

LINK PLUS++++

Special Edition – September 2020

Friends

Welcome to the start of the new Methodist Church year, and what a year we have just been through!

There are fewer reports this month, mainly because West Huntspill and Brent Knoll churches have not yet reopened. Please remember these congregations in your prayers. I would ask these folk not to be despondent as I have heard many accounts around the District of churches that have decided not to open until 2021 at the earliest.

To the churches that have reopened, I would remind you that the COVID-19 threat remains real, keep on your guard, and continue to follow the advice and guidance on the website. Managing Trustees, not Ministers, are responsible for what goes on in your buildings and in the name of your church.

I am also referring to Lockdown as being 'eased', Lockdown is not over! There is the threat of a winter second spike that will make us look again at whether we should worship physically together or not. Indeed the current requirement to keep doors and windows open during worship may make coming to church less attractive as the winter bites. Additionally, the government may change its rules at any moment.

For this reason I have decided to continue the Zoom services which will take place at 9.30am each Sunday until the end of November at least. If you do not receive notifications of these events please let me know

at steve.bennett@methodist.org.uk and I will add your email to the list, or write/phone if you would like a paper copy. Those on email will also receive details of our weekly Bible study (on Mark's gospel) and Thursday coffee morning.

Steve

Burnham

WELCOME BACK – We are open for Sunday Morning Worship. We had our re-opening Service on Sunday 26th July with a slight difference of chairs being spaced 2 metres apart, face coverings and a booking system etc. However, one thing remains the same, we are all together sharing in God's word, and for those who are unable to be with us, our Zoom meetings and worship continues.

We have held 5 great services, led by Rev. Steve Bennett, Janet Widdess, Tim Widdess, Diane Thomas and Jim McKnight and even with no congregation singing (although we really miss the choir), we have still been able to listen to the organ and speak our favourite hymns. As we reach Autumn, we are still all wondering what has happened in 2020 and what will happen. We are now in the 'new normal' and with restrictions being eased, we are able to go out and speak to people face to face (even though we are 2 metres apart), a social activity which not one of us would have worried about this time last year. We are starting to realise more how precious life is and to appreciate all that we have been given.

This week the Hospital Fete took place and it was so lovely to support our coffee morning friends, placing some normality into this rather strange time. As I wrote in my last column in April, the thought of future events seems so far away, but here we are, starting to fill those spaces in our diaries.

I don't think there are many people who can say their IT skills haven't improved during lockdown, and with the Zoom Morning Services, Bible Study, Coffee Mornings, and other church meetings, we have continued to pull together. Let us continue to pray for the world and for God to be with us in our daily lives.

With best wishes and stay safe, from all the Burnham Stewards

Marian Kingsbury

Brean

September is with us. What a year so far! I doubt that many of us have dared to take a summer holiday, unless it has been to friends and family, or somewhere that we know very well.

So it has been good to have met up with one another recently, in church and elsewhere. And for us at Brean a special joy has been to welcome Celia and Jimmy back among us in the last week, after Celia had had to distance herself for a bit longer than most. All of our regular congregation are back worshipping together now, but a special thought in our hearts for Margaret in residential care at Towans, and also for Marjorie who has been in Towans even longer.

Much consideration and effort have gone into making our church fit for a resumption of use and special thanks to John and Linda, to Anne and to all others who have helped, for the work that has been put in and is still being done to keep us safe.

On the first Sunday back we were pleased to have several of St Bridget's congregation with us. Their Church will not open until this month and they have asked that we don't attend the joint service on the 13th (their Harvest Festival) while they try to work out their best seating arrangements (they are not confident they can get us all in!).

They have also changed the time of their services, now starting at 9am – a bit early for me, I must say.

The upshot is that we shall have a service in our own church at 10.30am each Sunday in September.

We have also been blessed by the return of several of our regular visitors, and a welcome too to a new worshipper, Cathy, who comes along with Stanley and Joyce.

All in all we have had a congregation of more than a dozen each Sunday we have been open. We are configured to a total attendance of 20 in the church and can of course accommodate a few more by sliding the partitions to the 'schoolroom' open, enough at least for our Link Village service in November when the Chairman of District is our preacher.

We have been lucky in this part of the country so far, though I am sure that we shall all be happier when this particular virus is under control. Not that it will ever disappear, so they say. I was reading an article recently which talks about viruses in general being 'unimaginably varied and ubiquitous', over 200,000 different species being present in our sea water for example. A back of an envelope calculation suggests there are 10^{31} (that is 10 followed by 31 noughts) viruses in the world. They are parasites that have fashioned the evolution of all organisms since the beginning of life. They are not all bad therefore; they act as nature's Spring cleaning system and can cancel out some of our bad bacteria. And indeed, we may not be here as a species without viruses; the 'ability of mammals to bear young is a consequence of a viral gene being modified to permit the formation of placentas.' (Source: Economist 22nd August).

We might live in fear of Covid but what a fascinating, intricate world we live in, full of formations so small we cannot possibly see them, and

yet which, in their own way, challenge us to confront issues such as Coronavirus in our efforts to make this world a better place.

As part of that challenge, those of us who have been pleased to share in the Zoom sessions that Steve has been leading, will be aware of the increased sense of wellbeing that such gathering brings to us. The study session at 10am on Wednesday is working through Mark a chapter at a time, and the Virtual coffee morning is also well received. Long may they (and the Zoom Sunday morning service for those who cannot attend worship in church) continue.

And so we move into September. We are glad that more churches are finding the wherewithal to open again. But our hearts are with Brent Knoll and West Huntspill as they are challenged by the difficult circumstance of their own situations.

We hope that any church able to celebrate Harvest Festival can do so satisfactorily. And of course September is the time for Church Councils which, however they are held, will provide us with challenges of their own.

Finally we send our sympathy to Liz and Steve on the death of Liz's mother last month. May God's blessings go with you and your family.

So we, at Brean, send our best wishes to all as we enter a new season of the year and a new set of situations for us all to face.

Harvey Allen

East Brent

Well East Brent returned to worship on 12th July and it was a joy for our few to gather once more together (2 metres apart). Harvey led the

worship and what an excellent morning we had, of course we missed the coffee and chat after. **BUT WE WERE BACK!!!**

Since then we have had Gary Hoare, who has only taken one service at EB before, then Steve, followed by Jim McKnight all were top class and a joy to have amongst us and being in worship gave us back our Sundays to some extent. It is a pity to not sing the hymns, but we quietly hum or say the words which can be quite enlightening.

Jill took the lead on the one Sunday we had no one and did very well and it is disappointing to have to now wear masks from 9th August.

This coming Sunday we shall be welcoming the Revd. Tim Widdess for the first time and look forward to his preaching in the circuit.

During the last few weeks we have had a further two storage heaters fitted in the Church along with new circuitry and outside LED lights all supposedly more efficient to run, all of course certified, this now completes the requirements of the last Church Council.

We send our condolences to Liz and Steve on the death of Liz's mother and our thoughts and prayers are with them at this time.

Jill and I have a new addition to the family in the form of a Labrador cross Collie puppy now 10 weeks old called Poppy and a real live wire.

We sincerely hope it will not be too long before all the circuit Churches are back functioning,

And singing returns.
Gordon Legg

PLUS +++ POEMS, PRAYERS and OTHER MESSAGES

Harvey Allen writes: Kathy supplied this poem sent to her by one of our summer visitors.

Can You Hear Me At The Back?

By Steve Pigeon 15.7.20

(Can be sung to the Tune: The Church's One Foundation)

The church's congregation
Is split by plastic boards.
On floors there are white markers
Which cannot be ignored.
We all must pray in silence,
Can't talk or chant or sing.
Electronic bank transfers
Instead of Offerings.

At lecterns, there stand preachers,
With rules to be observed.
They have to wear a face mask –
So now they can't be heard!
They cannot stand too closely,
No shouting or loud voice;
Just tiny little whispers
In this they have no choice!

We don't know what they're saying,
This really is absurd!
What is the point of meeting;
If no one can be heard?
Yet if we try to change things
They'll lock us down once more.
I think I have the answer –
Resort to semaphore!

And finally.....

Thank you to all who sent cards on my 60th birthday in July (even those that commented specifically on the fact I had now entered the 'third age'!)

And grateful thanks for all the thought prayers and kindness received since the death of Liz's mum, Gretel. Please continue to hold her husband John and all the family in prayer.

Gretel knew Doreen Newport when she lived in Winchester, and Doreen wrote 'Think of a world without any flowers' StF 92 whose words seem apt at this time of change

Thanks to our Lord for being here among us,
thanks be to him for sharing all we do,
thanks for our Church and all the love we find here,
thanks for this place and all its promise true;
we thank you, Lord, for life in all its richness;
we thank you, Lord, and praise your holy name.

Steve