



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



NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2021

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Autumn at Wisley Gardens

*For each new morning with its light
For rest and shelter of the night
For health and food, for love and friends
For everything thy goodness sends*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

September 2021



Dear friends

The end of July saw me doing something I'm not normally given to. I went on a retreat on Lindisfarne, following a pattern prepared in discussion with Ray Stanyon, our Training and Development Officer, and staying in a holiday cottage in the centre of the village.

There are retreat houses on the island but I wondered if they might be a bit too holy for me. I think that the last retreat I went on was my pre-ordination retreat in 1987! Originally it was booked to be the conclusion of my sabbatical last year but I couldn't legally go then and so was able to move the booking forward a year. I therefore went this year as part of my "in service training" programme, specifically to pray and to think about worship.



A round trip of almost 800 miles is a rather longer drive than I'm normally prepared to do these days but going by train wasn't really feasible. Thankfully, once I arrived I never moved the car from the day I arrived until the day I left. Actually, thinking about it, the journey going didn't seem so bad, what with the excitement of the retreat ahead of me. Coming back though was a dreary drag and I was pleased when I finally drove back into Elgin Road. The retreat itself, however, was an incredible experience so I just have to put all that driving into context..

With all that we've been through in the last 18 months, and with all that we've learnt during the Covid pandemic as well, I desperately needed some time to think about where we are and how might it all impact on worship both now and in the future. And then what about Zoom worship? We're going to be what's known as a hybrid church with people joining and worshipping with us online as well as in our buildings so some big questions have been going round in my mind which I really did need to start getting

my brain around. I did also wonder if my "style" was a bit dated now. My retreat gave me the opportunity and turned out to be an unforgettable and most fulfilling week. To have time to stop, to think and to pray about it all was both invigorating and necessary.

My Bible study focussed on the Old Testament books of Ezra and Nehemiah. They tell the story of the Jews returning to Jerusalem after the exile. Cyrus' defeated the Babylonians and, in 538 BCE, issued a decree allowing the Jews to return. What insights might that give us as we return to church from our Exile? More of that anon because I did get some ideas

The parish church, possibly recognising that some people staying on the island may be on retreat, has an evening prayer service each weekday at 5.00pm. I attended them as a devotional discipline, rather enjoying being led, rather than being the leader. I also went there on the Sunday for Communion. The set Gospel reading at that service was the account of the feeding of the 5,000 and I was struck by the simple fact that the people needed feeding. The disciples suggested to Jesus that he sent the crowd away so that they could get food and Jesus effectively told the disciples, "You feed them"! They said that they couldn't but Jesus enabled them to feed the crowd until all were satisfied. I came away thinking anew that people still need feeding and we can't send them away to feed themselves, any more that Jesus would allow that great crowd to be sent away to fend for themselves.



St Aidan in the Priory grounds



The posts marking the old pilgrims' crossing

Quite often I walked down to watch the tide coming in and covering the causeway. Seeing the road under water was great and I have to say that I much preferred the island then - when it was quiet and cut off from the mainland. Every time I left my cottage's front door I knew immediately what state the tide was in because the island cut off from the

mainland has a totally different atmosphere. About an hour before the causeway became unsafe to cross, there would be a queue of cars driving away before people got stuck there. I couldn't help but wonder if they had any idea what they were missing and that too made me think about the church. So many have left. So many have drifted away - but I still think that they are missing out on something wonderful. I think of many special experiences I've been blessed with in church over the years. How do we share that? The queue of people anxious to leave the island when I knew that it was about to become a place of calm and tranquillity raised all sorts of questions in my mind.



The road with the tide in, cutting the island off

No reflection of time on Lindisfarne could ever be complete without mention of Cuthbert's Isle, accessible on foot whilst the tide is at its lowest. So small, so simple, with the ruins of a chapel and a wooden cross. Sitting on the isle and watching the seals in the water was great and the sound of the seal colonies "singing" is one which I'll never forget.

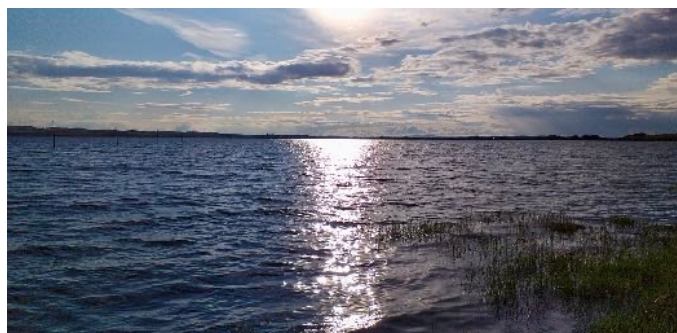


St Cuthbert's Isle with the tide in



Where I used to sit in contemplation to watch the tide coming in

By the time the churches came out of lockdown and both our buildings reopened at the end of May I will admit that I was exhausted. Taking quite a bit of annual leave as one block allowed me to rest and recover physically. Lindisfarne has done a lot to refresh me spiritually. I left the island with regret - but I also felt that I was leaving it ready to return to my "day job", energised and enthusiastic. My thanks to those in the pastorate who took on additional responsibilities to allow me to do it. Truly I am tremendously grateful. Lindisfarne is a place I'll never forget.



Phil Lad

Our Chair, Paula Walsh, receiving a cheque from the Mayor, Mary Sheldon. Mary kindly chose Elmbridge Mencap for the charity to support in her year as Mayor of Elmbridge although, unfortunately, she was hampered by the Covid-19 pandemic. However, despite that we have done well and the remarkable amount of £22,722.21 raised is going towards our planned Sensory Garden at Burview Hall.

Jean Rigden



We are back at all our clubs at Elmbridge Mencap. Everyone was so happy to be back seeing all their friends. We have taken on the running of another club for adults with Learning disabilities called One to One. Everyone is so good at mask wearing and social distancing - they are amazing!

We are hoping to hold our Christmas Fair in November: this will be our first fundraising event for nearly two years. Times have been hard for everyone but now it's onwards and upwards.

Jean Rigden

Anna and Alex practising social distancing



Watching England v Denmark on the Big Screen



Youth Club members

SERVICES AND OTHER KEY DATES SEPTEMBER 2021




All our services are also accessible on Zoom



Please note that People Who Lunch has had to be cancelled in September.
Normal service will be resumed on Friday 8 October! Save the Date!

It has been decided that Weybridge URC will no longer be open for private prayer on Wednesday mornings as there has been no recent demand for it.

Anyone who would like to use Weybridge URC for private prayer in the future should contact the minister who will be happy to facilitate it for them.

Sunday 5 September	10.30 am	Morning Worship taken by the Minister. This will be followed by the Quarterly Church Meeting.
Tuesday 7 September	7.30 pm	St Andrew's Elders' Meeting - Hersham Room
Sunday 12 September	10.30 am	Morning Worship taken by the Revd Derek Wensley
 Sunday 19 September (Harvest)	10.30 am	Morning Worship taken by the Minister
Sunday 26 September	10.30 am	Morning Worship taken by Mrs Anna Crawford

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MARLOW'S GREAT CHRISTIAN AID PSALMATHON

Christ Church URC in Marlow has for many years organised support for Christian Aid Week from the churches in the town. Traditionally, the mainstay of the effort has been the house-to-house envelope collection but of course that hasn't been possible for the past two years. Last year, an online appeal surpassed expectations, but what to do in 2021? The answer was multiple initiatives including an envelope drop (with return points at various local retailers), an outdoor cake sale and, again, a simple online fundraising site. But the big event of the week was Marlow's online Psalmathon which brought together 75 readers (from as far afield as South Wales, Birmingham and Peterborough) to read through the book of Psalms in an afternoon. The Zoom call was hosted from Christ Church URC. Participants were encouraged to get themselves sponsored for Christian Aid and the result, including Gift Aid was an amazing £6,740. In total, Marlow's fundraising for Christian Aid week reached £14,641 - some £5,000 more than last year which itself was up on pre-pandemic results. And that doesn't include the personal fundraising of Revd David Downing, whose 300,000 steps fitness challenge raised another £920.

Christ Church would like to thank Revd Clare Downing, who was the first of our readers on the day, and others from the Synod who got involved in the Psalmathon either as readers or sponsors.
Well done everyone!



A LITTLE LOOKING AHEAD

With both our buildings now open and with weekly Sunday services restored in both churches we now look to pick up the pace a little as autumn approaches. A number of things are happening so let me take this opportunity to look ahead a bit.

The first thing to say is that both St Andrew's and Weybridge **Elders** will be holding their September meetings "in person", rather than online. These will be the first ones at either church since Lockdown began last year and it will be nice to be together in this way. I suspect that for both churches we may be about to move to a pattern of in-person meetings in the summer months and online meetings in the winter to save coming out on cold, dark winter evenings.

Church Meetings will be held as well. 5th September is the date for St Andrew's and this will be a normal meeting. 26th September is the date for Weybridge URC and it will be the AGM, postponed from July when we had insufficient numbers attending to hold it. This will also include the election of Elders, a little earlier than normal because Weybridge Elders are currently becoming a bit of an endangered species.

Harvest Festival will also be held in both churches – 19th September at St Andrew's and 10th October at Weybridge. At the time of writing, it's not certain if the Weybridge service will be a Parade one or not. I still need to talk to the leaders of the uniformed organisations about that. Do put the dates in your diaries!

"**After church coffee**" will be starting again soon with a few adjustments to the arrangements, for example we now need to use wrapped biscuits, not loose; those serving will be dealing with the milk too because we can't have lots of people touching a milk jug handle - little things like that which are really just common sense at the moment when you think about it. To be honest, a number of the little changes will actually probably make some things rather better as well, for example, this is the end of slightly-soft "multi-flavoured" biscuits coming out of the tin week after week!

One thing we do have to have a bit of think about is the **Zoom service**. Fear not - it will still run! There is no intention to end the Zoom service but with a Tech team of six and with two people being needed to run the sound system/Zoom output each time, it is quite a big ask of them. So, there's just a discussion still to be had about how best to deal with the practicalities and about what we can offer long-term.

I'm starting to pick up on **pastoral visiting** again so don't be surprised if you get a phone call from me to arrange a time. Some of you already have. I'm being a little cautious, though, because I don't want to become a "super-spreader" but I am so happy to be able to pick up this aspect of the role because, as you know, it's something I really enjoy. One thing that will come to an end for the time being, however, is Weybridge URC being open for private prayer on a Wednesday. Circumstances have changed and we are now frequently in the position of having two stewards on duty but no one coming to use the church for private prayer. As this really doesn't seem the best use of resources we are going to finish it at the end of August but if anyone would like to go into either church for a time of private prayer after that, do please give me a ring. I will happy facilitate that for you.

So, that's a bit of looking ahead. Things are moving forward and the pace is now picking up a bit.

Michael Hodgson

DOUBTFUL COMPLIMENT *(from Holy Wit selected by the Revd James A Simpson)*

The late Dr Alexander Findlay, who was a distinguished New Testament scholar, went on one occasion to preach at a church, the main door of which was reached by climbing a flight of steps. That morning, at the bottom of the steps there was an elderly lady. With characteristic courtesy, Dr Findlay offered his arm. Together they slowly ascended the steps. When they finally reached the door the old lady turned to her escort and asked, "Do you happen to know who is preaching this morning?" "Dr Alexander Findlay" was the reply. "Oh, said the old lady, 'would you mind helping me down the steps again?'"

CHURCH FAMILY NEWS AND VIEWS



60th WEDDING ANNIVERSARY



Congratulations and love from us all to Tricia and Geoff Coaker who celebrate their Diamond Wedding Anniversary on 2 September

So here we all are for cousin Kate's Wedding on 2nd July which took place at Healds Hall in Liversedge near Wakefield, West Yorkshire. Had a lovely time meeting up with family and friends we had not seen for a long time.

It's been a while since we had a family photo and we do look good in our outfits. Lucky with the weather as well, as it threw it down the following day!

The date will be easy to remember as it's the same date for Mum and Dad's Wedding Anniversary!

Hilary Netherwood



to Rachel Woods (granddaughter of Roy Bones) who has graduated from the University of Portsmouth with a First Class Honours BSc in Psychology. She has also been awarded two University Prizes, one for her research project and project interview and another for her work during her placement year. Recently she has accepted employment as a Research Officer for the Office for National Statistics. For the time being she is hanging up her football boots and athletics spikes.



Sophia Swanson writes from Houston, Texas

The 4th of July in the US is often celebrated with plenty of fireworks, barbecues, parades, baseball games, family reunions and picnics. In our neighborhood, we have the annual golf cart parade with just over 100 carts participating this year.

The carts are decorated for the 4th of July and are patriotic. Red, white and blue are the theme colors everywhere. It is a day that we celebrate our independence from Britain in 1776.

WORTH WATCHING! Link - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p062lmkz/p062lhxs> One of the best programmes I have recently seen via the BBC iPlayer recommended by a friend, is Lachlan Goudie's *'Painting the Holy Land.'* He said, quote: 'I don't think there has been a time when I didn't know what Jesus looked like. Long hair, beard and moustache, often blond and blue eyed – right? Well, on a recent trip to the Holy Land to form a two-part Easter special for BBC One, I didn't meet many of this type of face.



The European artists who first painted Jesus's portrait had no idea what a Middle Eastern

carpenter's son would look like, but they did know what gods looked like – classical gods such as Zeus and Poseiden. Those were the first faces that became a template for the Christian Messiah an image that has endured, whether on canvas, film or miraculously burnt onto pieces of toast.' Lachlan treats this



subject with the dynamism and vibrancy of contemporary impressionism, using block colour and loose strokes to evoke the city as a living organism. For those who have become dismayed by our seeming ever- shrinking congregation, this programme will surely lift the spirits. It shows Christianity is thriving outside our four little walls in other parts of the world. I see this in the faces of our Artpeace friends despite their unimaginable

problems. You do not have to be a lover of art to enjoy this programme as the people Lachlan meets and the places he paints are inspiring. His enthusiasm is infectious!

Johnston Simpson





FRIENDS REMEMBERED



Barbara Jean Rodgers

Barbara lived in Walton all her life. Walton has changed a lot over the years and I know that her encyclopaedic knowledge of old Walton is just one thing I shall miss being able to consult her about. She had an older sister of course, Patricia, and they lived in The Chestnuts. Barbara went to Danesfield Prep and then on to Guildford High School where, incidentally, her headmistress had been her mother's house-mistress when she had been at school. After school, Barbara went into clerical work, becoming a PA at Esso, a job she enjoyed and which suited her well and where she worked for 27 years. During that time, she met and made some lovely friends, some of whom are here today.

When preparing for Mike's funeral, I asked Barbara how they met and she said, "Oh, that's a bit complicated - just say that we met at a housewarming party." So I'll stick to that. They courted and were married here at St Andrew's on 23rd June, 1973. Initially, they set up home in Rydens Avenue, but watched the houses in Wynton Grove being built and thought that they'd like to move there. Independently, they went into the agents to get the details on the same house which they bought and where they spent many years until Mike had to move into care and Barbara decided to join him. They were an incredibly close couple and it's perhaps fitting that in the end both sets of ashes were buried together, in the same short service, just a couple of weeks ago. It wasn't intended to be that way but somehow it felt so right.

This church has always been a big part of Barbara's life. She was baptised at St Andrew's on 10th February, 1945 and formally came into membership in May 1961, following the Presbyterian custom of coming into Membership on Whitsun, so this year marks the 60th anniversary of that. 1961 must have been a good year because, according to our records, Alan Crawford and Edith Pearce came into membership at the same service. During the recent lockdown Barbara joined us every week in our Zoom service from her room in Adelaide House. Her phone didn't let her join in the Zoom chat but she could hear everything that was being said she and liked to keep up with the news. Barbara was heavily involved in the Fellowship of Youth, the Youth wing of the Presbyterian Church of England, also attending various youth conferences. She later became a leader of the Youth Club. She was also the secretary of Badminton Club and a very competent badminton player, playing in competitions and winning various cups including one that had been given by her father. After winning it three years in succession, she was allowed to keep it!

Barbara and Mike didn't have any children but Barbara was a devoted aunt, always close to Tricia and Geoff's children and always interested in what they were up to. Barbara loved animals and Tricia tells me that Barbara learnt to ride a horse, giving up only after she fell off which I have to admit did call to my mind the old Thelwell cartoons. No wonder Barbara never told me that because I'd certainly have pulled her leg about it! Holidays were always enormously enjoyed. Barbara loved Scotland, particularly the Gatehouse of Fleet area. In the UK they went on canal boats and had trips to the Scilly Isles and Orkney. Overseas, they toured America in 1975 and Australia in 1999, but for Barbara and Mike their most special place was Madeira where they had an annual holiday of 10 weeks for some years, the perfect place to relax and unwind.

After suffering a ruptured aneurism and surviving - something only 20% of people do - Mike had a massive stroke so that Barbara could no longer manage him at home and he went into what is now Adelaide House, joined shortly afterwards by Barbara. Both were happy there, so well looked after by wonderful staff. Sadly, Barbara's own health began to fail a few years ago but she decided not to go for significant treatment which may well not have made much difference. She achieved her goal to outlive Mike and, although she missed him dreadfully, she was so glad that she had always been there for him. In April this year, Barbara was admitted to St Peter's Hospital and it became clear that there was nothing more they could do for her. She wanted to get home to Adelaide House but didn't quite achieve that only because her death was incredibly quick. Barbara knew that she was being sent home and that the transport was being arranged and so she just gently slipped from this world to the next with hope in her heart and her gold cigarette case in her dressing-gown pocket. I can't help thinking that's the way to go! So, whereas we miss Barbara I think that we can see that things turned out as she wished and that's something from which I think we can all draw comfort.

Barbara is now at peace. Always an independent spirit, she loved life and lives on in this world through the qualities which she displayed, the examples she set and the memories which each one of us have of her - memories which can still bring a smile, even on the saddest of days. Through the Saviour's love, she has been reunited with Mike and they have reached - as described in the hymn 'Will your Anchor Hold' - associated with the Boys Brigade and sung at Mike's service - "the city of gold and the harbour bright".

Michael Hodgson

ARTPEACE AND FRIENDS

The world is understandably preoccupied with Covid and the dreadful situation in Afghanistan. I hesitate to write this article as I know some people object to upsetting photos and



miserable news but I have never been one to dress things up and know that most readers want to hear the plain unvarnished truth of life experienced by our ArtPeace friends – these are their photos. Although their Covid situation does not appear as awful as ours, cases are increasing as are deaths. On a brighter note, some of the older artists have now had their first vaccine supplied by China. However, the country on a wider front is in a worse shape now than during the 1990's amid concerns of an economic crisis and human rights violations. Zimbabwe's 'new' President appears to be consolidating his grip on power with moves reminiscent of his predecessor's style. Photo left: A young boy wipes the screen of a commuter omnibus at a traffic light -then proceeds to ask for 12 cents. He is one of the many street children who sleep rough and do not attend school. Perhaps it is best to give you a realistic idea of how

thousands of young people in Zimbabwe are struggling to survive in words received direct from a young artist friend only a few days ago which sums up the situation far better than I ever could.

'Sometimes it seems like we are in danger of becoming a black hole nation that is void of light. We have so much going for us yet in the same breath we are drowning. We are sinking. This year has been a period of mourning. It's amazing how we still have more tears shed. There was a week where every single day, there was news of someone close to us passing on. Mourning our loved ones properly is such a part of Shona culture it's like the COVID pandemic has robbed us of our tears and our goodbyes. It has robbed us of closure. My tears flow for those we have lost but even more so for the generation of our children. I do not want to paint a morbid picture, but the truth is our children have become an endangered species. The Authorities are awfully silent on the youth ritual killings, child disappearances, child marriages, youth prostitution and sexual deviance and youth drug and substance abuse.

Hope is a very young mother whose own mother left when she was young to live in the diaspora. For 3 years she had one child, then two years ago she had another. She became a prostitute then. I saw her recently and she had become a shell of her beautiful youthful self. Not only does she sell crystal meth, but she uses it too. She is a nomad, never staying too long in one place for people to observe her and maybe even engage child services. She is so thin and wasted and conversation does not go beyond greeting pleasantries.

Our leadership leaves things like these to go uncorrected because it takes away the spotlight from them and their bad governance. We are so tired and broken, you actually understand the one who says they do crystal meth to numb the mind and spirit. It is wrong but I can understand why someone would want a break from life, from pain. There are many like Hope. The irony in her name makes me want to weep. I am sure her parents meant well. No arrests are being made peddling drugs. We have many missing children. There is a rising awareness of child marriages but amidst the noise are the relevant people doing anything? One day we will wake up to a nation of broken invalids. There will not be a young soul to govern or be governed. For now, our leadership is smug watching the fire on the mountain top. They will wake up when the river floods the village and they have made no boats and hopelessly can't swim.'

From artist Fortune: Sad sad news John. Remember Blessing (left), the deformed boy you once helped - he is no more and passed away yesterday at a traditional healer's shrine. His mother could not afford hospital fees so she had no option but to take him to a traditional healer. The other photo (below) is his grave being dug whilst his brother is watching as per their tradition - one brother is allowed. Also, he will be buried at midnight as per their custom. Male relations took control



and their Apostolic church elders were banned from attending the burial so it was not a Christian funeral. They do that coz of his deformed state and think poor Blessing was cursed. No women were allowed. Now the mother is distraught as the

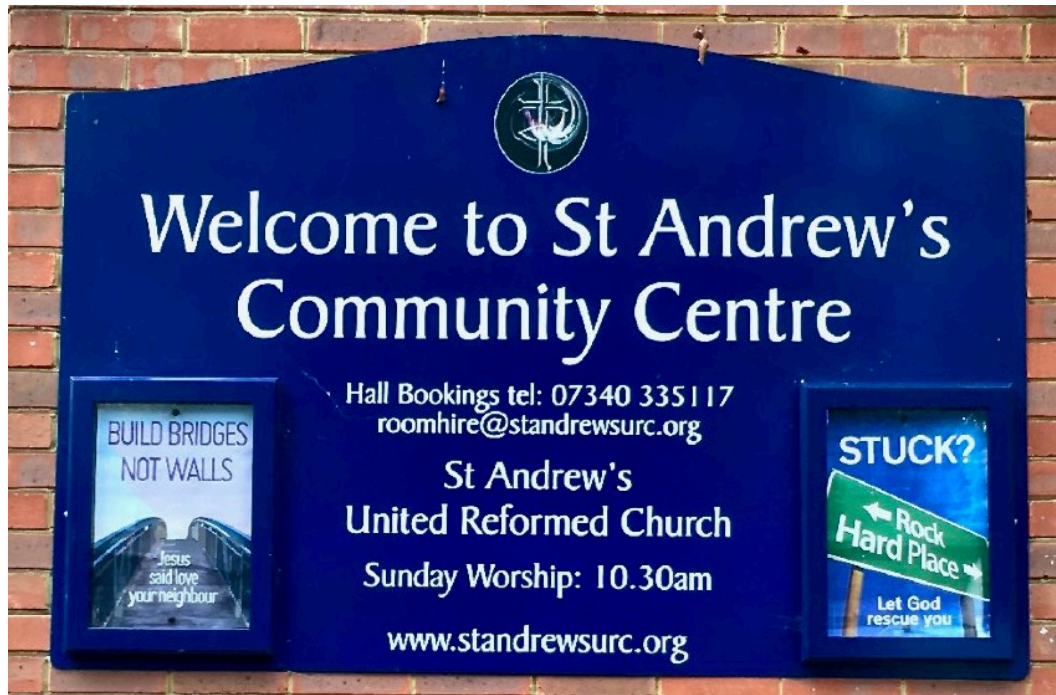
traditional healer still wants payment. John – this is life in some parts of Zimbabwe where living is often unbearable, and superstitions still reign.



From Artist Ignatious: 12-year-old Tapiwa (left) looks after himself and is busy cooking dried maize called mangai in Shona. His parents passed away 4 months ago. He lives in Ziko village. Some people try to keep an eye on him but there is not much food. Below, village children share sadza and dried vegetables.



SHARED SERVICES: Artpeace are so pleased to be part of our Sunday services – a highlight of their week. Some churches are now open, but I believe the government have decreed that only those with two vaccinations can attend. Sadly, donations greatly appreciated from a few people in various parts of the country, are at an all-time low and ArtPeace sales have been at zero for the last two years. Few are now sculpting as there seems no point and no one is travelling over from Zimbabwe. On a brighter note, Catherine a nurse from Bristol hopes to be able to visit her family in October so may be able to take over some mobiles and reading glasses. **Johnston Simpson**



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We re-opened our church building on 23 May and Covid-safe services now start at the original time of 10.30 am. Services are also accessible on Zoom.

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