

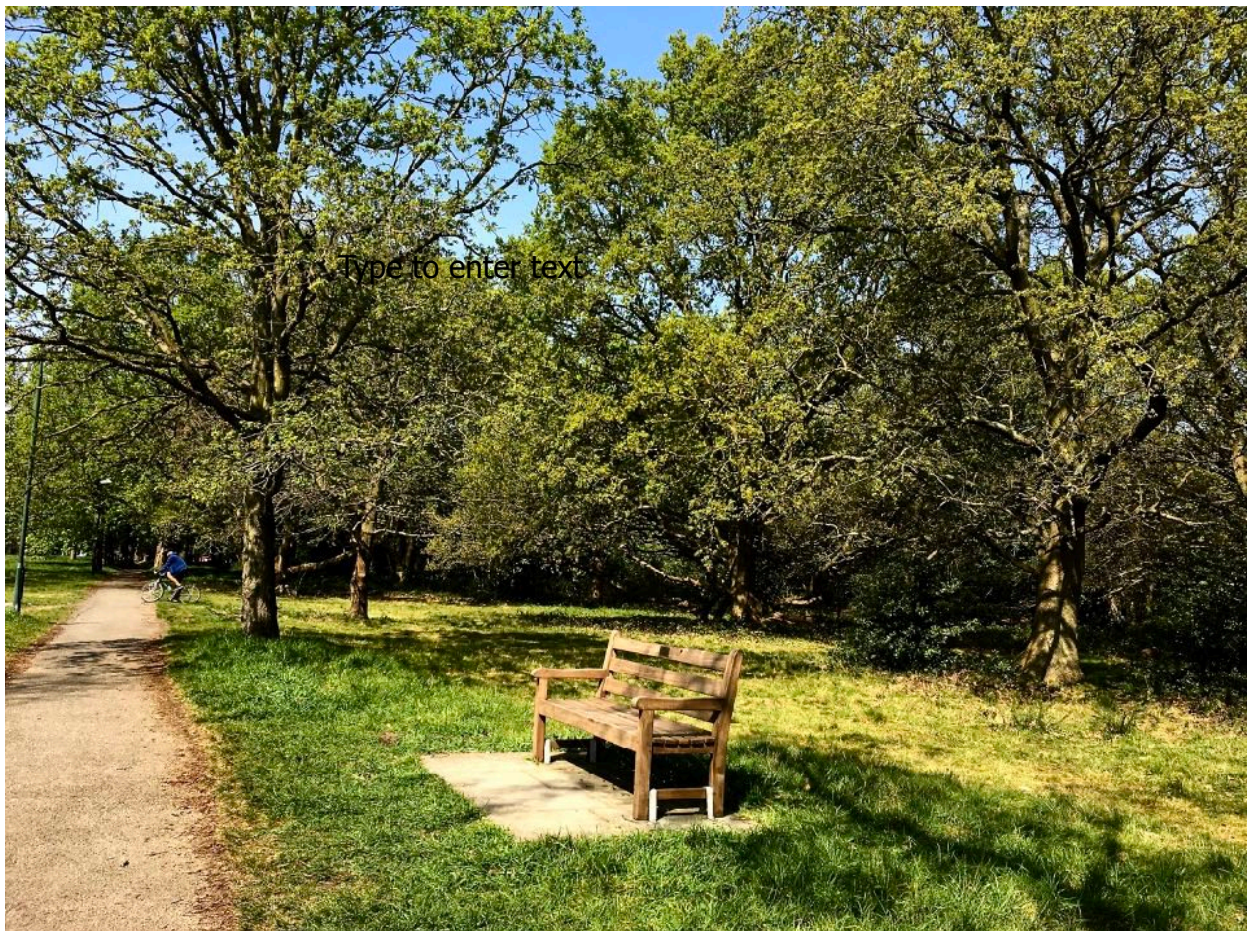


**ST ANDREW'S UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
WALTON-ON-THAMES**

NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2021

Volume 78 No 2



*"There is only one way to understand a lonely bench in a park: Sit on it; watch
whatever it is watching; listen whatever it is listening to!
Sit in spring, sit in winter, sit in summer!
To understand something deeply, you need to live its life!"*

Mehmet Murat

From The Manse

March 2021



Dear friends

The Prime Minister has now outlined the Government's policy for moving out of Lockdown, setting out various stages and when they might be reached, whilst stressing that no dates are finalised and that the Government will be "data-led" and not "date-led". At the moment, places of worship can be open provided they meet social distancing and COVID-secure criteria. However, the URC has very strongly discouraged in-person Sunday services whilst the virus is so active, new mutations are emerging where the effects of the vaccines are perhaps not as well established and whilst the resultant infection and death rates are so high. At the time of writing, the URC has so far made no change to that stance.

Since lockdown began, we've taken regular soundings from you as to your thoughts and feelings - what you've wanted to happen - what you would support and what you wouldn't. You probably won't be surprised to know that I'd like to do that again now because a lot has changed since our last "soundings". Vaccinations have been discovered for COVID and a vaccination programme has been rolled out with outstanding efficiency. Most people in our two congregations have now had at least one dose and some have had two. What difference does that make to your thinking?

Lockdown restrictions are going to begin being lifted soon - but very cautiously. Initially it's things in outdoor settings, with small numbers, which will be allowed again. That raises quite a demanding question for us. It may be legal for us to hold public services in church on a Sunday at the moment but when does that actually become a responsible and a desirable thing to do? We are all longing for the Sunday morning when both our church buildings are open once again – but when should that be? By the way, there is no word yet on when what's not allowed in worship is going to be relaxed, including singing hymns.

At the moment, the earliest that many indoor venues will be reopening is 17th May and within the URC there is some feeling that that's the appropriate time to think about resuming public worship inside church buildings because the physical situations are similar. Pentecost, the church's birthday, is the following week. Doubtless some will want to open for Easter though (4th April). The reasons for an Easter opening are obvious but it falls within the very first five week period when very little else will have been relaxed and before the effect of the first liftings can be known and analysed. Is that too soon?

In URC governance this is a matter for the Elders to decide but I know that they would not want to make any decisions without knowing what you think. As you know, the two churches and the two Elderships have worked closely together to get us through the pandemic and that's been appreciated by many. It seems to be logical to come out of lockdown together as well.

With regards to future online options, the current Zoom service will continue as it is until the churches are open again on a Sunday. After that, the intention is that a Sunday service direct from one of the pastorate churches will become the new Zoom service. Initially this will be the service from St Andrew's because Weybridge is not yet able to do this but we are looking into that. There's no intention to conclude the online worship though - quite the reverse. We want to move it on a bit and improve it. What's not clear at the moment is the extent to which our after-church Zoom chat will be needed once our churches are open again - or how we would do it.

So, what steer do you want to give us at this point? What are your thoughts? How are you feeling on the subject? When would you feel comfortable to return to the church buildings for service on a Sunday morning? Do tell us, please

With all good wishes,



CALENDAR FOR MARCH 2021

| | | |
|------------------------|------------------|---|
| Tuesday 2 March | 7.30 pm | Zoom St Andrew's Elders' Meeting |
| Sunday 7 March | 11.30 am | Zoom Worship led by the Minister |
| Tuesday 9 March | 7.30 pm | Zoom Weybridge Elders' Meeting (NB the first part may well be a Joint Elders' Meeting to discuss service arrangements) |
| Friday 12 March | 12.30 pm | Zoom People Who Lunch |
| Sunday 14 March | 11.30 am | Zoom Worship for Mothering Sunday led by the Minister |
| Wednesday 17 March | 10.00 - 10.30 am | Prayer and Share with Zoom |
| Sunday 21 March | 11.30 am | Zoom Worship for Passion Sunday led by the Minister |
| Sunday 28 March | 11.30 am | Zoom Worship for Palm Sunday led by the Minister |

A note on Sunday services: there will be no changes to the current arrangements until after a possible Joint Elders' Meeting on 9th March. At the time of writing we are awaiting fresh guidance from the URC in the light of the Government's recently announced plan for leaving Lockdown. We also need to take fresh soundings from you to discover what your views, feelings and thoughts are. Service details given here are therefore provisional at this point.

ELDERS' DEVOTIONS - FEBRUARY 2021

We are still in lockdown with a high level of infections and deaths. The only good news is the impressive progress of the Government's programme of vaccination.

I don't know about feelings in the meeting, but I still feel anxious about the situation when I watch the TV news with the worrying number of hospital patients and scenes of large numbers of people gathering giving the impression that many are not adhering to the concept of social distancing. It makes me wonder how long this situation will last. Let us hope and pray that the new Biden Administration in the United States will bring about changes in America and that the situation regarding climate change, immigration relaxation and relationships between countries the world over will start to improve.

In Isaiah 43, verses 1-2, God is encouraging us away from fear and anxiety and brings confidence, love and caring back to us. We need this as leaders in our fellowship. We pray for doctors, nurses, social workers and those in the medical profession, teachers, children and university students and parents of those who are vulnerable, those in government and especially the Prime Minister, and all who have to make difficult decisions on a daily basis.

Sue Groves

A PRAYER FROM THE URC HANDBOOK 2021

When there are tough decisions to be made

We are often faced with hard decisions,
decisions which impact not just our own lives
but the lives of people around us.

We are fearful, anxious, full of doubt.
Remind us that even when the way may be clouded
and the destination unclear,
the light of your love will shine through
The darkness will lift
and you will help us see the way again.

If we fall you will lift us up
when we waiver, you will steady our feet,
and when we face tough decisions
you will be there to lead the way.

Help us to face the challenges of life with courage
knowing that the strength and shield of God
will prevail and protect,
and your love will never leave us alone. Amen



FRIENDS REMEMBERED

Ronald George Knight MBE



Ron Knight was born in 1923, rather appropriately in Knights Hill, West Norwood. He was an only child, a keen stamp-collector and bright enough to get to a grammar school, where he did well. The 2nd World War intervened before he could embark on a career and as soon as he was old enough, he joined up. His application to bomber command aircrew was turned down, because of his eyesight and so he joined the Royal Marines and was packed off to Inveraray for training. So began the first of three life-changing links with Scotland!

Completing his basic training in the Scottish hills, he qualified as a signaller - including motorcycle despatch riding, knowing all the naval flags, not just radio, morse and semaphore, and was promoted 2nd Lieutenant, responsible for signals training, and was posted to 42 Commando Unit in Portsmouth. From there he saw service in North Africa, Sicily and Italy. When the allies invaded the south of France, he was on board ship with all the top brass to witness the landings.

After the War, and still a dashing young Marines officer, complete with dog and open-top sports car, he met and married Jane. David arrived a few years later - on the very same day that Ron was initiated as a freemason. After David, however, they were unable to have more children themselves and decided to adopt. So, to the second Scottish life-changing event when they were first introduced to baby Elizabeth, freshly imported from Aberdeen via the overnight sleeper train, at Kings Cross station, early one Sunday morning.

After being demobbed, Ron worked for Lloyds Bank, mostly in central London branches and he retired from the role of Securities Manager at a time when all stocks and shares transactions involved pen, paper and a slavish commitment to accuracy. With a strong sense of right and wrong, Ron was a stickler for the rules - a perfectionist, quite reserved and could be a bit stubborn but he was also generous and supportive, devoted to his children, his grandchildren and his great-grandchildren.

Sadly, Ron's first marriage ended when Ron was in his early 60s but he bounced back and in his own quiet way signed up with a dating agency. He very quickly hit upon his third Scottish life-changing event: he met Tess... and the rest is history. They married and enjoyed 30-odd years together, during which time they cruised the world - travelling from the Arctic Circle to Australia and New Zealand, and much in-between.

After retirement from Lloyds, Ron worked for several years as personal assistant to the Chair of the WRVS, for which he was awarded the MBE. It's a standing joke that he got the MBE 'for services to women', and it was his proudest ever moment when he received the award from HM the Queen. Not one to be completely idle, when that WRVS role ended, he joined Tess as a volunteer for the Princess Alice Hospice in Esher. Ron was a volunteer driver for five years. When latterly Tess started to have health issues, Ron was her devoted carer - the image of him determinedly insisting on pushing her wheelchair remains with us all and their almost daily 'brunches' at Squires garden centre were an outing and a social activity, as much as a pragmatic way of saving on shopping, cooking and the washing-up!

Ron and Tess stayed in their own home, in Weybridge, for as long as they could, but there came a point when they both needed a more supported and supportive setting. With Ron as a lifelong freemason, they moved into the RMBI care home at Shannon Court two and a half years ago. Sadly, Tess passed away just over a year ago, leaving Ron alone. At 97 he wanted, and was ready, to join her. On the eve of his 98th birthday Covid allowed him to do so - in his sleep, in his own bed.

Extracted from the tribute given at Ron's funeral by his grand-daughter, Carin

LENT 2021

Our friend, Michael Hopkins, shares some thoughts on Lent 2021



I think this is the point where I am supposed to talk about Lent being a penitential time, and time for giving things up, but that seems patent nonsense in 2021. In the last eleven months we have given up more than we ever wished for longer than we would have wished. And we have lost some people and some occasions permanently. In a moment of national and community grief it would be crass and churlish to suggest that now is a moment for giving up and for penitence.

As a Nonconformist, Ash Wednesday didn't feature in my upbringing much – that was something Roman Catholics and Anglicans did. Only really in the last thirty years has it begun to feature at all, and then it hasn't engaged many of us. Unfortunately for everyone, the present focus of Lent is boiled down to a singular preoccupation, which is reflected in the question on everyone's lips in the season of Lent: "What are you giving up for Lent?"

At the best of times - and 2021 is far from the best of times - I've always felt that boiling down a spiritual season to giving up chocolate or booze is the best example there is of totally missing the point. It doesn't adequately embrace the nature and meaning of Lent, and as is typical in the highly individualistic culture of 21st century Britain, it shifts the focus of Lent to a "me and God" experience based on what I am doing for God.

What I mean is that we run the risk of engaging with Lent by saying: "I can suffer like Jesus by giving up chocolate or Facebook or coffee so I can be more like Jesus!" No self-deprivation will place us in the same universe with the experience of Jesus, much less in the same room with Jesus. The ultimate irony is that our spiritual ancestors of the Protestant Reformation repudiated the practices of the time precisely because such practices focused on personal self-justification and not on the grace of God. Nothing is supposed to be about us working to ensure our well-being or salvation with God. If you think you need to give up

chocolate or Facebook or booze or coffee, by all means give them up, but don't do it for forty days and then take them up again, thinking it will somehow earn God's pleasure.

You might, then, be thinking I'm going to urge you to take something up instead. It is often said that taking something up is more positive, and generally a Very Good Thing. On one level it does seem better, but it's really basically the same as giving something up – if you do well it leads to pride, and if you don't it leads to guilt, and neither of those is terribly helpful. We cannot earn God's favour by taking something up. If you want to take up some good thing, by all means do so, but don't do it just for forty days, and don't do it just because you think you'll achieve some brownie points. Furthermore, in 2021 when we have already lost so much, permanently or temporarily, it seems just as much of an insult to your intelligence to suggest taking up some activity for forty days will help.

What, then, are we to make of Lent? As we always do, we go back to the Bible and look for God speaking to us. In today's reading Jesus makes time to encounter God, to engage with God, and to know that he loved by his heavenly Father. How can we use Lent to encounter God, engage with God, and know that we are loved by God in 2021? This Way! It's called love yourself through Lent, and it's a suggestion of different ways to care for yourself each day.

By Lent 2021 many of us are bruised and fragile, however much we may admit that or not, God does not want us to make that worse, I'm sure that God wants us to rediscover that God is grace and mercy, and God is love, holding us in the palm of his hand. Lent is nothing more, and nothing less.

Michael Hopkins (used with his consent)

FLOWER POWER

The flowers in the gardens of both of our churches are constantly giving pleasure as has been witnessed by passers by. Thank to all those who tend our gardens and help to remind us of the wonders of the changing seasons and how much joy they have brought to our flagging spirits over the past months. *Ed*



WOMEN'S WORLD DAY OF PRAYER 2021 - VANUATU



Sadly, the Committee from the various churches in Walton who organise the World Day of Prayer services have decided to **cancel** the service due to take place in St Andrew's URC on 5th March. We felt we did not have the expertise to organise a Zoom or streamed service and it would be too difficult to get various volunteers from the churches and have rehearsals and even advertise the service Walton wide.
<https://www.wwdp.org.uk/>

I am distributing the service booklet to the churches in Walton and there is a service on the Website which people can watch at home. I did a virtual training day last year and became acquainted with Vanuatu - a country I didn't know about before, but now have heard of and believe it scores low on 'Pointless'. *Anne Fitzgerald*

"On the other side of the world in the South Pacific, 2000 miles east of Australia, lies an archipelago of 80 islands called Vanuatu. With black and white sandy beaches, beautiful coral reefs, tropical coloured fish, forests full of lovely birds, abundant flora and fauna, and spectacular cascades these are wonderful islands.

To the Ni-Vanuatu, the people of Vanuatu, land is very important. It is not viewed as a thing to be owned, but as vital to the existence of humans as a mother is to a child. The traditional Vanuatu family took care of each other and was self-sustaining, and respect was shown for the environment. Modern technology is changing life – although the internet is scarcely available in the outer islands, mobile phones are almost universal. The islands, which vary greatly in songs, dances and customs, are proud of their cultural identity.

Health of women and children are key national priorities of the government. **Malnutrition** is a growing problem, accounting for most of the deaths in children under 5. Malnutrition has been aggravated by the introduction of processed, western foods. **Violence**, physical and/or sexual, affects approximately 60% of women and girls. Currently 83% of the population is Christian."

Coconut prayer

Praying while looking at a coconut from that life giving tree.

Its water refreshes,

Lord refresh us in your love.

Its inner flesh feeds,

Lord feeds us in your love.

Its oil is nourishing,

Lord nourish us in your love.

Its coir from the shell can be woven,

Lord wrap us around in your love.

Its leaves and trunk can build good houses,

Lord build in us the knowledge of your love.

So, we here on earth can be witness to your Love,

Given to us through your life-giving tree, the cross.

Amen. *(Christine Miles)*

Information above from the WWDP website



! CHURCH DIRECTORY AMENDMENT !

Please note that address for **Marigold Crampton** should read
Flat 24 Meadow House and that the postcode is **KT12 1PG**

WALKING IN LOCKDOWN - SUNBURY

Recently a friend and I took a delightful walk in Sunbury. Had the weather been drier in the preceding days the walk would have been even more pleasant but, despite the muddy public paths, we still enjoyed our outing.

We met up in the Orchard Meadow car park which can be found on The Avenue (be warned that it is a paid parking space). We left the car park and walked along a path on the left of the brick wall and turning right we entered Sunbury Park. Walking along the perimeter of the park we finally entered Green Street and left the park at Sunbury car park.

Turning right out of the car park, we crossed the road, walking next to the shops. No chance of any retail therapy as, sadly, they were closed. We turned left immediately after the shops to go down School Walk, a public foot path and then straight down the rather muddy path, passing the cemetery and golf course. This footpath has a lovely rural feel to it. Once we got to the road we carried on straight ahead, looking for the Shepperton Baptist Church. This turned out to be a decidedly non-churchy building without a steeple but we managed to spot it on the right. We followed the road for a little while until we came to an open space on our left. Here we crossed the grass and entered Ministerley Avenue.

We followed this road to the right and reached the main road where we found ourselves almost opposite the lovely Squires Garden Centre. How sad that we couldn't go in and sit down for a good old natter over a cuppa! On we went, along the paved sidewalk of Halliford Road, passing Vicarage Farm, which is quite extensive. We finally came to the bottom of the road where we turned left onto Fordbridge Road. We continued past the mini roundabout and walked past the well known Flower Pot pub on our left.

Walking parallel to the river, we passed the parish church of St Mary and eventually came to the Walled Garden. This historic walled garden in Sunbury Park - it has been described as a 'hidden gem' and a 'secret garden' - was built in the early part of the 18th Century. Spelthorne Council embarked on a restoration project of the two acre garden, starting in the autumn of 1985. Trees, shrubs and climbers are on the ancient walls, up to 8 to 10 feet high in places. Once more we bemoaned the fact that the tea room in the garden grounds was closed as they serve a lovely cuppa but best of all, their cakes and tarts are really delicious. We made a mental note to return later in the year to be able to enjoy the summer flowers and, hopefully, when the tea room is open once more. In fact, the Orchard Meadow car park can be accessed via the Walled Garden.



© Erik Houlihan-Jong

We passed an open space on the left which is Orchard Meadow and, turning immediately left to join the public footpath, we walked back to the car park. We could also have walked across the Meadow to the car park. This walk is just short of three miles but for an even shorter but still pleasant outing, you could go to the end of the School Walk and then turn around and come back. I found it useful to have the Start Point in my GPS. It is TW16 5HY.

This link gives more information and might be useful: <https://www.visitsurrey.com/downloads/Sunbury%20Walled%20Garden%20Walk.pdf>

I hope this will tempt you to try this walk - or at least part of it.

Maira de Kok

ARTPEACE AND FRIENDS

A SERVICE WITH A DIFFERENCE: Since lockdown, St Andrew's URC's Zoom service has attracted viewers from the US, Australia, Norway and Scotland but Sunday was a little different as our friends from Zimbabwe joined our Communion service with, as usual, our sister church Weybridge URC. Like us, Artpeace have been unable to attend their various churches but there the similarity ends as they have no Wi-Fi, no Zoom facilities and no access to YouTube or a PC. I tentatively asked whether they would like to join our service and was bowled over with the response. We had a truly ecumenical service in the making. Then reality set in as I knew only too well the limitations of their old mobiles used to communicate daily with me via WhatsApp. To make matters worse, their network has been disastrous recently! Some of their homes have no mains electricity so even charging a mobile can pose a problem. For example, see photo on left: Artist Fortune connects a solar panel to some contraption hooked to his mobile but it works albeit he quickly runs out of juice (charge) as he calls it!



Word got round the artists' extended families and friends so there was no going back which would have caused much disappointment. Michael our Minister involved our friends as best as he could realising that our service was possibly very different to what they were accustomed. It consisted of our greetings, a Bible reading, prayers and a 'Thought for the Day'. So the big day dawned – imagine the scene with groups of artists outnumbered by lots of excited children gathered in Tafara and Mabvuku - high density suburbs near Harare and a nearby displacement camp. Most groups had bread and water ready: some children took part in the Communion.

I started taking short video clips of the service but soon got into a tangle trying to be too clever and found the artists had difficulty opening them so quickly reverted to audio clips. Fortunately

their Network behaved itself on the day so I was soon receiving messages of appreciation which I shared with the congregation via



our Zoom chat line. Photos arrived later. Above left: Artist Lizeni with her family and right: Artists Mike and Muk enjoying feeling part of the service.

SOME COMMENTS FROM THE ARTISTS:

Ignatius: 'We give many thanks to St. Andrews - it was a blessed Sunday'.

Enock: 'Yes very audible and well-presented powerful messages. So important and informative words of Jesus Christ's deeds for us 🙏 Am here with my family hearing the biblical messages



knowing that Jesus Christ died for our sins. What a powerful sermon we heard in his mighty name - we thank St. Andrew's congregation - may the Almighty lead, touch, guide whatever you do great loving and caring people 🙏🙏🙏

Fortune: 'Audios went well, and we enjoyed the whole process - God bless. Thanks to Minister and St Andrews congregation. Children are so thankful for the words - it reminds them to keep on praying to our Father God who sent his only Son Jesus to die for our sins. Children very happy to see short live videos of communion service very interesting to them. Everyone has been touched by the service - interesting especially to the children who are all enjoying the almost live show'.

Shingi: 'Thanks for voice messages - we heard the congregation- sharing blood of Jesus and body of Christ, thanks for inspiring us to keep on praying to Our Lord. Nice video clips after service and a good message from St Andrews. Bless 🙏🙏🙏



Lizeni: 'Thank you very much for the service St Andrews'.

Mike: 'Thank you St Andrews URC. We have partaken of the mass out here. We love all of you wonderful people emulating the work of Jesus Christ. We feel inspired this side and part of something bigger than our small country. One love! Thank you, we are blessed'.

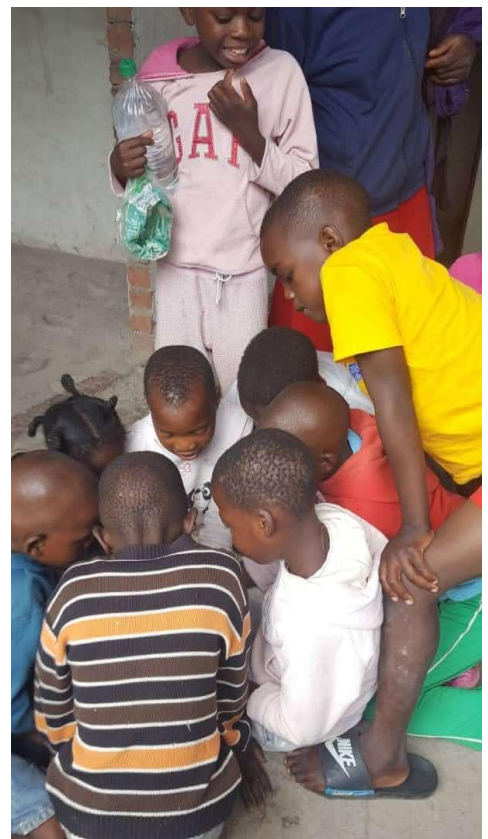
Love more: 'God bless you J for bringing the life of Christ to us. I saw Coster last week who could not attend today as he

was away mourning the death of his brother's wife'.

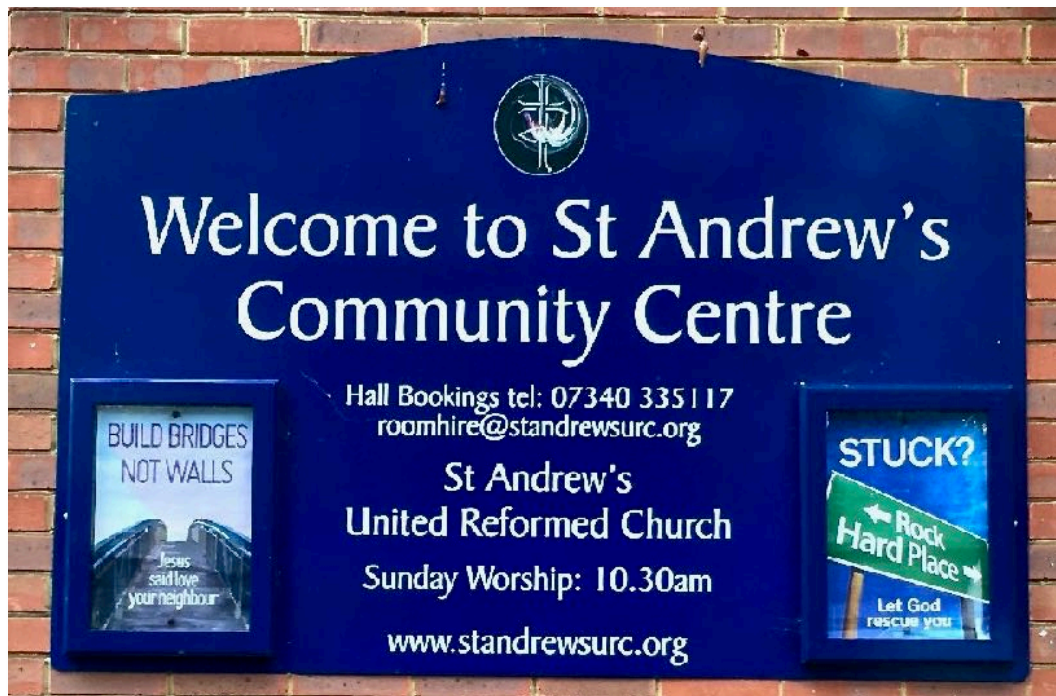


Photos above and right - more children easily doubling the size of our normal congregation. After all the excitement, it was back to the daily grind for the artists, their friends and extended families trying to grind a living out of abject

poverty. The lack of decent mobiles is proving a big problem - without them we simply could not continue this project - any support appreciated. Finally, I would like to thank all those who give generously. Shalone (above) was thrilled with the second hand dress her mum bought with part of one donation.



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

We are at present holding services every Sunday with Zoom at 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.**

I Peter 4 vv 8-10