

GOOD NEWS NEWSLETTER

HOPE
Together



We are
CHURCH
and we are
here FOR YOU



Dear Friends,

The Bible verse printed in the membership ticket for our new church year (2020-21) is taken from Isaiah 43:18-19 (NRSV):

Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old.

I am about to do a new thing.

Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?

I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

It is really good to send you this greeting as we prepare for a new church year in our Circuit, a time when some of our churches are making plans to re-open their buildings. Others are not in a place where this is either wise or possible to do. I wonder though how we now view our church buildings in the light of our experiences of 'lockdown' for we will all have heard stories (and experienced ourselves) of how a 'church without walls' can continue to thrive even when we have been faced by such a massive challenge as 'Covid19'.

We perhaps need to accept now that we are not entering a 'post-Covid' season, rather we are adapting to a time when we shall need to learn how to live with Covid and all of the challenges (and opportunities) it presents us with. So, we are not in a place where we are able to simply resume 'church' in the forms that we have known previously. Rather, in the same way as so many organisations are finding, we are learning how to re-imagine a new way of being which allows us to be adaptable and flexible in our ministry and mission and to catch hold of the '*new thing*' which God is seeking to do.

I have a friend who is a GP and he has explained how the introduction of phone (or face time) consultations has been something which has enabled him and his colleagues to work far more effectively within their practice and that this will be something which they will certainly continue to use in the future. Learning and adapting to new ways of working!

What have we been perceiving in terms of the 'new thing(s)' which are springing forth? Are we able to work through those missional questions which are contained in the 'Opening our Churches' Methodist document and to use them as a means to create a new Mission Plan for our church? You can find resources on the Methodist Church website which will help you in doing this.

Over the summer we invited churches and projects across our Circuit to send through any 'good news stories' which had arisen over the time of 'lockdown'. I do hope that you will be encouraged to read them here and that we may feel ourselves being more connected as a Circuit as we share these stories.

Thank you to those who have sent these stories through and thank you to all of those across our churches who have been faithful in their support and in their witness to Christ through all the challenges of recent months.

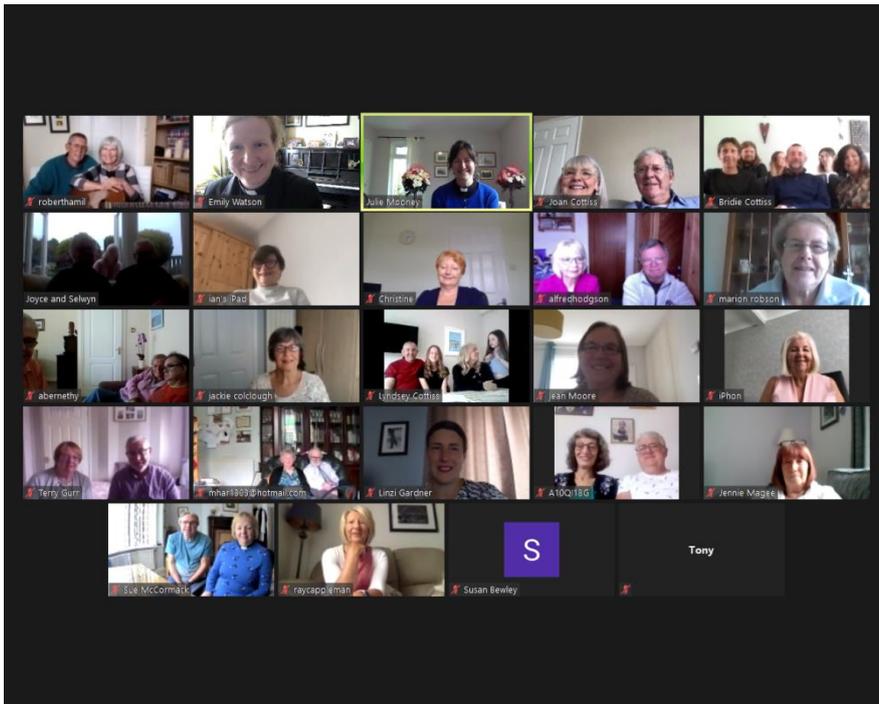
Shalom,
Paul

Passionate about Jesus!

Circuit and District offices 0191 2321693.

Registered charity 1134265 'registered in England and Wales'

Church of the Good Shepherd



One of the great stories over these last 3 months is how we have discovered Zoom and managed to quickly learn how to use it to share worship with our congregations. In the Wellington Team we have held twice-weekly

ecumenical services and they have run so well that Joan and Dave Cottiss, from Church of the Good Shepherd, asked for a celebration service to give thanks for their 55th Wedding Anniversary.

What a wonderful celebration that allowed their family and friends to safely gather online and take a role in the service. Each of their sons helped to deliver part of the



service then Joan and Dave led everyone in The Lord's Prayer. We thank God that, even in times of isolation, we can be united as a church family, and we thank God for Joan and Dave, whose faith and lives truly reflect the love of Jesus.

Another great story is our introduction of a plan to engage with our toddlers over the internet.



Our baby and toddler Group, Little Shepherds, started in September 2018 and we have on average 25 regular attendees. During our weekly sessions we have

play, snacks, plus Bible stories, songs and prayers. This is a wonderful group and valuable outreach to the community. During lockdown we have kept in touch the best way we can, mainly via text and a WhatsApp Group. Recognising that social distance restrictions prevent us gathering in the way we wish, we have recently begun working on a weekly plan to deliver songs, stories and prayers to our little toddlers and their families. This has just started with a video on YouTube about 'Sheila the Sheep' starting nursery school and a God version of the classic nursery rhyme Old MacDonald had a farm. We have received wonderful feedback about our toddlers watching and singing from their own home with requests to watch again and again. We are thrilled that we can continue to engage with our toddlers and their families as this, for many of them, is their only link to church.

Rev. Julie Mooney

International Student Coordinator news

While the past four months have been very challenging, we have delighted in the opportunities that communication technology has provided to maintain and deepen relationships with our students at the ISC. Through the use of Zoom, Whatsapp and Facebook we have continued to support international students and their families in ways that we hadn't considered before lockdown. Where we were often only in contact with a partner of a student in the past, we are now talking with whole families via Whatsapp. Where we often lost contact with many of our students when they returned home, we have seen frequent participation in our Zoom gathering from alumni in Chile, Japan, China and France. A particular highlight has been our weekly conversations with a Muslim student and her husband, who are always very keen to talk about faith. The depth and honesty of our conversations has been a real privilege to be part of. I am not sure this would have happened without the circumstances Covid-19 has created.



ISC English Practice Class
COFFEE BREAK

Mondays at 3pm
(approx. 30 mins)

Zoom ID: 726 8867 7339
Password: 1821
(Download zoom.us app to join)

You are invited to
make yourself a drink and
join Stephen on Zoom
for some informal conversation

Image: master1305/Freeepik.com

The Methodist Church

Stephen Richardson

SAW at The Holy Biscuit



During lockdown we have seen so much growth within our Shieldfield community. The weekend before lockdown began we planted wheat at SAW and around the Shieldfield community as part of Shieldfield Wheatfield. It is a strange feeling to be planting wheat in a time of 'plague'. It feels very ancient. But this project, as well as

exploring urban food growing and food sustainability, is about connectedness. It is looking at how to transform the isolation and self-interest within our communities into connectedness and caring for the whole. Over the course of the past 132 days our community has both cared for this wheat and for one another.

As the wheat has grown and become rooted we have seen community members grow and become more rooted. A whatsapp group has been created where residents are connecting over growing and sharing resources, skills and knowledge. We are looking forward to some form of community harvest celebration where we can come together to mark our community growth through this pandemic.



We have also been an active part of the fortnightly meeting of Shieldfield community organisations who are working together to

share information and support each other to serve our neighbourhood especially during this crisis. Together we have helped to coordinate food parcel deliveries, community litter picks and summer activity packs for young children. We are now looking at other ways that we can collaborate in the long term. Just as we are the body of Christ in the church, and each one of us has a part of it, we think it is important to image this unity within our community.



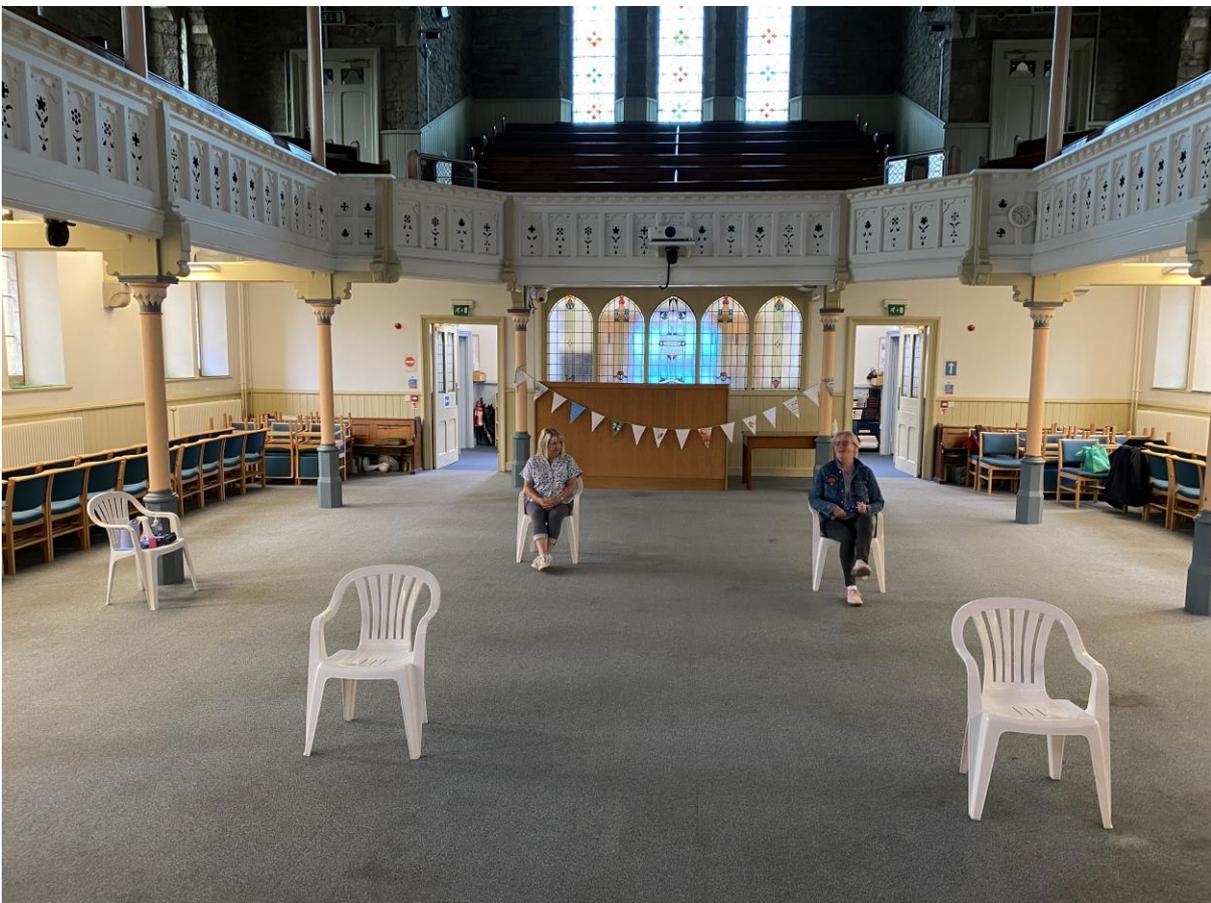
Painting for Fun is a core part of our SAW community and over lockdown we have encouraged members to create at home and email photos of their works to exhibit in our online gallery. We have currently received 119 pieces and the members of the class have

enjoyed exploring new techniques and mediums and being able to stay connected even though physically distanced. This has been vital for many of the members who struggle with mental health issues and loneliness. May God move our hearts to more compassion and may He comfort the hearts of those we work with who are suffering.

Blessings,
Lydia

Trinity Gosforth

As lockdown has eased, Trinity has sought to re-open the church worship area. For the past four weeks we have opened 10am-12pm on a Tuesday and Thursday. We allow four people into the worship area at a time to sit quietly and pray. Although the numbers of people coming in have not been high, we have been able to give people who have not been able to engage with online worship the opportunity to worship in their own quiet way.



Deacon Andrew Carter

St John's Prayer Space



Whilst wrestling with difficulties regarding re-opening the church building, even for private prayer, St John's decided to explore what might be possible using our outside space.

At the beginning of July an outdoor prayer space was set up in the church garden in a quiet corner near our car park which includes a bench, some prayer resources and a cross onto which people can tie ribbons if they wish. There is an open invitation to come and rest a while on the prayer bench, to pray or to simply be still and reflect in a calm and quiet place. 'Try Praying' booklets are available free of charge and to date a number of these have been taken away.

A number of church members have made use of the space and we were greatly encouraged recently when someone from the community suggested it as an ideal location for the proposed Kingston Park Community Forget-me-not Garden. The remembrance garden was the initiative of Deacon Tracey Hume and on 8th August people were invited to come and scatter some seeds and place a name marker to remember someone they had lost during lockdown, or simply to recognise the enormity of loss more generally. It is hoped that this will give an opportunity for a remembrance anniversary when the forget-me-nots are in bloom next spring and in the meantime that the area will continue to provide a place of peace and reflection for members of the church and wider community.

Rev. Adele Moorhouse

Trinity Wallsend

Prayer Boards

It all started with a conversation about how we might bless the community. We had noticed how many people actually walked past the church building and we wanted to be more visible. The fruit of our conversation was that we wanted to bless the community with HOPE. A small team worked alongside Mark Burdon who designed and wrote the prayers, whilst the bunting was produced at home and painted on these boards.

They have made such a difference to many people and we have been blessed by the comments made through the Facebook page and personally.



Deacon Gail Morgan

Brunswick Methodist Church

Packs for Prisoners – a good news story from the city centre.

During Covid the resource of our city centre building may not have been available to our Methodist, Salvation Army or Chinese congregations however it has continued to be fully used by a Christian charity with whom we partner, 'Junction 42'.



Ministry to prisons is a focal point of Junction 42's work and so, during lockdown, they initiated a project to make up packs to send to prisoners right across the country who have been unable to receive visits from family

or friends since February. Here are some words from Avril, a J42 staff member, who has been responsible for overseeing this project:

“Often what we perceive to be a small gesture of love and kindness, can sometimes have a lasting impact on a person's life.

As the 32,000 In-Cell Worship Packs begin to be delivered into the 130 prisons throughout the UK, the Junction 42 team is already receiving incredible feedback from the men and women who have been gifted with these paper bags filled with materials of hope, inspiration and creativity. From camouflage-print pocket bibles and cross-in-my-pocket packs to UCB's 'Word for Today' and prayer journals, each item

has been chosen to speak into the hearts and minds of those who may be forgotten.

Here is one story from an inmate at HMP Onley in the West Midlands. A male prisoner received the pack on the day of his father's funeral. So, another prisoner used the 'cross in my pocket' kit to make a cross which the young lad took and placed upon his father's coffin as his own contribution to the funeral service.

Junction 42 is so thankful to the team of volunteers for being part of this incredible and ongoing adventure. And we are extremely grateful to the Brunswick Methodist Church team for allowing us to spread



our production line throughout the ground floor of the building. It is a privilege to gather our helpers to a place of worship, praise and vitality in the very heart of our great city.”

Our own church members @ Brunswick have been part of the volunteer team which has assembled these packs for prisoners and so we are thankful for a deepening sense of partnership over this 'lockdown' period!

Rev. Paul Cleever-Thorpe

Heaton Methodist Church

It was suggested that it would be good to run a Youth Alpha online during lockdown. Alpha is a 9-week series that enables you to create a space where youth will be excited to engage in conversations about faith.

There are a number of young people who are part of church life and, with no school, we wondered whether they would be interested. The idea was met with enthusiasm. We completed the course last week and we have seen these young people grow each week as they have wholly engaged with the videos and the team.



With people walking much more in Heaton and with the church having a garden which is a beautiful space to be in, the idea of a labyrinth was born.

The labyrinth has a long-established spiritual history, being used as a central focus for prayer. The labyrinth has only one route, so there are no tricks and no dead ends. It has a single circuitous path that winds into the centre. Walking the same path to return, the entrance then becomes the exit. The path is in full view, which allows space for quietness and offers an opportunity for reflection, renewal and spiritual growth. You are warmly invited to walk this path. It is for everyone.

This is the link for you to watch

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-9sMPMH9LpQ>

Deacon Gail Morgan