

AMERSHAM FREE CHURCH

(A Baptist Union and United Reformed Church)

Woodside Road, AMERSHAM, Bucks, HP6 6AJ

Minister: The Revd Ian Green BA MTh

Associate Minister: The Revd Erna Stevenson BTh MSc

Registered Charity Number 1137287



From: The Revd Erna Stevenson

Thursday 11th June 2020

Dear Friends,

What a joy it was for the elders that on Monday they could hold their first Zoom meeting since the Lockdown started back in March! To master the technology, to 'see' each other after all that time was a real treat and to exchange news of family, friends and church people was very encouraging. Some of us, as so many others, do find the isolation harder to bear than others, and we are grateful to the Revd Sarah Crane, author of our Thought for the Week for sharing with us her experiences as Lead Chaplain at Milton Keynes University Hospital serving at the sharp end of the fight against Covid-19. It helps to put our own plight into perspective.

Finding ourselves in a situation not of our own choosing can be debilitating, and perhaps the hardest part of it is losing control, having to give up our cherished freedom of choice over our lives. But as our recent Pentecost celebrations affirmed, the human spirit infused with the divine Spirit can create within us an inner freedom, which is not only able to deal with the restrictions but, in fact, can make us flourish with new creativity and fresh possibilities. And we are thankful for the many signs of this within our own church family.

In fact, I cannot stop marvelling at the variety of ways we have found for coping with our isolation here at AFC under the inspired guidance of our leaders and of each other. And at the daily surprises that reach us through news and gifts and shared thoughts from all directions. It was good to have news from some of the other churches in our area recently. From Edwin Quidan, Minister of Harlesden St. Margaret's & St Georges Church, from members of Trinity URC Slough, from Burnham and Corse End URC-s. In these challenging times there is real strength in all these contacts and in the on-going and encouraging relationships with our fellow Christians in those churches, as well as being reminded of some of our overseas contacts. We send them our prayerful good wishes and we are looking forward to having a greeting from Liz and Sergio Vilela in Mozambique this Sunday, in the audio service.

We have also made contact with Rayners Care Home and they have told us they will ensure that residents there have access to the audio service week by week.

For some of us this period of Lockdown is a God-given opportunity to catch up on our reading. You may be interested to be reminded (first published in the April issue of Family News) that Reform, the monthly magazine of The United Reformed Church is available free online whilst the Lockdown lasts. It can be reached through Google on Reform Magazine Free under the icon Stuck indoors? Read Reform free. In the current issue there are some interesting explorations on the meaning of the Lord's Supper and previous issues are also there to read.

In both the recent Elders' meeting and in the subsequent Team meeting yesterday one of the items discussed was the issue of re-opening our church as and when it becomes possible. The first step will be to open the church for the use of private prayer from Monday 15th June. The doors will be open on Tuesday 12-1pm, Thursday 3-4 pm and Sunday 5-6 pm. This will not be a service, just a quiet space in the Sanctuary for individual prayer - there will occasionally be some background music.

During these opening times an elder, steward and Ian will be on hand to welcome people and make sure they are comfortable and safe - it will all be physically distanced. Additional information will become available on the website over the weekend.

You will have already heard the sad news about the death of one of church members and good friend, Mr John Fox. His funeral service will be held on Friday, 12th June, the details of the webcast provided by the family can be found in Ian's blog of Wednesday, 10th June. We pray that John's family may be upheld by God's comfort and love in these difficult days.

We also pray that we may be given all the patience and courage, the wisdom and discernment we need in these extraordinary circumstances as we follow our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ian joins me in sending you our love and best wishes,

Erna