was talking to my sister on the telephone and she mentioned that their church was going to stream their Sunday morning service. It was if a light went on because that's what I enjoy being part of: I like watching streaming rather than doing zooming!

I am sure that for most people one is not better than the other, rather it comes down to personal choice but it made me wonder what Jesus would have preferred? Would He have liked zooming or streaming! I have to say that I'm not really sure but I do know that whichever means He chose His main choice would have been to communicate through prayer because He often withdrew into the desert (lockdown) in order to pray to His Heavenly Father.

And that's the challenge to me today when I feel as though I'm in a desert ie. a lockdown situation: what is my main, most important means of communication? Is it zooming, streaming, or praying? And who is my main receiver? I trust it is my Heavenly Father.

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you so much that in whatever situation I find myself, either with other people or even in lockdown, you are always there with me, for you have promised never to leave me or to forsake me. Please help me in times of quietness and loneliness always to remember that. In Jesus name we pray amen.

Another thought !!

Having had a week to think and consider about streaming, zooming or praying I still prefer praying but I have been challenged to reconsider my position and eat "humble pie," so from today I eat humble pie and admit that there is a time to Zoom in order to connect with friends and

family whom we cannot see in the flesh at the moment! So whilst “humble pie” can be quite indigestible from today I thank the Lord for modern technology!

Rev Tim Widdess

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These pieces are both taken from "The Friendship Book." (where they are written as A Thought For Each Day).

Her laptop pinged, and a message popped up.

"I see you. I love you!"

It was from a friend, and just what she needed to hear at that moment.

But, how?

Then she realised she was still logged into her online messaging system. It showed a little green light next to the pictures of any of her friends who were also online then. And a green light would be next to her picture on her friend's screen.

Such technology would have seemed magical not too long ago, but perhaps it brings us closer to believing that there is one who sees us, whether our light is shining bright or we are in the dark.

And He loves us, too.

I was just about to start another daily chore

When a swift glance through the window sent me running to the door.

Spanning roofs and high brick walls, away beyond my view,

A rainbow shimmered colours of every shade and hue.

I couldn't help but stand there - I couldn't bear to miss

The glory of this moment, as nature reached to kiss

My mundane Monday morning with a sign from God above,

That between life's sun and rain we have the promise of His love.

I watched my lovely rainbow slowly disappear from sight,

But caught within the heart are those which shine for ever bright

The kindness of a stranger or the love of a dear friend

Sent in your time of need - a rainbow without end!

Carol Boocock