

# LINK PLUS++++

## Special Edition – May 2020

### Friends

As we continue in lockdown we are finding new ways of keeping in touch. We held a successful virtual coffee morning and Sunday worship service, and will continue to do these things for as long as they are needed.



Of course it is not the same as meeting face to face, conversations are more difficult, and singing was certainly an experience for all who took part, yet it was good to see so many of you on screen. Thanks to Tim & Janet Widdess for the screenshot of the coffee morning.

Some people are finding this lockdown a time for doing all the things they have put off for ages, some people are finding peace and relaxation in the space provided by it, some are learning new skills or taking up hobbies. However, for many it is a time of hardship a time when getting medical help is more difficult a time when the constant isolation is wearing them down, a time of added complications and problems.

Hopefully, however you are coping and whatever your circumstances, whether alone or with others, you can keep cheerful and hopeful. Many of you will have seen Thomas Moore (Captain Tom) on the television and the remarkable response his fundraising has had from the people in the UK – over £30 million last time I looked. I think some of this is because of his age, some because of the good cause, but some is because of who he is, his optimism and hopefulness. In one of his early interviews, when asked about the lockdown, he wanted people to know that it would end, that the sun would shine again, and all would be well once more.

Let us give thanks to God for the hope that keeps us looking forward to better times.

Steve

### **Brent Knoll**

I'm writing this piece just after Easter - an Easter, the like of which I'm sure none of us have ever experienced before. No joining together in Church for feet to be washed and the final supper to be shared on Maundy Thursday. No corporate meditation at the foot of the cross on Good Friday. No joining in celebration at the top of Brean Down to watch the sun come up as we offer praise and heartfelt gratitude as we remembered Jesus' resurrection. No raising of our voices in joy as we joined together in our chapel for Easter morning worship.

But although we were apart, it didn't mean that we weren't brought together during these incredibly difficult times through our faith. I

know many of us remembered the true meaning of the Easter weekend in our own homes, remembering humbly, the sacrifice of Good Friday and celebrating, in our own way, in our own homes, the joy of Easter Sunday. I know that many of us would like to say a big thank you to Steve and ministers of all denominations who have provided Christians in this area with resources which enabled us to worship this Easter, even though we were not physically together. Christian unity indeed.

We all know that all too many of us are experiencing fear during these times. Perhaps feeling low as we do the responsible thing and remain at home where possible. But with that in mind, I would like to share with you words I received in an email from the Chalice Well Gardens in Glastonbury. A multi-faith, all inclusive charity which opens its gardens to all under the umbrella of its motto "Many paths, one source". The email contained the words of its founder, Wesley Tudor Pole. Written in 1958, they could have been written for the crisis we are going through today:

"As events unroll, it may be only too easy to give entry into our minds to the two great enemies. Fear and depression. Bar the gates on them! On the other hand, welcome into the home of your spirit, Faith, Serenity and Courage. Open your doors widely to receive these three good friends, and be at peace. Realise that the sun never ceases to shine: however dark the clouds may be which seem to obscure its light."

There is no "news" from us here at Brent Knoll Methodist Church this month (and possibly for many months to come). There are no services to be advertised, coffee mornings to attend nor bible study groups to enjoy. But the one thing we can all do and are doing is pray for the strength to get through these difficult times and to an end to this virus. And it will happen. This will end. We just need to hold onto those three things mentioned in Pole's writing - Faith, Serenity and Courage.

Dear friends across the Circuit, to every single one of you from each and every one of us here at Brent Knoll - we pray for all three - for all of us. God bless.

Rosemary Krull

### **Burnham**

This, "Not the Stewards Column from Burnham", is obviously going to be rather more personal musings from me as the stewards (7 of us) haven't actually met and church news is limited for the same reason. Although we haven't met we have all been in touch either by phone, email, text or as on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> April By Zoom. Steve suggested we had a Zoom virtual coffee morning. Now I have never used facetime or snapchat or skype or any other means of visually contacting anyone before but I really wanted to be part of the session. Getting onto the zoom site was very straight forward and I was so excited to see Marian Kingsbury frantically waving at me and speaking to me. We had a good chat before lots of other folk came onto the site (most of us with cups of coffee). It was great to see Geoff Stait join the group as he recovers from Covid 19. We thank God for his ongoing recovery from this dreadful illness.

I hope you are not finding this enforced isolation from the world around us too onerous. I seem to have settled into a sort of routine. Get up, breakfast, start my list of jobs, stop for coffee coinciding with Homes under the Hammer, more household tasks, latish lunch to coincide with Father Brown, then more jobs until House of Games and then my evening meal. Oh! I forgot walking the dog for exercise for both of us. As he is very old and arthritic (me too!) our walks are of necessity slow and of a short distance, just right for both of us!! I am really missing the fellowship of church. I am a firm believer that we create our own church within our own space and that I am in my own church in my house and that is wonderful but nonetheless it does feel lonely at times. To go from doing so much with all the other members of the congregation and stewards to doing virtually nothing has been a shock. I sometimes wish I could just sneak into church and

sit there quietly on my own for an emotional and spiritual top up. (I might just do it one day!!!)

Have you been clapping for the NHS and other vital workers? I started out with gentle clapping on my doorstep and now I'm out on the pavement banging on my saucepan with great enthusiasm. I live in a short cul-de-sac and we are all yelling at each other across the road – "Are you okay?" etc etc. We are becoming a micro community rather than just folks who live in the same road.

While I was going through wardrobes, cupboards, drawers at the beginning of my BIG sort out, (I think the charity shops won't know what's hit them when things get back to normal) I came across some boxes of music and poetry that my husband had written all through his life. As I hadn't really been able to go through the boxes since he died I decided now was the time. It has been an amazing experience to read his words and sing his music again. I would like to leave you with one of his poems. I hope you don't mind this bit of indulgence from me – it is called "Awakening".

I awoke – and stood in the silent darkness – before the dawn of day,  
Letting night's dark shadows with moonlight play. And there – Before  
the night should fade, a myriad, shining points of light,  
As far as human eye can scan, I saw the stars – such glistening  
grandeur,

Part of God's eternal plan. A mass of stars and other worlds, too far for  
us to know if there is other life out there – A life like ours – or will it be  
as diverse as their stars themselves? If He permits, someday we will  
know. But till that day we can only gaze – with Awe and Wonder.

Barry Hall

Keep well and stay safe  
Ann Hall

## Brean

You could say that not much is happening in Brean, but life goes on. It is lovely to have a bit of peace and quiet at this time of the year, to have the beach (largely) to ourselves and to hear the birds in all their glory. And yet who can feel other than sympathy for those who are kept away, and for those whose very livelihood is at risk. Some of us listened to Steve's first Zoom service. It was good to share with familiar faces even though our singing left much to be desired.

At the start of Lockdown Judy and I were invited to join a WhatsApp group made up of about a dozen members of the Arts Society to which we belong. There is chat going on from the early morning cuppa, to late on in the evening and goodnight all. Most days the originator of the group sets a voluntary challenge - make a paper aeroplane that flies the length of the lounge, identify these birds, and so on. A day or so ago it was to write a short poem on Covid 19. About half of the group made the effort. Here is mine (the (x) stands for a name so put your own single syllable one in to make it scan)

'Tis but a month, I asked myself,  
Since Covid did begin,  
To show its teeth in Somerset,  
And dig its canines in?

Then up pops (x). WhatsApp? she asked,  
Come listen here to me,  
I've had this thought whereby we may,  
stay friends unitedly.

We'll greet each one o'er morning drink  
And keep a repartee  
Of things to do and say and show,  
Have fun, yet care to be

In touch with those who need our care,  
And those we haven't seen.  
Our neighbours, friends and those we meet  
And any in between.

And that is why, tho' tis four weeks,  
Since we began this way,  
It seems as if time's gone so fast  
It is but yesterday.

It has been a great success. None of the group, as far as I know, is a regular churchgoer. Religion is never discussed, and I guess that nobody even thinks this way, but someone of a religious persuasion could well say that God's work is in the midst of us.

God is not remote. As I get older I more and more think of God as Universal. Christ deep within us. Present in everyone, no matter who they are or what they have done and it is how we respond in Love that makes the difference. As we take each day as it comes, even under Covid, it is afterwards that we see how God has been at work.

The day after Easter, Richard Rohr, a Franciscan Friar in the US, wrote this in his daily blog

*"It is largely after the fact that faith is formed.... Only after the fact can you see that you were being held and led during the fact."*

He supported his text by his own experience, having lived through the anxiety and pain of prostate cancer. He quoted the story from Hebrew Scripture about Moses, who sought to know the Glory of God at a moment of great difficulty for him. Eventually, he was allowed a glimpse of the backside of God as God passed from view while Moses held his face to the recesses of the cleft in the rock. But it was enough. Moses had seen the vision, was comforted and given hope.

Our WhatsApp group is not static. We have grown in appreciation of one another. When we come out of Covid and meet again in the flesh, we shall be different albeit with realising it, both in how we see the world and how we see each other.

In a later blog, Rohr talks about living in a liminal state, that moment of change from one way of living to another.

So I was glad to read of Steve's suggestion for a regular and virtual coffee morning even though, for the moment, we can't join in because we need to go to Musgrove each day). It will give us refreshment, maybe a newness of vision and a newness of seeing each other and the world around us.

Rohr's prayer on that day just after Easter was this:

*O Great Love, thank you for living and loving in us and through us. May all that we do flow from our deep connection with you and all beings. Help us become a community that vulnerably shares each other's burdens and the weight of glory. Listen to our hearts' longings for the healing of our world. [Please add your own prayers.] . . . Knowing you are hearing us better than we are speaking, we offer these prayers in all the holy names of God, Amen.*

Harvey Allen

### **West Huntspill**

I have just been sent the following from The Taunton Circuit Link, which I thought was very good. It fits in very well with a letter in the Methodist Recorder this week from Rev Tony Burglass, who was challenged to sing "Thine be the Glory" outside his front door on Easter Sunday.



He lives in a cul-de-sac, and though he had some reservations, he decided that he had a reasonable singing voice and was of a sufficiently strong character "(i.e. I'm draft enough!)" to do it. He printed the words for not only "Thine be the Glory", but also for "Christ the Lord is risen today" and put a copy through every door in the street inviting his neighbours to join him. He also said that those who didn't like it could just turn the sound up on the telly and it would soon be over.

About half the street came out, some joining in the singing and others listening. He even had a few grateful text messages afterwards, so people really seemed to enjoy it. He just hopes they don't expect him to do every week!

### **How the Virus Stole Easter**

Twas late in '19 when the virus began,  
Bringing chaos and fear to all people in each land.  
People were sick, hospital full,  
Doctors overwhelmed no one in school.

As winter gave way to the promise of spring,  
The virus raged on, touching peasant and king.  
People hid in their homes from the enemy unseen.  
They YouTubed and Zoomed, social distanced and cleaned.

April approached and churches were closed.  
"There won't be an Easter" the world supposed.  
There won't be church services, and egg hunts are out.  
No reason for new dresses when we can't go about.

Holy Week starts as bleak as the rest.  
The world was focused on masks and tests.  
"Easter can't happen this year", they proclaimed.  
"Online and at home it just won't be the same".

Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, the days came and went.  
The virus pressed on; it just wouldn't relent.  
The world woke Sunday and nothing had changed.  
The virus still menaced, the people estranged.

"Pooh pooh to the saints", the world was grumbling.  
They're finding out now that no Easter is coming.  
"They're waking up! I know just what they'll do!  
Their mouths will hang open a minute or two,  
And then the saints will all cry boo-hoo.

That noise" said the world, "would be something to hear".  
So it paused and put a hand to it's ear.  
And it did hear a sound coming through the skies.  
It started low, then started to rise.

But sound wasn't depressed.  
Why, this sound was triumphant!  
It couldn't be so!  
But it grew with abundance!  
The world stared around, popping it's eyes.  
Then it shook! What it saw was a shocking surprise!

Each saint in each nation, the tall and the small,  
Was celebrating Jesus in spite of it all!  
It hadn't stopped Easter from coming! It came!  
Somehow or other, it came just the same!

And the world with it's life quite stuck in quarantine  
Stood puzzling and puzzling.  
"Just how can this be?"  
It came without bonnets, it came without bunnies,  
It came without egg hunts, cantatas, or money".

Then the world thought of something it hadn't before.

"Maybe Easter doesn't come from a store".

Maybe Easter, perhaps means a little bit more".

And what happened then?

Well..... The story not done.

What will YOU do?

Will you share with that one

Or two or more people needing hope on this night?

Will you share the source of your life in this fight?

The churches are empty – but so is the tomb,  
And Jesus the Victor over death, doom and gloom.

So this year at Easter, let this be our prayer,  
As the virus still rages all around, everywhere.

May the world see hope when it looks at God's people.  
May the world see the Church is not a building or a steeple.  
May the world find Faith in Jesus' death and resurrection,  
May the world find Joy in a time of dejection.  
May 2020 be known as the year of survival,  
But not only that – Let it start a revival.

(by Kristi Bothur with nod and thanks to Dr Seuss)

Maureen Cavill

**PLUS +++**  
**POEMS, PRAYERS and OTHER**  
**MESSAGES**

I have quite strange request. Extraordinary times, extraordinary measures...

My daughter works with me as a carer and she drives herself to the clients but her 20 year old car broke down, it is waiting to be SORN-ed

when the end of life vehicle premises open. So that she cannot work which is a great problem for us now. Due to the lockdown we cannot buy a used car for her as long as the lockdown is in place because the saloons are closed.

I would like to ask you if you could help us with the followings: If there is anyone in the circuit who has an automatic car and is thinking about selling it, please let us know. Keeping in mind the requirements of the government (a car can be seen safely with keeping the social distancing) and we can pay for it in cash if the car is not expensive.

Could you please send a circular to everybody you can reach to ask for help regarding this extraordinary request please? Thank you for all your help! God bless.

**Ildi Haraszti (Local Preacher on Trial)**

**I heard the voice of God today.**

I heard the voice of God today.  
Its kind and gentle tone  
Emanated clearly  
from the speaker on the phone.

'Hello.' It said. 'It's only me,  
I thought I'd ring today  
To have a little catch up,  
and make sure that you're OK.

'I'm hoping you've recovered from  
that nasty vicious bug.  
Are you eating better now  
and keeping warm and snug?'

We talked of this, we talked of that,  
you know the way you do  
while manna for my heart and soul  
came right on pouring through.

I touched the hand of God today,  
which really made me smile.  
It happened this morning  
in the supermarket aisle.

A voice said: 'Let me help you there,  
I'll lift the heavy stuff.'  
The helping hand was big and strong,  
the skin was rather rough.

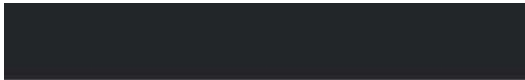
An unknown person, reaching out  
to help me on my way.  
And thus, celestial sparkle  
was sprinkled on the day.

For strangers, friends and neighbours,  
whate'er their earthly role,  
are also proxy angels  
alert and on patrol.

Tall and short and young and old  
no matter height or girth,  
they channel bits of heaven down  
to beautify the earth.

And so I've come to realise  
it's part of the design.  
We all have the potential  
to be human and divine.

Tricia Sturgeon, Norfolk (supplied by Daphne Hill)



I lay at night within my bed  
The strangest feelings in my head  
This world I love and come to grace  
Has turned into a deadly place  
There's people dying all around  
A cure yet has not been found  
It's something no one's ever seen  
And it's got the code name C19  
But we'll win the fight that much is true  
Because our team is dressed in blue  
They'll fight it each and everyday  
Until the virus goes away  
And just in case you cannot guess  
Our team is called the NHS



(Sandra Nelson – from Facebook)

**And we think and pray for those overseas who are fighting the disease as well. I have received this from Snigdendu Kobiraj in the Durgapur Diocese of the Church of North India**

As the Novel Coronavirus (COVID - 19) continues to spread in an unpredictable manner, the Government of India declared a

national lockdown from the 23rd of March 2020, which is to continue till 4th April 2020 and is expected to be extended till the threat is reduced.

The current situation triggers a growing risk of food shortage to the section of people who live below the poverty line, especially daily wage earners. These sections do not have a reserve fund that would sustain them through this crucial time of national lockdown. The Church's social teaching principle of solidarity is about recognising others as our brothers and sisters and actively working for their good. In our connected humanity, we are called to build relationships – to understand what life is like for others who are different from us. It's part of what allows us to connect to others.

St. Michael's Church, Durgapur has a long-standing history of standing in solidarity with the subalterns in their times of distress, and the lockdown is no exception. Taking into consideration the plight of the people, the church youth met and resolved to distribute food items to some families within the vicinity of the church. With short notice, a very successful drive was conducted by the youths in which the members of the church contributed towards this noble drive with open hands and hearts.

On 10th of April 2020, which also happened to be Good Friday also, a total of 106 families were aided through the distribution of food relief in the form of rice, pulses, cooking oil, vegetables and dry food like biscuits and soya beans. This noble initiative undertaken by the youth of St. Michael's Church was much appreciated by all, including the local populace and the administration.

The members of the church are proud of their youth and stand by them when they need to stand beside the people of God in the immediate future also. May the Almighty give His healing touch to all those who are suffering from this deadly ailment, the courage to all who are fighting against it and provide sustenance to the hungry during this time of apprehension.  
Amen.

The LINK March 1986

EASTER CROSSES.

Following discussions between local Anglicans and Methodists it has been decided to erect three large crosses on the top of Brent Knoll for Easter. Everyone will appreciate that this is a wonderful opportunity to remind thousands of people using the local motorway, just what the real significance of Easter is. In order to be seen the crosses have to be very large and consequently rather heavy, so plenty of manpower is required.

Will any able bodied men in the Link Churches who are able to help with the erecting of the crosses please contact me to ensure that this job is done efficiently. (Tel. 784069).

It is hoped to erect two crosses on Monday 24th March with the third being placed in position on Tuesday 25th March, followed by a short act of worship. Details of the service planned following the service on the top of the Knoll are given elsewhere by Kip.

The crosses have to be purchased and it would be most helpful if individuals and perhaps the Link Church Councils could make a small donation to help defray the costs. Once the crosses have been paid for it will be fairly easy to erect them each Easter for a good number of years to come.

Your support and help will be much appreciated and it hoped that Easter 1986 will be memorable for everyone involved.

LES JENKIN.

\* \* \* \*

(Cedric May – from 1986)