



Christ Church Stocksbridge Crane Moor Methodist Church Green Moor Methodist Church

for Sunday 7th March 2021

Dear

Greetings to you at Christ Church, Crane Moor and Green Moor!

Hello again. I hope you will be able to join me on Sunday for the worship online if you can. It will be a communion service as it is the first Sunday in the month; so please be prepared.

We've got quite a few birthdays to report, over this two-week period, and we wish you all a happy birthday:

- 1 March it is Norah Allott and Graham Revitt
- 2 March it is Evelyn Windle
- 6 March it is June Throssell and Una Dransfield
- 7 March it is Margaret Hughes

Haven't we had some treats in the last few weeks.

- Pearl's concert, with its wonderful singing from the young people and the great images Simon linked with the performances, made for a touching hour. If you want to donate to UNICEF, you still can; please send your contribution to Simon in the usual way.
- The young peoples' service was a triumph. Thank you to all the young people who were filmed for their parts by Simon, who knitted the whole service together. You could see how engaged the young people were and how much they enjoyed doing it. They also learned the story in a new way!
- And there's another treat coming on Palm Sunday. Simon is putting together another young peoples' service online with their contributions. Should be worth watching. If you have a phone, tablet or computer you can see these all by going to the church website. www.christchurchonline.org. I'm sure someone in your family could help you get on if you have got one.

The Church Leadership Team had its first meeting since I last wrote to you, and it was joined by the new officers. It went very well, as far as a Zoom meeting can, and most people had a chance to contribute in some way to the various discussions about worship, pastoral care, activities, premises, and finances. Some of the points were:

- Thinking about the members and friends, we were so pleased to hear that Mary Bentley has got one of the flats in what I think we still call 'Newton Grange'. We hope that goes well for you Mary.
- We noted that quite a few people who receive the weekly mailing had replied to say they were happy to download it each week. This has cut the weekly mailing from 145 to about 70, so reducing the postage bill. We are very grateful to the Christ Church Post People who hand deliver as many as possible.
- By now you will have had the chance to join the new midweek fellowship online led by various members of the congregation; I hope it continues to develop and be a fruitful source of Christian fellowship.
- The Lunch Club is planning an Easter goodie bag for members.

- The Social Café is expanding its activities to another session on Mondays, only during the remainder of the pandemic, so that they can cope with the number of people who need their service under the pandemic regulations.

As you may know, this week I conducted the funeral of an old friend, Mick Smallwood, part of the Shiregreen URC community. His wife, who was my secretary at Pitsmoor, I later learned went to school with Gwen. She helped start the Lunch Club there with Gwen. Mick had been a Magistrate for 25 years, and Jenny Clarke was able to speak on behalf of the court. When Mick was a young boy he spent a whole year in a remote hospital in a plaster cast after falling off a wall in Alfred Road. I'm telling you this story because in that year his family were only allowed to visit once a month. It struck me, as I thought about people in our church in hospital, like Mavis just recently, how devastating it must be to be so cut-off. I'm so proud of our pastoral carers and telephone supporters and Lunch Club phoners and Meeting Place volunteers who are doing such a great job of being in touch with people. It's not an easy task to phone, thinking 'Oh what can I say this week?', or 'Do they really want me to ring?' I think the answer is 'Yes they do', even if some of them might find it hard to say so! So 'Well done' to you all. And it makes us think, doesn't it, how we can reinforce in our future lives here at Christ Church a strong connection with those who are cut off for one reason or another?

As I write I am preparing for the funeral of Iain Austin at Green Moor. Iain's wife, Kathryn, is one of the Church Stewards there, and the funeral will be in their field behind their house. Many of the church and village will walk from Church to the field, to say farewell to this man who dedicated his working life to those for whom literacy was an issue. Our thoughts and prayers are with Iain's family.

One of the things that the Church Leadership Team discussed was our approach to the ending of the lockdown, and how we would plan for our response. We will be doing some detailed planning before the next meeting, but we laid out some principles:

- We will always comply with Government regulations and guidance;
- We will always follow the advice of our denominations;
- We think we do not want to rush into an early start for regular Sunday worship, until people are confident in their safety, and until it can be a supportive and welcoming and uplifting shared experience of worship;
- We will make continued use of the weekly mailing and online services, and we will take steps to make them available to more people;
- We will develop more online ways of sharing, including the weekly fellowship and the young people's activities;
- We will continue the other supportive measures that we have in place for care and communication and support;
- We acknowledge that some of these measures will live longer than the pandemic and may transform into elements of our church life going forward.

These principles mean that we believe it will not be until after Easter at the earliest that we begin to think seriously about a start to public worship in church, if that is possible in the state of the pandemic at that time.

We all want to meet and sing and pray and uphold our Lord in the presence of each other. The time is coming, but we must approach it with care for everyone at the centre of our decisions.

Gwen and I send you all our love and best wishes.

Ian



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