

# Stoke St Gregory Baptist Church

## NEWS May 2020

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### From Sonya

**Romans 8:38-39** “And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”



At this difficult time for all of us, it is good to remember that whatever we are going through, whatever our struggles or our worries, nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. He cares about all the things which concern us – the big things and the small things. We can go to Him and ask Him for His help, and He will answer. He has an incredible way of bringing good out of the most difficult situations if we give them into His hands.

I want to encourage all of us to take advantage of more time spent apart from other people, to seek to go deeper in our relationship with God. He longs to show us more of His love, to tell us many things and to empower us. Let’s take time to be still in His Presence so that we can receive all that He wants to give us.

I pray that God will bless you all in amazing ways at this time,  
Love and blessings,

Sonya

## Homegroup@TheManse

My, doesn't February seem a long time ago! But that was when Sonya launched an evening homegroup, meeting at the Manse on Tuesday evenings.

Since then, I led an initial 3 week study on Habbakuk whilst we decided as a group what to study, eventually settling on the Bible Society's introductory sessions on their 'Lyfe' course. The six streams each have six weeks on various aspects of the Christian life, the introductory course being the first session of each stream.

But, although still based out of the Manse, we're now meeting using Zoom, the same on-line conferencing tool that Sonya uses to bring us our Sunday worship. All who are involved find it really good to meet together regularly, good for our faith and good for our hearts, although we really miss meeting in person. *Ian Setchell.*

## SupaClub

We would like to thank each of the children who have come along to SupaClub over the last few terms and also offer our thanks to the staff who have put up with us causing noise, mess and disruption at times. It is also a good opportunity for us to see & chat to parents when they come to collect their children, some of which don't seem in any hurry to leave, wanting to finish off their craft work!

I know we have enjoyed the children's company and look forward to the time when we can once again learn together more about Jesus, read and act out bible stories, play games and do crafts, as well as having a few healthy nibbles! Thursday afternoons are very quiet these days! Our team of helpers, Sonya, Anne J, Kathy, Tim and Stuart pray all SupaClub children and families stay safe and well and hope to see you whenever school resumes. Blessings to all. *Stuart*



Sunday 8th March saw a very different format for our morning worship.

For a while the Messy church team have been considering different options as the Friday 3:30 pm slot didn't seem to work for people, helpers and families alike. After much deliberation it

was decided that we would try Sunday at 10am. At this point it has to be said that some of us were not keen!

The smell of bacon wafted from the kitchen and, along with other goodies, many enjoyed a hearty breakfast. Sonya chose an Easter theme and all the activities and worship were based around that. The introductory activity was a quiz which proved very popular. This was followed by craft activities which were great fun and resulted in some lovely pieces of work for the children to take home, reminders of the Easter Story. Finally we all met up back in the chapel for a time of singing and story.

It was great to see so many join in this Messy Church. There were some new faces, old friends from Friday Messy Church and, of course, our regular congregation. I think it was unanimous .....everyone enjoyed themselves and learned or were reminded of some aspect of the Easter story.

Who knows when our next gathering will be but make sure you DON'T MISS IT! Look out for the date in the newsletter, Facebook, website etc.

*Gill Yaskin*

### **From the Deacons**

The Deacons met by Zoom in April, Our discussions mainly centred around finance. For the first three months of the year our expenditure has exceeded our income by £2,906. A deficit of approximately £1000 per month. This is unsustainable. We are grateful to those of you who have started to contribute by direct debit. We are also aware that some people are going to face a severe reduction in the finances if the present situation continues.

Sunday Worship and the Tuesday Housegroup continue using Zoom, which is not ideal but it is good to keep in touch. If you haven't tried the Zoom service yet, do give it a go. We need to stay connected to each other. Sonya asked if there's anything else we can do to reach out to the community at this time. Please let her know if you have any suggestions.

The AGM scheduled for May has been postponed.

Lord Jesus Christ,  
you taught us to love our  
neighbour,  
and to care for those in need  
as if we were caring for you.  
In this time of anxiety, give us  
strength  
to comfort the fearful,  
to tend the sick,  
and to assure the isolated  
of our love, and your love,  
for your name's sake.  
**Amen.**

## Heart of the Village



When first proposed around eighteen months ago the purpose of the Heart of the Village project was to create a vibrant hub at the centre of the village owned by the community and run for the community. It has always been believed that maintaining continuity of the village shop would be crucial to success, as if it were to close it would be difficult to recover the customers. For this reason, while fundraising continued for the overall

project, every effort was made to ensure that a shop would be available to the community. Through a remarkable co-incidence. A temporary 'shop in a box' became available and was installed at the Williams Hall. More than fifty local volunteers were trained as a pool of talent to run the business. However, this pool evaporated when the current restrictions were put in place. We were very fortunate to be able recruit from this pool, assistant managers to run the shop during these exceptional circumstances. The shop is open 07:30 to 17:30 weekdays except Weds 07:00 to 13:00, Saturday 08:00 to 14:30 and Sunday 09:00 to 12:00.

A covid policy was put in place such that only one customer is allowed in the shop and that a one-way system of circulation ensures separation. It is with great pleasure that we can say that the effort has resulted in a success. The shop is trading strongly, serving the community as intended, particularly in these difficult times. Home deliveries have tripled. The shop stocks milk and dairy produce, bakery, and meat and fresh fruit and vegetables. To place an order ring: 07842 992825 Anything (within reason) can be ordered. Order by midday Weds for delivery on Thursday. The box will be left on your doorstep by one of our volunteer drivers. *Graham Glead.*



Some of you may remember Mike and Kathy Davidson's daughter, Fiona, who used to attend Sunday School here. She is now an anaesthetist in Greater Manchester, currently based at Royal Oldham Hospital. Kathy writes:



During the current coronavirus pandemic, she is working 3 x 12.5 hour shifts per week, a mixture of day and night shifts: she is normally part-time. Being only a couple of months away from completing her specialist training, she has been included on the Consultant rota.

Fiona works some shifts on ICU, which is challenging; full PPE is hot and uncomfortable to wear and breaks are needed every 3 or 4 hours. There have been some shortages of kit, including gowns, and Fiona has had particular problems with getting a supply of suitable masks

to fit her face shape. She and all the staff are seeing more deaths than they are used to, but they haven't been overwhelmed at Oldham. She did have one particularly traumatic shift when working a locum elsewhere.

When not on ICU she provides the anaesthetic cover for emergency or trauma lists or for maternity. A few of these patients also have confirmed or suspected Covid 19, so appropriate PPE is then required. When the hospital was being reconfigured to provide sufficient intensive care beds, Fiona was involved in training nurses to use theatre anaesthetic machines as substitute ventilators.

Fiona's husband, Liam, is working from home, on reduced hours, which helps with childcare. They are both grateful, particularly when Fiona is on nights, that Max and Niamh have been accommodated certain days at their respective schools. This is especially true for Max, as his autism means he has significant sensory needs.

She has been touched by the generosity of friends donating soft drinks, cakes etc for her to take into hospital staff and sending gifts of toiletries for herself.

*Those of us at home, whose life is going on as normal, may forget how hard life can be for those serving on the front line during this epidemic. It's good to be reminded how hard they are working in difficult circumstances. Please remember Fiona and all her colleagues in your prayers. Liz.*

## For our Prayers

Helen and Simon Gittens,  
Edith, George and Bertie  
Anne Jackson  
Peter and Sue Nicholas  
Jean Pimm  
John and Paddy Scott  
Shirley Worgan  
All the volunteers in our  
neighbourhoods



*Crab apple blossom on the edge of the Moor*

Our love and prayers are with Anne M who has to return to Bristol for further treatment; Mary S unwell for several weeks, lovingly nursed by her daughters, and gradually recovering; Steve and Edwina following Steve's fall and a spell in hospital; Tony and Gill and their family having received news from the US that Tony's father is very ill; Fiona, Kathy and Mike's daughter serving in the front line of the NHS.

Sadly there are many in our community grieving the loss of loved ones. Our thoughts and prayers are with families of Norman House, Eric's wife, Jill Venn, Mary Nash, Jean Jones and Alan Vowles.

## Congratulations to

...Phil and Fran Lawrence on the occasion of their Golden Wedding anniversary. While making arrangements to relieve Phil of the Polkesfield newsletter delivery due to the 'lockdown' we learnt that he and Fran were married on 28 March 1970 in Taunton. It was very cold and snowed 'confetti' on them and the guests! "So cold that Phil cut his thumb while cutting the cake" Fran recalls with a chuckle. When they got home to Wiveliscombe where Phil worked, the Rayburn was on and there were two hot cross buns to welcome them. Twenty five years later, now living in Stoke, they renewed their vows and had their marriage blessed at the Parish Church .....another 25 years and the coronavirus denied the planned Golden celebration.....Speaking to Fran a month later ... "a party isn't important". She and Phil are thankful for being alive, their wonderful family, having memories, glad to be still together making each other laugh. "When we are able to move freely

again, our celebration will be to go to Church to give thanks for all our blessings”.

...Judith Hincks on the occasion of her 80th birthday on 4 April, a milestone indeed! Our best wishes to Judith and David as they had to keep to themselves on a day when plans went awry!

... we also celebrate with Ben and Hollie Hembrow the birth of Harriet Ellen on 4 April, a sister for Rosie and another granddaughter for John and Liz.

**BMS Birthday Scheme** All best wishes to Joan Thatcher and Anne Gadsby who celebrate their birthdays on 1st and 20th May respectively. Happy birthday to you both!

**The Writes of Spring** Hasn't it been a lovely spring? I can't remember a year when the tulips looked so good, Even on a grey day as I look out of the window I can see the cherry blossom in flower and the beech tree coming into leaf. The swallows have returned and are tidying up their old nest in the porch.

The National Trust compiled a digital nature diary from observations submitted by the public during the first week of spring, which this year coincided with the outbreak of coronavirus in this country. Many of the writers speak of nature as a constant, a relief from anxiety, a rebirth, a source of hope. Themes that are part of the Easter message.

“The entries show that our collective relationship with nature is not simply a form of escapism – it's also a means of fathoming out meaning, of coming to some kind of understanding of the current crisis and of what it means to live as part of nature. There are references to self-

### **Virus**

24 March 2020

All the world is reciting  
a prayer this morning.

In my garden  
the slender pear tree  
puts on her bridesmaid  
dress,

the magnolia raises her  
arms fluttering white  
petalled gloves.

I hear the thrum of a  
mower in the distance  
reminding me that life  
goes on.

*DB. Hampshire*



isolation, social distancing, as well reflections on the lessons we're learning about the consequences of not treating the natural world with respect. But above all, running through the submissions is a sense of profound, underlying joy in the beauty of spring, paired with a cautious

optimism about the future." *Dr Pippa Marland. National Trust.*

The theme of joy runs through the epistle to the Philippians, which Sonya has chosen as her theme for the coming weeks. It has been described as a love letter, a letter to friends, an epistle of joy. It begins "I pray with joy ..." and concludes: "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" Paul's joy of course is not in spring but in his fellow Christians and in the Gospel.

I hope that despite the present circumstances you will be able to find joy in spring, joy in each other and joy in God.

To read the more about the diary and the other entries go to [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk) and look for Nature Diary. The poems and word pictures may give you hope, perhaps you will feel inspired to write something yourself next spring.

26th April	Philippians 1:12-30
3rd May	Philippians 2:1-11 Communion
10th May	Café church
17th May	Philippians 2:12-30
21 <sup>st</sup> May	Ascension Day
24th May	Philippians 3:1-14
31st May	Pentecost
7th June	Trinity Sunday Philippians 3:15 - 4:7 Communion
14 <sup>th</sup> June	Café Church

