

Bournville, Cotteridge, Kings Norton & Stirchley



Point



The bi-monthly mini-magazine of Churches Together in Birmingham 30

Enabling Inclusion



Please - Include all of us

“Then will the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb shout for joy.”

As this Messianic promise has not yet been completely and literally fulfilled, what should we be doing for the blind, deaf, lame and dumb? I am assuming we want to include them in society, and more particularly in the Church, as an example of how society should be. And not just as people to “do good to”, but those who have their own contribution to make.

I can only speak from my own experience, but I'm told that makes what I have to say more valid. I lost most of my hearing over 30 years ago following an operation which was potentially life-saving. While this experience is not unique, it differs from that of someone who was born deaf or has gradually lost their hearing due to advancing age, in ways that are not obvious to a hearing person. But other experiences are the same for everybody with hearing loss.

Blindness cuts you off from things; deafness cuts you off from people”. So we already know what it is like to be isolated! Discussion groups and after-church chats are particularly hard unless some kind friend deliberately (but preferably not too obviously) takes the trouble to see that we are included. Now, of course, we have the added barrier of not being able to lip-read people wearing face masks.

Over time, we either give up altogether, or develop our own ways of “being communicated with”. Some people are a lot more confident than I am in going up to a group and asking what they are talking about (and asking them again when they appear to have changed the subject!) I have always read any printed matter I can lay hands on (my mother told me I learned to read from the Lux soap flakes packet) so notice sheets, newsletters, emails or anything on a notice board rarely escape my attention. It is very satisfying when I can tell somebody else something they have missed!

What of more specialised aids to communication? I am very thankful that my church now has a very good hearing loop which is nearly always working. Sign language (BSL) is a big topic. I have seen a change in attitude from when I was discouraged from learning it because “only people born deaf use it” “it is difficult to learn” to now that it is an official language and almost fashionable for children or young people to learn. Having learned some a few years ago and seen other people use it in other churches, I find it an aid to worship.

I have just been to the first Sunday service at my church since March. The “new normal” requires us to sit 2 metres apart wearing face coverings, and not sing or pray out loud, or linger inside or outside the building. I thought, wouldn't it be wonderful if we all knew BSL? Jean Morgan



Connecting in Lockdown

Since September 20th the Cotteridge Church is open for worship for 30 minutes on Sunday mornings in strict Covid safe conditions which means all the 30 people allowed in the congregation wore masks and sat at 2m distance from each other so it is strange but it is good to have face to face contact with our friends in the congregation who we have not seen for over 6 months. During this time we have kept in contact by having Zoom meetings for JCC and Property and Finance committee, also 2 meetings for the congregation, a service on Wednesday evenings which can also be accessed by phone and a coffee and chat session on Sunday lunchtime. Revd Mike Claridge has put out a Reflection each week which is on YouTube and can be accessed at any time during the week. Our pastoral links network has worked well with all the pastoral links, keeping in touch by phone with the people on their list to make sure all was well. Some of us have also kept in touch by phone with people who come into our church but are not church members like regulars in the coffee bar and coffee bar volunteers, volunteers and clients from the Food Bank and members of the Day Centre. People who live on the Bournville estate who are over 70 have received a regular phone call from a member of staff at the Bournville Trust, it was really good to hear a friendly voice making sure that all was well and organising help if needed. This service has now finished but the Trust sent a letter out giving details of agencies like Age Concern that we can contact if we need help. Revd Roger Collins and Jane Stephens have also done excellent work delivering orders of Traidcraft goods along with weekly newsletters for the people not on the internet. Peter Childs has sent out the church newsheet each week along with Mike's letters and updates to all on the email list also on the email we have been treated to Neil Walters's daily poem. We have also all benefitted from the services of our local shops, milkmen and pharmacies. We must remember this and keep supporting them when this pandemic ends. As I am writing this we are awaiting another message from Boris Johnson about more severe restrictions on our movements and socialising so who knows what we will be able to do or not do by the time you read this, but whatever happens I am sure we as a community can look after one another, keep in contact with as many people as possible and above all keep safe.

Linda Mann

<https://www.thecotteridgechurch.org.uk/>

Café is open
every day from
10.00—12.00
for sandwiches
and hot drinks



What's Up on WhatsApp

At St Joseph and St Helen's Catholic Church we have a WhatsApp group which anyone can join. It was set up very early on during lockdown to keep as many members of the congregation as possible in contact with each other. Jacqui is our administrator and she sends out links to the church readings every morning and especially at weekends.

When we were unable to attend mass on a Sunday Jacqui sent out a link to the NMCmedia website which gives a list of churches where priests were streaming their church service online via the link.

Although St Joseph's was not participating online, St Edward's in Selly Oak and St Bridget's in Northfield provided an excellent local online service which allowed everyone to participate. However many people also tried far flung churches and suddenly a wide list of varied sermons became available.

The WhatsApp group has been most powerful in providing support to those who feel trapped and isolated in their homes.

As lockdown rules were relaxed and the churches opened up for socially distanced services St Josephs installed two very large television screens to avoid the use of books. At some stage in the future when we can all participate in communal singing we will be able to lift our heads and project our voices heaven-bound as we read the words on the screens rather than focussing them downwards into a hymnal.

And not least, there is now a Facebook page which extends a presence to the wider world.

<https://www.facebook.com/St-Joseph-and-St-Helens-112509660542574/>



Our world is being reinvented.

Jesus replied, 'No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God. Luke 9:62

As we realise that the Covid disruption will be with us for longer than most of us thought, we're also starting to accept that we won't ever go "back to normal" completely. The question, then, for each of us is what our best contribution might be in our changing environments.

Some changes that we need to make are fairly obvious, such as becoming more adaptable, more flexible, more responsive and more resilient. We also need to look after ourselves physically, emotionally and psychologically - we are experiencing trauma and that is going to take its toll on us.

If we're leaders, we need to help our congregations to do all of this too. But we need to do more than merely survive.

You might need to think creatively about how you can contribute to what your community is going through, and what it will continue to experience through the disruptive years that lie ahead in the 2020s. Covid is the immediate crisis, but we know for sure that many other disruptions are coming our way - some of them have even been accelerated by Covid.

In this new reality, What is your role?

I believe that the best answer to these questions is to think about re-invention or re-imagination, rather than re-building. We cannot merely go back to doing what we were doing six months ago. A changed world will require us to do more than rebuild. But keep in mind:

*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever.
Hebrews 13:8*

John Slevin

Are you up for the challenge?

Not everything that has been attributed to Covid has changed our lives for the worse. Spending many weeks in lockdown has meant that many of us have re-evaluated our way of life and how we relate to the world and the people round us.

Less traffic on the roads allowed us to hear the birdsong while wildlife emerged more visibly into our urban gardens. With no opportunity to show off, fashion became less important. Sourcing food locally and growing our own has led to a renewed appreciation of sharing a meal with others - both physically and online. Forcibly being separated from our family and friends has led to an increased understanding of the importance of people, not things, in our lives.

Community spirit grew as we looked around and identified our neighbours and those in need. Volunteers delivered shopping and food parcels to those shielding; local WhatsApp groups sustained and connected us; Zoom meetings brought us together; befriending phone conversations and even letter writing flourished. We smiled at strangers we passed on the street.

Many of us declared that we hoped to make this amelioration more permanent in our lives. How many of us will succeed? As traffic creeps back and we seek to resume our old lives and habits, will we forget the glimpses we had of God's kingdom on earth? There's a challenge!

Sally Slevin

National Interfaith Week 2020

Footsteps will be marking Interfaith Week with a [Tread Lightly](#) event. This year it will be an online celebration of community initiatives that are contributing to the circular economy. Join us at 2 pm on Sunday 15th November.

Earlier in Interfaith Week, we will be holding a [joint event with Faith for the Climate](#) looking at how Birmingham can send a message to the COP26 climate summit in 2021. 7 pm on Monday 9th November.

Footsteps (Faiths for a Low Carbon Future) brings together faith groups in Birmingham to respond to the challenge of moving to a low carbon future. A project of Birmingham Council of Faiths, registered charity no. 1015006.

<https://footstepsbcf.org.uk/events/tread-lightly-2020/>

The closure of our churches during Covid-19 has inspired a modern response. Click on the different links below to find out what's happening:

<https://www.facebook.com/rowheath.pavilion/>

<https://twitter.com/rpavilion?lang=en> <https://www.pavilionchurch.org.uk/>

<https://www.facebook.com/St-Joseph-and-St-Helens>

<https://bournvilleparishchurch.org.uk/>

<https://www.facebook.com/BournvilleParishChurchStFrancisOfAssisi/>

<https://www.facebook.com/AscensionStirchley/>

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Religious-Organization/Bournville-Quaker-Meeting/>

<https://www.facebook.com/Cotteridge-Quaker>

<https://cotteridgequakers.org.uk/>

<https://www.thecotteridgechurch.org.uk/>

<https://www.facebook.com/TheCotteridgeChurch/>

<https://twitter.com/cotteridgechurc?lang=en>

<https://www.birminghammethodistcircuit.org.uk/church-page/st-andrews-b30>

<https://www.weoleyhillchurch.org.uk/links.php>

<https://www.birminghamvineyard.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/vineyardbham/>

<https://twitter.com/vineyardbham?lang=en>

<https://b30.foodbank.org.uk/>

<https://www.birminghamchurches.org.uk/news/>

<https://www.facebook.com/BirmCTogether/>

CHURCH CONTACTS

For further details of worship and/or activities at any of the churches please contact the people below:

- St. Andrew's Methodist Church
Revd. Nick Jones - 453 9497
- Bournville United Reformed Church
Revd Leonora Jagessar - 472 0730
- Society of Friends, Bournville
Claire Bowman - 07753 635438
Room Hire, 471 2155
annegiles57@gmail.com
- St. Francis Church, Bournville
Interregnum - phone Church Office -
472 7215
- Rowheath Pavilion Church
Revd. Matt Wilson - 433 3912
Office - 458 1711.
- Society of Friends, Cotteridge
Chris Martin- 475 2088
- The Cotteridge Church
Revd. Mike Claridge - 433 5176
Revd. Roger Collins - 459 4009
or Church Office - 433 5518
- Church of the Ascension
Revd. Catherine Grylls - 443 1371
- Birmingham Vineyard
Jeff & Becky Stamps - 622 1230
- Catholic Church of Ss Joseph and
Helen
- Catholic Church of St Pauls
Father David Barry - 458 1236

“Points” is published by Churches Together in Birmingham 30 for the exchange of ideas and news. Opinions do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the churches as a group or individually.

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Next Issue's Focus will be

Will Christmas be cancelled?