

St Barnabas Church Mitcham

Parish News



Autumn 2020

ST BARNABAS PARISH NEWS – Autumn 2020

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A big 'Thank You!' to all who contributed to this issue!

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The St Barnabas Parish News is published by St Barnabas Church, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 2DJ. Telephone 020 8648 0119

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SERVICES AT ST BARNABAS CHURCH

During the COVID-19 Pandemic

- Sunday Worship:** **10.00 am:** Parish Communion in church
11.15 am: Sunday Eucharist via Zoom and on Facebook
- Bible Study:** **Wednesdays at 8.00 pm:** via Zoom
- Evening Prayer:** Compline follows Bible Study on Wednesdays



St Barnabas, Mitcham is the Church of England Parish Church of North Mitcham, in the Diocese of Southwark, comprising Graveney ward and parts of Figges Marsh and Lavender Fields wards.

St Barnabas is a member of Churches Together in Mitcham (an ecumenical body) and Mitcham Group Ministry (formed by the Anglican parishes of St Peter's & St Paul's, St Mark's, St Olave's and St Barnabas).

Our Mission Statement:

'St Barnabas is committed to encouraging and nurturing all people in their faith in God and their service to the wider community.'

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



To say that a lot has happened since the last newsletter would be an understatement.

The world is a very different place in the wake of Covid-19. We have temporarily adapted into a Virtual Church with virtual services, virtual Bible study, virtual discussion groups, and even virtual tea and biscuits!

At the start of the lockdown period, you could be forgiven for thinking that fewer people might attend virtual services rather than regular in-person services. However, the Lord's blessings truly are great. A lot more people have been attending the virtual services than expected.

People have been joining us from places as far away as Brazil, Nigeria, Portugal and even as far as Kent! This reminds us that the Church really is a global family, and we have been blessed to be able to share our community of St Barnabas around the world.

It has been a very eventful time at the Church since the last newsletter. This edition of the Parish News contains articles on the major events that have happened since the previous issue. The restoration works were completed resulting in a magnificent new interior for the Church. The Bishop of Southwark delivered an address at the Thanksgiving Service to mark the completion of the restoration and remind us of the importance of being thankful.

We also have a very special poem included in this edition to commemorate the completion of the building works, and to celebrate the past one hundred years of St. Barnabas Church. There was a wonderful virtual Pentecost Service this year, where the readings were given by members of the congregation in various languages. The Flower Sale was a resounding success even though it was in the middle of Covid! Speaking of Covid, in this edition, various members of the congregation have shared their reflections on this period. We also have an account of the first day back at Church, detailing all of the Covid-secure protocols we have in place to maximise safe worship in these interesting times.

We hope you enjoy this packed edition of the Parish News!

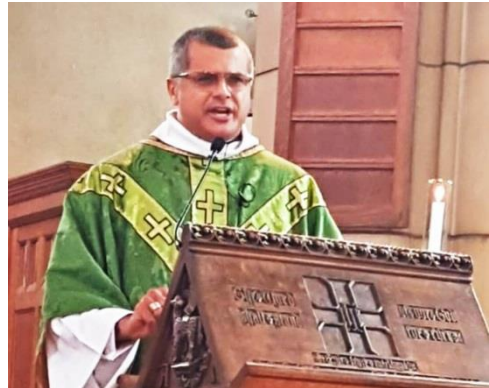
Sally Spain

MESSAGE FROM THE VICAR

Dear Parishioners,

'We make our own plans, but the Lord decides where we will go' (Proverbs 16.9 CEV)

It is now six months since we started this lockdown due to the coronavirus crisis. When the lockdown started in March, we thought that it would be for a few weeks only and that we would soon be resuming normal activities. How wrong we were!



Although some of the restrictions have now been eased, and some more will be lifted in the near future, we will still be living under considerable restrictions for some time.

We have now re-opened the church for public services and had our first Eucharist in church on Sunday the 6th September. We are scrupulously following the government and Church of England guidelines on public worship in the context of coronavirus. You can read more about that in the section 'Back to Church'.

This has been a time when we have been forced into the safety of our homes and some people are trying very hard to find meaning in all this. Some would ascribe it to God as if God was trying to teach us something, others are saying that it is nature, or mother earth, fed up with us, with our exploitative and uncaring way of dealing with our natural resources. Still, there are others warning us about some cosmic powers forcing us to rethink our lifestyle. Oh, I should not forget that there are also those apocalyptic preachers using this crisis to remind us that the end is nigh!

Well, I would like to point out that the virus has no free will, or an objective, except to spread itself as much as it can. A virus like the covid-19 has neither purpose nor morality. It's just an accident of nature or of human manipulation. But whatever is behind covid-19, even if some of us enjoy entertaining some of the conspiracy theories, this crisis is making us to think even more carefully about our life and our future.

And we don't need to ascribe a meaning to the virus in order to give a better purpose to our lives. We don't need to see the virus as an agent sent or caused by some spiritual or supernatural power in order to rethink the way we live and to project or replan our future. And even as we plan our future, this coronavirus crisis should have helped us to be a bit more humble and realise that we do not have absolute control over our lives, let alone our future.

Thinking about the future, there is a trend that has been going on for some time in human resources which asks the question of what you would like to be doing in the near future. Sometimes that question is put thus, where do you see yourself in five years' time? Now, within this new context, and it may sound like a tough question, where do you see yourself next year? Have you got any idea? Neither have I! It is a little disconcerting, isn't it? To think that we cannot even plan properly for the next year. Some of the big events and conferences, which had been postponed for next year, are already being postponed again for 2022!

What this small thing, invisible to the eye, has shown to us is that we have often taken our future for granted but now we have become more aware that all our plans for the future are always based on hope and, if I dare say, in faith as well. Then we have St James to remind us in quite strong words that the future is uncertain and that we should trust in God.

'You should know better than to say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to the city. We will do business there for a year and make a lot of money!" What do you know about tomorrow? How can you be so sure about your life? It is nothing more than mist that appears for only a little while before it disappears. You should say, "If the Lord lets us live, we will do these things"' (James 4.13-15 CEV)

May God guide and help us as we face a new and different future.

Blessings,

Fr Joabe



CALENDAR OF EVENTS



SEPTEMBER 2020

Sunday 6 Trinity 13 (Re-opening of church)
Sunday 13 Trinity 14
Sunday 20 Trinity 15
Monday 21 *International Day of Prayer for Peace*
Tuesday 22 PCC meeting –(Autumn begins)
Sunday 27 Harvest Sunday (Trinity 16)

OCTOBER 2020

Sunday 4 **Trinity 17 - Animal Welfare Sunday** - 3pm Blessing of Animals **TBC**
Saturday 10 **Harvest Supper – 7.30pm on Zoom**
Sunday 11 **Trinity 18 - (Homeless Sunday)**
Saturday 17 **APCM – 3.00pm in church**
Sunday 18 **Trinity 19 - (Healthcare Sunday)**
Sunday 25 **Bible Sunday** - Last Sunday after Trinity (*Summer Time ends*)
Saturday 31 **Martin Luther, Reformer, 1546**

NOVEMBER 2020

Sunday 1 All Saints' - 10am & All Souls' 3pm
Monday 2 All Souls' Day
Saturday 7 Fireworks Night **TBC**
Sunday 8 Remembrance Sunday - (3rd before Advent)
Wednesday 11 Armistice Day
Sunday 15 2nd Sunday before Advent - Dedication Festival 5pm **TBC**
Sunday 22 *Day of Intercession & Thanksgiving for the Missionary Work of the Church*
Sunday 29 Advent – Toy Service **TBC**

DECEMBER 2020

(All Christmas events will be confirmed nearer the time)

Saturday 5 Christmas Fair
Sunday 6 **Advent 2:** Carol Service 6pm
Sunday 13 **Advent 3:** Nativity Play, Christmas lunch
Sunday 20 **Advent 4** Christingle Service
Monday 21 *Winter begins*
Thursday 24 **Christmas Eve** (Midnight Mass 11.30pm)
Friday 25 **Christmas Day** (10am) *Bank Holiday*
Saturday 26 *Bank Holiday*
Sunday 27 **Christmas 1**
Monday 28 Bank Holiday
Thursday 31 **New Year's Eve** (11.15pm)

SERVICE OF THANKSGIVING AND DEDICATION OF WORK COMPLETED IN THE CHURCH



It is very good to be with you for this happy celebration of a job well done. Our thanksgiving therefore strikes a chord of renewal and of hope. Something has come to an end and something new is beginning - and I am glad to have the chance to say a few words at this auspicious moment. I am grateful to you all for welcoming me to St Barnabas and I thank Fr Joabe for inviting me into this newly beautified and very wonderful building. I know it has been a long held, and very good ambition

of Joabe, shared by many here, to bring this uplifting building back to its former glory. There has been great zeal for God's House in this holy place!

St Barnabas Mitcham – a symbol of hope during the war

It was my predecessor Bishop Hubert Burge, the second Bishop of Southwark, who consecrated this building almost exactly a hundred and five years ago, on 14th November 1914. Less than a hundred and fifty miles away the first Battle of Ypres was raging – let us remember this when we are tempted to think that we live in particularly troubled times. In such dark days this soaring and optimistic building, drawing on the best of the past, using modern materials and skill, stood from its very first days as a symbol of hope.

It will have played a vital role in those early years when the need for somewhere to gather to pray for loved ones in harm's way and to mourn those who had died was such a deep and present need. And since then it has stood in the heart of these pleasant terraced streets, insisting that this is a place where people dwell together, not a mere dormitory.

There is something striking in the date of the Church's foundation, three days after the day that was to be set aside at the end of that terrible conflict as Remembrance Day. It provides a constant reminder now to remember those

who went before us and it is fitting that this Service should be taking place in what has become the month of Remembrance.

Chris Cook, 50 years as church organist

It is also right and fitting to pause now and acknowledge one other Remembrance Sunday anniversary; for it was fifty years ago last Sunday that Chris Cook, himself the son of a Vicar of St Barnabas, began his career and ministry as organist here. For almost half the years this building has stood here, it has been filled with the sounds that Chris has brought to life. Music is a great gift of God and those whose skill allows us to give it back to him in praise and worship are held in special honour. On behalf of all of us here I express our gratitude to Chris; for all that, he has contributed to making this Church resound to the glory of God.

The Church is the Body of Christ

For we never forget that the Church is the Body of Christ. We, the people of God, are the Church: whenever we worship together, pray together, hear God's word preached, and above all when we celebrate the Eucharist together. And we are the Church seven whole days not one in seven, beyond these walls, as we serve our communities and practice the virtues of humility, generosity, hope and courage on which a good society is built – virtues I commend to all those seeking to serve in public office especially our parliamentary candidates.



In our Gospel reading, Jesus speaks of the Temple, but his disciples learn that he is referring not to the stone edifice, but to himself. The people of Israel worshipped God on the Holy Hill of Jerusalem. We now know God face to face, in the person of Jesus Christ, who is with us whenever two or three are gathered together. In our reading from the Letter to the Ephesians St Paul reminds us that we are now the Risen and Ascended Christ's body on earth. We are that same temple, built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone... a holy temple in the Lord... a dwelling-place for God." (Eph 2.20-22)

This building is God's gift to his people

The Most High God does indeed not dwell in houses made by human hands (St Stephen in Acts 7.48), yet we treasure the building too, and we are right to do so. For it is good and beautiful and, through regular faithful use by God's people it comes to speak truly of God's constant love for this place and the people of this community. Not only that but we do not forget that this building is God's gift to his people. As we read in the First Book of Chronicles [which might have been stated in your orders of service to be the First Book of Kings], "all this abundance that we have provided for building you a house for your holy name comes from your hand and is all your own" (1Chron 29.16).

For all these reasons it is right and proper to love and care for our Church buildings. And at length, with the sale of some Church property came the opportunity to do this and to do it well as St Barnabas was transfigured. The stonework has been cleaned. This is a difficult and specialist job to do properly but so much better than covering the blemishes with a coat of paint. And there is a new sound system. Once again this building fulfils the vision of its builders and architect and gives back Glory to Almighty God in sight and sound.

Let this be a building that welcomes others

Let us give thanks for what has been done and let us enjoy and cherish this building without ever becoming blasé about it or taking it for granted it. On my first day at Theological College I remember clearly the Principal giving wise advice to us all in saying "never become over familiar with holy things." Doubtless he had in mind the need for those called to be Priests to keep the wonder of the Eucharist fresh in their minds. But the principle holds good for Church buildings too. It is good to keep fresh in our hearts the beauty of this holy place and never take it for granted; rather let us behold it anew with wonder and gratitude each time we enter, saying "all things come from you, and of your own have we given you." (1Chron 29.14).

Let it not be, though, just a building for us to enter. Let it be also a building from which we go out and a building into which others are welcomed to come in too. The Southwark Vision which I have now been commending to the Diocese for some time rests on the twin pillars that we are Christ centred and outward focussed. I said that today was both an end and a beginning. It is the end of the

renovation project - we give thanks to God and congratulate all those who have worked hard and well with patience and vision - but it is also, praises God, the beginning of something yet more.

One of the great advantages of a building project is that it is a challenge. And then, when we have, together, seen it through to a good and joyful conclusion, we may realise that, by God's grace, we are together capable of rising to challenges, of accomplishing hard things. This building is now palpably, visibly, ready for what comes next. But by the same token so is this Church, this body of God's people, the body of Christ in this place. Not only that, but the wider local community will have seen the builders and their tools and vehicles coming and going. Even those who never set foot in a Church building will know that there is life and growth and energy here – in other words that something is happening. They will be intrigued, curious and willing to accept an invitation.

Now ... open the doors and seek the lost!

This is what I mean by a beginning. Now is the time, mindfully and intentionally, to turn outward, to open the doors, turn on the lights, to go out, energised by the beauty of this building and the joyful noise within, all speaking of the one true God, and take the flame of God's love into these streets, communicating that fire to the hearts of others.

We have worked hard on this building, for good reasons, with a good heart and vision, and to good effect. That work has strengthened and united us. Let us have confidence in who God has called us, together, to be. Let us have confidence in the one who calls. And let us now, with the same zeal for God's House, open the doors and go out to seek the lost.

**The Rt. Revd. Christopher Chessun
Bishop of Southwark**

INTRODUCING GARY CARPENTER

On Sunday the 13th of September we were delighted to welcome Gary Carpenter to St Barnabas. Gary is a Reader-in-training in the Diocese of Southwark and will be doing the placement with us under the guidance of Father Joabe for the next three months. In his own words:

“I became a Christian in my teenage years. I did not come from a regular church-going family but joined the youth group at church in order to play football!

I met my wife-to-be at university in Bristol and married as soon as we both had graduated. We have lived in various places since (in Bristol, Kenya, Hampshire, Surrey, Cheshire, London) and mostly worshipped at Anglican churches. We’ve been living in Wimbledon since 2000 and are now at church at All Saints & Holy Trinity, Wandsworth.

We have 3 children, now all off our hands and married. We have 5 grandchildren (and 2 more on the way during this placement, God willing!).

By trade, I am an accountant and have been working as a finance director for different companies for many years.”



Welcome to St Barnabas, Gary!

OUR MISSION PARTNERS



**Christian CARE is seeking to appoint a new
FAMILY SUPPORT COORDINATOR
to start in January 2021**

At this time of the Covid-19 pandemic, **Family Support** - the provision of food and other household essentials - has become really central to the work of Christian CARE. So does Christian CARE run a Foodbank? Yes and No! We do respond to emergency referrals for food, for example when there are benefit delays. However our Family Support is about giving a smaller number of families, who are really struggling to provide for their children, a measure of food security. We usually befriend the parents and help the children in these families too, so it is a very personal service. Our shoppers deliver food parcels meeting specific family needs regularly each fortnight [currently each month]. We also include baby, household and toiletry items if necessary. At Christmas we provide hampers for over 30 families. Some of the women we help are domestic violence victims in Merton Refuge.

The Coordinator, who serves on our CARE Committee of 7 members, looks after the shoppers and the families they visit, to see that all is going smoothly. She/he liaises with her Food Stores Manager to ensure that we have a good range of items in stock, and also does some of the emergency deliveries. She/he has contacts with churches, schools and women's groups who donate groceries particularly at Harvest time. The Coordinator is assisted in the record-keeping by the Office Administrator.

The first parents our current Coordinator met and worked with 5 years ago were living in a dark, damp, musty flat and were facing imminent eviction. They had

no money at all to provide for their 2 children; there was a baby about to be born and they had nothing ready for her arrival. A few months later, in a temporary home equipped with all the bedding they needed, with the baby safely born and all the children given warm clothes and, most importantly, with food, toiletries and nappies being delivered regularly through the Family Support scheme, the mother spoke so movingly:

'I say to my daughter, "Whenever the story of our family is told, we will never forget what Christian CARE has done for us at this time."

If you would like to find out more about this rewarding volunteering opportunity, where you can be at the forefront of the charity's response to Covid-19, please....

... **visit us online at** <https://christiancaremerton.org.uk>

... **email Gillian (CARE Coordinator) at** gillian.thick@christiancaremerton.org.uk

... **phone Gillian on** 07932 628840

Registered Charity: 1044099

CAN YOU HELP?

We have been able to keep delivering large bags of groceries and shopping tokens to between 20 - 25 families each month during the pandemic. These items are particularly needed to restock our cupboards for winter.

- Long grain/basmati rice – 1kg/2kg/5kg bags
- Cooking oil – 1litre/3 litre bottles
- Tinned tomatoes and sweetcorn
- Tuna in water /brine
- Tins of hot dogs in water/brine
- Cereals – Weetabix, Crunchy Nut, Frosties, Coco Pops, oats
- Chocolate biscuits, Jammie Dodgers, digestives, custard creams
- Tins evaporated milk
- Drinking chocolate
- Fruit juices - orange, apple, mango, pineapple
- Tinned fruit – peaches, pineapple, apricots, mangos
- Jam - strawberry, blackcurrant and apricot jam
- Chocolate spread, honey

NB. *We are currently overstocked with baked beans and pasta.*

We are rarely asked for tinned spaghetti, mushy peas, curry sauces, marmalade, tins of grapefruit, rhubarb and prunes, risotto/dessert rice or soup!

Phone Gillian on 07932 628840

A POEM BY MARGARET H LONGDON

One Hundred Years

Men came together and made a plan.

A church right here, to be built by man.

A stone was laid, the walls rose high;

Reaching up into the sky.

We stopped the building that was so grand,

Men went to fight in another land.

Some lost their lives or came home lame,

Many human beings wouldn't be the same.

New hope was needed, a church incomplete.

No money, few men, it looked like defeat!

But plans revised, a false wall there

They did it together, no need for despair.

Chairs were added, an altar or two.

A pulpit, lectern, an organ (not new),

A choir of boys, from Westminster city,

Curtains and hangings to make it look pretty.

A hundred years pass, the building stands tall.
Eight vicars remembered by a list on the wall,
The church it needs cleaning, re-wiring, heat,
New lighting, repainting, to make it look neat.

The faculties are granted, the scaffoldings erected,
But church on Sunday, you are expected!
Months of work to clean and renew.
The scaffoldings down, choir back in their pew,
New chairs, walls clean and light,
New sounds, new lights, shining so bright.

In a hundred years on from all this fuss,
Will the then congregation ever think of us?
Will they look back in wonder at what we have done,
As they worship Our Saviour, The Three in One?



Margaret H Longdon

PENTECOST SUNDAY

I woke up on the morning of Pentecost Sunday to the sound of the leaves in the trees at the back of my garden. I wondered if it is one of God's ways of communicating with us. I put my head out of the window and took a deep breath. The sunlight broke through the gaps in the window curtains, leaving the tops of the furniture glistening.

During the pandemic all public places have been closed, including the church building, so this gave me more time to prepare for church. The virtual congregation were to meet at 11.00am. I wondered whether the service would be as interesting as previous Pentecostal services had been, given that we were meeting online.

At the start of the service the congregation was informed that the Bible readings were going to be in different languages. "I'm not sure this is going to work," I thought to myself, unsure how we were going to understand the languages of the different speakers, or if they would hold the congregation's attention over the course of the service. I resolved to keep an open mind, and was curious to hear the readings in the other languages.

English translations of the readings were included in the service programme, so I quickly read the script ahead of the readers. With this preparation, I was able to concentrate on the readers and to even follow along, albeit in languages I didn't speak. Reading the first lesson in French, was Abigail Armar. She was easy to follow, especially as I could recognise a few French words. The words rolled off her tongue like it was her first language! She impressed me with her fluency.

As the second reader came to speak, I wondered whether I would be able to follow her reading, since although I recognised some French, I knew nothing of Hungarian! However, I found that as Mimi Kovacs spoke, I needn't have worried as I got engrossed in the emotion and passion with which she eloquently read.

As the service continued and Josias Cavalcanti read in Portuguese, followed by Johnson Ayibiowu who read in Yoruba, I found them just as captivating and engaging as the previous readers.

These readers all demonstrated Pentecost in a way I couldn't have

imagined before. The extra effort of the readers and the wonderful singing of Avril Shipton, Cathy Cheeseman and Sarah Minns left me feeling that on Pentecost Sunday, 31 May, we celebrated the birthday of the Church, virtually.

On this day, a long time ago, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples and they started speaking in

different languages. Despite the different tongues, they were still able to understand each other. I could not imagine the same thing happening nowadays, but I found that the miracle of Pentecost had a way of repeating itself. It united us under a common language of God, that transcends different words, dialects and phrases, and for which we are all enriched and grateful.

Sally Spain



Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

Break me.

Melt me.

Mould me.

Fill me.

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.



GOODBYE ST. BARNABAS!

In February, after over two years of trying, we suddenly exchanged on our house.

This gave us two and half weeks to say goodbye. On the Sunday, I told my St Barnabas family that I was leaving and the following Sunday would be the last time I would worship with them on a regular basis.

This church has been my family since I was very small. I remember lighting my fifth birthday candles in the Sunday school with Barbara Cook helping me, but I had been here some time by then.

The following Sunday I was given cakes, cards, presents and many hugs. It was a very insecure time for me. I was leaving everyone I had been great friends with for many years and going miles away to a new house where the only people we knew were our son, his wife and our grandson.

The days flew past and so everything was in the vans and we were saying goodbye to the house we had lived in for over forty-one years. I was scared - stepping into the unknown. It seemed I was giving up my past and the future was this great unknown. The next day the vans



arrived at the new house, Magnus was very excited and it was fun finding a place for everything. He was just getting used to us looking after him while his parents taught TKD when Covid 19 sent us all into lockdown. We went to Stuart and Laura's for Mothering Sunday but had to watch the service from St. Anne's on line.

Lockdown became a routine of unpacking boxes in the morning and gardening in the afternoon. Sometimes we went out for a walk but it was easy to get lost in an area you had only lived in for a few weeks. We spoke to neighbours through a hole in the hedge and anyone who walked past the house while we were in the front garden.

On the Sunday, I started going to St Anne's Zoom church, followed by coffee in a Zoom room with a few other people. Gradually I have met several members of the congregation and with their names on the screen I feel as if I know some of them by name.

The following week St Barnabas started Zoom church, and it was an hour later than St. Anne's, so I was able to go from one church to the other. So, it has not been goodbye to my friends at St Barnabas as I have been seeing everyone, sometimes twice a week, which has helped me to feel very settled here.

Has lockdown been a bad thing?

Not for us. We have managed to get all the boxes unpacked from the move and all the boxes taken away. We have spent days and days in the garden – still many hours of work to do but it is looking much better.

Best of all I have not left St Barnabas but have got to know people that I didn't have a chance to talk to very much during the Sunday services. I have also met many people from my new church, so it will not be so daunting when I am able to attend a service.

These last few weeks we have been able to look after Magnus again and we are looking forward to the new addition to the family due in September.

So, lockdown has been an exciting time, a time to get the house and garden semi-sorted. A time to meet up with long standing friends and to make new ones, it may all take place on line but at least we can still meet up, catch up with each other, share what has been happening each week but I do miss the hugs. So, it has not been "Goodbye St Barnabas," it has been "Hello everyone, what have you been doing this week?"

Without lockdown we would not have spent so much time together, just talking, laughing, singing and praying. Much as we want lockdown to end, it has brought us closer together, as the most important things in life are the love of family and friends.



Margaret Longdon

Margaret's Lily plant (a present from the choir) bloomed in July!

A FEW THOUGHTS ON LOCKDOWN ... FROM KENT

A couple of days before lockdown, I was travelling on the tube from Maida Vale studios on my way back home to Kent from a 'cancelled at the last minute' choir rehearsal following the government announcement of restrictions and realised that actually this was a moment in time significant enough that I would remember this my whole life (a bit like when 9/11 happened and everyone can remember where they were when they heard the news).



I realised that this would be the last time I would be on a train into or out of London for a very long time and that the hurried goodbye to my friends was different from all the other goodbyes in that we all had no idea when we would meet again.

That whole journey seemed to be in slow motion until I reached home. I haven't really been further than 10 miles from my home in Kent since and in the first month not any distance at all, like so many others. I miss the hustle and bustle, the liveliness in the interaction between my lovely musical friends and the creativity which we all had when together. I miss my bell ringing (one of my hobbies/way of life) and the tight knit communities within this activity, all the social interactions, all the jokes and laughter.

But then I ask myself why is it that, on several occasions in my life, everything goes into slow motion when God wants me to listen to him? I am horribly guilty of frantically 'doing' rather than just being. My singing and my ringing are both ways in which I find I can give of myself in my worship and show my love of God to others (I am hopeless at using words to explain the Gospel to others, something I know I have to work on!). I know that in my faith, in a strange way, I have needed this relative down time to rediscover my relationship with God and lockdown has given me this time.

I remember distinctly when I came to faith as an adult. I was brought up by truly atheist parents and it wasn't until I went to University that I got curious when a couple of girls who were Christians in my halls of residence started to talk to me about their faith. I listened because I was curious and I remember after about 6

months pretty much shouting in frustration to God – ‘well if you are real, why can’t you show yourself to me!!!’

About a month later, I was with my university choir in France on a tour and I went off by myself for a walk (for some reason feeling quite low) and came upon a church that was very remote and very empty. I wasn’t quite sure if it was OK to go inside but I really wanted to have a look at the organ so in I went. The sun was shining directly through the stained-glass window behind the altar and as it shifted, there was a sudden ray of coloured light on the stone floor and I felt this indescribable warmth and sense of comfort, almost a weight on me but not in an unpleasant way. It was another moment of slow motion for me and I knew that I was blessed and that He was there for me. This was the moment of which I was reminded on my way home on that train and I think this was meant to be! He was saying ‘I am here for you’.

This reminder has really helped me during lockdown, especially when I have felt isolated and low. Being in Kent, I wonder if the dynamics have been different than in London. I live in a village where a lot of the people are vulnerable because of their age and so people have been very cautious and also respectful of each other and the social distancing. The local shop has been great in helping people to get their food whilst being safe. It is rare at the time I write for people to wear masks because nobody really uses public transport.

Although I feel very much separated from London at the moment, I do feel that this is a community that helps each other out. When we have all gone out to clap for the NHS at 8pm, it has been nice to reconnect with neighbours by shouting across the street. I look at pictures of people in London and realise that people cannot maintain that kind of distance all the time. I feel lucky that out here, we have the green spaces, the farmland, the sheep and cows and horses and so much bird song! Reconnecting with nature is so good for one’s soul. I hope that where you are, you have some open parks or green spaces to enjoy and that you are able to make the most of all the amazing things God has given us. I am certainly grateful. I am also so grateful that I have made a connection with St Barnabas Church over the lockdown period.

Having this regular time in my life to worship on Zoom and make new friends is a blessing. Thank you for your welcome.

Cathy Cheeseman

LOCKDOWN REFLECTIONS

January 2020, and a new virus, we've been here before, never much of a problem. So get on with life, eat, drink and be merry, play on our phones, enjoy our social life and grumble about the government. And anyway, there's Brexit to worry about, and a date on 31 January with some friends at an Italian wine bar to drown our sorrows (people wishing to celebrate would presumably be in Wetherspoons opposite).

February 2020, and my diary shows a busy round of socialising, church activities and booking a lunch date to celebrate Avril's 90th birthday. We thought 5th March was a bit early, but it was Avril's choice and a very good one as time was running out, not that we knew it then. And we all had a lovely time!

March 2020, and a normal start. I took a funeral for a gentleman whose room was opposite Robin's on 10 March, not knowing of course that it was the last one I would take until...who knows? On 12 March I was told that there were to be no visits to Robin's Nursing Home. Sunday 15 March was our last service in church. I preached on living water and referred to the



recent floods around the country, no mention of the virus.

And then, lockdown was announced, all our plans were on hold, my diary shows nothing but crossed-out entries, and then just nothing.

But life carries on, and the long days brought some respite in the kindness of neighbours and strangers. A neighbour became a friend, texting to tell me to look on my window sill where she had left biscuits, cake, chocolate, loo paper (not all together, you understand. We had knitting tutorials between the front door and the garden gate. I discovered that my garden is perfect for social distancing, and was able to celebrate my birthday with cakes, wine and of course champagne. So I had a bit of a social life, and was at last able to visit Robin. My diary is starting to fill up again.

The downside is the fear of everything getting worse, seeing people I knew struggling with their health and finances, the growing bitterness and division in our society. Lockdown was never going to be easy for an extravert living on her own, but I am pleased that I have coped with it, though it hasn't been easy.

At St Barnabas we were looking forward to enjoying Easter back in our splendidly refurbished church. Easter Sunday found us in our various kitchens, living rooms and studies, celebrating online. Who knew that a programme designed for

work meetings would prove an enabler of worship!

I have presided at the Eucharist with my keyboard shelf as a makeshift altar, and felt the presence of God there at my desk. I have prayed for people online, blessed them on Skype, and even heard a confession over the phone.

What have I learned? That God is good, that I am truly blessed, that friendship is more precious than gold, that all our plans can be suddenly overturned and that the things we used to think of as important probably are not.

Revd Trudy, June 2020.



**All I have needed Thy hand
hath provided
Great is Thy faithfulness,
Lord, unto me.**

THE ANNUAL PLANT SALE

The Church building had been closed for months. The only sign of life around it was a well-kept garden. The Church's activities had been put on hold in compliance with the lockdown, so no one expected this year's flower show to take place.

On the day of the sale, the sun was out and you could feel the heat. On approaching the Church gate, there was a sea of lilac, different hues of yellow, and a patchwork of other colours just above the perimeter hedge. Arriving at the time the event was to start, there were already many people on the Church grounds. Justin was manning the gate, "Hi Sally, head over to that table for sanitising gel." M'Tonya, my niece, and I already had face masks on, but the table was well-stocked in case people needed them.

"Looks like we arrived just in time," M'Tonya said, pointing to the queue that had now built up outside the gate. The last time I saw these people they were in long sleeve jumpers and woolly dresses.

On this day, there was an assortment of t-shirts, shorts, and summer dresses. People were chatting and children were running around. Those at the gate were waving with excitement, calling out to those already in the Church grounds, who they hadn't seen in months.

The plants sold out very quickly according to the reports after the event. M'Tonya and I spent a very pleasant half hour at the Sale, and then left so that others could enter.



When indeed the Plant Sale was advertised, it lifted many spirits and gave everyone something to look forward to.

We later heard that the plants all successfully sold out very quickly. For those who attended, whether you stayed for fifteen minutes, one hour or the duration of the Sale, it was a most welcome outing in difficult times.

Perhaps this was summed up best by Avril Shipton's message to the St. Barnabas WhatsApp group: *"Congratulations Graham! Lovely event, lovely flowers, lovely people. Wonderful to be back with friends again after so long."*

Sally Spain



GRAHAM'S VISITORS



In the last six months, especially during the warmer weather, I have been leaving the double doors to my conservatory open. During that time, I have received several visitors.

My first was a Fox; he/she looked around, turned around and left. Butterflies flutter in and flutter out. I came into the room to find a Wren sitting on one of my potted plants. It chirped several times before leaving. I also had two Wood Pigeons waddling up the carpet side by side, until half-way up the room, before turning slowly and toddling outside.

You may be wondering why I am telling you this. It's because of something you may have heard before in Church...."Open Doors".

As I had open doors at home and I had visitors, what would happen if the Church Doors were left open more often? I'm sure people in our community would come in. "Open Doors" would suggest 'Come on in'.

People needing a quiet space to think, pray, would appreciate this or to look at the beautiful refurbishments. I do hope that in the very near future, we will be able to have our "Church Open Doors", open.

All Creatures WELCOME!



Graham Woolger and Friends.



... MORE LOCKDOWN REFLECTIONS

...spending more time in the garden, enjoying nature



...tuning in every day to the **Government broadcast on the pandemic.**

Getting to know my neighbours a lot better...

...showing support for the NHS and other front-line staff every Thursday at 8 pm.



...**DISCOVERING THE JOYS OF ZOOM!**

...feeling the pain of my friend's loss of both a sister and a brother in 24 hours.

Praying earnestly for deliverance ...



...hearing that the earth's climate is a lot healthier, now that the world is staying at home.

...adding 'masks' and 'hand sanitiser' to the shopping list... as well as toilet paper and pasta!

...finding a good online exercise class...!



Delise Anderson

HOMECOMING: REFLECTIONS ON RETURNING TO ST BARNABAS AFTER LOCKDOWN

It had been almost six months since the Church doors were last open to Parishioners. As I approached the Church on that Sunday, 6th of September, I wondered what it was going to be like. Would it feel different from the normal experience of Sunday worship, or would there be no change at all?

With these thoughts in my mind, I entered a brightly lit and warm Church. A feeling I could only describe as spiritual came over me.

The natural light through the windows, together with the new drop-down lights, and temperature that was just right, all gave the Church an inviting and comfortable atmosphere. For a moment I wasn't even sure that this was the same Church that I had been attending for so many years.

Although the refurbishment had been completed at the end of last year, there hadn't been enough time before lockdown to get used to the Church's new look. Even though I had seen the restoration work before, I appreciated it all over again, looking at the Church's new appearance with fresh eyes.



I had been wondering what the Covid-secure Church would be like for Sunday service.

On entering the Church, I noticed that the wardens had thought about everything: all of the chairs had been spaced two meters apart with everyone observing social distancing, people were wearing masks, there was a sanitisation table providing disinfectant gel and masks. I certainly felt safer in this environment than in the supermarket I visit frequently!

It was really reassuring to be able to worship with all of the necessary safeguards in place to keep us safe during these times.

Father Joabe welcomed us back and delivered an uplifting sermon.

He reminded us that the Church is a community of people who want to live as children of God, sharing their knowledge and gifts and coming to know one another. This echoed the sentiment that many of us felt - it was so great to see familiar faces again, like meeting relatives that have not been seen face-to-face for a long time.

At the end of the service I stepped out into the September sunshine thinking how great it was to be back and looking forward to the next Sunday at St Barnabas.

'FOR WHERE TWO OR THREE ARE GATHERED IN MY NAME, I AM THERE AMONG THEM.'

Matthew 18.20

Sally Spain

PHOTO GALLERY



At the plant sale



Revd Trudy welcomes Gary, trainee Reader



A long procession



“Great to be back!”



Father delivering the sermon



Johnson reading the lesson



Father David and Andrew from Mitcham Parish



Father Joabe staying safe



Baby Astrid and big bother Magnus, Laura & Stewart



A great day out at the plant sale



Avril Beats the Covid-19 Lockdown



Be the first to name this tourist on the beach and win a prize!



A St Barnabas Zoom service in progress...

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PEOPLE IN THE PARISH

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Safeguarding Officers	Carol Phillips and Johnson Ayibiowu Please contact them if you are concerned about the safety or well-being of a child or a vulnerable adult in the church.
Parish Clerk	Delise Anderson, Parish Administrator Parish Office: Tel. 020 8648 0119 Email: stbarnabasmitcham@gmail.com

CHURCH SERVICES: Sunday Worship every week is at 10.00 am in church and 11.15 am on Zoom and Facebook.

Check out our website: www.stbarnabasmitcham.org.uk

