

St John's United Reformed Church

Record

Somerset & Mowbray Roads, New Barnet, Herts, EN5 1RH

Church at Home

In my last letter in the *Record*, I wrote on 2 March: “In the event of a ban on medium-sized gatherings, we are blessed to have various alternative ways we can continue to communicate and support one another.” As it turned out, on Sunday 15 March we had our last public worship service. The United Reformed Church advised all its churches to cease all public gatherings in order to lessen the transmission of Covid-19; and soon after that the Government banned all public gatherings for the same reason.

Being unable physically to gather has been a loss for us all. The right to worship publicly and freely is one that I never imagined would have to be restricted in the UK. This absence, along with the lockdown restriction on mixing and movement, has affected us all. But in the light of the still-emerging infectiousness and mortality rate of Covid-19 in the UK, I am convinced that suspending public worship was the right decision. Were we to have ‘dissented’ and continued to meet—as some individual churches have done abroad—we may inadvertently have become a centre of a radiating cluster of infection.

I do not believe that God suspends the laws of cause and effect just because someone thinks that their faith is so strong as to ‘shield’ them from the disease. Rather, I believe that God works providentially *with* cause and effect to draw Creation to his good purpose: the reconciliation of all things in Christ.



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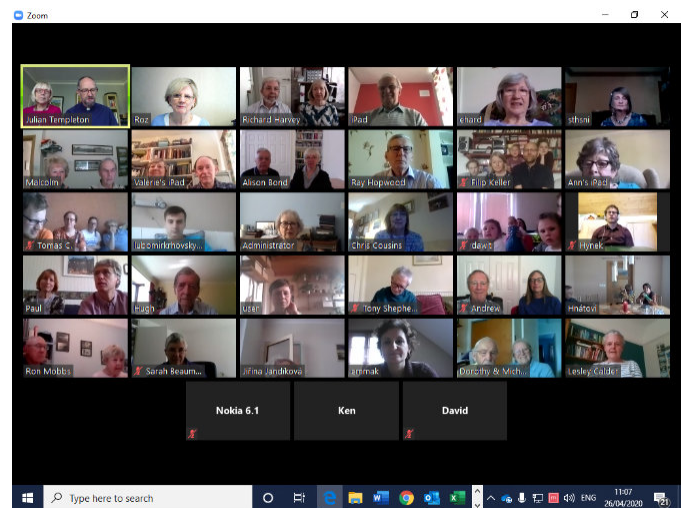
At the date of writing, 30 April, the official number of confirmed cases of those who have died in the UK with Covid-19 is 26,097. I fear that the actual number—which we do not yet know due to lack of comprehensive testing—is greater than this. When compared with other similar nations, the UK's current high Covid-19 mortality rate ought to leave no room for complacency. I wish to pay tribute to all public-facing workers—NHS staff, carers, shop staff, delivery drivers, refuse collectors—who have put their health and lives at risk in order that the rest of us can survive in lockdown.

The elders and I gradually realised that the lockdown would be extended indefinitely, so set about trying to provide some ways that we could continue to worship as a church from our own homes. The URC Daily Devotions team sprang into action first, making available an audio online and email or text service of worship. Richard Harvey and David Paul recorded a service for Palm Sunday that we made available via YouTube; and then some of us discovered the delights—and the frustrations—of Zoom! The Elders have had weekly or fortnightly meetings via Zoom, and then on Good Friday we tried our first Zoom worship service. A highlight for me was being able to celebrate the Lord's Supper with many of you on Easter Day.

Last Sunday we were able to have a combined service with the Keller family and some of the members of our twinned church in Svitavy, Czech Republic. For those unable or unwilling to try Zoom, we have made available the recording of the Zoom service via YouTube on our church website. You have all been amazingly patient and generous in your comments about our efforts on this new medium. I hope the screenshot photographs give

those of you who have not tried, or don't have access to the Internet, an indication what it is like. I would like to thank the elders who have distributed the URC Daily Devotions Sunday Service text so that others of you can use this to worship at home. What this has meant is that each of our homes has again become the centre of the Church's worship, prayer; and even fellowship. I say 'again', because, according to the Acts of the Apostles, this was the practice of the earliest Church:

...they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved." Acts 2:46-47



Clearly, our current "at home" is different from the early church, where groups of people gathered in person. But what our use of communication technologies demonstrates is that physical distancing need not equate with social isolation. A digital screen and electronic speaker has its limitation, but it does allow face-to-face interaction. An increasing number of people—especially the young—have for some time had significant social interaction via a screen. If we are to reach them with the good news of Jesus Christ, we need to use this medium more effectively. If we learn to do so, this would be an example of working *with* cause and effect to further God's work of reconciliation. I believe that we will be living with the after-effects of Covid-19—economic, psychological, social, and spiritual—for an extended period. Let us pray that God will help us as a church to be equal to its demands.

Julian Templeton



Christian Aid Week 2020



Christian Aid Week will out of necessity be very different this year, yet the need is as great as ever. There will be no Big Brekkie, no house-to-house collecting, but we can still pray and we can still donate. The following is taken from the Christian Aid website:



Photo from Rohingya camp in Bangladesh



Florence in search of water in Kenya

Love never fails. Coronavirus impacts all of us. But love unites us all.

As this virus spreads across the world, love rises up in response. You've already shown incredible kindness to your neighbours. Now is the time to reach out to your neighbours both near and far. Your love protects. From storms, from drought, and now from coronavirus. Your love protects our global neighbours battling the spread of this illness. Your love protects. With soap, clean water and medical supplies. By supporting us this Christian Aid Week, you can reach out and protect more of your neighbours today.

In 2019, the volunteers from St. John's helped raise £2,207 from the Big Brekkie, house-to-house collection along local roads and from individual donations. We hope that most people this year will donate direct to Christian Aid, as there will be no counting and banking done in the usual way. There are many ways you will be able to donate:

- You may be sent an eEnvelope encouraging you to donate
- You can donate online via the website, as a direct debit or as a one-off donation
- Telephone donations may be possible if you call 020 7523 2269
- The processing of postal donations may be delayed, so please avoid if possible

We also hope to have some form of quiz during the week as another way to focus our minds on those in greatest need at this time. Details to follow....!

I would also encourage you to look at the following link, which has a series of prayers written for this time of coping with the coronavirus pandemic:

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-04/Coronavirus%20CAW20%20prayers%20.pdf>

Finally, we have the opportunity to join a live Christian Aid Week service on the 10th May at 1pm introduced by Amanda Mukwashi, Christian Aid's Chief Executive; there will be special guest speakers, prayers from Christian Aid partners and a Sermon from Dr Rowan Williams.

Roz Douglas quoted in *The Guardian*



Congratulations to Roz Douglas for being quoted three times in a *Guardian* article on 24 April entitled: 'Let there be light: the new must-have for celebrities in lockdown'. The article included a photograph of the new Opposition leader, Keir Starmer, leaving his house in north London earlier this week carrying a piece of lighting equipment to use for an online interview.

"For people like Keir Starmer, they are talking to us about life or death policies," says Roz Morris, the managing director of media training company TV News London and a former BBC and ITV broadcaster. "He's a serious person and he wants to look like one."

With professional life shifting further online, "this is a whole new world of skills people are having to take on and lighting is vitally important," says Morris, who has seen a recent uptick in demand for her services – a webinar she is running next week has 800 registered guests rather than the usual 300.

"As people had to learn to use computers, now they have to learn to use online image," she says. "People have made the mistake of thinking this is just a kind of visual phone call but it isn't. It's a professional encounter in which they have to be like a producer and director."

Well done, Roz! However, we hope Roz's teeth have not been unduly set-on-edge when participating in St John's Zoom events. It has not gone unnoticed that some participants have appeared largely in silhouette, partly off-camera, from below, from above, and some rather interesting 'noises-off' have been overheard! Those who have inadvertently shared the entire contents their desktop screen with the rest of us shall remain nameless. However it's early days for us all in the new world of online meetings and we are all learning all the time. PS Roz uses her maiden name when working.

Julian Templeton



Recently the Chipping Barnet foodbank safely distributed 35 pre-packed emergency food parcels from the St Peter's Parish Centre in Somerset Road in the space of 2 hours! To adhere to social distancing rules, there is a one-way system in place, with 2 metre markers for clients that are queueing, with one person allowed in at a time to provide details to the team leader. Those 35 food parcels fed 110 people. Andrew Summers, Chair of Trustees, paid tribute to the hard-working Core Group and volunteers for enabling the foodbank to continue to operate at a time when some other foodbanks have had to close due to lack of safe conditions for volunteers and clients. To support the Chipping Barnet foodbank, go to: <https://chippingbarnet.foodbank.org.uk>

Lockdown

by Richard Hendrick OFM

Yes there is fear.
Yes there is isolation.
Yes there is panic buying.
Yes there is sickness.
Yes there is even death.

But,
They say that in Wuhan after so many years
of noise
You can hear the birds again.

They say that after just a few weeks of quiet
The sky is no longer thick with fumes
But blue and grey and clear.

They say that in the streets of Assisi
People are singing to each other
across the empty squares,
keeping their windows open
so that those who are alone
may hear the sounds of family around them.

They say that a hotel in the West of Ireland
Is offering free meals and delivery to the
housebound.

Today a young woman I know
is busy spreading fliers with her number
through the neighbourhood
So that the elders may have someone to
call on.

Today Churches, Synagogues, Mosques and
Temples
are preparing to welcome
and shelter the homeless, the sick, the weary

All over the world people are slowing down
and reflecting.

All over the world people are looking at their
neighbours in a new way

All over the world people are waking up to a
new reality.

To how big we really are.
To how little control we really have.
To what really matters.
To Love.

So we pray and we remember that

Yes there is fear.
But there does not have to be hate.

Yes there is isolation.
But there does not have to be loneliness.

Yes there is panic buying.
But there does not have to be meanness.

Yes there is sickness.
But there does not have to be disease of
the soul

Yes there is even death.
But there can always be a rebirth of love.

Wake to the choices you make as to how to
live now.

Today, breathe.
Listen, behind the factory noises of
your panic.

The birds are singing again
The sky is clearing,
Spring is coming,
And we are always encompassed by Love.

Open the windows of your soul
And though you may not be able
to touch across the empty square,
Sing.



Fellowship

The Fellowship is Zooming back!

St John's Fellowship is starting up again, but this time it will be via the Zoom video service, where our members will be able to see our speakers and other members, on their computer screens - BUT members will have to provide their own tea and favourite biscuits!!

We have to finalise the revised schedule with our speakers, but we plan to hold our first virtual meeting with our original guest speaker -

**Diane Nightingale, on Wednesday 20th May, starting at 8.00 pm as usual.
The title of her talk is**

"Islands on the Edge of the Sea - Walking in the Outer Hebrides"

We realise some of our members will not be able to join us, but we hope other members of St John's will take the opportunity to join the Fellowship members to enjoy an interesting and often stimulating talk, while we all endure this difficult period in our history.

We will keep everyone updated on our revised schedule during our Zoomed Sunday services".

Ron Mobbs



Community Garden

If anyone has any spare edible plants for the community garden, please let me know when they are ready and we can arrange for them to be planted.

There are some herbs including sage, rosemary and chives and also chard in the raised bed. If anyone can make use of them as some of us may have a little extra time to experiment with new recipes at the moment.

Thanks

Heather Elsdon

Some Happy News

My younger daughter, Naomi Snider, married her American Fiancé, Alex Abarbanel-Grossman, on the 17 March 2020.

The Wedding was originally planned for the Easter weekend, with all Naomi's London family and Toronto relatives present (as well, of course, Alex's family). But, due to the imminent closure of municipal buildings in New York as a result of the Corona virus, it was brought forward.

The Wedding was an extremely small affair: the bride and groom, bridesmaid and best man, who were also witnesses; and of course the Judge. For civil marriage ceremonies in the US a judge is the presiding officer and it is not possible to book a date or a time slot!!! The procedure is for the wedding couple to turn up at the Municipal Office and await for a Judge to marry them, of course bringing with them all their paperwork (which included Naomi's passport visa and, full birth certificate). Despite the short notice and distance, Rachel (my other daughter) and I were able to view the Ceremony on 'Facetime' along with the Groom's Parents who were on lockdown in Montclair, New Jersey, due to health concerns.

We are still hoping to have a family party later on in the year.... It has currently been postponed to the end of October, but it seems very unlikely that we will, by then, be allowed to fly to the States.

However, as you can see from the photographs, Naomi and Alex are extremely happy, in lockdown in Brooklyn, and I hope you will join with me wishing them every happiness for their future life together.



Helen Snider

QUIZ

WEDNESDAY 13 MAY

8:00 PM

Alison Bond will lead a lighthearted quiz on Zoom as our main fundraiser for Christian Aid Week. Look out for the email invitation.

LIST OF CHURCH EVENTS VIA ZOOM

At the time of compiling the following list of events, no indication from the Government has been given as to when physical-distancing restrictions will be relaxed. Therefore, please treat these events as provisional. A recording of each Sunday Zoom Worship will be made available on YouTube and posted on the Church website:

<http://www.stjohnsnewbarnet.org.uk>

MAY

Sunday 3rd	11:00 am	Worship with Lord's Supper led by Julian Templeton
Thursday 7th	11:00 am	Time for Coffee and Prayer led by Tony Shepherd
Sunday 10	11:00 am	Worship led by Andrew Summers & Helen Snider
Wednesday 13	8:00 pm	Quiz for Christian Aid led by Alison Bond
Sunday 17	11:00 am	Worship led by Julian Templeton, followed by Church Meeting
Wednesday 20	8:00 pm	Fellowship, Diane Nightingale
Sunday 24	11:00 am	Worship led by Tony Alderman
Wednesday 27	8:00 pm	Social Gathering led by Malcolm Bond
Sunday 31	11:00 am	Pentecost Worship led by Roz Douglas

JUNE

Wednesday 3	8:00 pm	Bible Discussion & Prayer led by Julian Templeton
Sunday 7	11:00 am	Trinity Worship with Lord's Supper led by Julian Templeton