

**Pastoral Letter #10 | 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2020**

***<sup>2</sup> Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving. <sup>3</sup> At the same time pray for us as well that God will open to us a door for the word, that we may declare the mystery of Christ, for which I am in prison, <sup>4</sup> so that I may reveal it clearly, as I should.***

***Colossians 4:3-6, NRSV***

Dear Friends,

***How is your prayer life?***

***How alert are you in prayer?***

***What are you thankful for?***

***Who are you praying for?***

They may be questions that you've been asked before, perhaps questions you think you know the answers to. But I encourage you to really pause for a few moments, and really reflect on them. As the words from Colossians challenge us, how alert are we to prayer?

Throughout the pandemic I'd say that my prayer life has sometimes lacked rhythm and routine. As the pattern of life around me has been under constant uncertainty and change, juggling the demands of family life, studies, and ministry, maintaining a settled, regular routine of prayer has been a challenge.

But, in saying that, I'm going along with a misconception of what a 'prayer life' should be. Too often prayer becomes either a shopping list – where we tick off all the people and things to pray for and tell ourselves 'job done', or a chore where we believe we must devote significant chunks of our day to kneeling in prayer and petition to God. Neither of those approaches are 'wrong', but neither are they all that 'prayer' is and can be. Prayer is not actually about what we do, but about entering into a space of conversation with Jesus, our friend who loves and cares for us, celebrates with us in our joys, and walks with us in our sorrows.

Although I would say my prayer life has lacked routine, I think I've spent more time in prayer. So much that we have journeyed through together these last months was unexpected, none of us were prepared for it, and I certainly didn't take the 'ministry during pandemic' module at college! Days have been immersed in prayers and petitions to God for wisdom and guidance and encouragement, and shots of praise and thanksgiving for getting through another day; for stories

told of God at work among us; for inspiration and opportunities to 'declare the mystery of Christ' by email, video, face to face and more.

In his short book about the essential elements of Christian I 'Being Christian'. Rowan Williams, past Archbishop of Canterbury reflects on prayer and some of the writings of monk, John Cassian:

*"Let your prayer," says Cassian, "be frequent and brief." If you try too soon to spend three hours in intense contemplation, the chances are you'll end up with cramp and lots of distractions. You'll find other things to think about apart from God. But by 'frequent and brief' he does not mean just uttering the odd casual word. 'Frequent' is serious, and means 'Keep at it: make it habitual.' But also: 'don't try to pile up the 'prayer hours' for the sake of thinking that you are doing well. Instead, remember what you are moving towards is finally the relationship of Jesus to the Father. 'That union of the Father and Son and the Son with the Father will fill our senses and our minds,' he writes. Notice the phrasing: it is once again about being an embodied person living in a particular place and yet seeing all that is around you in the light of God, because prayer has become habitual.'*

I encourage you in the coming days to continue to build up a frequency of prayer. Conversation with God, asking God to aid us all as we seek to declare the mystery of Christ in a world and our communities that continue to deeply need to experience the light of love of Christ's hope and grace.

May you yourselves know the certainty of that hope and grace in the coming days,

***In peace & hope,***

**Rev Dan**

**The first ever  
Cordless Phone  
was created by  
God.**

**He named it  
"Prayer"...**  
**It never Loses its  
Signal and U never  
have to Recharge it.  
Use it Anywhere...!**



## News & Updates – November 2020

### Action for Children

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As we work towards Christmas, all 3 congregations *normally* include a focus on the work of AFC within our Advent and Christmas programme. Things are different this year but you can donate to the work of AFC this year by making a gift by cheque (payable to: Action for Children) or sending shopping vouchers.

These can be placed in the weekly offering plate at face to face worship in the coming weeks (and by the end of November) or sent direct to Joyce Peirce, Alafin, Nyton Road, Aldingbourne, PO20 3TX

### Circuit Plan

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Due to restrictions, we are not printing copies of the circuit plan at the moment, and because of the changeable circumstances we're in, the circuit plan is being published one month at a time. Local plan dates for November are as follows:

	NOV	1 <sup>st</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>	22 <sup>nd</sup>	29 <sup>th</sup>
Together	9am	Lynne James	Rev Dan Balsdon	Rev Dan Balsdon	Rev Dan Balsdon	TBC Dan Balsdon
Bognor Regis	10:30am	Malcolm Lindo	Rev Dan [Com]	Joyce Stroud	Rev Tony Brazier	Rev Mike Lewis
Felpham	10:30am	Stephen Waters	Lynne James	Rev Dan [Com]	Liz Bates	Margaret Thompson
Westergate	10:30am	--	--	--	Rev Dan [Com]	--

### Together

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The Worshipping Together booklet for November 1<sup>st</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> is enclosed, with a reminder of details of Together, meeting at **9am on Sundays**.

### Live Stream from Felpham

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As well as Together at 9am, Felpham's 10:30am, face to face worship is being streamed via zoom. All are welcome to join this stream by following the same instructions that we have given for connecting to **Together**.

### Keeping Warm

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As part of the government legislation to be COVID secure, we have to maximise natural ventilation, which means having a combination of doors and/or windows open. If you feel the cold, we encourage you to wear an extra layer or bring a blanket at face to face worship.

### Annual Leave

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I'm on annual leave from Mon 26<sup>th</sup> Oct, returning on Nov 3<sup>rd</sup>. Please contact a local church steward or pastoral secretary if necessary, during this time.

## **Other Worshipping Opportunities**

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Free Methodist Phone lines, updated each Thursday.

Listen to a prayer: 0808 281 2514

Listen to news: 0808 281 2478

## **Advent & Christmas**

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We continue to look at updated guidance and seek to plan our advent and Christmas programme accordingly. This will include a combination of phone/zoom and face to face. More info in the next mailing, in readiness for Advent 1 on 29<sup>th</sup> Nov.

## **Local Church Updates**

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Thanks to the many who continue to help us maintain Covid-safety in our buildings. Please continue to support us in seeking to ensure safety as we also enable face to face worship to continue. We pray for those areas in the country where face to face worship has had to be suspended again.

### ***Bognor Regis***

House Group (Fortnightly on Weds, 10:30am) and Church Fellowship (fortnightly on Thurs, 2:30pm) are now meeting in the church, Please contact Anita for info.

### **Memorial Service**

Our annual memorial service, this year entitled '**Remembrance and Hope**' will be held at 3pm on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> November. This will be a time to remember the lives of those close to us who have died and will include opportunity to name those people before God. Names can be submitted to Rev Dan in advance, even if you will be unable to attend.

### ***Felpham***

#### **Memorial Service**

Our annual memorial service, this year entitled '**Remembrance and Hope**' will be held at 3pm on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> November. This will be a time to remember the lives of those close to us who have died and will include opportunity to name those people before God. Names can be submitted to Rev Dan or Jan Hall in advance, even if you will be unable to attend. The service will also be streamed via zoom – connect through the instructions for **Together**.

### ***Westergate***

Westergate successfully reopened the building last week for face to face worship and will next gather on 22<sup>nd</sup> November. Thanks to those who worked hard to make this happen.