

Warwick Unitarians

Newsletter

November 2020



It was with great pleasure that we re-opened the Chapel for services on Sunday 26th July, and we have continued to gather for worship in our small community, well distanced and masked, in our beautiful Chapel since then.

Sadly, the Coronavirus pandemic which is still raging around the world has not yet been brought under control in the UK and this has caused our Government to reimpose the lockdown that blighted the first half of the year. As I write the full implications of this announcement are still being negotiated, and there is pressure from many different quarters which must make decision-making extraordinarily difficult, but firmness and determination must be the watchwords at this juncture if they are to bring down the rates of infection nationally and locally. We will therefore have to play our part and follow the guidance and the rules once they are clear.

I spoke last week of the need to follow the guidelines laid out by the Government previously, but that was in the context of hymn-singing, which had crept up above the private humming of hymns as we listened to them played on the piano or on recordings. Inevitably the instinctive desire to join in had led to more audible participation. Singing aloud is still considered one of the dangerous transmitters of the virus, as my choirs have sadly had to accept, but the issue is no less important in congregational singing too, and I am grateful to everyone for accepting my insistence that we should only listen rather than sing along.

During the past weeks we have much appreciated several visits from Diane Rutter, who is also of course responsible for helping Peter Flower create the excellent recorded services that are sent out by the Kingswood Chapel (try for example <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5lWzIRd2Rbl>)

Gavin Lloyd came from Bicester to lead our first return to worship back in July with a fine service on the theme of the Fruits of the Spirit. It has been very

warming to see Gavin return to join us since then not only when taking services himself but when others have been leading us in worship.

We have also been pleased to welcome our District Minister Rev Sue Woolley. Sue has been producing a stream of thoughtful services from her home ever since the first lockdown. These have been listened to and enjoyed by people all over the Midlands while their Churches and Chapels have been closed, but we consider ourselves particularly fortunate that she has been able to come to Warwick and take our services in person. If lockdown is confirmed to apply to churches I shall continue to send out the weekly link to Sue's services.

Rev Jeffery Bowes, who has responsibility for the Coventry congregation which has met more sporadically, has also taken services for us, but we are delighted that he also been attending other speakers' services here.

We are deeply grateful for all of these people for supporting the Warwick Unitarians in these challenging times.

It has been good that they have enabled us to meet up again. Perhaps one regret has been that, what with social distancing and without refreshments being served afterwards, there has not been so much opportunity to chat. May 2021 eventually bring that back!

Argument and disagreement will continue for many weeks about the wisdom of this latest lockdown. There are forceful points being made on all sides as everyone in the country is affected in one way or another and it is the Government's difficult task to assess all the different viewpoints and arrive at the best possible outcome for the nation. We can be grateful that it does not fall to us to reach such significant decisions. We should pray for all those who do have to contribute to the discussions, that they may be guided not by self-interest but by the long term interests of the entire nation; that they should bear in mind, as they appear to side with one element of our society, that other sectors too have strong needs and valid requirements. In our unequal society there are too many whose voices may be heard too little but whose needs are great, needs that cover every aspect of livelihoods and health, including mental health. May our decision makers be blessed with the Wisdom of Solomon as they face the terrible problems that face us this winter and may we emerge for 2020 strengthened and resolute, whatever the privations that ensue.



The Diary for November would hopefully read as follows if there is full relaxation of the rule forbidding the opening of places of worship, but I shall have to confirm that later by email.

1 st November	Diane Rutter
8 th November	Gavin Lloyd
15 th November	Rev Jeffrey Bowes
22 nd November	Diane Rutter
29 th November	Rev Mark Hutchinson

We thank Elaine compiling a Pulpit Rota, calling as always on the good nature of our friends who are prepared to give up their Sunday afternoons for us. We are very grateful to them all for joining us.

All being well, by December we shall be hoping to hold some services in what remains of Advent. But it is clear that a Carol Service would prove too tempting to us all to sing out, so I give you advance notice that we have decided that this year there will not be a Friday Carol service before Christmas. We are however planning to hold a Christmas service on Sunday 20th December. The next service would then be on January 3rd 2021.



When I wrote in June, I said that we should use the opportunity of our enforced absence to reflect now on what we want from our meetings, why we attend, what we contribute, how we want to reshape things to fit in with the “new normality” that is facing us as panic subsides but the reality of the ongoing existence of the Covid19 virus in our society becomes clear. I invited you to consider whether the online services that Sue Woolley and others were providing in the interim could provide for all our spiritual needs. I suggested we should ask ourselves what more we are looking for as we walk in through

the front door of the Chapel on a Friday or a Sunday afternoon? And should we ask what it is that we have found here as we leave again ninety minutes later.

I proposed a variety of possible answers, but wanted you to think for yourself what you want from the Chapel – with the implication that we all need to think more about our faith and about our doubts and about how we can contribute to making the most of the all too brief services we celebrate there.

The question is still valid and needs addressing.

I quoted Feargus O'Connor saying "We need to be together to feel less alone in our contemplation of life's ultimate questions". Gavin put in more starkly one Sunday when he said simply "We need each other".

How are we to achieve this sense of spiritual togetherness in the best of ways? I trust we will return to this question many times in the future as we reconvene after the dreadful experience of the Coronavirus.

Earlier in October we made a collection of food stuff to deliver to the Leamington Food Bank and we contributed to the Red Cross appeal for Lebanon. In this time of restrictions I hope that we are all committing ourselves to supporting local enterprises like Helping Hands or international ones like Red Cross individually since we are not meeting as a Chapel. The needs are none the less critically urgent, and indeed all the more so as charity collections have been so badly affected by Coronavirus.

In the meantime, do not lower your guard against Covid19. It is still with us and is unlikely to be banished from our lives for some time to come.

Stay safe.

THE CHAPEL TEAM

Chair: Malcolm Burns 01926 831559 **Secretary:** Elaine Nomura 01926 611964
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