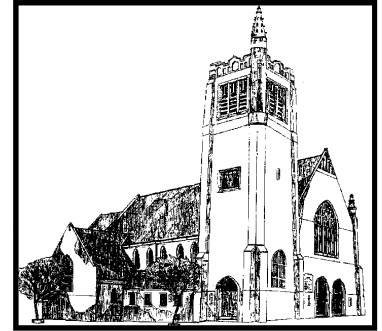




# Newsletter of St. George's URC Hartlepool

## Lockdown special Aug- Sept 2020



Hello!

I do hope you are all keeping well and beginning to come out of the enforced hibernation into something that looks and feels different from pre Covid days but also feels a little bit more 'normal' as you reconnect with family and friends within the confines of social distancing.

We were all sorry to learn of the death of Alistair Bushnell at the beginning of July. Alistair was a very faithful member of St John's, where he was ordained as an Elder and latterly at St George's. I got to know him when he and Enid took on duties at weddings, acting as stewards and making things very easy for me. It was good to see some of you at the crematorium where thankfully it was a good day and you were able to gather outside an offer support to Enid. We continue to hold Enid, Ian and Niel in our prayers.

I am sure that many of you have felt that you have spent some of the past 4 or 5 months in a wilderness situation. It has been a challenge for us all not knowing when we could see family or friends, not being able to be spontaneous, but having to plan journeys even to the supermarket to avoid the queue and crowd there. Only this morning, as I delivered some of the service sheets to folk, I decided I would pop into Asda for a couple of things then remembered I hadn't picked up a mask and had to come home without a Saturday night treat!

So often I have been drawn back to the story of the Exodus in the bible. As a child I remember being fascinated by the stories of the plagues, of the sea's parting, and bushes that didn't burn in the fire. The golden calf was beautifully illustrated in my Children's Bible and all those accounts of Moses and his conversations with God on the mountain filled my imagination.

They tell us the story of wandering people, uprooted from what they knew, trying to find a new home and a new way of being. They were faced with constantly having to change track and direction, experienced disappointment and frustration. So often they became disillusioned by their lot and on occasions wanted to turn around and head back to Pharaoh and slavery.

But Moses remained strong, and, under God's guiding hand, they sought to move forward and they entered the Promised Land.

We need to place our faith and trust in that same God. The God who guided Moses and the Israelites, guides us today. Brain, Paul and I have completed the Risk Assessment and the Elders will meet to discuss it soon. There is a lot to be done before we can return to church for worship but we are on the right track and like the Israelites, moving forward day by day, although sometimes its hard to see the progress!

However, it is good, that with some confidence, I can start to say, "See you soon!"

Take Care, God bless

Sue



## News of People etc.

We are very sad to have lost a long standing and very dear church member when Al-istair Bushnell died recently. Our thoughts, love and prayers are with Enid, Niel, Ian and their families. Due to the regulations, the funeral was for a few people only. There will be a special service when things are in the new normal and a piece about Al's life in a future Newsletter.

Margaret Windsor, who some of you will remember especially from St. John's has also died this week and the funeral was on the 24th. July.

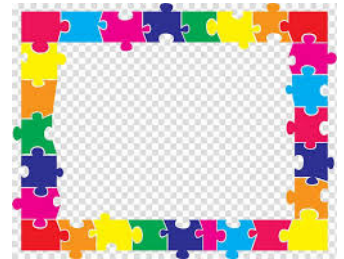
On a much happier note, Brian and Margaret Carter will celebrate their Golden Wedding Anniversary on 8 August. We send our love and congratulations and hope the celebrations won't be too curtailed. We know the Carter family loves a party!

We hope you are all keeping well and are beginning to get out again and that our people in Homes are enjoying seeing some family members again. If this has taught us anything, it's that face to face contact with friends and family is very important.

## Fund-raising from Anne

Anne, Gillian Rodger's step mum, is making face masks that meet the current WHO requirements. They are available to purchase for £2 each with proceeds to the church. Anne is also hand making Christmas cards which she is also willing to sell for church funds. For further details on how to order the masks and/or Christmas cards please contact Gill Rodgers.

A lot of jigsaw puzzles were found in the church when the last big clear out was done. Paul and Gillian Rodgers have sold several already, raising £115 for church funds. Some puzzles still remain and are available to purchase. Again please contact Paul or Gillian if you are interested.



## Thank you

Continued thanks to Sue and Alex for the Sunday services and the midweek devotions., a Sue would appreciate it if people could send her their favourites hymn/reading with a little bit about why for the Midweek devotions. We've had some really thought provoking .ones in the last few weeks and you've got one in you! Yes, you!

There will be news later on about what we can do for Harvest. But please remember our commitment to Commitment for Life, which is needed now more than ever when the countries it supports has the extra problems of Covid– without the resources we have in this country.

## A Timely Chuckle

### Answers to questions on the Old and New Testaments by children who had been studying them

1. In the first book of the bible, Guinness. god got tired of creating the world so he took the sabbath off.
2. Adam and eve were created from an apple tree. Noah's wife was Joan of ark. Noah built an ark and the animals came on in pairs.
3. Lots wife was a pillar of salt during the day, but a ball of fire during the night.
4. The jews were a proud people and throughout history they had trouble with unsympathetic gentals.
5. Sampson was a strongman who let himself be led astray by a Jezebel like Delilah.
6. Samson slayed the philistines with the axe of the apostles.
7. Moses led the jews to the red sea where they made unleavened bread, which is bread without any ingredients.
8. The egyptians were all drowned in the dessert. Afterwards, Moses went up to mount cyanide to get the ten commandments.
9. The first commandment was when Eve told Adam to eat the apple.
10. The seventh commandment is thou shalt not admit adultery.
11. Moses died before he ever reached canada then Joshua led the hebrews in the battle of geritol.
12. The greatest miricle in the bible is when Joshua told his son to stand still and he obeyed him.
13. David was a hebrew king who was skilled at playing the liar. He fought the Finkelsteins, a race of people who lived in biblical times.
14. Solomon, one of Davids sons, had 300 wives and 700 porcupines.
15. When Mary heard she was the mother of Jesus, she sang the magna carta.
16. When the three wise guys from the east side arrived they found Jesus in the manager.
17. Jesus was born because Mary had an immaculate contraption.
18. St. John the blacksmith dumped water on his head.
19. Jesus enunciated the golden rule, which says to do unto others before they do one to you. He also explained a man doth not live by sweat alone.
20. It was a miricle when Jesus rose from the dead and managed to get the tombstone off the entrance.
21. The people who followed the lord were called the 12 decibels.
22. The epistels were the wives of the apostles.
23. One of the oppossums was St. Matthew who was also a taximan.
24. St. Paul cavorted to christianity, he preached holy acrimony, which is another name for marraige.
25. Christians have only one spouse. This is called monotony.



An opossum up a tree; or is it an apostle?

## Re-opening church

Obviously there is much to consider before we can open church and conduct worship safely for all our members, and be reassured that the elders will be discussing it carefully before it happens. In fact plans for a safety assessment are in place.

There will be somethings we had to consider and one of these is the wearing of masks. Perhaps it might be useful to read this from the URC Synod Moderators

**In light of the various guidance issued by the governments in England, Scotland and Wales, the United Reformed Church (URC) Synod Moderators strongly encourage the use of face coverings for all people attending worship and other URC events that involve face-to-face meetings.**

We recommend that these do not need to be surgical-type masks but should have at least three layers of material, in line with World Health Organisation guidance.

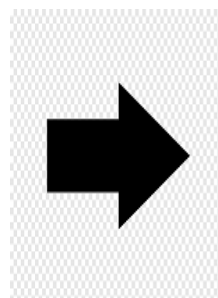
However, we note that there may be issues of inclusion if the mouth and facial expressions are hidden from view – for example, if you are leading worship, and someone is lip-reading what you say. Where you expect this might be an issue, we would commend careful consideration to using the types of mask with a transparent “window” or a face shield/visor.

As with all situations where face covering is recommended this is primarily to protect others should you unknowingly be carrying coronavirus. The scientific evidence suggests that there is some degree of protection from infection for the wearer, but they tend to be more effective at preventing transmission from the person wearing the mask.

We understand that many will find wearing masks uncomfortable. However, there is unquestionably a higher risk for people meeting together for an extended period, such as during worship, than for those we casually pass whilst shopping. It is surely a sign of loving one another that we put up with a little personal inconvenience rather than jeopardising the health and wellbeing of others whom we meet in the name of Christ.

At this time there is no penalty for those who choose not to wear a face covering in church, and we are not asking you to prevent people from entering if they do not wear a mask. Neither should we be quick to condemn those who won't – some will have a genuine medical reason for this. Churches may wish to provide a small stock of disposable face coverings to give to those who attend church unprepared and encourage them to follow this good practice. Some churches may also wish to organise a few people who will take the opportunity, in fellowship and in service, to make cloth masks that can be given away, using patterns widely available.

Worshippers should also be reminded that it can be a source of contamination to touch the face coverings whilst thinking or praying, and that care should be taken to prevent contamination when face coverings are put on or removed. Use the ear loops or tabs, and wash or sanitise hands before and after. This could be a particular issue if a safe way is found of serving communion, and people remove their face coverings for this.



# Being Masked

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Wearing a mask is a big point of debate at the moment. Most of us accept the necessity of mask-wearing, uncomfortable though it may be, because it's important for the protection of others as well as ourselves. Though I have to say that the family above have gone a bit too far . . . !

Some people worry how we can show care for others when we're wearing a mask and our smile is hidden, but the truth is that we can see an expression through the person's eyes. I'm sure we've all had the experience of someone smiling at us, but while their mouth is in the shape of a smile, their eyes are betraying anger, indifference or even real hate.

We can certainly see an expression in someone's eyes. Unless we're solid with botox, the skin around our eyes creases when we smile. And eyes are expressive of joy or sadness; they can sparkle and they can be cold and quite frightening. Children who are abused often have wary eyes. Truthfully, the inner person shines through the eyes; our eyes reveal more than we think.

But what about the other kind of mask, the 'masks' we all of us wear?

The 'mask' of pretence that all is well or all is wrong. The 'mask' of pretence that I can cope when I know I'm falling to pieces. The 'mask' of pretending knowledge when we're really thrashing about, confused like everyone else. The 'mask' we wear to make people like us. Such masks – and there are as many as there are people – are sometimes needed, as in a crisis when we have to hold ourselves together, but worn regularly they don't bring health and can be hard to remove.

In the Bible, we read that Moses wore a face-covering when he came down from meeting with God, because his face shone with such a radiance that people couldn't cope with it. **(Exodus 34:29-35)** I suspect that the radiance, the love and strength of God cut through their 'masks' to reveal to them the people they really were and it scared them. So, to avoid disturbing them, Moses went masked.

Jesus didn't. People looked on his face and found challenge, yes, but also openness and healing for their bruised souls, if they would accept it. In **Mark 10:17-22** we have the story of a rich young man who came to Jesus, a genuinely devout man seeking eternal life. Jesus "looking at him, loved him." But the young man held onto his mask of wealth and status, he dared not let it go.

A question for us all – do I feel I have to hide who I really am? And for us all to remember - God loves us behind our mask. Others will like knowing us too!



*(A topical edition of our friend, Rev Ruth Crofton's, weekly online offerings )*

## Commitment For Life

Mining is big business in Zimbabwe, with mineral exports responsible for 60% of the country's export earnings, and 16% of national GDP. The government has outlined ambitious plans to quadruple the sector's total value to \$12bn by 2023, particularly focussed on platinum extraction.

However, the country's lax licensing laws permit foreign companies to own 100% of a mine licence for any commodity, save platinum and diamonds, in perpetuity.

Mining also severely impacts on indigenous communities and eco systems. Strip mining is particularly destructive. Coal fires can burn for decades, releasing fly ash, toxic chemical and greenhouse gases, such as methane. Coal dust inhalation causes black lung disease among miners and those living nearby.

Mine accidents kill thousands every year. Cardiopulmonary disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, hypertension, lung disease, and kidney disease have been found in higher-than-normal rates among residents who live near coal mines. Toxic levels of arsenic, fluorine, mercury, and selenium are emitted by coal fires, entering the air and the food chain of those living nearby.

Your Support for Zimbabwe through *Commitment for Life* helps empower these communities to stand up to exploitation and abuse by the mining sector. Thank you for your support.

# Books of the Bible

M	A	L	A	C	H	I	E	L	E	U	M	A	S
S	A	D	E	U	T	E	R	O	N	O	M	Y	R
S	S	E	J	S	M	L	A	S	P	O	R	C	U
N	A	N	J	H	A	C	I	M	H	U	R	R	T
A	L	S	O	O	U	I	E	D	L	E	O	J	H
I	S	A	N	I	H	E	Z	E	S	T	H	E	R
P	G	U	E	H	T	N	R	L	P	A	L	A	L
P	E	S	C	O	L	A	A	V	R	B	U	P	S
I	N	I	H	I	I	G	T	J	N	E	I	E	M
L	E	D	P	T	T	H	A	N	O	J	R	T	A
I	S	B	S	H	U	I	M	A	E	S	O	E	R
H	I	H	L	S	E	S	V	I	U	M	H	R	K
P	S	J	S	H	E	B	R	E	W	S	A	U	E
O	T	E	K	U	L	N	H	A	L	I	T	L	A

- ESTHER
- PHILIPPIANS
- PETER
- EZRA
- DEUTERONOMY
- LAMENTATIONS
- MALACHI
- MARK
- HEBREWS
- SAMUEL
- PSALMS
- JOHN
- LEVITICUS
- JOSHUA
- GENESIS
- LUKE
- JONAH
- MICAH
- RUTH
- JOEL

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