



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

NEWSLETTER

Volume 77 No 5

JULY 2020



"Make your faith larger than your fears and your dreams bigger than your doubts."

Robin Sharma

From The Manse

July 2020



Dear friends

Lockdown restrictions are gradually being eased and so this month I'd like to ask you some very important questions. They are definitely not rhetorical questions - quite the reverse. The Elders and I need your thoughts and comments because some important planning and decisions now need to be thought through and made.

At the time of writing, churches have been allowed to reopen for a few weeks - but for private prayer only and subject to social distancing and health and safety restrictions. Having St Andrew's and Weybridge URCs open during the week for people to pop into hasn't normally been our custom. Whereas we would willingly open, when we have tried in the past few have come. Given the work involved and the records which would need to be kept (in case Covid tracing became necessary) we do not plan to make opening for private prayer a regular feature at this point but I'd gladly arrange access for any members who asked for it.

What is more complex is thinking through when we can realistically resume Sunday services in church. We all long for this day. I am so looking forward to entering church and addressing a live congregation with the words, "Let us worship God". The Government have now lifted the ban on services on public worship from 4th July and we shall need permission from the URC and the Wessex Synod Trust before we can reopen. At the time of writing, the regulations and restrictions we'll need to follow are still emerging. Social distancing will certainly need to be in place and this will probably still be 2 metres since the measures needed to be put in place to drop it to 1 metre are not realistic for us. (Masks, visors, Perspex screens, sitting at angles to each other etc.) Significant changes will have to be made to cleaning and Covid prevention measures since we need to make the premises "Covid Secure". Singing hymns looks as if it won't be allowed. Using pew Bibles and hymnbooks will probably not be allowed either. No passing round the collection bag (!), or shaking hands - and a cosy natter round the table after church, putting the world to rights with a cuppa is definitely going to be out. So, St Paul, writing to the early church may be about to sort of hit the nail on the head - "everything is permissible but not everything is beneficial". This is where the Elders and I would really appreciate knowing your thoughts and feelings.

Our two congregations have a significant number of older/vulnerable people in them so the first question is all about who would be able to come when we can reopen? Shielding formally ends on 1st August but what sort of service could we offer and would people actually want to come for that? It could well be that a significant number of you simply wouldn't feel safe coming into church on a Sunday yet.

There is no intention to cease having a Zoom service and St Andrew's IT set-up is almost able to live-stream a "normal" service now. St Andrew's Elders have agreed to the minor upgrade to enable this. Weybridge currently doesn't have the facilities to enable this to happen and rather more work would be necessary. The services we've been having using the internet since Easter have been very well received and, given the current concerns and uncertainties, it could well be that at present we can minister more safely and more effectively online a little longer.

Then thirdly, the reality is that some of the key people who make things tick and happen week by week have health concerns or wouldn't feel comfortable about coming at the moment. That could make it hard to run things well and then, as indicated in last month's Newsletter, there's the question of who will lead services? Given the average age profile of those leading our worship, will they want to "hit the road" again yet? If not enough ministers and lay preachers are available we may not be able to run a service each week at both our churches. How do you think we could address this? How would you deal with that? What are your thoughts?

The Elders will have to make the final decision as to when to re-open. We are going to be giving very careful consideration to this. Many of us are inclined to be cautious at the moment, wanting to see what happens to the "R" number and if there's going to be a second spike. The R figure still hovers at only just below 1 - the point at which the infection is spreading again. The "track and trace" system we were told would be vital if lockdown measures were to be significantly eased isn't in place and it's not looking as if it will be for some time yet. Everyone is nervous of the potential for a second spike. People have to be kept safe when they come to church. They also need to feel safe as well - the confidence factor. There is no point in opening and then finding that most people don't want to come into an enclosed building at the moment.

So, we really want to test the waters with you first.

- 1) What are your thoughts and feelings about all of this?
- 2) What do you want to do?
- 3) What would you support?
- 4) What wouldn't you support?
- 5) What would you like to say to your Elders as they have a difficult decision to make?

The Wisdom of Solomon may well be what's needed here but the Elders really do need to know your considered opinions too. They want to do what's best for everyone. They want to act responsibly and they really need to know what you're thinking on this one.

So, these questions are definitely not rhetorical. **Please let the Elders and me know where your thinking is at the moment.** Take it for granted that we all want to re-open our two churches as soon as we can - but knowing when that can be is not going to be easy. What do you think? What are your instincts and considered feelings at the moment?

The next Elders' Meetings are: July 7th for St Andrew's and July 14th for Weybridge.

With all good wishes,



THE STATEMENT OF NATURE, FAITH AND ORDER OF THE URC

Our exploration of the Statement of Nature, Faith and Order of the URC continues.

We conduct our life together
According to the Basis of Union
In which we give expression to our faith
In forms which we believe contain
The essential elements of the Church's life,
Both catholic and reformed;
But we affirm our right and readiness,
If the need arises,
To change the Basis of Union
And to make new statements of faith
In ever new obedience to the Living Christ.

**Our crucified and risen Lord,
Who leads us in our faith
And brings it to perfection.**

The Basis of Union is our constitution. It sets out our core beliefs and how we're organised. In it you'll find sections about our purpose, our faith, (see the March Newsletter), our structure, our understanding of ministry and how that all works out in practice. There are various "schedules" which tell us what to do and say on certain occasions; for example, the ordination and induction of Elders and Ministers. If you'd like to read the Basis of Union you can easily do so on-line. We had a year-long course on it with weekly lectures and regular essays when I was at Congregational College!

The Basis of Union, however, says something about our understanding of the church - that it is catholic (universal – not Roman Catholic!) and reformed, ie grounded in the understanding so the Reformers (see note in February magazine as to whom we tend to regard in this light); but we also recognise that the Basis of Union is not a "forever fixed" document as, say the Westminster Confession and the Savoy Declaration is (June Newsletter). Our willingness to change the Basis of Union very much illustrates the hopes that were around when the URC was formed in 1972. You'll remember that in the February letter I gave some background information about the ecumenical hopes of the 1960s and '70s. The coming together of the Presbyterian Church of England and the Congregational Church of England and Wales was hoped to be the first of significant denominational unions. That entire hope and ethos is therefore what lies behind our readiness to change the Basis of Union and to make new statements of faith. That openness was made as we believed Christ was calling the church to reunion.

This is, perhaps, the opportunity to say that a significant issue for the URC today is that the Basis of Union was never intended to be a document which would stand for long. It did enough to bring PCE and CCEW together and the thought was that it would then be replaced in subsequent unions with other denominations. Obviously that has not happened, which does create some issues.

On the subject of making new statements of faith, however, I am reminded of a very passionate session of General Assembly at York in, I think, 1997. As I've mentioned in previous letters, the original URC documents were written in traditional language and over the years there have been changes made to bring them into inclusive language. The passionate debate in this particular Assembly concerned a version of our Statement of Faith which was in fully inclusive language and did not, for example, refer to God as Father. Arguments against were robustly made by those horrified by the gender-neutral language.

Arguments in favour were passionate made by those who found the gender-specific language in the existing statement profoundly unhelpful and negative. In the end, it was accepted by a significant majority because (a) it wasn't replacing the original statement, just offering an alternative if required, and (b) because it's so rarely used in church life that many didn't know the traditional language one even existed! What sticks in my mind from that evening, however, was that the spirit of dissent and independence was very much alive and kicking that night. Beliefs and views were being passionately held and discussed and, at the end, a number of those against requested that that dissent be formally recorded in the minutes. A line from an old hymn kept going through my mind that evening: "And in our hearts their spirit live that gained our liberty". (Cong Praise 516) On that occasion, probably more than any other, I was keenly aware of the dissenting line in which I stand. I found it invigorating.

The conclusion of this section, however, reminds us that at the end of the day, "Our crucified and risen Lord, ...leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection" which is a massively important thing to keep in mind.

Michael Hodgson

You may remember our Random Words game in the June issue. Did you try it? How do you think you did? You will find the answers on the next page and I thought it would be helpful to include the original game ("for ease of reference").



RANDOM WORDS

Any one bored enough to fancy of game of random hymn words? The rules are really very simple. Below is a list of random words, each of which are taken from different hymns. Which hymn though? They may, of course, appear in more than one. The first 14 are all taken from the version of that hymn in Rejoice and Sing.

(1) Glassy (2) Wayside (3) Landscape (4) Inextinguishable (5) Secretly (6) Vouchsafe (7) Dry-shod (8) Ineffable (9) Fiercest (10) Sloth (11) Hobgoblin (12) Lance (13) Moor (14) Commonwealth.

If they were too easy for you, here's a few which may be a bit more challenging. Some are from hymns not in Rejoice and Sing but which may be remembered from the past. Some are in R&S but I'm quoting from an older version of the hymn which R&S changed.

(15) Supernal (16) Wert (17) Raiment (18) Wormwood (19) Consubstantial (20) Quiver.



Random hymn words
- the answers to last month's brain-teaser

Last month (see previous page)

you were given a list of random words, all taken from hymns and invited/challenged to identify where they came from. Inevitably some appear in more than one hymn but here's what was in my mind.

- (1) Glassy R&S 34 - Holy, Holy, Holy - "Casting down their golden crowns around the **glassy** sea"
- (2) Wayside R&S 124 - We plough the fields and scatter - "He paints the **wayside** flower, he lights the evening star"
- (3) Landscape R&S 668 - There is a land of pure delight. - "Could we but stand where Moses stood and view the **landscape** o'er"
- (4) Inextinguishable R&S 433 - O thou who camest from above. - There let it for thy glory burn with **inextinguishable** blaze
- (5) Secretly R&S 103 - Praise to the holiest in the height - "And in the garden **secretly**, and on the cross on high"
- (6) Vouchsafe R&S 559 - Blessed City, heavenly Salem "Here **vouchsafe** to all they servants"
- (7) Dry-shod R&S 236 - Come, ye faithful, raise the strain "led them with their feet **dry-shod** through the Red Sea waters."
- (8) Ineffable R&S 47 O worship the King all glorious above - "O measureless might, **ineffable** love"
- (9) Fiercest R&S 209 Ride on! Ride on in majesty - "Thy last and **fiercest** strife is nigh"
- (10) Sloth R&S 378 - Awake, my soul and with the sun - "Shake off dull **sloth** and joyful rise to pay thy morning sacrifice."
- (11) Hobgoblin R&S 557 Who would true valour see - "**Hobgoblin** nor foul fiend can daunt his spirit"
- (12) Lance R&S 556 When a knight won his spurs - "with a shield on his arm and a **lance** in his hand."
- (13) Moor R&S 544 Lead kindly light "o'er **moor** and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till the night is gone"
- (14) Commonwealth R&S 603 Lord for the years your love has kept and guided - "For young and old, for **commonwealth** and nation"

Those not in "Rejoice and sing" or else where R&S has changed the text are:

- 15) Supernal - Unto us a boy is born, King of quires **supernal**
- 16) Wert - Holy Holy Holy - Who **wert**, and art, and evermore shalt be
- 17) Raiment - Ten thousand times ten thousand, In sparkling **raiment** bright, The armies of the ransomed saints throng up the steeps of light.
- 18) Wormwood All hail the power of Jesus' name - Sinners, whose love can ne'er forget the **wormwood** and the gall.
- 19) Consubstantial - Blessed city, heavenly Salem - **Consubstantial**, co-eternal, While unending ages run.
- 20) Quiver - Onward Christian Soldiers - "Hell's foundations **quiver** at the shout of praise"

GOD IS BIGGER THAN YOUR CHURCH BUILDING



Eddie Boon, Minister at Cornerstone, Hythe URC, interviews the Revd Clare Downing, Synod Moderator of the Wessex Synod of the United Reformed Church, to find out how things are going generally in the Wessex Synod and how life is at the moment in the wider URC.

We can get obsessed by our own local culture. Clare comments that there is variation between churches and sometimes in an individual church about how they are feeling about things. Some churches are physically as well as virtually busy and other to churches where on the surface you cannot see anything happening but the church the people some are struggling with isolation, many are worshipping virtually, others are finding other ways of connecting. Mostly things are going ok in our churches and people are making sure they are looking after each other and looking after those outside of the church too. Biggest challenge? Trying to think ahead. How to come out of it rather than how to deal with the situation on the spot. Helping people to reassess what it is that God wants of us that might not be the same as it was before. Reassessing where we put out energy and helping people to do that.

Eddie Boon asked Clare what would she say was the greatest joy she has experienced when in contact with people.

“Probably that people have realised that God is bigger than their church building. God is there when we meet virtually when we meet socially distanced in a garden and that we can do things slightly differently. We might miss these meetings together but it hasn’t stopped God.”

Clare, has been elected and appointed one of the two Moderators of General Assembly for two years from July, along with Peter Pay of Salisbury URC. There is a new General Secretary, John Bradbury. We ask for prayers for all of them as they take on their new roles.

You can see the whole interview - well worth a watch - by clicking on the link below. *Ed*

<https://youtu.be/nK-srx4eLlc?t=184>



GARDEN JOY

One good and positive thing about Lockdown has been having more time to enjoy the garden. Apart from the squirrel who keeps invading the bird food tray, sitting in the garden listening to the birds singing is a delight.

One night Eric and I were sitting in the garden enjoying a cup of tea at 10.30pm when a hedgehog suddenly appeared running across the lawn. I haven’t seen a hedgehog for years!

Everything in the garden is growing well including the tomatoes and runner beans well worth the effort.

Jean Rigden



FRIENDS REMEMBERED

Gordon Faultless

It is with great sadness that we learned of the death of Gordon Faultless, a much loved member of the Weybridge congregation. Gordon supported the church in a number of ways, not least from the organ bench for many years. At the time of writing, the funeral arrangements are still being planned but it is likely that due to the current restrictions Gordon's funeral will be a private service, with a Memorial Service to follow at Weybridge URC when this becomes feasible.

We send our love to Margaret and the family and to the Weybridge congregation as they mourn the death of a very special man. We remember them in our prayers.

Michael Hodgson



We Will Meet When the Danger Is Over

We will meet when the danger is over,
we will meet when the sad days are over;
we will meet sitting closely together
and be glad our tomorrow has come.

We will join to give thanks and sing gladly,
we will join to break bread and share wine;
and the peace that we pass to each other
will more than a casual sign.

So let's make with each other a promise
that when we've all come through is behind,
we will share what we missed and find meaning
in the things that once troubled our mind.

Until then may we always discover
faith and love to determine our way.
That's our hope and God's will and our calling
for our lives and for every new day.

John L Bell (C) Wild Goose Resource Group, The Iona Community

The Iona Community, founded in 1938 by George MacLeod, is an ecumenical Christian community of men and women from different walks of life and different traditions within Christianity. Among them are Presbyterians, Anglicans, Lutherans, Quakers, Roman Catholics and people of no denominational allegiance

LOCKDOWN LABOURS

“Faint heart never won fair maiden”- well that’s what they say and so, with that in mind, I decided to tackle a neglected job at the Manse - the garage. Built in the 1960s, the Manse garage could accommodate an 1100, or an Austin Maxi. or possibly even a Cortina very nicely. What it doesn’t accommodate is a contemporary Volkswagen Tiguan. When I first moved in I tried to put the car away with wing mirrors folded in, gingerly edging it through the narrow entrance, with the obstacle sensors having a “blue canary”! Quickly realising that even if I could get it in I’d not be able to get out of the car, I bowed to the obvious and reversed out.

Aristotle was a clever chap who knew what he was on about when he stated that, “Nature abhors a vacuum” – and so it is with the garage. Before leaving Wales, I downsized the contents of my garage considerably, getting rid of many treasures kept for decades because they might come in useful one day. Since they’d not, I disposed of them and have frequently wished I hadn’t as their dispatch proved to be hasty. I do consider it an assault on my masculinity having to go out and buy bits of timber instead of rummaging around in the garage and proudly unearthing the very thing, squirrelled away for years. Having arrived here with little to go in the garage, however, Aristotle’s postulation has been verified. Compounded by a bad habit inherited from my father of putting things just inside the door to get them out of the way until I could find a proper place for them, getting into the garage had become a gymnastic feat; not easy when the lockdown waistline has done a Mr Blobby. So, one drizzly Saturday afternoon a couple of weeks ago I sallied forth into the garage armed with determination and a mug of tea.

As suspected, the presenting issue was not insuperable and a good sweep out of the floor resulted in a dramatic improvement too. But what of the garage contents? To be fair, most things seemed to have justifiable retention credentials. One box, however, exuded an air of mystery. What treasure did it contain? Could it contain the thing I could sell, make my fortune with and retire to the South of France to live a life of leisure? Lifting it down and carefully opening it, with curiosity mounting, I peered in.

It was a box of now degrading, single use carrier bags from Presto’s Supermarket. Presto was in Bideford when I moved there in 1987 and changed to Safeway not long after. There were also a couple of “Texas” bags as well (remember “Texas Tom”?) Please don’t ask me how they came to be there because the peace of God is not the only thing that passes all understanding. Punishment swiftly came my way too as, tipping the bits into the bin before recycling the cardboard, a gust of wind turned the contents into confetti which adhered most effectively to the damp concrete of the drive.

Task completed and with fair maiden now considered won, I shut the garage door basking in an unaccustomed glow of virtue.

Just don’t mention “the L word” ... (Loft).

Michael Hodgson

“Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful.”

William Morris

STARTING OVER AGAIN

Like many businesses, Churches and Charities, Elmbridge Mencap, owing to Covid 19, had to close our doors and go into lockdown. As things start to ease, we are now looking at how we can gradually get started again. This is much harder than lockdown with all the risk assessments and health and safety issues.

My husband is working hard to make plans to reopen Burview Hall for all our special people. First he had to write a risk assessment. Then there was the buying of screens, signs, antibacterial sprays and dispensers, paper towels and more. We have had to put away cups and cutlery and purchase throwaway cups and teaspoons. We have had to lock away things that are difficult to clean and take down curtains. You think you have covered everything and then another problem pops in to your head. Instructions for the clean had to be written out and a quote obtained for a deep clean just in case we get a case of Covid 19. Social distancing is going to be a challenge for many of our members. As, like many others, we have had no revenue since we closed, three of our trustees, including me, have set up a fundraising committee to try and come up with new ideas for fundraising.

It is sad to see the Burview Hall empty and as so many of our members are vulnerable and in lockdown it is difficult to know when we will get back to what we love to do. I miss the people who use Burview Hall very much and am looking forward to seeing them all again but I will also admit that going out and about again for me will have its own challenges.

Jean Rigden

KEEPING UP WITH JAKE

The last baptism celebrated at St Andrew's was that of Jake Houlihan, on 3 June 2018. Since it is always a tonic to hear good news about our young people, I asked Shirley, as a proud Grandma, how Jake was getting on. Jake, who will be two and a half in August, loves playing the piano and taking Bing the rabbit for a walk in his shopping trolley. He is into books of his choosing, a favourite author being Julia Donaldson. His favourite colour is yellow and he is very good at finding things and following instructions. However, he has a mischievous streak and has twice locked Shirley and John out in the garden (to his obvious delight!) so they have to remember to remove the key from the door. Shirley says he shows empathy and consideration for others and is generally a joy to have around. He will be going to Nursery in July and is more than ready for it. Sounds as though you will go far, Jake!

If anyone has any happy news to share of their younger generation, please send it in!



Quality time with Grandma Shirley



Down time with sisters Tiffany and Sianna



Reading with John

ARTPEACE AND FRIENDS

A BIG THANK YOU to those readers who were touched by my last article and responded by donating to ArtPeace. This comprised of two ladies from St Andrew's, one from Scotland plus a whip round from Toller URC Kettering's elderly congregation despite self-isolation. Artpeace (left)



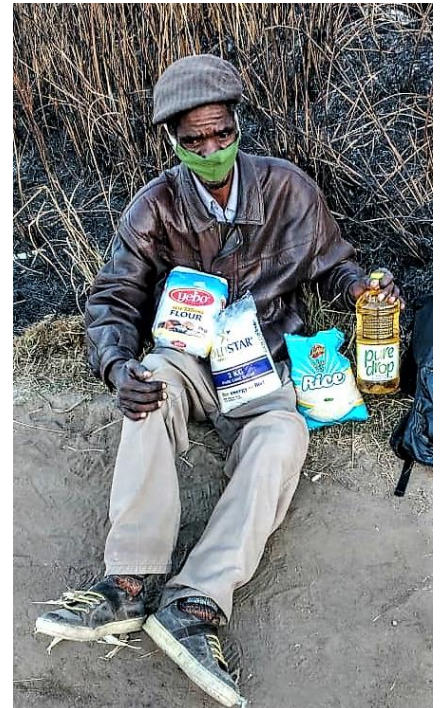
could not find the words to express their thanks. It is winter in Zimbabwe, so the nights and mornings are cold. Each day starts with the usual grinding struggle just to survive. Children make the long journey to fetch water from boreholes etc. Numerous children do not attend school due to the virus situation and have no books or guidelines from schools or teachers re what they should be doing 74 days into Covid19 lockdown. They know not of the online

learning revolution in other countries and are without computers or internet access. They struggle home with buckets of water - arms getting longer with every step. Then the struggle to find food begins with rampant inflation putting most basic foodstuffs beyond the reach of ordinary Zimbabweans. The Govt. are demolishing all roadside stalls where most poor people shop.

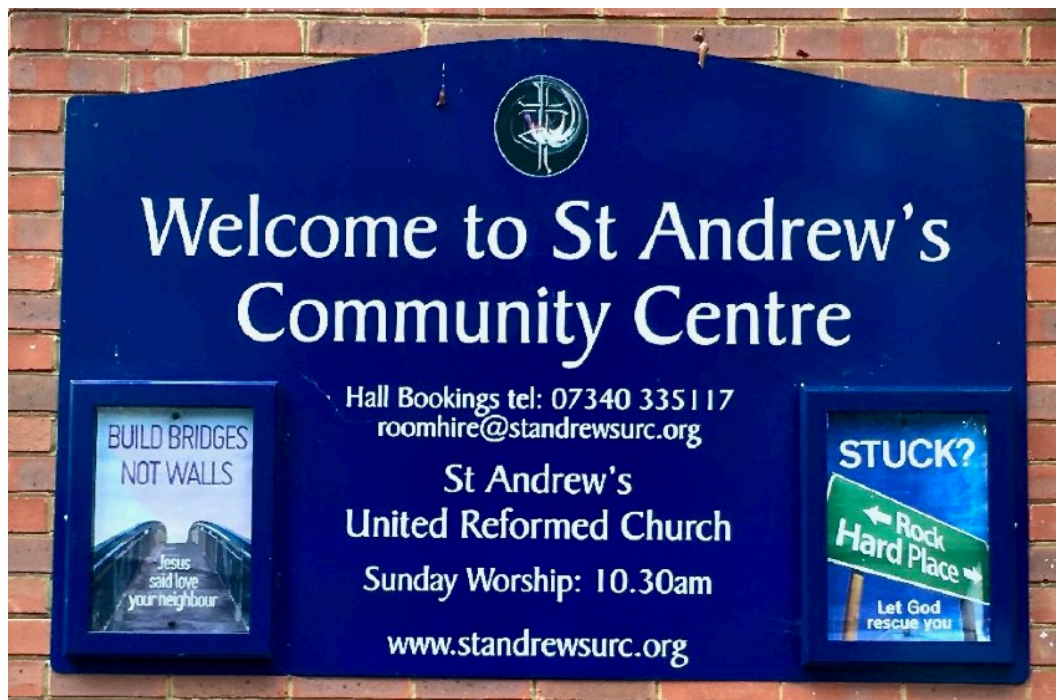


(photo left). However, our artist friends were able to buy some foodstuffs despite the inflated prices thanks to the kind folk mentioned above - see Fortune right. Fortune staggers from one crisis to another. His wife Norah's mother died recently in Bikita Masvingo Province - a 215-mile journey by bus which used up most of their donation. She had to move quickly as bodies are buried next day. Unfortunately, on the way home she was arrested by police as she did not have written approval to make the journey, but time was at a premium. A frightened Norah was

held in custody until a 30\$ fine was paid. **DILEMMA:** Fortune was faced with a problem *as all he had left in the world was 6 dollars*. If the fine was not paid within a few days Norah would be put into a quarantine compound full of people who had travelled across the borders of Botswana, South Africa and Mozambique. I understand these quarantine centres have inadequate facilities: people get beaten if they complain; bribes are taken to get test results and there are worrying rates of infection. Fortune hobbled the 5 miles on his crutch to Silveira House where Fr David kindly loaned him enough money to make the trip. I shall repay this amount from donations. I know many people struggle to make ends meet in the UK but their plight must pale into insignificance when compared to hundreds of thousands of people in Zimbabwe who get zero assistance from the State and have no jobs. This is only one little example of how our support is often the difference between life and death - the artists' words, not mine. Photo above right of Norah in custody.



Johnston Simpson



MINISTER

The Reverend Michael Hodgson
The Manse
3 Elgin Road
Weybridge
KT13 8SN

Tel: 01932 841382

Email: michael.mah@btinternet.com

CHURCH SECRETARY

Mrs Anna Crawford
23 Shaldon Way
Walton-on-Thames
KT12 3DJ

Tel: 01932 244466

Email: secretary@standrewsurc.org

Website: www.standrewsurc.org

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!

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