

The Beacon

News and views from

Leicester Trinity Circuit



For the Fallen. Sept. 1914

by Laurence Binyon

**“They shall grow not old, as we that
are left grow old**

**Age shall not weary them, nor the
years condemn**

**At the going down of the sun and in
the morning**

We will remember them”

A strange day of Remembrance this year, we hope that those passers by in Syston appreciated the cross and poppies in our church doorway.

To pause and give thanks for all those who gave their lives so that we might live in peace. This year however old or weary we feel, may we remember the courage and bravery of all those who in the past years have given their all for our peace and be thankful.

**Remembrance Day Poppy Cross at Syston
by Christine Solway**

Quarterly Newsletter

www.leicestertrinitycircuit.org.uk

November 2020

Superintendent's letter



Dear Friends

Over recent weeks and months, I have been very impressed with the way that you have responded to a desperate situation with grace, patience, imagination and care. I know that now, as the days become shorter and colder, we are becoming weary of the restrictions. For many, the tedium and loneliness are intensifying, especially as Christmas draws closer. What should be a joyful time, filled with celebration, is filled instead with uncertainty.

I hear the talk of Christmas being cancelled, and I understand what people mean, but Christmas can't be cancelled! The Incarnation can't be undone. God came in Christ, and is part of our human history. We do have something to celebrate – and we will!

Inevitably, our celebrations will be quite different this year, but no less sincere, no less heartfelt, than in previous years.

In your preparations, I'm sure that you will continue to remember those who are alone, and isolated. I'm sure that you will do all that you can to share the love of Christ in a way that leaves a lasting memory.

The current restrictions have made us realise how important it is to be with others. It's made some of us realise that we have taken our freedom for granted. Simple freedoms - to give someone a hug, to shake hands, and just be near to one another. To speak without a mask, or a window, between us.

All of this has emphasised, for me, what is amazing about the birth of Jesus. Our God made eye contact and skin contact! Jesus hugged and touched his friends - and was grasped and abused by his enemies, because having a close connection to others always makes us vulnerable.

God knew that the life that was laid in a manger in Bethlehem would end on a cross in Jerusalem – but knew, too, that this was the way of our salvation. Having weighed the risk, God still chose to come in Christ, because our need was so great.

We weigh the risks, and we decide that we will keep apart from those we love, in case we bring a potentially deadly infection. But the emotional cost is high. Human contact matters, and we only discover just how deeply it matters when it's taken from us, when we can't touch one another, and the only eye contact we can make is through a screen. When we can meet, and hug each other again, it will be truly wonderful.

In Christ, God came to meet us. The significance of that statement is more amazing than ever this year.

For our sake, God accepted the restrictions of being human: of being in only one place at once; of being hungry, cold and scared; of being separated from friends and family. Our God has felt grief and pain. God accepted the cost, in order to bring forgiveness, and new life in Christ.

This Christmas, as we find new ways to worship, perhaps we will come with a fresh understanding of what the Incarnation means, and sing with awe, "Praise to God, the Christ has come!"

God bless you, at Christmas and always





Magnificat

Each Sunday evening from 6pm

Zoom Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85215398709?pwd=RTU4dHFKZWlreWJlbkMzNU9seHFXUT09>

Meeting ID: 852 1539 8709

Passcode: 360820

Or join us by telephone: 0203 051 2874

Join us for thoughtful and thought-provoking explorations of Mary's Song through music, reflection and prayer, led by trainee local preachers and worship leaders. Each will conclude with a time for fellowship.

Advent 1: Sunday 29th November

God who saves (Luke 1 vv. 46-47)

Leader: Dr Douglas Beoku-Betts

Advent 2: Sunday 6th December

God who notices (Luke 1 vv. 48-50)

Leader: Moleen Chikumba

Advent 3: Sunday 13th December

God who turns the tables (Luke 1 vv. 51-53)

Leader: James Blackhall

Advent 4: Sunday 20th December

God who remains faithful (Luke 1 vv. 54-55)

Leader: Graham Tennant

Christmas Eve Services 2020

4pm Holy Communion

at Oadby Methodist Church

7:30pm Holy Communion

at Great Glen Methodist Church

11:30pm Midnight Communion

at Birstall Methodist Church

and at Syston Methodist Church

please check with the church nearer the time to confirm that the service is to take place



Christmas Day Services 2020:

The following churches hope to hold services on Christmas morning.

Please check nearer the time for further details:

Bishop St: Christchurch: Cosby: Countesthorpe: Great Glen: Harrison Rd: Nativity: Oadby: South Wigston
Syston: Wesley Hall

**At 10am on Christmas Morning,
Rev Paula Hunt will lead a service over Zoom,
which you are welcome to attend:**

Zoom Meeting ID: 844 5306 6239

Passcode: 318068 By telephone: 0203 051 2874

Celebrate a love that builds hope this Advent



It's rare for us to live through a phenomenon which affects us in the UK at the same time as people right across the world. Not often in our lives have we experienced a threat that is shared by our global neighbours in countries as wide-ranging as Ethiopia, Lebanon and Nicaragua.

Covid-19 and measures to curb its spread have held much of the world in its thrall throughout 2020 destroying lives, instilling fear, devastating livelihoods and forcing vulnerable people into more desperate poverty.

As we approach Christmas though we are reminded of a person who turned the world upside down for good, whose life in a time of oppression and fear introduced a hope that transformed the globe as it spread across it.

Looking to Emmanuel, God with us, this Christmas, we are reminded that God walks with us through deeply difficult times and works through us in all circumstances to show love to this world. A love that never fails. A love that unites. A love that builds hope.

Inspired by Jesus, Christian Aid supporters walk alongside those for whom coronavirus is yet another threat on top of existing ones, including the climate crisis, conflict and in 2020 the impact of locust swarms.

Your gifts and actions help people like Mekonnen Sofar in Ethiopia's South Omo region, who digs a metre deep in dry river beds to try to find a water source to keep his livestock alive as the climate crisis pushes his family into hunger and threatens his whole way of life.

Friends, fellow herdsmen and children have died through digging so deep that the dry bed collapses above them.

Christian Aid is working with families like Mekonnen's to provide community water sources and explore alternative means of raising income such as through making soap from aloe vera and planting drought resistant crops.

The new restrictions placed on how we meet and interact have caused us to rethink what it is to be community, but our supporters know that we are bound together by much more than a virus and have shown a deep determination to continue to reach out to others.

This Christmas churches are being invited to join **in a moment of solidarity and hope on Advent Sunday, 29 November** by using the carol '*When out of poverty is born*' in their worship and taking a collection for Christian Aid.

The hymn, which is freely available to use to use from caid.org.uk/christmasresources celebrates Mary's faith in the Magnificat and begins with the words '*When out of poverty is born a dream that will not die*'.

This Christmas we can celebrate the incredible truth that we are bound together globally by a love that builds resilience in the face of disease, drought and darkness, that builds up hope for all our neighbours.

To find out more about Christian Aid's Christmas Appeal, including how to act for climate justice, visit caid.org.uk/hope. This Advent, £15 could train one woman to make aloe vera soap, £80 could provide two goats to help a family build a better future and £290 could pay for the materials and tools to build a pond, providing life-saving, reliable water for a whole community.

News from the Circuit Stewards

In 2020, throughout the various Covid-19 tier placements and lockdowns, circuit stewards have been busy. The team consists of Julie Manning (senior circuit steward, Uppingham Road) Charles Hilton (Birstall), Joy Pick (Syston), Pedzisai Katsande (Uppingham Road), Peter Holdridge (circuit finance officer, Countesthorpe), and Diane Allen (South Wigston).

Presbyterial stationing has taken most of our time in recent months with the unexpected and very welcomed summer arrival of the Revd Debra Chidakwa Akue who has pastoral responsibility for the Church of the Nativity and Christ Church, and the known factor of two presbyters, the Revds Saidu Kanu and Fran Rhys, leaving in 2021. As part of the Circuit Invitation Committee, circuit stewards have helped craft circuit profiles and represented the circuit's presbyteral needs to the Northhampton District.

Before stationing, several circuit stewards were involved in the Circuit Leadership Team's sub-group which looked at supporting churches struggling due to the pandemic, particularly during the first lockdown. Recommendations of this group are presented and voted on at Circuit Meeting.

In addition, each circuit steward continues to represent the circuit at individual church councils, recently via Zoom, providing circuit, synod and Connexional news and answering any questions that may arise. They also have oversight of the circuit's manse which recently included the purchase of a manse for the Birstall section. Circuit stewards are also assigned to each manse, helping accompany manse stewards with decisions about general work and maintenance throughout the year. Where there is no manse steward available or assigned, circuit stewards step in to oversee general work. In 2021 that will include manse preparations in anticipation of two incoming presbyters.

Julie Manning Senior Circuit Steward

News from the Churches:

Aigburth:

At Aigburth, services and activities have managed to occur through most of the year. There have even been some very memorable events such as our VE celebrations where we had a special meal, waved flags and residents sang along to Vera Lynn 'We'll meet again' which gained poignancy this year due to the pause in residents' visits at that time. We marked harvest slightly differently this year too; Mike who is head of the domestic staff, brought in his apple press and showed us how to make apple juice which we were able to sample. Some of the apples came from our own Aigburth apple tree. We also experienced a very moving Remembrance, joining Oadby Trinity for a zoom service on Sunday and then our own chaplain led service on 11 November

Emma Hurley- Chaplin



MHA Aigburth Care Home

With the encouragement of the staff of the home we have been allowed to continue with our work in the garden throughout this year. The residents have waved encouragingly through the windows.



Early Autumn in the garden – all the hard work coming to fruition.

Marilyn Bowles

We have made chipping paths through the larger beds for easier access



Housekeeper, Mike Wilford, showing residents how to press the fruit from our apple tree watched by Chaplain, Emma Hurley, at the active Harvest Festival!

Gardening has been sustained by the additional efforts of our new volunteer, Alan Stead, from Christchurch.



Residents Vera and Gaynor, checking out the donations of bulbs from Oadby and Wigston Pride of the Borough: 100 Carlton and 100 tete a tete daffodils and 100 mixed crocus, which have now been planted.

Members of De Montfort Rotary club planting 1,000 crocus for us.



Bishop Street:

Since lock down began in March there has been a weekly newsletter including a 'mini' sermon from Fran and news from the Circuit and Connexion along with links to our own worship material and other services available online via YouTube. Members of the congregation have appreciated being able to access services from around the country and beyond. Weekly worship material has been produced by Fran, other ministers, local preachers and worship leaders using a link: <https://bishopstreetmethodistchurchsundaystuff.wordpress.com>.

Miriam Stevenson, Fran Rhys and James Blackhall have been responsible for compiling the service including links to YouTube hymns and videos. Members of other churches have expressed thanks for this material which they have also been using.

Since 6th September services have been held in the church after risk assessment and Covid-19 regulations were put in place. We were pleased that on 27th September James Blackhall's third trial service took place. This was much appreciated act of worship by one of our very able trainee local preachers.

We are trying to use different ways of incorporating hymns into worship during this time when congregational singing is not allowed. Solos have been sung, and the words have been read, followed by a few minutes of individual meditation to music.

Videos have been made of some services in October. This was done to enable members to view the Sunday service when they wished and to be able to see familiar faces taking part in leading worship.

Last year the vision-planning group recommended strengthening the Church's online presence, which is happening through the Wordpress site listed above. Work on improving the website has continued. There is also a new Facebook group: Bishop Street Community which has been set up for regular postings. Leon Dundas has set up a WhatsApp group to maintain contact with the more tech-savvy congregation members.

Pastoral visitors have been keeping in regular contact with their groups. Informal contact by email, phone, text and letter has been maintained between members of the congregation, cell group members and Bible Study group members. Copies of 'Our Church's Future Story' and 'Inclusive Church' texts are circulating among members, both generously donated by Clive Marsh. Copies of the Prayer Handbook have also been donated for all members. Therefore, prayer and study have been encouraged through the availability of these resources.

Chris Parker, our centre administrator, was brought out of furlough at the beginning of August so he could help with the risk assessments and Covid-19 regulations and prepare the building for safe use. First, by the Chapel cafe and then from 6th September for public worship. Gradually other user groups have been able to return, currently using the chapel space and in groups of up to 15. This has been vitally important for the range of support groups who use our premises including AA groups, Narcotics Anonymous, Depression Alliance. They were all anxious to return and now combine meeting physically with Zoom links. They will be able to continue to meet during the new nationwide lock down from November 5th

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Robin Stevenson and Tony Moore have been in regular contact with Carbon Legacy, the company who are to install solar panels on the church roof. Hurrah, the final consents have been granted and work can now start.

Our Arts Enabler and Administrator, Leonie Dubarry-Gurr has continued to work one day a week from home, putting together an online art exhibition. Please visit the website to discover more about Art at the Chapel and future plans. www.artatthechapel.com

Two of the church's tenants are considered 'essential services' and have continued to work in properties on either side of the church since March. They are the Zinthiya Trust and Community Cycles.

Zinthiya Trust have continued to keep their Community Shop in Pilgrim House and their Advice centre at 12 Bishop Street open.

There have been regular Church Council meetings throughout the spring and summer. A General Church Meeting was held on 3rd May at which Francisca Incoom and Tanvi Pate were appointed as new stewards. The Finance and Property Committee has been meeting via Zoom every 2 weeks to discuss financial issues. Initially, we lost all income from hourly room rentals, and a further blow came when New English, our tenants on the first floor of Pilgrim House with us for many years, announced that they could no longer afford the space and would be working from home leaving us with a potential loss of £10,000 a year. However, it looks as though we have new tenants for both this space and the front 1st floor office for 2021. Like most churches we have been challenged to use new ways of meeting and supporting one another and we are looking ahead by working on a Mission Plan to present to the March 2021 Circuit meeting.

Mary Gill



Community Cycles – Dwight's story

Some years ago Bishop Street Methodist Church, in the centre of Leicester, was approached by Community Cycles to start using the large and hard-to-use basement area at Bishop Street, as a base in which to do up abandoned bicycles, and provide them at low cost to job-seekers, asylum seekers and anyone looking for a modestly priced bike, and to provide a repair facility to keep bikes on the road.



One of the projected uses for the basement had been to provide 'incubator space' for small businesses/charities, and almost without knowing it, this is what the Church was able to provide. Headed up by Dwight Hove the project was able to identify and meet various other cycling related needs, from bike-riding lessons for community groups and university students to customised bikes for people with disabilities.

In the autumn of 2018 one of the ground-floor units became available in our next-door building, Pilgrim House, and Dwight was able to step up his operation and move there, which gave him street level access and visibility. Under the Covid-19 situation bicycle shops were identified as essential services so Dwight was permitted and encouraged to stay open. With essential workers needing to minimise use of public transport, the council set up a scheme in which Community Cycles supplies re-furbished bikes for people to get to work. The City Council has also funded a scheme to provide free bike-servicing/repairs at various city bike-shops, to enable people to keep their bikes on the road, and on Saturday mornings Dwight opens up in that capacity. Dwight is continuing to get requests from the City Council to provide reconditioned cycles for NHS workers so he will be kept busy throughout the coming months.

Robin Stevenson

Church at the Cross Great Glen:

Like many other churches it has not been the best of times for us here at Great Glen. We did briefly open our doors for "Quiet Time" on Saturday mornings when those wishing to do so could have a time of reflection and personal prayer. All done within the strict Covid guidelines.

We also had the chance to gather again for a few morning services. For various reasons some members continued to join by Zoom which allowed those who preferred to be there in person to take up the limited seating. It was good to be together as a Church.

Our thanks Jenny who did a brilliant job in joining us up to the circuit service which enabled us to join with Heather in her celebration of becoming a Lay Preacher. We wish her every success in her work among us.

Some of us joined in the Zoom discussions on 'Christianity and the Far Right'. which were very interesting and thought provoking

We hope to open our doors again in early December when hopefully those who wish to can have a quiet time and if at all possible we may be able to have some Christmas services.

Joan Gambold

Cosby:

Like many churches, Cosby Methodist Church in Leicestershire, was unable to hold its usual fundraising coffee morning for Christian Aid. Church member and fundraiser extraordinaire, Joyce Maneggio, is a dab hand with the sewing machine and she started to make masks out of cotton fabric to raise funds for Christian Aid. Like many of us, she'd heard the government message: leave PPE for the medical and care sectors. Fabric masks can be washed and reused. 40 some masks and £225 later, she decided to switch her efforts to raising money for church funds. The additional impressive total raised for the church is £500,

and Joyce lost track of the number of masks made, but estimates 230. How much of Cosby village are wearing masks made by Joyce!?

Rev'd Fran Rhys



Houghton on the Hill:

After careful preparation, and just one week short of six months since we were last there, we were able to meet again in the Chapel for a communion service on the 9th September. The words of Psalm 122 have never resounded more truly. With the early autumn sunshine streaming through the windows it was a time of peace, reflection, hope and something of a sense of homecoming. It was almost possible to put some of the horrors of the past six months out of our minds.

Our re-opening was the result of very careful planning, because the Chapel was still closed, the Church Council couldn't meet there to plan the reopening! A meeting in the garden in front of the Chapel was one solution but the weather forecast was not promising....so we met in the little barn at the back of my home with all the doors open, 'appropriate' said the assembled company 'but it isn't yet Christmas'. It provided the perfect venue and we even managed a cup of tea when all the details had been finalised.



Of course we know that the Covid-19 pandemic is not going away anytime soon, but this was a very special new beginning. We continued to have a service at 2.30pm each Wednesday afternoon in

the Chapel. One highlight was our 'Dry Harvest Festival' at the end of September when we 'harvested' a large range of dry goods donated by our members, with those unable to attend sending very welcome contributions, for the Oadby Food bank which continues to run at full capacity. For those vulnerable or cautious we also continued to meet Online each Sunday morning at 10.30am.

Our first monthly Sunday morning service happened at the end of October and then, alas, Lockdown 2 happened and we all had to revert to Online meetings. In the meantime the congregation are very active at keeping in touch with those for whom it is important to stay at home. Members of the congregation continue to ensure that all is well at the chapel, caretaking, polishing and hoovering, and an end of season tidy up of the garden is imminent (to catch the last green bin collections for 2020!).

Lockdown 2 looks as if it may have a slightly more definite end. However some restrictions are sure to remain and it is very unlikely that we will have the traditional carol service on Christmas Eve which is attended by friends from the village and others from further afield. We do however have some ideas for something much more low key (no singing, but there are other ways of enjoying Christmas music) just before Christmas when we hope our regular Wednesday afternoon services will have resumed. Finally, no doubt to the amusement of the residents of Main Street we are hoping, as last year, to move my potted Christmas tree (outgrown as a house tree) to the Chapel on a trolley to provide a bit of Christmas Seasonal cheer with pretty lights at the front of the Chapel.

Mary Moore

Oadby:

Since the end of the original 'lockdown' period, Oadby Trinity has been operating not quite 'back to normal' but very nearly!! Zeph's Cafe has been 'up and running' and has seen increased footage as time has gone by, with customers expressing their delight at finding a place where they feel secure and where the stringent safety precautions are strictly adhered to. The number of tables in the cafe has been cut by half to allow for social distancing, but we have been fortunate to have been able also to use the church foyer, so numbers which can be accommodated are nearly the same. The lawn area at the back of the church has also been put to good use with several tables there. The food served is as delicious as ever, so when circumstances permit, why not come over and give yourselves a treat?

The Oadby Foodbank has, and is, continuing to operate from Oadby Trinity – the need has continued to grow and the response has met that need! Our leader and hard worker Lesley has gathered a good team, around her (some from the other Oadby churches) because of course those who are over a certain age (!) have had to step back and shield because of the pandemic.

Saturday Prayers was again held each week in church, and several of our 'hirers' had been able to resume their regular sessions in the Hall and other rooms where they were able to show compliance with the necessary Risk Assessments etc! What a strange world we are living in. Our Covid Officer has never been so busy with preparing and issuing various Risk Assessments and indeed altering and amending these as the regulations change. He is looking forward to taking a good holiday when 'it' is all over!!

Back into lockdown again for at least four weeks. Let us hope that we shall be able to have some resumption of these activities before Christmas! Thanks to our Minister Derek, we have been able to worship each week without interruption either via Zoom or in a combination of Zoom and church. We have been pleased to have been joined in our worship services by our friends from Houghton and Great Glen. In place of our weekly 'Notices', Derek has sent out each week a letter of encouragement to

each household either by email or by physically cycling to those homes without computer access – that is really 'going the extra mile' and we are blessed with his ministry. We also acknowledge Chris McLean's contribution too by helping with the Foodbank, and by cleaning tables etc. in Zeph's – sterling service!

Every blessing to all our friends around the Leicester Trinity Circuit – don't forget to come over and enjoy either a meal or coffee and cake at Zeph's when circumstances permit.



Barry Wilford

South Wigston:

Throughout lockdown our pastoral visitors have kept in touch with members and adherents, mainly by phone. Our church website has been one way of keeping people informed,. The monthly magazine, the Oracle, and weekly newsletters have continued. They are sent to over 30 households via e-mail, and 9 households by post or personal delivery. People have been sending stories and photos of their lockdown activities for inclusion in the magazine. Church management meetings were, and continue to be, held using Zoom; the church laptop was lent to people who weren't able to get on line.

The private pre-school, held in the rear area of the church, shut when lockdown was announced but wanted to re-open in September. This gave us the impetus to get the church risk assessments done, cleaning was carried out, and a Covid-secure building was organised. The church was divided into two parts: one for pre-school, one for church use.

We decided to start with 2 services a month from September to November. These were to be held on the 2nd Sunday, led by our minister Rev. Fran Rhys, and on the 4th Sunday, led by the local worship team. A "welcome back" leaflet was prepared and physically delivered to everyone on the pastoral list. A copy can be found on the church website.

There was a bit of trepidation when we held our first service on 13th September. "Welcomers" were in place, lines were marked on the pavement, and the foyer had a one-way system. The upstairs worship area was re-organised with well-spaced chairs, and guides on the pews – rainbows meant please sit here, a red cross indicated the seat should not be used. Would anyone come? Would we get too many people? In the end we had 18 adults and 1 child – our usual congregation averages 25 adults + children. Since then we have had "A different sort of harvest" – the lack of fruit, veg and produce on display highlighted food poverty, and money was raised for the local foodbank and WaterAid. In October we had our first Communion service, led by Fran – this went well. Also our annual shoebox service for Link to Hope in Eastern Europe – 56 boxes and £250 were raised. Our Girls Brigade is also running again but we have no plans to restart Saturday morning coffee, and fellowship groups.

We have decided to stick with two services a month in December and January; this will include a service on Christmas day.

Mary Brycland

Heather Corlett becomes a Local Preacher Recognition Service: November 1st 2020



Heather's journey began five years ago when she felt a call to be a local preacher. She began the journey by accompanying Shirley Kendal when Shirley conducted services. At the same time she began studying the Faith and Worship Course with Miriam Stevenson.

The Faith and Worship course was the map that Heather followed and consisted of four modules. When a module is completed the assignment, an exegesis of a Bible passage and reports on Heather's services, is sent to Methodist Church House for moderation. After Heather finished Section A, with Miriam, I became her tutor for the rest of the course.

The course is demanding and required Heather on occasions to leave her comfort zone. She was introduced to new ideas and new ways of approaching worship. Heather faced the challenges. She developed new skills and her faith matured.

There were rough patches along the journey. There was unclear instruction from the Connection and Heather had to rework an element of the course. The roughest patch came towards the end of the course. This was due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Heather submitted her final assignments, well in advance of the final date for submission. The assignment was stored in a building where entry was not allowed and the work could not be moderated. This meant that the results were late arriving.

The next stage in the journey for Heather was to leading an act of worship which was to be reported on by a number of people. Initially Heather was reluctant to do this over Zoom but she agreed. A brave thing to do. Many people who attended the service were helped by Heather's conduct of the worship.

The final part of the journey for Heather was an interview at the Local Preacher's meeting. This was a Zoom meeting. Heather interview was recorded and it was played back to the meeting. The meeting recommended that Heather should be accepted as a local Preacher. All that was needed was a service of recognition in which we could rejoice with Heather as she began a new way of service to her Lord.

It has been a privilege to tutor Heather. It was a joy to give her the results of the moderation of her assignments. She was happy and relieved because her work had been considered to be good. We had many interesting discussions and I am pleased to say that she did not always agree with me! Heather finds joy in her new ministry and will be a blessing to others.

Tricia Lockley

Local Preachers and Worship leaders News:

Zoom, Zoom!

During recent local and national 'lockdowns' normal patterns of worship have been seriously disrupted. Even when we have been able to meet together in worship we have felt keenly the current ban on corporate

singing: how strange it seems for Methodists not to sing their faith! Many of us have had to learn new skills and adapt to leading or taking part in worship via **Zoom**. Despite its limitations, 'virtual worship' has been a blessing, particularly to folk who are isolated. *Zoom* has also enabled preachers and worship leaders to 'meet' together for fellowship and to transact the necessary business of the LPWL Meeting. Our preachers in training have been able to continue with their studies and several have conducted their 'trial' services through this medium. It is a particular cause for joy that **Heather Corlett**, a member of Trinity Methodist Church at Oadby, was able to complete her period of training. Heather's Admission Service as a fully accredited local preacher was held on All Saints Day at Oadby. A small, socially distanced congregation was present in the church, joined via *Zoom* by many others from the Circuit and beyond. The service was conducted by our Superintendent Minister, the Revd Paula Hunt. The preacher was the Revd Kathleen Wood who 'zoomed in' from Richmond, North Yorkshire. We pray God's blessing on Heather's future preaching ministry in this Circuit. Although she was not able to be present to receive her certificate personally, the service also provided an opportunity to celebrate **Hazel Clarke's** faithful service as a local preacher for the past 60 years. At the September LPWL meeting **Richard Cawthorn** was appointed to fill the vacant role of Local Preachers' Secretary.

Howard Smith

Christianity and Violent Extremism:

The Rev Dr Tom Wilson, Director of St Phillips Centre, in an article in Trinity Newsletter *Affinity*, claimed that extremists on the Far Right were using Christianity to justify their violence against Muslims, and opposition to immigration. A group then met for two evenings on Zoom to consider what could be done in response to this. A book, *The Claim to Christianity*, by Hannah Strommen and Ulrich Schmiedel, lecturers in theology at the universities of Edinburgh and Chichester, had presented the evidence for Dr Wilson's claim. This was supported by a Power Point presentation by Sean Arbuthnot, coordinator of Prevent, based at St Phillips, and by the testimony of Christopher Hardy who had been drawn into a Far Right group but left after a Christian experience.

The presentation by Prevent showed the wide range of white extreme groups, some of whom are in Leicester. Along with attacks on Muslims and opposition to immigration, they are anti-government, anti-Semitic and maintain that the interests of the white community must always come first.

In trying to gain support they maintain that as Christians they treat women as having equal rights as men, they support the rights of LGBT people, and they condemn sexual exploitation of women and children. They suggest that the Muslim community as a whole is the cause of all these problems. In presenting themselves as Christians the extremists make a great deal of the flag of St George, and often put Christian symbols on their propaganda and clothing.

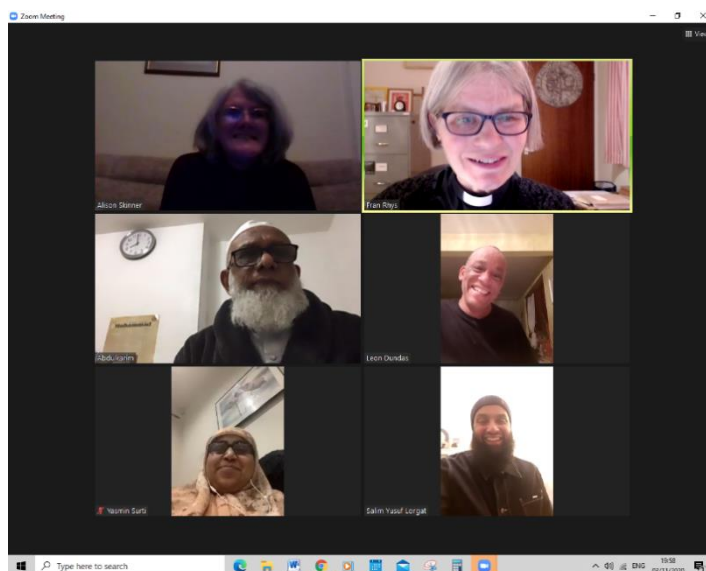
In the first place Prevent staff wanted Christians to become more aware of the way Christianity is being misused by the extremists. The book *The Claim to Christianity* had shown that even some church leaders were mis-interpreting Biblical material in ways that encouraged the Far Right. In one example the Good Samaritan was represented as an immigration minister who paid an aid organisation a lump sum to manage the injured man, but stamped a firm 'decline' on his application for asylum, and refused to support the man's family.

The staff also made a plea to Christians to help them interpret Biblical material in better ways. It was shown, for example, that the account of Christ Cleansing the Temple was not a justification for people to use violence against Muslim, but demonstrated Christ's anger at the way people were exchanging money and selling doves in the Court of the Gentiles, in ways that prevented people offering their worship to God.

The man in his testimony to his “escape” from a Far Right group made a plea for Christians to make more time to listen to people who have problems.

It was a challenging discussion on an important issue, and well worth a wider audience. Do get in touch with St Philips if you have a study group that would like to explore this.

Mosque-Church Twinning:



‘What, in your faith, encourages service to others in society?’ and ‘How does your faith or belief shape your daily life – including at this time of Covid-19?’ These were a couple of the questions discussed by a representative group from the Al-Falah Mosque and Bishop Street Methodist Church on a recent video call. Our responses to these questions ranged from the story of the Good Samaritan; to the understanding that whenever you save a life, it’s like saving the whole of humanity; to faith as a constant to cope with crises, bringing strength, optimism, and hope.

The Mosque-Church Twinning initiative has been initiated at national level by the Muslim Council of Britain, and through a coming together of Baptists Together, the Methodist Church, the Salvation Army, and the United Reformed Church, with the help of the Christian Muslim Forum.

The pilot programme is designed to underline the aims of National Inter Faith Week (8-15 November) by initiating online conversations between local mosques and churches in order to learn more about each other’s communities. It is not about engaging in deep theological discussions. The intention is to encourage friendships between people of different faiths and in so doing bring greater understanding. The hope is that in future years this pilot project could become a template for other faith communities to adopt and refine. Such a coming together of faith communities is much needed in Leicester as elsewhere, not least to simply get to know one another.

Our conversation naturally included reference to the recent terrorist attacks in mainland Europe and the problem of trying to use religion for political gain, and also how it feels to have one’s beloved faith figure mocked. The Leicester group’s second video conversation ended with an expressed prayer that we will be able to meet together in a restaurant or be able to host a meal for members of our church and mosque in the not too distant future.

Rev’d Fran Rhys, Bishop Street Methodist Church on behalf of the twinned group.

USING WEBSITES

Whilst **EVERYONE** is at home, they are online and they are searching.



How does our website look?

Does it look like we are inviting?

Does it look like that our Churches are at the centre of their community?

Can anyone find out what is going on in their area?

Would your Church's webpage encourage someone to take the next step & make contact?

*"How people **perceive** your church's website is how many will **perceive** your entire church as a whole"*

General Marketing surveys, show.

- 97% of consumers search for local organizations online
- 46% of all searches on Google are local
- 89% of surveyed participants admitted to searching for a local business on their smartphone once a week or more with 58% searching at least daily

To make our Churches more appealing and welcoming, we need everyone's help, with news items, advertisements, photo's, etc. Please send them to webteam@leicestertrinitycircuit.org.uk or if you are interested in maintaining your Church's circuit webpage, contact Charles Hilton at webteam@leicestertrinitycircuit.org.uk.

Circuit web site. <https://www.leicestertrinitycircuit.org.uk>

Regards

Charles Hilton (webmaster)

Thoughts on... 'Guidance for the clinically extremely vulnerable'

My husband received a letter recently. Did you get one? It was from 'Matt'. A bit over friendly I thought. Must consider himself so well known that we are on first name terms. He's probably right. We hear from him a lot. He's the one who doesn't sleep too well because he reads the latest statistics just before bed and then spends most of the night in 'tiers' ! (sorry).

He sent us a 6 page spectacular covering all aspects of how to avoid 'the bug'. Nothing really new – we have heard it all before – but one or two points struck me as being a little tricky to follow. Apparently when we go out we must not only socially distance but 'wash our hands regularly'. (Page 3 para. 5) Now this would be O.K. but for the fact that in our local park the only water available is in muddy puddles and there is no way that my husband can bend down to ground level anyway. We could take some with us but it can weigh rather heavy. Sorry 'Matt' but we will have to give that one a miss.

Then there is the 2 metre rule (page 3 para. 6). 'Try to stay 2 metres away from other people in your household'. I have been racking my brains on this one. I need to put my husband's shoes and socks on as I am his carer. Try as I might I cannot see how to do this from 2 metres away. Any ideas? The same applies to our double bed. We did buy a king size some time back so that helps but it's not going to give enough space even with a pillow down the middle. Think again 'Matt'.

Bless him, he's trying his best, but I wish he wasn't so obsessed with being 'on line'. Apparently you can register your needs if you have no-one to support you. Of course you need a broadband connection. No information about a telephone number. You are on your own there – try the Council.

We should not complain. How many Secretaries of State for Health and Social Care have been faced with a global pandemic. The training course was far too limiting.

Just like the rest of us he may well need the intervention of the Almighty.

Stella Orbell

Dear Matt

Thank you for your letter

It makes us all feel better

The vulnerable are at risk

I'm sure you can assist

Social distancing in the home

With family members all alone

Tell me Matt, how do I dress

the person if no social access?

Socks and shoes from a distance

Long lines of tape and persistence?

Do I put food under the door?

But can they reach the floor?
How do we sleep?
Only one bed to keep

The fun we had reading
Made us all reeling
We had a laugh
Oh! so daft

The imagination and rumour
Ignited our humour
Thanks for cheering us up
The recycle bin is shut.

Thank you for your letter
It really makes us feel better.

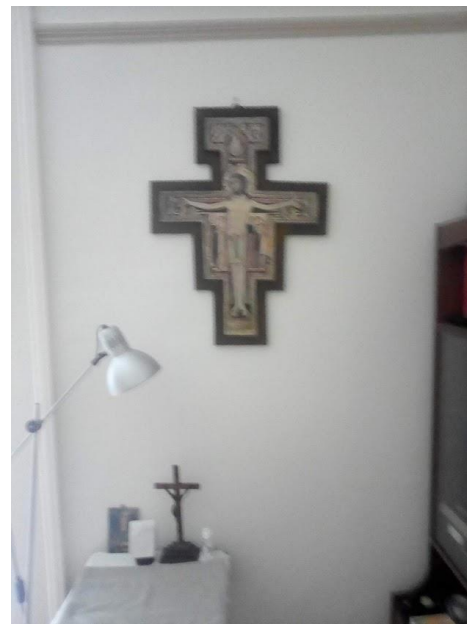
Anne Dodge

Metherringham Retreat:



Many of us have had the experience of solitude and quiet this year. Some will find that easier than others. Some will also have been able to use this time intentionally. I don't know about you but I find that harder to do at home, so, in between lockdowns I went to the Community of St Francis house in Metherringham for a self-guided "mini retreat" and I thoroughly recommend it. It is easily accessible by public transport (there is a train station that has regular services travelling from Lincoln and a once a day direct train to/ from Leicester).

The house itself is set in a beautiful part of the Lincolnshire countryside and the house has beautiful grounds including a labyrinth that was able to be walked and still yourself in the presence of God and journey deeper in your relationship with Christ. The peace and the tranquillity was something I really appreciated- and noticed just how well I slept with no traffic noise and no street lights! The peace also enabled me to have space to read and to pray in a way that I do not normally find myself having. Whilst there I reread 'The Shack' a book that I love and found that the idea that God can handle any question we may have and cope with our feelings just as they are very reassuring indeed.



The hospitality provided by Sister Maureen is exceptional. She, and Sr Jann (who was visiting from another CSF house) were incredibly kind, gracious and wise and joining in with their daily pattern of prayer and worship allowed me to enter the presence of God in a deep and meaningful way. The house is set within the Franciscan tradition of the Church of England, so hospitality is a major focus. Being able to share with these holy women with a few guests from the local area around the Lord's Table in Holy Communion was truly special indeed. Another very special point of the retreat was being there to witness the sisters make their "Cross devotions" a very important part of Franciscan worship where they "[have] in mind Saint Francis' devotion to the passion of Christ and [look] upon the figure of the Crucified" (Daily Office, CSF "Friday Cross Prayers"). While this sort of devotion to the cross may not be a typical expression of worship for many Methodists it was deeply moving and has stayed with me in the months that have gone by since. If you are looking for some quiet time with God or even just a chance to restore your batteries then do consider visiting the convent and if you do do tell Sister Maureen that I say hello.

James Blackhall



Methodist Women in Britain news.

A forum meeting was held on Saturday 3rd October via Zoom. It was strange to see both familiar and new faces on a computer screen instead of gathered together all in one room. However, it enabled the main issues to be presented and discussed, and views and our ways of dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic shared.

First a new strap line: **For Women, For Justice, For Christ.** This encapsulates what MWiB is about. If you want to know more about Methodist Women in Britain, I recommend you visit the web site and search for an article which Hilary Evans, our President, recently wrote for the Methodist Recorder explaining how MWiB came about in 2011 and outlining the work done since then and the campaigns that have been launched over the past 9 years.

Prompted by the recent publicity through Black Lives Matter we looked at ways in which we need to increase our awareness of the need to overcome conscious and unconscious bias when we interact with people. How can we recognise this, and then address any bias leading to discrimination.

Links have been made to campaigns for global social justice, climate change and against gender based violence.

Earlier in the year there was a request from Twelve Baskets, a Christian publishing charity, for funds to help them continue to produce the Vine at Home, free weekly worship material for use at home. Many churches around the Connexion have been printing this material and delivering it to church members unable to leave their homes or to access online worship.

Rachel Allison's appointment as the Helen Kim Memorial Scholar is coming to an end and a new appointment is needed for 2022. Please look on the MWiB web site for details about the role of the scholar and how to apply. This is a link with the World Federation and gives access to the work of that organisation and their place on the UN assembly.

The World Federation Quinquennial meeting in Gothenburg has been postponed until August 2022.

The Autumn newsletter is due to be published on the website. It will provide updates for the events planned for 2021.

Swanwick conference 2021.

Plans are going ahead to hold this conference with a maximum of 200 delegates. The theme planned for this year is '**Travelling in Hope**'

The keynote speaker is Sister Imelda Poole on her work in Albania with young people at risk of trafficking. Booking has been held over until January 2021.

Bursaries are available from District funds and there is one free place per District for someone attending for the 1st time.

We heard about COP 26 project from Mollie Pugmire. This is a campaign to raise awareness about the climate crisis and how we can both be better informed, and also plan in our churches to reduce our carbon emissions and become ECO churches. JPIT has resources for use.

Grants for a range of projects both for overseas and home based, and also support for individuals are all available.

I am the Northampton District Forum Representative and can be contacted through email:
richardandmarygill@gmail.com

The national web site is www.mwib.org.uk

For the District.

We have set up a Northants District WhatsApp group. Please contact Nina Rawlins:
ninarawlins@yahoo.co.uk with your mobile number if you would like to join. We hope this will link those interested in the work of MWiB and enable us to share information and ideas and give each other support.

For the Circuit.

I am building up a list of contacts for each church in the Circuit. We have cancelled the planned Carol service due to take place on Wednesday 2nd December at Syston. I am hoping that we will be able to hold an Annual General Meeting at Bishop Street on Friday February 26th 2021 and make plans for 2021.

World Day of Prayer 2021

The Preparation Days are taking place via Zoom. The service materials have been distributed and it is hoped that services can be held in churches on Friday 5th March 2021. The material has been prepared by the Women of Vanuatu, an island country in the Pacific. The Theme is 'Building on a Strong Foundation'.

Planning for the Ypray conference is also going ahead at the Hayes conference centre in May 2021. Use their web site for further information.
www.wwdp.org.uk

Mary Gill



Action for Children....

The Children's Charity of the Methodist Church

The latest Methodist Newsletter from *Action for Children* states that "*coronavirus has had a devastating impact on vulnerable children in the UK. More than 4 million children in the UK were locked in poverty before the pandemic hit. Now, many struggling families have lost jobs or seen their incomes fall. They have been pushed deeper into crisis. Our frontline key workers have been a vital lifeline through the pandemic, supporting more than 10,000 children and keeping 99% of our services open.*"

During these past months when so much of the normal pattern of our church life has been disrupted *Action for Children* has continued to rely on the generous support of the Methodist people. Most of us have handled less cash as a result of periods of 'lockdown' and many of those '*League of Light*' collecting boxes are not likely to be quite as full as usual. At this time when it is difficult to hold fund-raising events, please consider donating to the ***Emergency Coronavirus Appeal*** which *Action for Children* has launched in response to the pandemic. More information about how to support this work is available at:
actionforchildren.org.uk/donate.

Donations may be made by cheque payable to **Action for Children**. I am happy to forward any contributions sent to me or they may be sent directly to Action for Children Customer Service, 3 The Boulevard, Ascot Road, Watford. WD18 8AG. Thank you for your continued generous support.

Howard Smith (*Circuit Co-ordinator for Action for Children*)

Football:

Two top football teams

--- founded by a Methodist Minister

The Rev. Ben Chambers was born on 30th August 1845. He felt a calling to the Methodist ministry and at the age of 24, having completed his training, he took up his first appointment. In 1877 he was appointed Circuit Superintendent and minister at St. Domingo chapel in the Everton district of Liverpool. Within a month of his arrival he had persuaded members of the Young Men's Bible Class to set up the St. Domingo Cricket Club. Rev. Chambers wanted to encourage them away from drink, which was the massive social problem that drugs are today. He was a strong supporter of the Temperance Movement.

A year later the cricketers felt it would be a good idea to take up Association Football during the winter to keep fit. In a very short time the membership of the team included non-St. Domingo men and it was decided to rename the football section of their cricket club "Everton". They were so successful that in 1884 they opened a new stadium called 'Anfield' and in 1891 they became champions of the Football League's First Division.

Following a split in the ranks of the club, the Everton contingency took their name with them and the Anfield club was renamed Liverpool Football Club.

Rev. Chambers died in 1901. His neglected grave was discovered by writer Peter Lupson in a cemetery owned by the Methodist Chapel in the Yorkshire village of Shepley where Chambers grew up. Mr Lupson was researching the church roots of famous football clubs for his new book, 'Thank God for Football'. The grave has now been restored by the two football clubs. Without the Rev. Ben Chambers two of the world's biggest clubs, Liverpool and Everton might never have existed - it was this modest Methodist from West Yorkshire who set the ball rolling for the creation of the clubs.

Angie; Countesthorpe



Book Review:

Escaping the Maze of Spiritual Abuse: Creating Healthy Christian Cultures

by Lisa Oakley & Justin Humphreys

The structure of authority in Church can too easily lead to Spiritual Abuse.

Perhaps this doesn't happen in Methodism? We are probably less prone to it than some denominations with a more hierarchical structure, or indeed to those Independent Evangelical Churches whose pattern is dominated by a charismatic leader. Nevertheless, there are ways in which we can fall into similar traps and need to be aware of the risks. We need also recognise that the Spiritual Abuse may be as easily be perpetrated on the minister by somebody in the laity as the other way round.

Part of the problem is that some unacceptable behaviour is taking valid approaches in Christian discipleship to an unacceptable level. Holding one another to account, expecting complete commitment, demanding committed giving, respecting charismatic leaders... all of these are part of our Methodist heritage. In some ways we are weaker for neglecting them. John Wesley might accuse us of being “nearly Christian” for our failure to be fully and unquestioningly committed to our faith.

A further concern is that the perpetrator of this type of abuse almost invariably thinks that they are in the right and acting in the victim’s best interest. Even when they do acknowledge that the world judges their behaviour to be wrong, they know that God is on their side, and they are following what Scripture demands. The combination of God-given, Biblically sanctioned ethics, and the presumption that power is itself God-given, is an especially powerful combination.

Matthew 18: 15ff is particularly problematic. If Spiritual Abuse takes place, this passage seems to suggest that it can only be addressed by the victim seeking to resolve it with the perpetrator, and that any abuse should be disregarded if there aren’t two or more witnesses. A literal standalone reading of that is clearly unacceptable in any Safeguarding situation, but the risks are particularly acute here.

We think of this as a phenomenon which happens in cults and in pseudo-Christian religions, but as the work of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse has progressed we have seen that abuse is more widespread than we previously understood.

I’ve not read sufficiently widely on this subject to offer a strong positive or negative recommendation of this particular book. However, for those like me who haven’t thought sufficiently about this important subject, it seemed a good readable introduction. If it gets us thinking more deeply about our Safeguarding responsibilities then it can be truly valuable. We need to be serious in asking where the Holy Spirit is guiding us.

Oakley and Humphreys acknowledge that there are problems in other faith traditions, but they write from their own experience within churches, and it is churches that they are seeking to help find solutions.

Ultimately it is a positive book. The problems it diagnoses are worrying, but it offers solutions as to how we can seek to be more Christ-like in our discipleship and our discipline.

Rev Derek McLean



Bible Study:

Our heads are often full of voices – voices that pull us in opposing directions. There are so many words and not enough spaces in between. These words vie for our attention and the voices seem to demand some sort of action. At least, that is how it has felt for me these past few weeks.

Sometimes, there are emotions, strong and deep, that are attached to the words and this complicates things. Some of these, I know from experience, will subside, but others feel like I will break and tear apart under their weight.

Jesus says, in John 10:4 his sheep follow him because they know his voice.

As followers of Jesus, he is our good shepherd and we are his sheep. We have chosen to follow him because we have seen and found, in him, the way to life and peace and purpose. But the 'following after him' can get so complicated – others are journeying with us and the path gets crowded and confusing. It's not as simple as we had thought it would be, or perhaps, as we had been told it would be.

I am 60 years old, and have learned a few things. I have discerned that there is only one voice that I must heed. Only one voice that speaks truth. Only one of the many, is distinguished and marked by love. Only some of the myriad of words that swirl around my head, competing for my attention, only some, will bring me life. I have learned this, but am also still learning this.

Jesus says that he is the Way, the Truth, the Life. What He says is not only true, it is THE TRUTH. This must mean that his words are superior to any other words that I may be tempted to listen to. Even when they don't feel like THE TRUTH, they are THE TRUTH, and I can choose to believe them, or not. The sheep follow him because they **know** his voice. They have learned to discern truth from lies.

In this same passage, Jesus says this about his sheep 'they will never follow a stranger; in fact they will run away from him because they do not recognise a stranger's voice'. He is so confident, isn't he? So confident that the sheep will only listen to his voice.

Which brings me back to me, and the cacophony of sound that has filled my head just recently... ***'Jesus, I choose your voice only. I choose to focus so hard on your words that those of the stranger will drop away, as yours come into focus. Your words will never tear me down, they will not suck life out of me, they do not insult me or belittle me or cause me to consider myself to be either "too much, or not enough". Your voice brings me comfort and is sweet and is often whispered – it reminds me of who I am and whose I am, and that is enough. You have said that I will not recognise the voice of the stranger, and therefore I choose to give it no space, no value, no power...'***

By Lucinda Smith

Poems:



Two Roses

Two roses grew together,
They were so much in love.
He entwined himself around her,
for she was his lady love.
She opened her pink petals
and blew her perfume rare.
It floated on the starlight
and scented all the air.
It was a strange relationship,
for she was tall and stately.
She had no thorns upon her stem,
she was a gentle lady.
But he was strong and mighty,
his thorns were long and sharp.
He carried no perfume,
but he was red and dark.
They stayed close together
all the summer long.

Until that one sad morning,
when they both were gone.

**Maureen Collins,
Wesley Hall.**



Are bombs still dropping somewhere

Are bombs still dropping somewhere, I wonder?
War seems to have taken a back seat recently.
Pandemic seems endemic, demonic, eccentric
Changing the very fabric of our concentric, egoistic lives.
I'm sure there must be bombs, horrific, landing somewhere
bringing panic
Far away from Covid news, which is horrid, torrid, invalid.
We are living with it, dying from it, looking for hope
We cope, we don't mope, we lope along with masks on
We long for a telescope, a microscope, a periscope
A misanthrope to end our tightrope existence
Working through this downslope, to flatten the curve.
The search for an injection, to help with this infection
Has caused some introspection, objection and reflection
But as we move along this new way, we find new words to say,
Like Zoom and "you're muted....you need to unmute"
Lockdown, safe distance , stay safe, be alert (your country needs lerts!!)
All phrases and words that now we don't dispute.
Masks have become so de rigeur, some small and some that are much biggeur
Some worn around the neck...so what the heck....but it's so wrong
But oh my goodness how we long
To be free again to move around, to visit friends on foreign ground
To fly away to distant lands, and feel our feet on burning sands.
Oh to go back to normal things, whatever that new normal brings.

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