

Stoke St Gregory Baptist Church

NEWS July 2020

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From Sonya

As I have spoken to some of you recently, what I have heard from several people is that they are struggling with not being able to connect with people. It has been such a long time of lockdown restrictions and it seems to get harder over time.

I miss all of you and miss being able to be together. It is perfectly normal to feel this way, because we were made to live in loving

community. We were made by a God who is a loving community within Himself – Father, Son and Holy Spirit and He made us in His image.



So, in this difficult time, what can we focus on which will help us to get through this season so that we can move forward into the future with hope? Hebrews 13:5+6 says, 'God has said, "I will never fail you. I will never abandon you. "So we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper, so I will have no fear." So, whatever you feel like today, why not take some quiet time outside if the weather allows, and reflect on these truths. Tell God how you feel and thank Him for the blessings you experience.

Let's also focus on how we can support each other with an encouraging word or a card or in some other way. And particularly look out for those who are shielding and unable to take any of the small steps towards greater freedom of movement.

May God bless each of you in a special way today. Sonya

From the Deacons

The Deacons met in June just as the government announced that churches will be allowed to open for private prayer. We agreed that it would be good to do this as soon as possible. Since our meeting we now know that it will be possible to hold services in church, with certain restrictions. The Deacons will be meeting again to decide how best to do this.

We continue to start our meetings with a passage from Joshua, reflecting on leadership and the skills required.

Much of our time together was taken up with thinking about how to encourage the fellowship to pray together as a community. Not everyone is comfortable praying in groups but we are called by God to the discipline of prayer and by listening to each other we can share our concerns.

A working party was organised to weed and tidy the church grounds.

<u>Finance</u>		£
June	Receipts	2804
	Payments	<u>2784</u>
	Surplus	20

South West Baptist Association has recently shared some questions drawn up by Pinner BC. The Deacons will be using them as a basis for discussion as we adjust to a new way of doing things. You may want to look at them too: What have we missed the most about church?

The Lockdown and our Church

Are there any things we've felt relieved to stop doing, things that we *won't* miss?

What kinds of support and activities are we offering in person and online, and why?

Have there been advantages to doing things in this way?

Exiting Lockdown and Beyond

Are there things we were doing before lockdown that should not be restarted?

Are there things we have started doing in lockdown that should continue?

Are there new things that God is calling us to start?

People are now familiar with connecting online – how can we maximise this new way of meeting in all areas of church life?

How can we allocate our financial and people resources to achieve this?

What may be the enduring pastoral needs caused by lockdown – economic, emotional, spiritual, medical – that we will need to respond to?

How can we share the gospel with people in this new context?

Opening the church for private prayer

Starting on 6th July, the Church will be open every Monday for private prayer from 10am – 1.00pm. Gill Yaskin will be organising the rota. It will also be open on the first Sunday of the month from 8.00 – 10.00am, Jamie will be in charge of this rota.

We have put a procedure in place for accessing and leaving the building safely:

Enter by the front door, sign in (name and phone number) in book on entering, keep all the doors open if possible, use hand sanitiser on entering. The sanctuary chairs will be pushed to the edges, please use plastic chairs which can be cleaned. The prayer material will be Hope Prayer stations laminated. Exit by side door after sanitising hands. Supervisors will disinfect door handles and chairs after each person(s) have left. There will be instructions on the walls.



(Prayer Stick Eileen Lawrence 1977 – Tate Britain)

Around the Fellowship

This month we are focussing on young people and those who care for them. Please keep them in your prayers.



Doing things differently... This is what Alexander has to say:

"I think homeschooling is quite interesting because I get to have my Maths and English lessons on the computer, and my mum sits with me when I'm doing my work. It's nice to have her help when I get stuck, but sometimes she says I'm stubborn when

I don't listen to her! It's also good to have as much time as I need to do my work, but the English tasks are quite hard as I have to do lots of writing. I enjoy being at home as I see my dad a lot more, but he works very hard so I have to wait until he has finished. I also enjoy spending lots more time outside during the day when I have my breaks. The only problem is that I don't see my friends any more, but I hope to see them when we go back to school in September."

Jenny Katte:

Way back in March, when the government first started shutting down public gatherings, my university, The University of Nottingham, closed its doors and all remaining teaching went online. Luckily, my department regularly updated us on new regulations and assessment arrangements, however I remember feeling disappointed that the final months of my degree were set to pan out very differently to what I had pictured. One of my friends who had graduated the previous year had been telling me that those final celebrations were the best times she'd had whilst at university – it didn't seem fair that the world was ganging up on our graduating class and cancelling our plans!



However, there were silver linings to the very dark clouds which seemed to permanently sit over Nottingham for the next 10 weeks whilst I wrote a grand total of 17,500 words of coursework and dissertation. For instance, the majority of our exams were cancelled, and I spent more time with my three housemates who had similarly decided to stay put. I consider myself very lucky to have lived with such wonderful people – we had BBQs and went on walks to the local park on sunny days and came up with new ways to keep ourselves entertained during the evenings. In general, those 10 weeks of hard-work probably would have looked very similar to a bystander if the lockdown measures hadn't been in place; had the pandemic never occurred, I would have still turned into a hermit, tapping away at my laptop at all hours, watching my word count rise.

However, once our final submissions had been uploaded, we were happy, but a little deflated. We knew that we should've been spending our last few days together in beer gardens and having fun in the city which had been our home for 3 years, but instead we were confined to our tiny back garden and the surrounding area. Most of our plans to celebrate were cancelled – last week I should've been dressing up and attending my Grad Ball, but instead I was in my khakis, helping my dad in the garden – and those which survived were at the mercy of the unpredictable British weather.

This is of course still the case now I'm back living in Somerset. Although the weather has been a bit hit and miss (to say the least!), the rainy days

have given me a chance to start my job hunt. I'm definitely feeling uncertain about finding a job. I have my student debts to pay off and I would ideally like to start a career within the next few months, but the job market is inhospitable at the moment. Widespread redundancies and furloughed workers are stark symptoms of a country where there are more job seekers than jobs. However, I'm keeping positive by focusing on the fact that I have a comfortable home with supportive parents in a beautiful location and a friendly community – if anything, the summer ahead affords me a long stretch of time which I can use to scour Indeed.com and pursue vacancy leads whenever and wherever they arise. Having said that, I'm already getting restless as I'm eager to get on with the next chapter of my life which, like my graduation ceremony, has not been cancelled, just postponed. *Jenny*

Luke Talmage

On Monday 23rd March, nurseries, schools, post 16 colleges and universities throughout the United Kingdom closed their doors to most children and young people on the instruction of the Government. They remained open to children that had parents who were keyworkers or who were vulnerable.



This led to many challenges for parents and educators alike.

As the Head Teacher of a Primary school that educates more than 400 primary aged children, the number of problems to solve were numerous and finding quick solutions to pressing situations was

hindered by the understandably (it was not so easy to empathise with this at the start of the pandemic) frequently changing Government directives and guidance!

In the initial state of lockdown and remote schooling, questions kept arising from many people. The most sensible point of reflection in which I could start to find an answer was always by reflecting on these questions.

- How do I keep the children safe in this situation?
- How do I keep my colleagues safe in this situation?
- How do we provide sufficient and suitable remote learning for children who cannot attend school?

The common misconception that schools have been shut since March is wrong. In my opinion those who work in a school have worked harder throughout this period than what they would do in more normal times! My colleagues at Manor Court, have phoned children and their parents at least once a week, completed online tutorial lessons, planned work for those at home and those in school, delivered food parcels to over eighty families, delivered work packs to 185 children and all whilst home-schooling their own children. I am delighted that children are returning to school and look forward to hopefully welcoming them all back in September. *Luke*

Lesley Perry

Life at the moment is as we all know is challenging. I have joined the working from home force, something I never thought possible in my role as a Student Support Officer within a senior school in Yeovil. My job ranges from lost property to safeguarding with everything and anything in between. In the weeks since lockdown began I have had a list of students and their families that I check in with to offer support. This ranges from how the student is accessing remote learning and their well being to the social media verses school work balance, strops and tears. I have among my families those who need additional support with day to day living in the form of a listening ear following bereavement, loss of work, food packages, internet access for those who either don't have it or struggle with access because of weak signal, students who find working alone tricky. I am in contact with The Lords Larder* on a regular basis and they are doing an outstanding job. I come off the phone knowing that my families will receive a package that will get them through the next week. I am not delivering myself as I do not live in Yeovil but a work colleague does this for me. I love that I am able to offer some practical support, it's not easy for them to ask and I am very conscious of this. The Government, as part of their care for struggling families, has given food vouchers which can be used in supermarkets which was wonderful but there was a blip as the agency issuing the vouchers did not keep pace with demand, this thankfully is now resolved. There have been many times when my heart has wept for them. It is SO hard to do this via a phone, I often want to reach down the phone and hold them. There are moments when I want to scream in frustration but there are also laugh out loud times. I take each day as it comes and along with my all

the staff of my school community we have worked everyday since lockdown which includes the school holidays and even weekends at times all so that we can keep our students and families safe and supported.

When we return in September it will be different again, we will have new students to meet and settle into a new school where they have not had the opportunity to visit. We have put together a video so that they might recognise some of us. My husband was an excellent camera man.

I have found time in all of this to enjoy the sun, bird song and a garden that is now looking lovely, move my son and his family from our house to their new home, zoom with various friends and practise retirement??!!.....might sit on the fence for a bit longer. But above all please if you are able support your local food bank with a donation no matter how small, it will mean more than you realise. *Lesley*

*The original name for food banks that started in churches for the homeless many years ago. It literally was food from God's cupboard

For our Prayers

Christine and Adrian Stables

Dianne Callaghan

Jane and Niall Waters-Fuller,

Harry and Alexander

Mary Strange

Ron and Freda Gadsby



Please pray for Anne M and her family as Anne has to travel to Bristol every day for radiotherapy. Also little Archie.

Whilst there is general relief that the Covid restrictions are gradually easing, let us remember those in our church family and our neighbourhoods who have lost loved ones, family or friends directly to the virus. We specially think of Tony, his family here and in the US where Tony's father, a nonagenarian succumbed to coronavirus. It must be of some comfort to Tony that he and Christopher were able to spend time with Dad and Grandad, and Tony's sister Michelle just a few months ago. We also pray for Colin Gorton and his family, whose mother died in June.

No immunity for others against the fall out of the virus in terms of lost jobs, loss of demand for services, lost business as well as lack of opportunities opening up for school leavers, recent graduates as well as those seeking re-employment. Our love and prayers are with all who face such stress, anxiety and an uncertain future.



Thank you... for your prayers for Joan Upham Mum enjoying a cream tea. Since this photo Lizzie has been allowed to visit her in the nursing home courtyard garden as Mum was feeling low from not seeing anybody. This photo was after a Memorial Service for those who have recently died. We haven't been told how many have Covid19 at the moment. Thank you again. *Geraldine and Paul*

BMS Birthday Scheme

Our love and best wishes to Kathy Davidson as she celebrates her birthday on 2nd, at a time when all BMS mission workers have adapted to doing things differently in the 17 or so countries where they live and work.

Please continue to pray for BMS as they work *'to transform one million lives in God's strength by 2020, through seven ministries. Through workers, partners and grants, this is what we do'.*

Sunday Worship:

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| 5th July | "The Church: Called to be a worshipping community" with communion |
| 12th July | Cafe church: John 5:1-15 Healing the paralytic at Bethesda |
| 19th July | Rural Mission Sunday: 'Heaven in Ordinary' |
| 26th July | "The Church: Called to be an inclusive community" |