A word from Alan

Welcome to our Spring Newsletter, which documents our ongoing response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our first reaction to the lockdown was bewilderment. How could we continue to function as a church? How could we ensure that people were supported? How could we stay in touch with one another? How would organisations like the Foodbank cope?

This newsletter gives a glimpse of the widespread effort to maintain worship, to care for those in need, and to keep open channels of communication. So much has gone on behind the scenes.

We still do not know when we will be able to return to church. When we do, we will face further challenges, but the experience of the past few weeks will help us.

Thanks to all those who have worked so hard and so creatively to sustain us over the past ten weeks. And thanks to all who have contributed to this newsletter – not least to Elizabeth and Amanda for their editorial and design skills.

In heartfelt gratitude for our partnership in the gospel,

The Revd Dr Alan Everett
Taking our services online

Technical challenges

In mid-March when it was becoming clear that it would soon become impossible to meet together, I was asked by Alan to help create the online services. I think many organisations at this point began to realise the scale of the change that was coming with little time to prepare.

The first thing to do was buy our webcam – I remember that it was one of two left on the website.

The first streamed service was for Mothering Sunday on 22 March. We used Facebook Live to broadcast. I had spent the days leading up to this finding out how our new kit worked and how to broadcast – this required rebuilding the All Saints Facebook page as, until that point, we only had a Facebook group and a place page.

That Sunday was the last time I would go into church for many weeks as the lockdown began the following day. We now needed to find a way to record, produce and broadcast services without leaving our houses. This posed a number of technical challenges. In addition, it was not long before Holy Week, with a large number of services in a short space of time.

Services were now recorded in the vicarage dining room. I talked Alan and Julie through setting up the equipment, using remote control software to film the service and transfer it to me. Zoom is used to record readings and intercessions to be edited into the service.

Amazingly, we continue to have a choir. Each part is recorded individually by choir members in their homes and stitched together by Nicky Mitchell using a program called Audacity. This is a painstaking, time-consuming task and I am enormously grateful to Nicky and Ruth for their work on this. My partner, Lizzie, who works as a subtitler on various channels including Sky News, had the necessary software to subtitle the hymns between shifts covering the news.

All of these elements are then edited together and cued into the broadcast software for streaming over YouTube. The live elements of the Eucharist are mixed with the pre-recorded hymns and videos as it is broadcast.

This is all complicated by the fact that on a typical Sunday I am two and half miles away from All Saints controlling the service remotely from my dining table.

I am hugely grateful to the wonderful ‘Floor Manager’ that is Julie for cueing Alan and setting up the shot and to Ethan who is now filming and broadcasting the midweek services.

While lockdown may be eased a little in the coming weeks it could be some time before we can meet together as before. I hope to create hybrid services where a few people may be in church but everything is still streamed to those who cannot be there physically.

Nearly twenty years ago we realised that we could still be the body of Christ as community while we rebuilt the church. While we cannot meet together in person we can still be that body as we minister to each other virtually.

Stay safe and I look forward to the time when I can see you without using a screen.

WILL BIRCH
Taking our services online

Music

Lockdown for the choir has been a very different experience to the normal run of events. Juniors and Seniors gather for choir practice Zoom meetings on Friday evenings, thanks to Peter Hardy and the Peplers. Around half of the choir meet virtually, but due to a time lag ensemble singing is not possible, so everyone is muted and sings to an accompaniment played from our home. Singers then send solo recordings which are mixed by Nicky and Will, taking around 5 hours per hymn.

We’ve welcomed piano and organ voluntaries from Sally Zimmermann, Norman and Marilyn Harper, and files from several guest singers.

We have remained relatively healthy, and are grateful to those who self-isolated in mid March to prevent the spread of the virus amongst us all. We have had a lucky escape!

The Juniors have enjoyed some lively sessions, with jokes, stories and some great singing. Their solo lines in *Lead me, Lord* (Wesley) and *O taste and see* (Vaughan Williams) have been beautiful.

Solo recording is not for everyone, and it takes several attempts to feel comfortable with singing alone. However, those who have managed this have become adept at this lonely form of music making.

Notable disasters include a smashed phone, intrusive dog barking, noisy motorbikes, a fall on the stairs causing a broken memory card, and late night computer failure! Highlights include the promotion of our dog Bruno to Assistant DOM at the organ console when it was too hot to leave him in the car.

You can listen to all the services to date plus some extra tracks of music by subscribing to the ASWD YouTube channel.

Here are some photos of recording artistes, the editing suite and my new assistant.

*RUTH HOLTON*
Taking our services online

Morning Prayer

Morning Prayer during this difficult time of lockdown gives me a good start, structure and purpose each day; a reason to get out of bed; something to look forward to and an opportunity to chat to friends face to face; just keeping in touch. It also brought back memories of Morning Prayer in the Vicarage dining room with Robert Titley, another time when we were unable to worship in the church.

True there have been technical problems - poor audio, which prevented me leading intercessions, and video and audio delay, which have been irritating but quite hilarious at times. But overall it has been, and still is, a great experience and has made isolation much easier for me.

PAT FISHER

It has been a great blessing that we have been able to pray together using the internet, holding a virtual morning prayer, sharing on Zoom five days a week during the pandemic. All we have needed is an online link or an ID number and password to join.

“Oh Lord open our lips.”
“And our mouths shall show forth Thy praise.”
These opening words have been the opening of morning prayer every Monday to Friday during our isolation.

Whilst the prayer time has gone well, we have experienced some challenges coping with Zoom on our computers or tablets. Certain phrases have become an integral part of solving virtual praying:
“We can only see the top of your head.”
“You sound miles away.”
“It’s an old computer. The sound cannot be any louder.”
“You are three lines behind.”
“You sound as if you are under water.”

The prayer session pauses whilst giggles overwhelm all, until someone else takes over from the lead person.
“Does anyone know this morning’s ID number?”
“832 8340 4446.”
“That ID won’t allow me into the meeting. It could be my Wi-Fi problem.”
“Press the link to join, that should work.”

Thank God for Zoom virtual prayer.

MAVIS ADENNEKAN
Taking our services online

Families

Making sure that our families are looked after during lockdown has been a priority. Moira and a team of volunteers have been providing weekly sheets for junior church worship on a Sunday which we hope families have found helpful.

We couldn’t provide our usual Good Friday activities for families this year but instead we put on a special Good Friday session of smAll Saints which was very well attended. Moira organised wonderful Easter goodie bags for all our regular families (see below). Moira and I also sneaked into All Saints to put together an Easter Garden display for the church, making use of the nativity figures our ‘Knit and Natter’ ladies had made.

The Posada WhatsApp group was resurrected and extended to include any families who wished to join. It has become a great channel of communication and for idea and photo sharing.

I send out a weekly email to all our families with the links for smAll Saints and all the resources the Diocese are providing on their website. It has been lovely to get emails back from families to say they are appreciating all that we are doing.

I am very aware too, that for some lockdown has imposed great pressures with full-time jobs and home schooling which leaves very little adult down time.

There have been changes. Our newest addition to the congregation, Otto Haslam, arrived safely on 14 April, a baby brother for Annie and son for George and Georgina. Sadly, we had to wave goodbye to Rosie, Nigel, Alfie, Joe and Patrick Enock-Brown as they moved to pastures new down in Sussex. Because of lockdown we were unable to give them the usual smAll Saints send-off.

WENDY STEPHENS
Taking our services online

Junior Church during lockdown

We have been without our weekly Sunday Junior Church sessions now for 9 weeks. During this time the children would have been involved in the Easter activities, including our Good Friday workshop, cake stall and fundraising for Christian Aid. And in the month of May they would have had the opportunity to engage in an Art project, with our Art Installation and the artist.

This has been replaced with weekly junior church worksheets, at first for the three age groups and more recently one weekly sheet produced by Eleanor, Becky, Claire, Edwina and Moira. This is no substitute for working with the children on a Sunday and everybody is sorely missed.

At Easter the children received an Easter package, delivered to the doorstep, by Moira, Adam, Mark and Belle. 24 packages were delivered to 40 children.

The package included, Easter eggs, paints, a stone, rainbow pinwheel, candle, wooden lolly sticks, Donkey and Feet template crafts. The crafts complemented the Easter story following ‘The Super Cool story of Jesus’ by Biblesociety.org.uk

It is great to know that most of the children are taking part in the weekly Small Saints Zoom sessions. We are all keeping in contact with each via our ‘All Saints Families’ Whatsapp group.

‘You are braver than you believe, and stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think’

Christopher Robin

MOIRA ROBERTS
Taking our services online

SmAll Saints

Moving smAll Saints to Zoom has been great fun and each week we are learning something new as we come more adept at sharing screens, knowing when to mute, pin videos etc. Squeaky Mouse has taken up residence at 29 Ferrers Road for the duration along with one of the knitted donkeys. Lockdown has been the ideal opportunity to experiment with Godly Play and our latest venture has been to tell the story via PowerPoint. Thank you to Orla, Sally’s lodger who told us an African tale all about a tortoise. With the assistance of Becky Hickey and Sally Zimmermann we are getting to grips with singing the songs. In recent weeks we have introduced the lighting of a candle in everyone’s home right at the beginning to bring a sense of unity and, as in church, parents (and occasionally children) read the prayers. It has been great fun and whilst it will never make up for face-to-face interaction has meant we can provide some form of worship for the little ones. However, it is not ideal for the very young who miss the opportunity to play with the toys in church. That is a great sadness.

Here are a few quotes from smAll Saints families.

“As a family we have all looked forward to and enjoyed our weekly Zoom Small Saints. It is a comforting and important part of our week. Thank you to Wendy and all those who contribute for keeping a constant in an unsettling time. We are so grateful for all the love and support we have received from Small Saints during lockdown with a newborn”.

-GEORGINA

“Thank you for all you are doing to keep the smAll Saints community connected, it is wonderful and very much appreciated”.

-CARLY

“Finn and Eve have been enjoying smAll Saints – it’s nice to have a bit of routine still and see familiar faces”.

-LOUISE

“William and Sophie do enjoy seeing everyone on screen. They were really gripped by Cathy’s talk!” (Good Friday)

-ISOBEL

Thank you to our team of smAll Saints volunteers for helping put together our Friday service which includes some wonderful activities for the children to do at home.

WENDY STEPHENS
Taking care of one another

Helping Hands & pastoral care

It was decided when lockdown was announced that it was imperative to make sure that every member of the congregation was contacted on a regular basis, whether by telephone call, text or email. We split the congregation into two groups according to need, allocating some to the pastoral team of volunteers and establishing a different system to cover the others. We listed all the groups who meet from within the congregation, from the knit and natter ladies through to the bell ringers, and made it the responsibility of each group co-ordinator to keep in touch with the group and report back on any concerns. This has worked well.

I send out a weekly email to the group leaders asking for feedback and also to forward any information that might be helpful to pass on to their members. Two separate email addresses were also created giving the opportunity for volunteers sign up (via Helping Hands) or make contact for assistance (via the pastoral email).

The early days of lockdown proved to be pretty busy. Revd Alan called and asked if I could help with maintaining church contact with members of the congregation.

I attended a meeting in the church with some PCC members and we identified various groups, leaders and potential volunteers to help. On returning home, I began contacting the latter by email to ask for their help, which would consist of making weekly phone calls to those identified as needing pastoral support, eg elderly, those with health issues, etc. The response was so heartening as almost everyone was eager to help. Some offered their services to be buddies in turn and I ended up with more volunteers than people to buddy them with, including a few who could do shopping or deliver medication if needed.

On discussion with Wendy S, it seemed prudent to maintain existing relationships between buddies (eg those already in regular contact or friends) rather than set up new ones. I then started phoning those identified as needing pastoral support, to ask if they wanted weekly phone contact and sought their permission to provide volunteers with their contact numbers. The vast majority was pleased to have such support. Having made a record of buddies in table form, I forwarded it to the Ministry Team, who in turn let me know the names of those they were supporting during lockdown.

The initiative is ongoing, but so far appears to be effective and welcomed. I know that I've enjoyed being in contact with those I've buddied.

WENDY STEPHENS

VALERIE SHERIDAN
Taking care of one another

Social Justice activity at ASWD

As it became clear that we would need to go into lockdown, our first concern was for the Foodbank which is reported on elsewhere. Thanks to the efficiency of the local organisation we were able to turn our attention elsewhere. In an amazing initiative, people who had been sleeping on the streets were accommodated in hotels or in some cases in flats. In a three-day period over 90% of rough sleepers were taken indoors at a cost of £3.2 million nationally. This is a tiny amount of money in comparison with the huge sums that are required to keep the economy afloat. This has the potential to be a good news story as people are being given additional support towards finding more long-term solutions. This comes at additional cost but if we can support homeless charities now, we may well feel that this is an investment. Locally, we support the Robes project which is helping 29 people.

There have been several meetings of the local leaders of Citizens UK. The main concern is that there is a huge disparity in the experience of the pandemic based on peoples’ socio-economic conditions. Some have money worries and live in very cramped spaces. Local schools and charities are trying to offer support but it is proving difficult to match resources to needs. This is something that we will need to focus on in the coming months as this disparity is likely to be even more apparent as the lockdown eases.

CATHY WILES

Foodbank

St Margaret’s Streatham is now the hub of the South London Foodbank, and volunteers are divided into two groups. There are drivers who pick up crates (whilst donning gloves and masks) and deliver food parcels anywhere from near Waterloo down to Norbury and South Norwood or across to Forest Hill, and then there are others who work in the Warehouse at St Margaret’s, sorting food and “picking” to make up the food parcels. The Foodbank is masterminded by Elizabeth, who calmly answers the phone and directs operations with occasional announcements - this morning’s most memorable one concerning unpopular tins of grapefruit, “put one in every parcel, tuck them somewhere into your boxes and hopefully clients can hide them in a fruit salad for the family”.

It’s vital to maintain a sense of humour in the Foodbank. The drivers often have a stressful time with deliveries, as some clients are very agoraphobic or have very limited English, then there are occasional wrong addresses and phone numbers. Returning a parcel feels like failing, as judging by the overwhelming gratitude of recipients, they really need the food we deliver. I’m relieved to be in the warehouse today, as I had a disappointing 25% success rate on one of my driving shifts last week.

RUTH HOLTON
Exploring our faith together

Cathy’s home group meeting at Ann Holley’s

Our group began as a Lent group a couple of years ago and has continued to meet at Ann Holley’s house in Idmiston Road starting with supper at 7pm and finishing at about 9pm. We gather roughly once a month to discuss a book and have considered the spirituality of older years. During Lent we meet weekly. This year, there was a little disappointment that a course was not being proposed and so we decided to read a poem a day using Janet Morley’s book ‘The Heart’s Time’. We were able to meet once before the lockdown and then met via Zoom. It was amazing how profound the discussion was. This poem was one of the ones we found ourselves referring to quite often. It has somehow caught the spirit of the times for us. We are currently reading Sam Wells book called ‘Learning to Dream Again” and our next meeting will be on Monday 15 June. The link is sent out on the day as it makes it easier to find.

CATHY WILES

Deaths of Flowers

I would if I could choose
Age and die outwards as a tulip does;
Not as this iris drawing in, in-coiling
Its complex strange taut inflorescence, willing
Itself a bud again - though all achieved is
No more than a clenched sadness,
The tears of gum not flowing.
I would choose the tulips reckless way of going;
Whose petals answer light, altering by fractions
From closed to wide, from one through many
perfections,
Till wrecked, flamboyant, strayed beyond recall,
Like flakes of fire they piecemeal fall.

EJ Scovell 1907-1999

Bible Study Group in Lockdown

The Bible Study Group has remained in touch throughout the lockdown and have discussed the merits (or not) of trying to do a Bible study using Zoom or similar. However most people thought the nature of our group study just did not lend itself to a ‘virtual’ meeting. For example, in our group we normally look at a specific passage going round the room with each of us reading a verse at a time. This gives us the opportunity to hear a variety of translations and often leads to some very interesting discussions. One of the group commented that much of the benefit of our sessions has been the spontaneity of conversation, allowing a line of thought to be developed. Unfortunately the delay presented by Zoom does take away this element of spontaneity and a structure would have had to be introduced which none of the group seemed up for. We have therefore decided to wait until we are able to meet again in the church, albeit at a 2 metre distance, so that we can be together in our normal relaxed setting. However we continue to be in regular and supportive contact with each other.

JUDY POWLES
Fellowship

Women’s Breakfast

Zoom has opened up opportunities for us during lockdown and going ahead with the women’s breakfast on our usual last Saturday in the month worked. A good number signed in to share a catch-up over breakfast in their respective houses and it was lovely that a few people joined us who would not normally come to the church for various reasons.

We had some interesting and lively discussions over subjects such as beating the parish bounds, how teachers were to mark the GCSE & ‘A’ Levels grades, rearing of little chicks (Alison Watt-Cooper showed us the chicks she was rearing at home) and generally just finding out how we were all coping. The plan is to continue to meet this way whilst lockdown continues. It is odd though, eating in front of each other on screen – it shouldn’t be, but we will all no doubt get used to it.

WENDY STEPHENS

“Well, I prefer the real thing, but it’s a wonderful opportunity to get to know church members that you don’t know, and hearing about the lives and changes happening in the ones you do know. It was lovely to hear about Antonia’s teaching situation in our Zoom meeting... it seemed to work well to me but I don’t have a lot of experience.”

GWENDA WALTERS

“It was good to “be together” with people and to feel connected face to face for a short while at least.”

JUDY POWLES

“I enjoyed the zoom breakfast. It was good to see everyone. It is not nearly as good as the real thing but great that we could do it. At one point I seemed to be the only person actually eating! If it’s breakfast then people must eat! What I like about the breakfasts in general is the opportunity to talk to people I don’t get to talk to very often.”

LESLEY SALTMARSH
Fellowship

All Saints Men’s Group

At the start of ‘lockdown,’ Stuart arranged three sub-groups amongst the Men’s Group to provide spiritual and practical help to each other. The Joseph Resources Group (practical help and support whenever needed), the Peter Outreach Group (keeping in touch and cheering us up), and the John Worship Group (inspiring and strengthening us spiritually). Men volunteered to join the various groups and we have all helped out where and when needed.

The most successful initiative from these groups, came from Carl Johnson. Carl & Eunice tune into Radios 2’s Pause for Thought and so Carl suggested that we could try and do this amongst ourselves during lockdown. I must admit that I thought we would probably do three of four Pause for Thoughts and people would lose interest, and that would be it.

However, after the first week, the feedback started coming in and we knew we were on to something good! We have now had 14 Pause for Thoughts and they have been very well received within the Men’s Group and within the larger church congregation, as word spread of what we had begun.

The different styles and varying content, lead to a great sense of anticipation each week. From ‘emptying the cupboards’ to ‘Carthusian monks’ we have covered a lot of ‘thoughts’ in the past 11 weeks.

The Men’s Group has also met virtually replacing the pub with Zoom. Attendance by old and new faces have made our meetings something to look forward too. We also hosted a quiz and Terry enjoyed a few virtual beers with us all also. Lockdown has certainly awoken the Men’s Group as something more than a group of Men eating crisps and drinking beer. The sense of fellowship amongst us has deepened over the past few months and has brought us closer together as a group. We hope to collate these reflections at the end of lockdown, so we can always look back at how we kept each other connected during this pandemic when we couldn’t meet at Church.

ETHAN GLACKIN-MCCOLGAN
Stewardship

The Finance Team

The church building was closed in late March following lockdown. Services and group activities have continued online where possible, but ASWD has lost all of its rental income, which forms a substantial part of its total income. Spending has been reduced, but there will be a need to draw on reserves. The financial situation is under constant review and further reductions in expenditure will be made as necessary.

A Finance Team has been set up, comprising the two Churchwardens (Julian Greene and Angie Sharma), the PCC Treasurer (Ros Scott), the PCC Secretary (Jenny West) and the Deputy Chair of the PCC (Elizabeth Flood).

It has been meeting regularly on a fortnightly basis to oversee the income and expenditure of All Saints. The team would be happy to answer any questions you may have about its work.

We are grateful to those who are able to give by standing order and we would encourage those who give in other ways to continue to do so online or by cheques payable to All Saints PCC. These can be dropped into the Church post box. Thank you for your generosity.

Link to online giving here: https://www.gofundme.com/f/3ka5hj-parish-funds

ANGIE SHARMA