



**Christ Church Stocksbridge  
Green Moor Methodist Church  
Crane Moor Methodist Church**

**NEWS LETTER**

**For Sunday 27th June 2021**

Dear All,

Welcome to "the very latest" - as Paul Hudson (the weatherman on BBC Look North) would say.

The Leadership Team met on the 15th, the day after the Government announcement regarding the latest situation with the pandemic. Clearly, the Prime Minister's announcement of maintaining the current circumstances and restrictions for a further four weeks has disappointed, not to say frustrated and angered many in our society, who were hoping that June the 21st would be the first day of no or very limited restrictions. Although some of this negativity is at a personal level, in terms of not just being able to do the things we took for granted before the pandemic started, there are still many businesses that may find these extra four weeks the last straw that tips them into bankruptcy, with the attendant further loss of jobs. Alongside this, is the worry many people have regarding the potential loss of their homes as landlords want to sell or cannot bear the rent arrears any more. There is also the continuing uncertainty over the future of our local steelworks.

So, we need to see our concerns about returning to worship in this context. Nevertheless, it is important to all our church family, that we consider meeting together face to face. Not everyone has been able to receive our on-line services or join the Whatsapp group, and have relied on the regular telephone calls, to keep in touch or the occasional chance meeting. The current rules do allow people to meet, within certain constraints, and so the Friday coffee morning has re-started and we know that some of you have enjoyed meeting in each other's gardens.

Many churches have been open for worship, but I think that when we tried it, some of us who attended found it a less rewarding experience than watching on line. Neither did we in general find the Zoom services to be as successful as some churches seem to have done. But the rules have been relaxed since those early days, so it is now possible to meet for worship and engage in some socialisation and serve coffee, within the current regulations.

So, the Leadership Team now feel that the time is right to consider opening up the church again for worship, but within the limitations of our COVID risk assessment - social distancing, taking names and hand washing and so on. We considered all the issues raised in a valuable paper that Ian had written, setting out the pros and cons and factors to be taken into account. At our meeting we agreed unanimously that we would aim to open again, probably in the middle of July. This of course will be subject to a satisfactory acceptance of our updated risk assessment by the URC and Methodist churches and, assuming no further government announcements of any additional restrictions - in the light of the changing pattern of the pandemic.

The church officers are to meet to plan the details of what is required to open safely. The service will be streamed live, so it will still be watchable on-line at the same time and the DVD's will continue to be produced, as will the newsletter and service sheet. Everyone will be kept informed of developments and our intention is to be as inclusive as is compatible with operating safely. Although we will still not be able to have congregational singing, we should still be able to benefit from using music in our worship.

As an added facet to planning future worship, you will know that a successful meeting was held, in which a number of our members offered to participate in preparing services. The details have to be fully worked out, but Simon added the following, to his notes of the meeting :

*At the recent Worship Group Meeting, I was delighted with the enthusiasm to help with services from everyone and also the offer of Team Leadership from Nick Bryan and Jenny and Mike to*

*make four teams in all. I realize that during the meeting, and from comments I have received after the meeting, that there was considerable concern regarding the issue of authorized preachers. I have been assured, that no judgement about the abilities and commitment to faith, of those who offering help and leadership was intended, but namely a concern that we follow the right process. We have to remember that as an LEP we have two denominations with differing attitudes to this.*

*Personally, I feel if people feel moved, to speak God's word, this should be accepted and encouraged. However, I have had discussions with Ian on this issue and he has agreed to look into the current situation and position of our two denominations. This will ensure that as a LEP we have a way forward that is supportive and inclusive in its approach to those prepared and moved to provide worship.*

Also, now that Christine Utting has retired, she has had a number of ideas of how she sees her Christian discipleship working out in the community. One such idea is in the area of reading and literacy. To this end, she has had contact with the High School and writes the following :

*" Your local school needs you!*

*During recent discussions with Stocksbridge High School, the issue of literacy following Covid was raised and a need for volunteers to listen to children read in school was identified. This led to the idea of a partnership between school and Christ Church, as part of our outreach work.*

*We felt this was something that members of the congregation could and would perhaps enjoy doing to support the youngsters in the valley. The details are yet to be confirmed but we are thinking we could establish a couple of teams to each go into school once a week probably on a set day for a few hours to listen to a number of children read.*

*Before we go any further we really need some idea of how many people might be willing to help. If you feel you would be interested please can you let Christine Utting know, on 2888379 preferably by the end of June. (If there is no reply, please just leave a message on the answerphone.)*

*Many thanks "*

The other area the Leadership Team discussed was Data Protection. Ian has produced a draft outline of the sort of information covered by these requirements and although it is likely to be a lot of work to reach a point where we comply fully, it will actually make life very much easier in the long run. Watch this space.

Finally, the Meeting Place have, in association with Steel Valley Project, made a start on the Quiet and sensory garden at the back of church and in the next couple of weeks, now that the sub-station work has finished, we should see some tangible progress.

So, that's it for now. Take care and have a good week.

Every Blessing



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