



**ST ANDREW'S UNITED REFORMED CHURCH  
WALTON-ON-THAMES**

**NEWSLETTER**

**Volume 77 No 6**

**AUGUST 2020**



*When obstacles and trials seem  
Like prison walls to be,  
I do the little that I can,  
And leave the rest to Thee.*

*'The Will of God' Frederick William Faber*



*From The Manse*

*August 2020*

*Dear friends*

Thank you so much for all your thoughts and responses to the questions asked in last month's Newsletter. They have been so helpful because it's difficult to know how best to proceed and how to act faithfully and responsibly about reopening our 2 church buildings and re-starting, "real" services. Obviously it's also difficult to gauge the general mood so heartfelt thanks to you.

As you may imagine, a number of opinions were expressed ranging from "re-open next Sunday" to "there's no way I would come to a service in church at the moment". In your responses, however, there has been much appreciation of the Zoom Worship and of the weekly prayer and "Thought for the Day". These do require a lot of work, so it's nice to know that it's so valued and proving to be helpful. These have also had some unexpected benefits which is great.

We are fortunate to have professional biologists in both congregations, as well as people working in the care sector. They have shared with us some of their insights which have been extremely helpful. The overwhelming steer you gave us, however, was not to rush into anything, particularly when we can't offer a "normal" church experience in any case. Some are desperate to get back to church for whatever we can offer, but others openly said that they wouldn't want to come to that sort of environment and service - they would much prefer to stick with the Zoom service where at least we can still sing hymns. The point was also made that we are in the summer period and that, traditionally, a number of church things don't happen in July and August, so use that natural lull to our advantage. A very piercing question concerned how we'd react if someone came to church and started coughing during the service. An innocent tickle in the throat or something more serious? Creating and maintaining a Covid-free environment, as required by the Government (and common sense) is hard.

The two churches have faced this current challenge together. This has been appreciated by some of you who feel that we've benefitted from that in various ways, and that coming out of lockdown should be done together too. It's been nice getting to know "the other congregation" better.

So, what we're going to do is take the steer so many of you gave us and will keep the status quo for the moment and will review things again at the end of August/start of September. Government regulations will almost certainly have changed again by then. We may have a better idea about the possibility of a second spike and we may also have a clearer picture of which of our visiting preachers are "available" - we know that some are not.

Thank you once again for all your responses and contributions. They have all been valued and have certainly been proof that many heads are better than one.

Finally, whilst we're not re-opening publicly at the moment, if you'd like to go into either church for private prayer then please let me know and I will willingly give you access.

With all good wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. Laid", followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line.



Thank you for all the cards, support and love you have shown to me over the past few months. Your wonderful support has kept me going.

*Margaret Faultless*

I found this recent article by Fr David Harold- Barry SJ, my contact at Silveira House, Harare, thought-provoking. David hopes to visit Walton next year. **JS**

## SUSTAINABILITY, SOLIDARITY & SECURITY

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San Diego (California) Bishop Robert McElroy preached recently drawing out three lessons from our pandemic which give hopeful signs for the future. First, he reminded us that the local community we call church is not a fixed structure like the bricks and mortar of the building which will survive, pandemic or no pandemic. A community is a living entity which needs sustenance to survive. If people do not meet regularly for liturgy and parish activities, the community is in danger of withering. Many people now go to church via the internet in Hong Kong this week and New York next. Could this become a habit, a preference, especially as one can 'shop around' and find places far more interesting than my local parish? To abandon my parish just because I cannot get there is to expect my community to survive without regular contact. That is the danger.

But there is also an opportunity. Since I can no longer take my parish for granted I have to now actively find ways of reaching out to people so as to keep communication alive. This leads to the bishop's second point: solidarity. He is a church leader in a country waking up to its imbedded legacy of racism and the drama of 'Black Live Matter' – a movement that has gripped people in America and across the globe. It is amazing that this is happening at the same time Covid 19 is hammering us. It is not just religious people who are reaching out to others. Everyone is. Really moving and beautiful things are happening. Nearly all are unseen and unreported. People are showing compassion and this can change the world. It is not just the virus of corona but the virus of indifference to others that has sparked a global response.

There is a feverish search for a vaccine and that will be a blessing when it comes. But we should also relish this time before it comes. We long for the security of a vaccine but there is a greater security staring at us if we can grasp it. It is to imbed this solidarity and compassion into our way of thinking and being. Covid has told us no one is safe unless all are safe. This is just a mirror of what we often say: no one is free unless all are free. Our greatest security is within. It is not in vaccines and walls and weapons. We, those of us who call ourselves Christians, should note that the greatest efforts towards solidarity and hope are happening without any apparent input from the churches. If ever there was a dramatic expression of this it must be the 27 nations of Europe hammering out a plan to care for all their citizens including the most vulnerable in the face of Covid. We have to pause and savour this moment. Here are the leaders of many nations sitting down hour after hour well into the night and early morning to reach a consensus on a way forward in response to the crisis of our time. Anyone who knows anything about how the same nations drifted carelessly into two world wars will be struck with awe. This really is human progress and we should rejoice.

## THIS AND THAT

It has come to my knowledge that in our church family there were several occasions worthy of celebration in July. To all of you, we send our congratulations and very best wishes!



Netta Philip on her 93rd birthday

Eva Ramage on her 95th birthday



### HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

Jim and Janet Sommerville celebrated their 58th wedding anniversary on 14 July with a quiet luncheon by the river.

Roy Bones celebrated the 63rd anniversary of his Ordination on 20 July. He was Ordained at St Paul's Congregational Church (now Raleigh Road United Church) in Richmond.



**Callum Simpson**, Susan and Johnston's oldest grandson, has graduated with a First Class Bachelor of Arts (Honours) degree in Journalism. Callum is the son of Iain and Louise Simpson. Some may recall Iain who attended St Andrew's Sunday School (in the good old days!). A keen musician in his spare time, Iain had a hit record in the charts at number 13 in the early nineties. Now a father of four, he can often be seen with his band Jafuso Blue, playing a variety of genres at local venues. (Family photo with Callum centre from the front - right hand side).

## REOPENING OF BURVIEW HALL

We have set the date of 1 September to re-open Burview Hall. It has been a long hard process of getting everything ready and we have spent £3,000 on all sorts of equipment to try and keep our special needs children and adults safe when they return. We expect a slow start, but if we don't set a date it becomes more difficult to get going. Like St Andrew's, we have had no revenue since closing on 16 March. We have put in extra cleaning and done a full risk assessment with a tick list for every room for users to follow.

A big thank you to one of our lovely congregation who sent a donation for Elmbridge Mencap. It is very much appreciated.

*Jean Rigden*

## KEEPING IN ZOOM TOUCH

Every week, usually on a Thursday evening, Hilary in Hersham, Ghislaine in Walton, Sophia in Texas and Norma in Putney get together on an evening Zoom call to catch up with the past week's goings on. It was Hilary's idea a few weeks ago and has since become a welcome fixture in our diaries. Topics are wide-ranging from how we are getting on with the 'ridding out' of drawers and cupboards, the delights and frustrations of keeping on top of the garden, how our pets - three cats and two dogs between us - are coping with the new normal (brilliantly!), Norma's lack of real progress with her piano lessons mostly due to lack of practise (and no excuses), to newly-discovered, inventive cooking skills and, most recently, the joy of a haircut. A bonus for Norma has been the incentive to learn how to set up a Zoom meeting - another item for the CV, if only that were still relevant in retirement. The screen shots below show us in masked and unmasked mode. Sophia has been busy making masks but is not taking orders! Her latest creative effort is a soup cosy ('protects hands and furniture from hot soup') which you can see her holding up in the picture below with the beautiful sunset.



## NEWS FROM ACROSS THE POND

*Sophia Swanson writes from Colorado:*

"Rob and I decided we needed a different view and loaded up the truck and drive 17 hours to our flat in Denver, Colorado. Normally we drive half way and stay the night at a hotel but, due to Covid-19, we decided to drive straight through. I happily helped by driving three of the 17 hours. Once we arrived in New Mexico, we could see the dark clouds rolling along with heavy winds and lightening. We decided to pull over and and unpack our desk and load it inside the truck to prevent it from getting drenched. This resulted in all our baggage getting sorted and repacked into the truck. Just in the nick of time we managed to get it done as heavy rain drops began to fall. Driving through major thunderstorms and lightening is not something I can recommend. Denver is known as 'the mile high city' because it is 5,280 ft above sea level."

By way of background on Denver, it is the capital of Colorado dating back to the Old West era, also known as the Wild West, often referred to as the period of the later half of the 19th century between the American Civil War and the end of the century. The Denver Art Museum is an ultramodern complex known for its collection of indigenous works and the mansion of the Titanic Survivor Molly Brown. It is also known for its craft breweries and for being within easy reach of the Rocky Mountains.

A minister told his congregation, "Next week I plan to preach about the sin of lying. To help you understand my sermon, I want you all to read Mark 17." The following Sunday, as he prepared to deliver his sermon, the minister asked for a show of hands. He wanted to know how many had read Mark 17. Every hand went up. The minister smiled and said, "Mark has only 16 chapters. I will now proceed with my sermon on the sin of lying."

## ARTPEACE AND FRIENDS



**CORRUPTION IN ZIMBABWE:** This country has the unenviable reputation for being one of the most corrupt countries in the world at all levels of society. This was brought home to me recently via the following account from a friend. On visiting his local miller, he noticed about a dozen bags of mealie meal marked **UKaid** and **WFP** - World Food Programme (the leading humanitarian organization). This food was meant to be distributed free of charge to poor Zimbabweans. My friend was informed that the contents of the 100kg. bag was being sold in 20kg lots at 7 US\$ a bag. He reported his findings to his local ZANU councillor (Zanu PF is the party of government). The next day these bags were no longer on display – the councillor had clearly tipped the miller off! This is how poor people are cheated – a small



example of daily corruption in Zimbabwe and of how UK taxes are abused. Pity the hungry children (right) forced to scavenge harvested fields for any grain. Artpeace want their UK friends to know what is going on. At least I know for sure that donations to ArtPeace go **direct** to those in need and I take this opportunity to thank a kind couple from St Andrew's who recently made a generous donation which is now on its way to our friends.

**EVICTED:** Yet another family in the artists' neighbourhood has been evicted from their



lodgings unable to afford the rent. One artist said: **The father cannot work due to the lockdown. They have no other income, so some days go without any food. Gogo (grannie) Moyo (meaning heart) above left, felt so ashamed and distressed at losing their modest corrugated iron hut but home nevertheless for this now destitute family of eight.** These people like numerous others, are on their own unlike the UK, with not one iota of help from the State.

**ZIMBABWE APPROACHES A HUGE CRISIS:** Nurses are on strike unable to survive on salaries equivalent to less than one US dollar a day. These are frontline fighters helping people infected with Covid 19. Striking nurses living in hospital accommodation at Harare hospital have been sent eviction letters. By contrast, their Minister of Health is out on Z\$50,000 bail after being arrested over a US\$60 million Covid 19 procurement scam without even spending one night in



jail. He has now been removed from his position for 'inappropriate conduct'. Compare this inequality between a 60 million US dollar scam by the Minister and a nurse surviving on less than one US dollar a day. The Zimbabwean journalist who exposed the alleged corruption has been arrested which is deeply concerning.

**SUFFERING:** Artist Fortune said: 'Just now I met this young boy coming from a polluted river carrying water for cooking and drinking. His family often get diarrhoea as they cannot afford purification tablets and have no firewood to boil water. Later that day I met the two young girls (right) - Chipo and Rudo who are orphans and stay with their 13 yr older sister. Their mother died 5



years ago, and their father left for South Africa a year later but never returned and has not communicated. Their sister was away doing odd jobs like washing, and gardening to try and raise some money. They go to bed hungry many times when their sister does not work. Thanks to donations for seed and fertilizer I was able to feed these 3 poor little girls thanks to my good harvest.' Our donations dear readers, hit the mark every time bringing joy and relief to many.

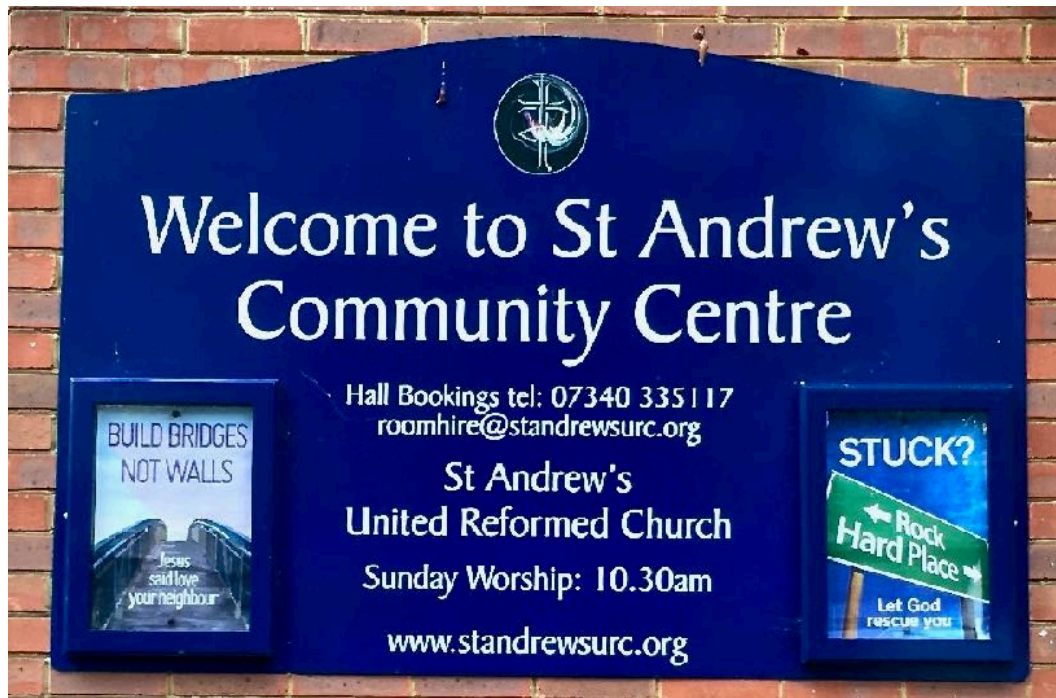
On 5<sup>th</sup> July I listened to the BBC's World service's heartening documentary titled: **THE 'GRANDMA' BENCHES OF ZIMBABWE.** Zimbabwe has over 14 million people but fewer than 20



psychiatrists. After years of economic turmoil unemployment and HIV, mental health (like the UK) is a huge challenge. Doctors estimate one in four Zimbabweans battles with depression/or anxiety. Lucia is one of the 700 grandmothers in the country turning the nation around. She sits on a wooden bench using a gentle form of cognitive behavioural or talking therapy with her community. This is one of 250 Friendship Benches set up by Zimbabwean psychiatrist Dr Dixon Chibanda, who believed that after a few weeks of simple training, grandmothers could become lay health workers for their communities. Lucia has the time, wisdom and respect to help the people who come to her. She understands them and has direct experience of their problems. Presenter Kim Chakanetsa hears the grandmothers are having astounding results. They have helped over 50,000 people and are breaking down the

stigma around mental health. Recent clinical trials found they are more effective than conventional medical treatments. As a result, Dixon Chibanda gets enquiries from around the world for the Friendship Bench and he is setting them up in Malawi, Zanzibar, Kenya, Tanzania and now New York. The World Health Organisation said more than 264 million people were suffering from depression. That was before Covid-19 brought new challenges. Photo: Two people talk on a 'Friendship bench' by kind permission of Rainer Kwitek.

**Johnston Simpson**



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Please note that, at the moment, in keeping with Government policy due to the Covid 19 virus pandemic, the church building is closed. However, we are holding services every Sunday with Zoom at the later time of 11.30 am. A weekly "Thought for the Day" and a prayer are also available by post or email. Please contact the minister for inclusion.

Anyone who wishes to take part. In the Zoom service should contact the minister, who will be able to send them a link to enable easy participation.  
You are all most welcome to join us!

If you would like the church to be opened for private prayer, please contact the minister.

***Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins.  
Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Like good stewards of the manifold  
grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.***

***1 Peter 4 vv 8-10***