

# LINK PLUS++++

## May 2021

### Dear Friends

With the reopening of Brean and East Brent last month, and Burnham and Brent Knoll this month, things are starting to get back to more normality. We pray for the folk at West Huntspill as they make their own decisions.

I don't know about you, but I am tired of regulation and restriction, facemask, social distancing, and hand-sanitiser; but I know too that these things are likely to be part of our life for a while longer. They keep us safe and protected, and if we follow the rules, we will find they are withdrawn a faster pace. Then we will get back to business, but not business as usual. I don't like the phrase 'the new normal' because I am aware that when it is said some people will hear 'new' and others will hear 'normal' (often meaning 'the way things were'). In reality the future will not be one of these or the other, it will be in some way both; hence the thinking behind the phrase.

What will be new, what will be normal, for you, the church you are part of, and the direction of the Circuit, will be up to us all. As we listen to the Spirit of God and the needs of our community (for we are not a social club, we are a church called to worship God and serve God's creation) we will be challenged to decide these things.

May God guide us, lead us, direct us, and inspire us.

Steve

### Brean

Well Easter has gone, seemingly into the far distance even though it was only three and a half weeks ago. No live service in our church of course. And instead of the dawn chorus of our singing across the circuit from the heights of Brean Down we all shared in a Circuit Zoom service at a respectable hour.

And by then, I guess we were all looking forward to our own 'resurrection' of being gradually released from our Lockdown status. It would have been nice to have had an Easter morning Communion service, but I think most of us could still remember how cold it was when we finally closed down for the winter last autumn, and the prospect of cold weather, the amount of effort to get the church into an acceptable condition, and the availability of Zoom services elsewhere, persuaded us to leave things for a couple of weeks.

So we had our first 'live' service on 18<sup>th</sup> April. It was a beautiful day and the sun shone splendidly, though there was still a cool breeze as our minister led us through a service fitting for the occasion of celebration. We welcomed one another in joyful hope, together with returning summer visitors and new members of the congregation. I think I counted 17 and the following week was also well attended with Jim McKnight leading us in his usual cheerful fashion.

We had had concern when Covid caused us to close our church, as to how many of the congregation would still be interested in making the effort to return to worship in the church, but in the first two weeks back everyone has been present on one or both of the services.

Being in church is more than formal worship. We have missed our time of chat and coffee afterwards but, on the 25<sup>th</sup> we ventured to have coffee in our garden after service. Without having pre-notice, only half a dozen were able to stay (so we didn't break Covid codes) but what a fun time it was. In a broader sense, worship is not confined to the hour inside the church. A radio programme I heard this week was talking about scientific research and how ideas were consolidated. As one scientist said, the most important time is in the bar afterwards. In other words, it is in that communal atmosphere that ideas are tested, new inspiration is granted and relationships deepened. Coffee time can be a bit like that too. And what a great occasion it was in our back garden. We were together for nearly an hour chatting away as though there had been no gap.

And that is what happened in church before Covid and where a small community like ours can exercise its own special ministry. Officially we meet together at 10.30 for an hour's formal worship; but we meet up

earlier to share our greetings with one another and to prepare for what is to follow. After worship we all share round a single table for coffee and chat. We might talk all together or to our neighbours left or right. Next week it might be a different combination but over time we build a strong relationship one with another. We enjoy meeting up with summer visitors, old and new, as well as potential new members. Round the table we find support, inspiration and new heart. In the past that table has been at the foundation of the Book Group that met with friends from St Bridget's before Covid disrupted things. A craft group also rose up from those discussions. And goodness knows how much Church Council stuff has been dealt with in an informal way (to be formally confirmed on a later occasion) and how many loose ends have been tied up otherwise. Our Monday coffee morning group was also an outcome from those chats. It was a small group, but members did also come to some of the social events even though they had no formal connection with the church in a worship sense. They were also involved in the Craft Sale eighteen months ago. Hopefully it will reform after Lockdown eases. This is typical of a small church where each member is part of the whole body.

After we had finished our worship on 17<sup>th</sup> April, we held our Church Council. At the meeting Linda reported that she was now a Circuit Steward and because extra responsibilities have been landed on Circuit Stewards as a result of the pressures that Covid has forced upon us, she no longer felt able to offer herself as our Church's Senior Steward. In the quietness that followed this announcement, Rose felt moved to stand up and say 'I'll do it .... but I will need some help'. Needless to say the offer was accepted immediately, and help was indeed offered to cover various aspects like rotas, vestry duty and other things. We thanked Linda generously for her past service and wished her well for her new duties; and we thanked Rose with relief for taking on the job. So for those that need to know (preachers and so on), please change your records to show Church Steward as Rosemary Baker (details as for organist)

All the usual Agenda items were completed satisfactorily, risk assessment, safeguarding, data protection lists, pastoral matters and so on. Our finances have taken a hit of course but we are still viable and voted donations to our usual good causes (though it seems that some Methodist ones are a bit elusive these days). John and Anne reported on the

improvements that have been made to the building, mostly as a result of the last quinquennial, and which include a new large window behind the organ stool and a new back door. Other minor areas now need attention, of course. Worship and Missions were also discussed from which please make a note that our Annual Outdoor service (Covid permitting) will be held on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> August, to which all are urged to come.

But the most trepidatious note is the line which reads 'SB will invite members to a Zoom meeting shortly where further and more in-depth discussion can take place regarding our mission and future success'. Whoops, and now don't tell me that something along these lines doesn't appear in your CC Minutes!! (And I am grateful to Morag for her efficiency in getting her Minutes out within a couple of days so that I have been able to use them in this report).

Joyce has contributed an article to Link this time which we heartedly commend to you. Thank you Joyce.

Summer's coming, Lockdown is easing, so we all send our best wishes and hope that your journey out of the mental and physical strait jacket under which we have been living, progresses smoothly.

Harvey Allen

### **Brent Knoll**

As reported last month, our Chapel wasn't open for Easter Sunday, but we were delighted to see the outside decorated with so many Spring flowers. A huge thank you to both Gill and Chris Poulter for making our church look so bright and alive on Easter Day. It was so very fitting and a joy to see.

We are now planning to open for Pentecost on 23rd May. We will, of course, have carried out a deep clean and a risk assessment to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our congregation. As Pentecost is seen as the birth of the Church, it would be a wonderful birthday celebration indeed to meet up together again after such a lengthy time away.

Little by little, life is beginning to look a bit more "normal" and if things go to plan, more restrictions could be lifted this month. We know we still have a way to go and need to be mindful of each other, but it has already

been uplifting for so many to meet up with friends and family after a long time apart.

From all of us here at Brent Knoll Methodist Church, we continue to hold our Circuit and each other in our prayers. And as more people are, once again, able to come and visit this beautiful part of the world, we pray too for their safety and wellbeing. And for a more optimistic and positive time ahead for all of us.

God bless

Rosemary Krull

### **East Brent**

East Brent returned to regular morning worship on Easter Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> April with an extra three very welcome guests in the congregation. The service was conducted by the Revd. Tim Widdess which included Holy Communion and was carried out within Covid-9 regulations, it was a joy to be back and an excellent morning service, the first communion in over twelve months and we thank all concerned in making this happen!!!

The following week Rob Jenks was with us for the short morning service and last week the 18<sup>th</sup> April we were pleased to have the Revd. Peter Davis take our service, so we feel we are getting back in the groove, but very much miss the full blast of hymn singing that East Brent is well known for and it will not come too soon as much enjoyment can be gained from singing hymns.

Our service on the 25<sup>th</sup> April will be followed by Church Council meeting, we unfortunately cannot provide the usual lunch, but the meeting will probably be quite short as we anticipate not too much to discuss, thus enabling us back home for our Sunday roast in plenty of time providing the influx of holiday makers do not hold us up.(one downfall of living in Brean).

Gordon Legg

### **West Huntspill**

Preparations for our 170th Anniversary at West Huntspill.

The "Life of Jesus" retold in knitted scenes, (including Miracles and Parables", a good number of Groups (suitably distanced,) families and individuals have risen to the challenge and have been busy during "Lock

down” and are producing some very interesting, imaginative and inspired story lines. Now we need some artist to colour the dividing screens so that each portrayal is separate. The stage sets are now ready to be worked on in a medium of choice e.g. (water colour, acrylic, emulsion, wax crayon or felt-tip). There are still one or two knitted scenes awaiting knitters and we will also need some props to be made.

We are not sure when we will be able to open the display for public viewing but if everything is ready we can do so when we are able to fully open our Premises.

More details from Christine Thomas 01278 256771

I look forward to hearing from you soon.



One scene is Luke ch: 2 v 41-52 the other is Luke ch: 10 v 38-42

# PLUS +++ POEMS, PRAYERS and OTHER MESSAGES

## Circuit Saturday Night Take Away

In view of the COVID-19 crisis in India we have decided to have a fund-raising event for them on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> May. We are making a range of Indian curries for people to order.

Orders should be received by Rosemary Krull or Liz Bennett by Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> May to be collected from the parking areas at Burnham-on-Sea Methodist Church (4.30pm – 5pm) or Milton Methodist church (5.30pm – 6pm) on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup>. In exceptional circumstances deliveries may be available by arrangement.

Please choose any two of the following:

- Chicken Korma
- Lamb Curry
- Vegetable Korma
- Vegetable Curry

Rice will be provided with all orders.

A minimum donation of £5 per person will cover costs, but we would like to raise as much money as possible to help those who are suffering in this crisis in India.

**Rosemary**      01278 751575 ([rkrull@hotmail.com](mailto:rkrull@hotmail.com))

**Liz**              01278 784808 ([lizbennett512@gmail.com](mailto:lizbennett512@gmail.com))

## Christian Aid

Many thanks to everyone who supported the Easter Goody Bag fund raising initiative for Christian Aid. It was amazingly well supported and I would like especially to mention Ann, Carol and Sandra, and also Steve who publicized the event via his e-mail contacts. It was lovely to meet so many people in person who until then had just been a face on zoom or a

voice on the phone - Link members have arms and legs just like everyone else!

Thank you all again,

Barbara



### **Easter Goody Bags/Christian Aid 2021**

Christian Aid began in 1945, founded by British and Irish churches to help refugees following the Second World War. In the 1950's Christian Aid week was launched to raise extra funds to eradicate extreme poverty and injustice worldwide by tackling it's root causes.

In years gone by, I, as so many of other volunteers, have given time collecting donations in support of their work.

Whilst living in Co Durham, I knocked on many doors, often to be ignored and since moving to Burnham, have spent time in the foyer of local supermarkets "rattling my bucket", again feeling like the invisible man!

Thanks to our friend Barbara Williams and her smart thinking, £445 has been raised for Christian Aid in the week leading up to Easter, after 35 Easter Goody Bags were delivered to 29 doorsteps in and around Burnham.

Feedback has been very complimentary, I didn't feel invisible, but welcomed and valued at every one of my allocated doorstep deliveries.

So, thank you to Ann Hall and Carol Boocock for their contribution in items, time and encouragement. Thank you to Barbara Williams for her inspiration, giving people the opportunity to make a financial contribution



to the work of Christian Aid and also accepting my offer of help. It was a joy and indeed, a joint enterprise, which needed a team to make it happen.

Once again, living proof that God listens and answers prayer.

**Sandra Nelson**

### **Mothers in Israel**

I wonder what thoughts went through your head when you saw that heading. I have to confess I was intrigued when I came across it relatively recently and made an effort to find out more.

I had come across it as the title of a book by Revd. Donna Fowler-Marchant with the sub-title. "Methodist beginnings through the eyes of women." It caught my interest immediately as I had written a dissertation for my distance learning degree in theology on the way in which women in the various connections of Methodism had been used in local and itinerant ministry.

Having bought the book, I learnt subsequently that Epworth Rectory under the heading Susanna's Kitchen were going to have a Zoom meeting at which Donna Fowler was going to speak about her findings. It was such a chance to hear directly from the author herself, so I signed up as did about 50 other people from round the Connexion. Interestingly the meeting was zoomed from Epworth with our speaker in North Carolina. She has an appointment as a circuit minister in Watford, but is unable to be there at present because of the pandemic.

The title of the book came from Deborah, the Judge, referring to women who were especially gifted. In the context of the book, it is made clear that while it was customary to refer to other women as "sisters" – "Mothers in Israel" was reserved for woman who stood out with their contribution to faith.

Donna began with a detailed account of the tremendous influence Susanna Wesley had had on her children. Susanna Annesley was one of 24 or 25 children born to her parents. Her father had left the ministry of the Church of England to become one of the dissenter ministers, but as Susanna reached an age (about 12!) to be able to reason out for herself the various merits of each, she elected to return to the Church of England.

Subsequently she met and married Revd. Samuel Wesley and they had 19 children – 10 of whom were to live to adulthood.

Perhaps it was not surprising that the greater part of Donna's talk focused on Susanna. While she referred to the more commonly known facts about Susanna, she also brought out the strong and varied qualities in her character that were to prove such an influence of the attitudes to women in their activity in the church as John met the challenges of the emerging responses to faith that were to lead to the foundation of the Methodist church.

Susanna can be seen as – a teacher, - of her own children as they grew. There is the story that as each child reached its fifth birthday she would spend time with them until they could read – expecting that to be accomplished in the day! There is additional evidence that she taught others about faith. This moves on to the fact that initially she led family prayers, but when her husband was away and his parishioners found the curate who was stepping in for him very boring, others requested to join in these gatherings, and it is reported that up to two hundred attended, and she exercised pastoral care over them. She wrote, not only frequent letters to her children once they were away from home, but also essays/journals in which she expressed her theological beliefs. On one occasion she wrote in defence of her son, John's, rejection of Calvinism, for John believed that salvation was for all whereas Calvinism took the stance that a person was predestined to be saved or not.

Susanna had a conventional faith, but was often unconventional in the ways she expressed it with boldness. Hers was a deep piety along with a stubborn determination to stand up for what was right, reinforced by theological competence to defend her actions.

When we read of Susanna's life we must never forget that this was only possible because of her superb organisational skills.

In summing Susanna up, Donna felt that her lasting legacy was as a role model for female leadership in the church.

If acceptable, next time I would be willing to continue with how women were used in the Methodist societies in John Wesley's lifetime.

Joyce Pipet

### **“It is not growing like a tree”**

Here’s a poem from Judy Allen.

It’s by Ben Jonson whose life straddled Elizabeth I, James I and Charles I so you might need to read it again in order to make better sense:

It is not growing like a tree  
In bulk, doth make men better be;  
Or standing long an oak, three hundred year,  
To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sere:  
A lily of a day  
Is fairer far in May  
Although it fall and die that night;  
It was the plant and flower of light.  
In small proportions we just beauties see;  
And in short measures life may perfect be

### **FREE BOOKS OFFER**

Greetings from north Kent! I am a Methodist and the author of a book called [How to Handle Later Life](#), which was published in 2017. In its 1,000 pages, I explore the main choices people face as they grow older and the ways in which they can avoid potential problems in fields from transport and healthcare to social contact and end-of-life care.

Reviewing my book, Eric Midwinter, a founder of the U3A movement, wrote:

*It would be difficult to visualise a more complete and wide-ranging compendium than this on how to cope with the pressures and perils of later age. ... Health, with more than 200 pages, housing, legal matters, finance and all other facets of later life are comprehensively and sympathetically treated, with a user-friendly structure and presentation. There should be a copy in every library, council office, doctor's practice, MP's surgery, Citizens Advice Bureau, Age UK office, if not in every household.*

In his review in the *Methodist Recorder*, The Rev Albert Jewell, former head of pastoral care at Methodist Homes, wrote:

*Shoard addresses in a thorough-going and balanced manner the biggest concerns and decisions people face as they grow older... Reliable and*

*comprehensive... It should be found in every public library... As someone who has been involved in dementia care and research over the years, I find the author's chapter on this subject particularly impressive. Its 25 pages are essential reading.*

Over the last twelve months, the pandemic has taken away opportunities to sell my book, whether at speaking events, conferences and exhibitions or in bookshops. My publisher has retained copies for sale, but I have taken others which it would otherwise have pulped to reduce storage costs, and am offering them free to individuals and groups in churches with a special interest in engaging with older people. If anyone in your church, lay or ordained, involved in work with older people within the church and/or their wider community would like a copy, please ask them to write to me at PO Box 664, Rochester, Kent ME1 9JB with their name, address and a cheque made out to me for £3.70 (to cover postage and packing). For any questions about my offer, email me at [marion@marionshoard.co.uk](mailto:marion@marionshoard.co.uk).

You can see sample chapters, the table of contents, introduction and reviews at [www.amaranthbooks.co.uk/titles/how-to-handle-later-life](http://www.amaranthbooks.co.uk/titles/how-to-handle-later-life) . [marionshoard.co.uk](http://marionshoard.co.uk) provides information about my background and activities, including within the ecumenical group [Christians on Ageing](#), in which I serve as a trustee.

Best wishes,  
**Marion Shoard**

**Finally, please note....  
the deadline for the May Link Plus is  
24<sup>th</sup> May.**