

Dear Friends,

So far, it has felt like a long and difficult year that, in some odd way, seems to have neither started, nor really happened, but here we are, and so soon it will be autumn. Many of us, myself included, are very aware of the changes, challenges, and heartache of the months since lockdown was announced on 23rd March.

I have taken many funerals, both of church members and people in the community, since the 25th March, mostly in difficult circumstances. Towards the end of this newsletter is a contribution from Trinity, and the deaths of those who were a part of that church's community. But we also remember the loss of June Carter and Jack Davies, members of Langdon Hills, and our friends at St Paul's, John Simmonds and Glen Allington. Plus, Jill Faulkner and Val Harris from Billericay; Kath Lock and Kevin Beckwith of Linford; Fred Penney of Grays; and Lynn Selwyn of Horndon-on-the-Hill.

Much good has come out of our situation, as you will go on to read, but even more important than the worship that has taken place, is the help and support people have given one another, both practical and spiritual. I would like to say a special 'thank you' to those in the Basildon and Thurrock churches, for all their hard work towards reopening churches for worship and lettings. As usual, I am very aware that I have many able lay colleagues with whom it has been a privilege to work. It has been great to be able to support you, and be supported by you, as we have worked, and sometimes struggled together, so as to get through difficulties and challenges.

We particularly remember, and thank Rev'd Brenda for her pastoral work during this time. Thanks also to Rev'd David Bagwell and Rev'd Dr Samuel Cyuma for their online presence for their churches and beyond.

So, it is with hope and trust in God, and the goodness of one another, through the Holy Spirit, that we move forward into the future, with humility and compassion.

God bless *Rev'd Marion (Superintendent)*

Farewell and Welcome

In July we bade a fond farewell to Rev'd Brenda Gutberlet, and wished her God's blessings on her retirement. In September we give a warm welcome to Rev'd Oluyemisi (Yemi) Jaiyesimi and his wife Moji. Yemi and Moji join us from the Ealing Trinity Circuit in London. They are settling into the new Stanford-le-Hope manse. We hope that they soon feel at home with us, and pray that God will bless Yemi's ministry in this Circuit. The Circuit Leadership Team would also like to thank Roger Key for coordinating the necessary work to get the new manse ready.

Suzanne Stubbs, Senior Circuit Steward

Message from Rev'd Brenda Gutberlet

It seems strange to say that I am now retired, or 'sat down' - the traditional words used when Methodist Ministers ask Ministerial Synod for permission to retire. THANK YOU to the Circuit, and especially my colleagues and the Thurrock churches, for their prayerful support, messages, cards and gifts, as I begin a new chapter in my life. Though we were unable to share in the usual round of farewells due to Covid-19, I retire blessed by the six years of fellowship within South Essex Circuit. I know you will support Rev'd Yemi as he joins you in worship and fellowship. As with driving, so too with a change of Minister, glance back and give thanks to God, but then look up, and move forward together.

Be blessed and stay safe.

Rev'd Brenda Gutberlet

Message from Oluyemisi Jaiyesimi (Yemi)

Dearly beloved people of God in the South Essex Circuit let me start with the Good News in ten golden words **GOD LOVES YOU. JESUS DIED FOR YOU. YOU ARE PRECIOUS.**

My first name is Oluyemisi which means The LORD cherishes me and I truly believe He does. My middle name Adetokunbo means Crown from overseas and this is because I was born in the UK. I was born on 13th October 1956 in the West Middlesex Hospital, Isleworth, London and my first eight years were spent here in the UK.

From 1964 to 1984 I lived in Nigeria, among other things attending Methodist Boys High School in Lagos and the Government College Ibadan for my secondary education and University of Ibadan and A.B.U. Zaria for further studies and Immanuel College of Theology for my ministerial training and taught at my alma mater MBHS Lagos.

I met my wife Mojisola in 1982 in Nigeria and we got married in 1984 at St Marks Church, Kennington in South London and had our only child, a boy, in 1985. Our son Jesuseun, also called John, is married to Jane and they have given us five grandchildren, the first a boy nine is called Joachim and he has four sisters Jasmine, Jemimah, Johanna and Julianah. They live in Huddersfield.

I returned to Nigeria in 1985 and continued teaching at my old school MBHS until 2001 and was briefly the Principal of Igbobi College in 2002. Commissioned as a Methodist minister in Nigeria in 1982 and ordained in 1986, I have served in the British Conference since 2002 in Kings Lynn, in Shebbear College as Chaplain, in Bristol, in Barnsley and until recently in the Ealing Trinity Circuit and now I am here travelling still with Jesus

I love reading. I love films on true life stories and events and I certainly love singing and love it when there is a harmony between the music and the words and when we sing what we mean.

I do believe that God loves each one of us as we are, but loves us too much for us to stay as we are, so together we praise Him for all that is past and trust Him for all that is to come.

My wife Mojisola, which means I wake up to wealth, is a lawyer but presently is in training to be an advocate for CHRIST in the Church of England our mother Church.

Our son John, ably supported by our daughter-in-law, is Pastor of the Potters House Church in Huddersfield and does this in addition to his work in business intelligence.

I look forward to getting to know you, to love and be loved, knowing that we love because He first loved us. At the beginning of a new church year it suffices to hold on to the words in Haggai 1 v13 THE LORD SAYS I AM WITH YOU and we respond keep me travelling along with you.

Stay safe and secure in the love of Jesus continually poured into our hearts by the Blessed Holy Spirit... Thank you o my Father for giving us your Son and leaving Your Spirit till the work on earth is done. The LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

Kind regards – Rev'd Yemi

Churches re-opening and return to worship

Basildon Churches:

Trinity – Sunday 30th August

St Paul's – Sunday 6th September

Langdon Hills – Sunday 13th September

Thurrock Churches:

Grays – Sunday 13th September

Horndon-on-the-Hill – Sunday 20th September

Linford – Sunday 13th or 27th September

Stanford-le-Hope – Sunday 20th or 27th September

Billericay Churches – please check their website

The Wall of Remembrance @ St. Paul's

How can we be “Christ in the community” with our buildings closed and church activities on hold? During the last few months, many have lost loved ones through Covid-19, or other diseases. Many have not been able to say ‘Goodbye’ in the way they would normally do so.

At St. Paul's we had a vision to meet those grieving in this time of pandemic by setting up “the wall”, which is composed of large portable display boards.

People can name those who have died from Covid-19, or for other reasons, by writing the name of their loved one on a Forget-Me-Not flower to be put on the wall. It is an opportunity for people to remember those who will be greatly missed.

However, it soon became clear that by being at “the wall” we were able to meet people in other ways. Many conversations have been had about loss and bereavement, but others have been how thankful people are that they have not lost anyone. We are also seeing the wider impact of this pandemic, as people have lost their jobs, visited the food bank for the first time, had hospital treatment “on hold”, felt isolated, confused and anxious.

We soon found ourselves becoming the “church” outside the church, as people started to visit regularly. Some are just shopping, others dog walking, or passing by. We have talked about different vegetables, what to do with an avocado and how to cook chickpeas! Our church family has “popped down” to have time together. We are the church on the pavement. It has challenged us to think about “church” when we return to the building.

In September, we will be at the wall on Tuesday afternoons and Saturday mornings.

Alternatively people can email the name of a person and message to remembranceatstpauls@gmail.com and we will place the name on the wall on their behalf.

Anna Williams



Grays Methodist Church – A life in lockdown

Although the doors of the church were closed to members and the public, we have been kept busy, including dealing with a leaking church hall roof. A prayer group of 4 individuals turned into zoom meeting for Grays, and then a zoom meeting for the Thurrock churches. It was good to see the participants and catch-up after each

service. The services were led by Rev'd Brenda, and, when she retired, they became local arrangements.

We were able to hold Rev'd Brenda's informal farewell service by zoom. It was a creative service with original contributions of music, poetry, and best wishes for Brenda's retirement, by the churches in Thurrock.

Our weekly notice sheet became a weekly newsletter, with contributions from Rev'd Roland Joiner and Maureen McPherson. There were activities from Roots for children.

The young people's Easter eggs had been ordered early in March. We were fortunate that our Easter bunny, in the form of Rev'd Brenda, was able to deliver the eggs when the lockdown eased in July.

Like other churches, we are preparing to open in September and despite restrictions, looking forward to see each other in person – God willing. We also look forward to meeting our new minister, Rev'd Yemi.

Gillian Ross

Worship at Trinity during Lockdown

As soon as lockdown was imposed we knew we had to do something to keep in touch with our community at Trinity. We started by improving our contact details – both email and WhatsApp – to include as many of our community as we could. Next we realised there were resources for worship available for home use, which we started to send these out each week. The Vine has provided weekly home worship, as has the Methodist Church - both of these were circulated. In addition, Rev'd Marion has provided a weekly contribution of ideas for personal devotions, which we have sent round. For younger members, we have supplied age appropriate resources.

However, we also felt a real need for something more like worship as it was in normal times and, emboldened by using Zoom in a different context, we tentatively embarked on providing a Zoom service every Sunday at 11am, from 19th April. We were not sure how many would be able, or indeed, want to join us, but right from the start we had 26!

From there we have increased our numbers and regularly have around 35 now, with 49 having joined at some point. We have been delighted to be joined by members from St Paul's and Langdon Hills.

We soon realised that the free 40 minutes provided by Zoom was not going to be enough, and we now pay the monthly subscription to have as much time as we need. We also found that it was good to have 10 minutes before the service to allow people to join in and greet each other, and we stay after the service for as long as people want to chat!

Because we have a piano, with the means of recording hymns onto it, and are happy to sing, we have been able to include singing in our worship, with everyone joining in at home (muted of course!) In addition, we have invited different members to read the Bible reading and on some weeks have had a video. Recently we have introduced news sharing. We have also become adept at displaying a PowerPoint with words for hymns and prayer responses, where necessary.

However, the joy of the Zoom service is undoubtedly the fact that we can see each other and worship together on a weekly basis. Although we will be worshipping in the church once again from August 30th, we still intend to use Zoom for those who would rather stay at home, or who are immobile.

Clare Nice

Also, thanks from those of us in Basildon to Suzanne Stubbs and Anna Williams for leading worship on some Sundays in which we, in Basildon, have also shared.

Rev'd Marion

Sad News from Trinity

It is with great sadness that we have to report the deaths of four valued and much loved members of our church community. Joan Pearce died in February but her funeral happened just before lockdown and was attended by many people from the different aspects of her life. We are thankful for all she contributed to the life of the church and we miss her greatly.

Alan Backham died in April. Then Alan's wife, Joyce, died in July. Joyce was the Circuit Action for Children representative. Both these deaths followed illness that we knew of, but nevertheless came as a huge shock to all those of us who loved them and they will be hugely missed. Alan helped with the church maintenance on a regular basis. Joyce has been a mainstay in so many ways at Trinity that it is hard to imagine what it will be like without her.

Bob Burlison also died during lockdown. He had been suffering from dementia but caught Covid-19 and died in Basildon hospital. Mary and Bob have been regularly worshipping with us, and are members of the Disability Club.

They will all be missed in their various ways and contributions but we know they will be with the Lord and free from pain and ill health.

Clare Nice

How2be

Alongside the need to explore what it means to 'Be a caring church', there is now, perhaps, another question that needs to be addressed; namely 'how to be' a caring church in the light of the ongoing pandemic; the effects of which will be felt for many months (if not years) to come. Indeed every aspect of 'Our Calling' could be usefully re-examined by the church, in these unprecedented times, as 'more of the same', may not be possible, let alone as effective, as before.

I still believe in the church and that to follow Jesus and with him to continue to build the kingdom, God needs the church, 'to be'; but, with apologies to Shakespeare, 'How to be - that is the question!' if we are to 'serve the present age', and not exist in an age that is now passing away.

Having been helped, or perhaps forced, by God in the last few months to do things 'as never before' can we now gladly choose in the next few months to continue to do things 'as never before'. Can we venture forward in faith rather than take a step back by simply trying to return things to 'as before'?

Rev'd David Bagwell