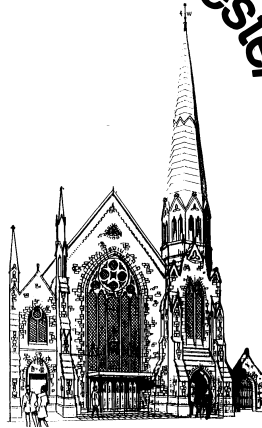


NEWS

United Church Dorchester



APRIL 2020

Registered Charity No: 1137996

Methodist and United Reformed
Part of Churches Together in Dorchester

Minister:

Rev Peter Clark 01308 425978
Please contact one of the Church Stewards if necessary

Pastoral Visitor: Angela Fisher

Church Secretary: John Hilton

Senior Steward: John Parson

Church (general number): 01305 262462

Church office: 01305 457477

Website: unitedchurchdorchester.org.uk

Private Tel & email removed from web version

Coronavirus

In the light of current coronavirus advice from the UK Government and various public bodies, the following changes to usual church life have been agreed:

All church services, events, activities and meetings have been cancelled or postponed and, following guidance from the national Methodist Church, the United Church Dorchester building is now closed with immediate effect.

Blood donors are one of the only organisations being allowed to use our building. Did you know that Marylyn Mould has given blood 85 times? She started at 16 when she worked at a big organisation in Blackburn and had to get her Dad's permission before she could donate! They actually came to the works, as they did at County Hall for many years, and it was a good way to get away from her desk for an hour.

Everyday Prayer

Loving God, at Easter time we thank you for the joy at the heart of our faith, and for resurrection and renewal in our lives and in the world around us. At this time, when we are unable to meet together, keep us united in spirit as we pray for one another. Amen

Lectionary readings

5th April

Isaiah 50:4-9a
Psalm 31:9-16
Philippians 2:5-11
Matthew 26:14-27:66 *or* Matthew 27:11-54

12th April

Acts 10:34-43 *or*
Jeremiah 31:1-6
Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24
Colossians 3:1-4 *or*
Acts 10:34-43
John 20:1-18 *or*
Matthew 28:1-10

19th April

Acts 2:14a, 22-32
Psalm 16
1 Peter 1:3-9
John 20:1-18 *or*
Matthew 28:1-10

26th April

Acts 2:14a, 36-41
Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19
1 Peter 1:17-23
Luke 24:13-35

Church Family News

Happy 90th birthday to John Travell at the beginning of April.

Mary Martin celebrated her 60th birthday (and we all enjoyed her cake) on the last Sunday that we all worshipped together at church.

A huge thank you to all the pastoral visitors who have been amazing over the last couple of weeks. They are keeping everyone informed and connected.

Worshipping at Home

There is information on the church website about services that are available online.

BBC1 is broadcasting weekly services on Sunday mornings, with individual preachers and readers on location, mixed with recordings of previous Songs of Praise hymn singing. The first programme was broadcast on 22 March and the next programme, for Passion Sunday, was broadcast on 29 March from Bangor Cathedral. They are available to view on **BBC iPlayer**.

Radio 4 is broadcasting a regular **Sunday Worship** at 8.10am.

It was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath was beginning. The women who had come with Joseph from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments. On the sabbath they rested according to the commandment. (Luke 23:54-56)

Dear Friends,

We returned from Australia which is jokingly referred to as 'down under' but I found Dorset to be even more upside down, thanks to Covid-19 and we have spent three weeks since then, trying to react appropriately and to be a church innovatively. I had expected to launch straight into the usual slow grind of Lent, exhausting series of Holy Week services and then delight in the glories of Easter. Not this year!

We ministers sometimes rather ungraciously complain about those folk who come to services on the Twin Peaks of Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday, missing the quietude of Maundy Thursday and the desperate depths of Good Friday. It's one reason why I have a particular passion for the Stations of the Cross which to me enable us to identify with the enormous cost paid on the cross. I remember one of my Bridport members looking at the wonderful Bridport Stations of the Cross display there in the United Church last year and reduced to tears, saying she didn't think she'd realised ever before quite what he went through. It never occurred to me that I would be approaching holy week, fully prepared to have no services at all. No peaks, no depths, no gathering, no singing, no celebrations. And yet here we are.

But if the last weeks have taught us anything, we have surely learnt that, even if we are apart we are together and, what is more that we are never alone (even though at times we certainly feel it is!) On the last two Sundays I have enjoyed three different services sent on different electronic media and as I write this, I am aware that a portion of my brain is composing a sermon for the Circuit offering on Palm Sunday. The church has not always been as it is now. In some places and at sometimes it has gathered in homes, sometimes in fear of persecution and, do you know what, the church has adapted and survived.

On that first Bad Friday evening, as Joseph and the women laid a very definitely dead Jesus in that tomb, they knew, very definitely, that it was all over. Their dreams, hopes and expectations lay there as dead as their disappointing Messiah. As a former Archbishop of Canterbury once said, two days later, they didn't know it was Easter!

So to a degree we mostly feel a bit like that at the moment. Flat, confused, disappointed, frustrated, fearful and so on. We don't know how this will work out or indeed how it will be for us who come out at the other end of this long, apparently interminable period of isolation, guarding and social distancing.

But what we do know, thanks to those first, mind-blowingly, world-changingly few days, that this is not the end. There was Resurrection and there will be resurrection again. We will get through this and we will adapt and change and come out of the other side. For we are the People of Hope and at the very core of our story - His Story - is a faith built on that hope!

So please in the next few weeks read and re-read the stories of arrest, crucifixion, death and rising. Immerse yourself in them. Believe in them and, believe that, as Jesus once said, "The truth will set you free."

Easter blessings to you, one and all.



SUPPORT SERVICE DURING COVID-19 OUTBREAK

Please don't forget that United Church Dorchester is operating a support service for anyone who needs to self-isolate – if you are vulnerable due to age, health issues or in a household needing to isolate due to possible infection then this support is for you.

We have a willing team of people comprising younger folk under 70 who can shop, collect prescriptions, post mail or any other urgent task. Please don't struggle on alone or put yourself at risk, particularly as shopping may involve lengthy queueing. We are here to help.

To access support, please contact Peter and Gill Robinson who are coordinating the volunteers: petergillrobinson@btinternet.com If you do not have access to email, please phone the Church Office (01305 457477) and leave a message: the answer machine is being checked every couple of days, and someone will get back to you as soon as possible.

Dear Members of UCD (United Church Dorchester),

It is obviously a difficult time for us all, but we shall try to stay in touch. We hope that you all received your copy of "Vision" magazine and other papers. Shirley Hood, Wendy and John Hilton, and the pastoral visitors all combined to get it prepared, printed and delivered promptly. They did a great job, and we thank them. During the next (few?) months, Wendy and the pastoral team will play a crucial role in keeping all members supported. We have asked the pastoral visitors to phone each of their flock every week if possible. Susy and Kevin Rogers will be working hard to keep the church web-site updated, and Gill and Peter Robinson will be organising the Support Service.

This Newsletter will be put on the church web-site and may also go out as an email attachment. For those without email, we hope to print paper copies and have them sent out, either by post or delivered through letter boxes by volunteers on their daily walk.

Although we cannot meet for worship, we can still pray and read the bible every day, and on Sunday mornings on BBC1 there will be Sunday Worship. Enid and I watched and joined in the first one, which was from St David's Cathedral, and which was very good. The hymns were from a "Songs of Praise" which had been recorded at the same place last year. The programme was at 11.45am on the 22nd March and will be at 11.30am on the 29th (I am writing this on the 25th) so the time may vary. (Now on the 28th, the time has suddenly changed to 10.45am!!) Those who can access the internet have many other choices. The circuit is producing an online service each Sunday. The first on the 22nd was by Debs Brazier with Pete helping. On the 29th it will be Pete Brazier, Palm Sunday Peter Clark, and Easter Sunday Gwyneth Owen. We watched Debs last Sunday and it was excellent, and it was good to have worship led by a familiar face. The circuit is also producing a written order of service each week with the hope that it can be delivered to those who do not have a computer.

On a lighter note, Enid and I wondered what would happen if we were not able to have our hair cut for several months. She suggested that we could each have a pony-tail! I have always been "short back and sides", even in the 1970s when long hair for men was fashionable. It could be interesting!

So, keep smiling. Keep talking to each other on the telephone. Above all, remember that God loves you and God will always love you.

With my best wishes,
John Parson (Senior Steward)

Hi Everyone,

Sorry it's taken so long for the Stewards to get in touch but things have been moving very fast. It was only on Wednesday, the 18th, that the morning service was cancelled and four of us sat in the foyer (well spread out) trying to work out what to do. We went through a series of iterations from spacing chairs 2 metres apart and asking Debs to provide content for a virtual service at United Church, which the next day had to be cancelled because of the developing situation. (Thanks to Debs and Pete Brazier for the service they prepared for the circuit website.) And so it continued; every plan we developed was overtaken by events the next day! As a result we've since had to close down the lettings (apart from blood donors) and internal group meetings, try to work out how we communicate with church members and how we provide shopping and other help for members of our congregation in need during this enforced stay at home. (The shopping service is now being led by Peter and Gill Robinson.) We now know that 40 households aren't on email and there are plans in place to supply them with printed information.

The AGM was cancelled but, as no post had more than one candidate standing, we have decided that we continue as if the AGM had taken place (and, if necessary, ratify everything when lock-down is lifted). Hence, Gillian Daniel and Paul Smith have stood down (our thanks to both of them for all they have done as stewards and continue to do in other roles) and Brian Savage joins us on the stewards (welcome).

Finally, work is progressing to create virtual, on-line, gathering spaces where we can hold meetings and a virtual coffee shop where people can meet and chat. Kevin and Susy Rogers are heading this and they have put more information elsewhere in this newsletter. Now the situation is beginning to stabilise we hope that we can start to take a little control again and begin to think of new ways to strengthen our faith in this new and rather strange world we now live in.

The Stewards Council

Coffee and chat

As part of our continuing efforts to help everyone feel that they are still part of a larger community, we have been investigating how best to create 'virtual' or online meetings for groups of church members. Many of us will be used to using things like Skype or Facetime for one-to-one video calls, and we think we've found a way of doing something similar but with larger groups.

So we shall be trying out a virtual or online 'coffee and chat' session – hopefully three times a week, at 11.00 on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. If you think you might be interested in joining this group (on any of the days), please email coffee.chat@unitedchurchdorchester.org.uk and we'll send you further details. These details will confirm that you only need very basic computer skills. We will guide you through (either with written instructions or verbally by telephone) exactly what you need to do and you will discover that you have learnt something new at the end, as well as having a good chat, face-to-face, with a group of your friends.



Prayer Chain

If you would like prayer for yourself or others at any time, please contact Penny Fennell. Details can be given anonymously, and confidentiality within the prayer chain is absolute unless there is a safeguarding risk.

News from Lübbecke

I have been in touch with one of my friends from our partner church, St Andreaskirche, in Germany. There are currently over 30 cases of Covid-19 in the town. My friend works in a retirement home, which she says is more difficult now because of the need to distance and constantly clean. She is exhausted but cheerful.

At 5pm every evening the churches ring their bells and people put a lighted candle in their window as a symbol of hope. My friend says she often thinks of all her friends in Dorchester. Please pray for all in Lübbecke, especially Pastor Eberhard Helling. More news as I get it.

Susy

Residential Missionary Weekend, 23rd to 25th October at Ammerdown Conference Centre, Radstock, Somerset Theme: "Encountering Diversity in Mission + Building Bridges in Rome"

Led by the Rev Tim and Mrs Angela Macquiban, who have recently served five years as mission partners at the English-speaking Methodist Church in Rome and in developing the work of the Methodist Ecumenical Office as a place of hospitality and education reaching out to all.

Full board, Friday dinner to Sunday lunch: £190. Deposit of £80 required by 28th April, full payment by 20th July. Shared transport arranged. Further details and booking forms available from David Reep.

Notices for order of service and news sheet

The deadline for the May news sheet will be 10.30am on Sunday 19th April. Please send notices for inclusion to Myra Dawson.

Church Website

Don't forget to check out the church website (<http://unitedchurchdorchester.org.uk>), which is managed by Susy and Kevin Rogers. As well as a downloadable version of the news sheet, it also gives information about the church and its various groups, events, reports and how to contact specific members/groups. The website belongs to the church as a whole so you are encouraged to contribute. Where possible, go, discover and explore!

Data Protection Act

In common with most other churches and organisations, the United Church Dorchester keeps pastoral records of the names, addresses and telephone numbers of regular worshippers and friends. The information is used for church purposes only, is never communicated to any other body and is held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Please notify us in writing if you do not wish your data to be held by us in this way.