



Focus

Autumn 2020

Brighton & Hove Methodist Circuit Magazine & Circuit Plan

Dear friends

I would like to take this opportunity to say a big thank you to you all for your support and prayers during these very different days in the lives of our churches and circuit and indeed our own individual lives.

What was our usual has been, and still is, disturbed and we are still working out what today's normal is let alone tomorrow's and next months will be different again. Along with so many others we watch the news and listen to the guidelines issued to try to work out not least what we are allowed to do but also what is wise for us to do. Anxiety levels are high but also a determination to keep living as fully as we can as safely as we can.

We find ourselves in a world which needs to see and hear Good News more than ever, to find in these changing times a trust in the faithfulness of God. For the world to see and experience that it needs to see and feel the faithfulness of people of faith to the ways of God that we believe we have seen most clearly in the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

Although there is a longing that we may soon be back to being able to use our buildings as we wish and come together in the groups that have sustained us in our life journeys that is not the case just yet. Meanwhile we have discovered some additional ways in which we can do, and be, Church.

We have found that for many it is possible to do many things that we used to, albeit in a different way, online. Whilst acknowledging that all of us miss being able to meet regularly in person in our buildings for Sunday morning worship worshipping online has for some opened doors to attending either for the first time or on a much more regular basis.

For some it has breathed new life into our worship and opened the door to new possibilities whilst for others it is something that is OK and they are thankful for it but they can't wait until our buildings are fully open. Others have not been able to join with the online worship or have chosen to worship in a different way and have tuned into services on the radio or on their TV's and/or used worship sheets that have been sent out or used our Sunday Worship Book.

Our strategy for now and the foreseeable future came as a result of the responses we received to the letter with questions that was sent out widely around the circuit and to conversations and discussions that have happened since. We were immensely grateful to the work that Steve Preston did in analysing and presenting the results in an accessible format. The full results of that survey will be available shortly on the Circuit website or copies can be made available via email or post by request from me/Circuit Office.

From September as you are aware we have been having a mix of online and in-building worship most (but not all) weeks and we will continue that pattern for the moment. The Preaching Plan is going to be drawn up in a way so that we can be as flexible as possible and able to respond to changing circumstances with a minimum of disruption.

We will continue to have online worship every week as we see a definite need for that to be available and we continue to be very grateful for the work of Alex Harrington, Natalie Steele and Russell Taylor. Those services will be organised by/involvement a small team of people each week.

Our in-building worship will continue to take place in one of the Circuit churches on a rota basis. Because of the restrictions in terms of what can/cannot happen at such a service and because we recognise the importance of Communion to us all these services will continue to be led by a Minister and they will last between 30 and 45 minutes.

You will all be aware by now that if you attend a service being held in a church building you will be expected to follow the directions of the Stewards on the day as well as the general guidelines for worship. These include:

Wearing a mask (and I would ask that even people who are exempt from wearing masks to wear one at least on entry and exit if they could do so out of consideration for others, it may be that your reason for being exempt from wearing a mask might make you ask yourself whether meeting in a building for worship at this time is a wise decision).

Washing/sanitising hands and making sure you keep socially distanced from others who are not in your bubble. Then you will be asked to sit in particular places and to remain in that seat throughout the service, and at the end you will be asked to leave straight away in the manner prescribed by the stewards and making sure not to congregate anywhere. There will as you know be no singing though music might be played either live or by the sound system.

Under no circumstances should you come to worship in any of our buildings if you are feeling unwell or showing any symptoms of Covid.

We all have a responsibility to act lovingly to others.

So here is the plan for November

November 1st

10.30 Online Worship only Accreditation service
Andy and Rev Kathleen Allen

This will be the Accreditation Service for Jonathan Gravestock as we recognise him as a Local Preacher on Full Plan.

November 8th

10.30 Online with Andy, Geoff Harrington and Deeptima Massey

10.30 Woodingdean Deborah Cornish Communion

6.30pm Thinking Aloud online Andy Lowe

November 15th

10.30 Online with Andy, Beulah Fletcher and Paul Steadman

10.30 Stanford Avenue Dan Woodhouse Communion

November 22nd

10.30 Online with Dan, Heather Leake Date and Bob Winton

10.30 Dorset Gardens Deborah Cornish Communion

6.30pm Online Prayer/Meditation service Deborah Cornish

November 29th

10.30 Online with Dan Woodhouse and Barnstormers

There will be a small Christmas Newsletter issued for December and January with details of services during those months.

If you have any questions or points you wish to raise about worship and the plan then please do ask me.

We have also been able to do some of our business meetings online, most recently with our Local Preachers meeting on September 2nd and our Circuit Meeting on September 17th. It is likely that we will continue to do that for our Local Preachers meeting and Circuit Meetings in November on the 12th and 26th respectively.

One of the new possibilities that has opened up has been meeting people from across the Circuit in new ways. One such way has been through having a Circuit Study group which I ran called 'Living the Questions' and the next article is a report on how it went and future plans.

In the rest of this magazine you will also find contributions from a variety of people. Some personal reflections on life in lockdown, a report on Barnstormers 'Kipps' and subsequent activities, articles on the Herods in the Bible and one on Jesus, reports on Student Chaplaincy, the work of Lunch Positive, a Holiday@Home Club report and memories of John Gothard. Add in some cartoons and pictures and hopefully there will be something for everyone in this edition of Focus.

In Christian love, Andy

From Stanford Avenue news (thanks to Alan Mackenzie)



Living the Questions

When our hearts are closed, we live within a shell. To extend the egg metaphor: the shell needs to be broken open if the life within it is to enter into full life. What we need is the 'hatching of the heart' - the opening of the self to God, the sacred, a comprehensive image for the individual dimension of the Christian live.

Marcus Borg, The Heart of Christianity

So it was that around 20 people from around the Circuit joined in the Living the Questions course which is an introduction to what is called 'Progressive Christianity'. We had two groups, one on Tuesday evenings and the other on Wednesday afternoons and we met fortnightly. People could move between the groups and that proved helpful to those who couldn't make a particular session on their chosen day, but most people stayed with the same group throughout.

There whole course is divided into three parts each part being a course in itself. Each part has seven sessions each one having a mixture of video input and discussion. Some written material for each session is also sent out prior to each session.

The course is designed to help people think about what it is they believe and therefore doesn't supply answers but the input offers the views of some of the leading Progressive theologians/scholars and the resulting discussions gave plenty of opportunity for us all to share our own questions and views without feeling that we had to come to an agreed answer.

The first part of the course included the following topics: 'An introduction to journey', 'Taking the Bible seriously', 'Thinking Theologically', 'Stories of creation', 'Lives of Jesus', 'A passion for Christ: Paul' and 'Out into the world: Challenges facing Christians'.

This is what Louisa Taylor from our Patcham Church has to say about the course:

'I wasn't sure what to expect when I signed up to 'Living the Questions'. I hoped I would have a chance to get to know a few more folk in our churches (in the midst of lockdown it was a welcome chance to connect with others) and also to be changed and challenged in some way. I wasn't disappointed!'

Over the last few weeks I've had a great opportunity to explore the core of my faith at a very deep, challenging and thought-provoking level. Doing this alongside others in our community has added richness to our discussions - none of us need to travel along the way of Christ alone. No question raised by any one of us was belittled or considered unacceptable. A spirit of love and openness helped us all to create a safe space for questioning and challenging ourselves. Spending time together in this way has been incredibly valuable. We do not have to have all the answers, only God does, and that for me is the great mystery of faith.

A big thank you to everyone who made the experience what it was and especially to Andy for organising, hosting, and of course his insights!'

Many of the people who were part of the first part of the course have now started the second part of the course in which includes topics such as 'The prophetic Jesus' and 'Evil, suffering and a God of love'.

If there are people who would like to do the first part of the course which is, I believe, necessary groundwork before doing the other parts then I am very happy to run it again in the New Year. If you would like to take part then please email me before the end of November and I will work on finding suitable dates.

Andy

Living with Lockdown

(How Long, How Long?)

Not long after the pandemic really started to bite in the UK, I received a text from my GP's surgery followed by a letter from the Royal Sussex County Hospital. Because of my age and a pre-existing medical condition, I was classified by the NHS as very vulnerable to the virus. The letter informed me that, should I contract Covid 19, I would most likely become extremely ill and would probably have to be hospitalised. I was advised to remain at home, to avoid mixing socially and to maintain a scrupulously strict regime of personal hygiene, hand washing etc. Although pleased that the NHS was monitoring my personal health so assiduously, it wasn't exactly good news.

My next series of contacts cheered me up greatly. The first was a note through the door from a young woman in our street, whom we did not know, informing us that she was starting a residents' Covid 19 support group. She gave her email address and phone number and asked us to contact her with any needs we may have, such as shopping, phone calls for company etc. during lockdown. Her note was followed by three others from our immediate neighbours, giving their contact details and also offering to shop for us or meet any other needs we may have. All of these neighbours are much younger than us with families and responsibilities of their own.

Our own children then engaged in role reversal, becoming parents to us, telling us to keep safe by staying at home and that they would care for us. We had to e-mail them with a weekly shopping list which they then delivered, ringing the doorbell, placing the shopping in the porch and retreating several metres so we could hold a distanced conversation. It is so frustrating not being able to thank them with a hug and a kiss as we normally would.

Fortunately we have a garden, so were not confined to the house itself, which made us think of those trapped in the upper stories of blocks of flats without even a balcony. The telephone and lap-top became real life-lines; we spoke to our children every other day and called and e-mailed other family members and friends regularly. As the weather improved we started to take regular walks for fresh air and exercise, at first just around the streets near us, then to the open spaces of Coney Wood, Windmill Ridge, Green Ridge and Withdean Park. Following the seasons in those green spaces has been so rewarding; watching buds bursting forth into leaf, blossom arriving and then the new fruit growing in its place. The birdsong has been so prolific and unusually audible because of the reduction in traffic noise.

Ten years ago I started to write my life story for our children and grandchildren but never got far with it, so I began again and this time brought it right up to date. It's now with a publishing company with high hopes of success. The process itself caused me to think carefully about what really is important in life. The pandemic seems to have brought out both the best and the worst in humankind. Thankfully our personal experience has been of the best, with the worst restricted to the TV news.

In normal times I'm a member of six different social groups which can no longer meet face to face, some of which have discovered the merits of ZOOM, although it's hard to imagine an on-line replacement for ballroom dancing. I used to get through a couple of books a week from the local library but that's no longer available and Kindle, although better than nothing, is not a satisfactory alternative. I enjoy having a real book in my hands, turning the pages back and forth. I would be lost without my daily newspaper and BBC radio 4. Regrettably, time with other people has been replaced by solitary pursuits such as crosswords, Sudoku, 1000 piece jigsaws and Netflix.

Kathleen and I are so grateful for the weekly Methodist Church worship sheet but do miss worshipping at DG each week as part of a congregation. I'm glad we have started to meet collectively in one place at a time across the circuit. Social distancing in a church seems to be a contradiction in terms and what is 'born in song' Methodism without singing? An old 'Wayside Pulpit' poster I remember from many years ago stated; "You may worship God in solitude, but you can only serve Him in the multitude." Given so much time to think, I am more than ever convinced that faith centred on belief is both insufficient and inadequate. My faith does not depend on dogma, doctrine or belief. I do not need a creed. What I do with my life is the important thing, not what I claim to believe. It's how I relate to my fellow human beings; how I try to live my life as a follower of Jesus. He didn't call us to worship him, he called us to follow him. I take inspiration from John Wesley's instruction to his followers all those years ago, "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can."

Dr Tony Leonard Dorset Gardens MC October 2020

Nothing lasts forever

penned by a Chris Beauchamp contributed by Hyder Khalil.

It is an extraordinary time and it has certainly given the human race a kick. It is wonderful to see kindness and greatness from so many people – as we continue through the blessing that is life. I hope that this attitude to each other will continue, even when the situation has passed.

I have always been brought up with the phrase "Nothing lasts forever". The situation won't last forever, though a new normal may well do – and let us think of this as a greater good. I hope that the good described above will last forever. As Professor Stephen Hawking said – with his own computer voice in the film about his life – "While there is life, there is hope".

Wellbeing Winners

Sue Harrington, Circuit Student Development Worker

These strange times continue, but I don't need to tell you that!

At the Universities we continue to learn new ways of being (see my previous article) but at the same time trying not to lose the good things that we did when we could actually go places and shake people's hands.

One of those things was the University of Brighton's Graduation show at which the Faith & Spirituality team (read Cynthia Park and me!) present awards in the Faith & Spirituality Wellbeing prize, which is funded by the Methodist Church – and we make sure that is known. It used to be the Chaplaincy Prize for Creative Sustainability, but because we were rebranded as Faith & Spirituality we needed to rename the award to make it a little less of a mouthful. So it became the Faith & Spirituality Wellbeing Prize.

Eligible projects should look to wellbeing in any of all its forms, obviously, anything faith or spirituality-based but encompasses anything which enhances or recognises wellbeing overall, whether that is environmental, spiritual, community or 'other' and demonstrates an awareness of and response to green issues.

The prize is funded by the Methodist Church - our history and ethos is one of social justice and love for people and the planet. It is given on behalf of the Faith & Spirituality team, who embrace the same values of whole-person wellbeing including how we treat one another and our environment. The prize is designed to reflect our care across all those areas.

We looked at the submitted projects online and after much deliberation, our two prize winners were Sophie and Emily

whom we afterwards met with via Zoom to congratulate and learn a little about them and their work.



Sophie's project was a wonderful, quite spiritual, exploration of her discovery of the land, its resources, its cast offs and how they can be used creatively to meet various human needs and to enhance our lives. Opening with her lovely poem, "In my mind"

I imagine a world
where we give, what we take
where we have, what we need
where we make, what we want,
where we trade
just to share.

Here's a few words from Sophie:

My project 'Land + Us' is based on the idea to create a series of personally useful objects made from locally sourced materials. Many of them were found during the exploration of the South Downs landscape as part of my dog walking routine, bartered with local people or were given to me. My written work and final objects made explore alternative ways of handling resource, land use and conscious design choices that will help sustain future urban environments; ultimately forming my personal ethos as a responsible designer and maker.

I am honoured to have received this award for a project that still concerns me deeply and personally.

I will continue this sort of work and research, from September in a shared studio space at Great Walstead School near Lindfield, where we will be able to produce work and run workshops.

Emily's project looked at environment in three different but connected ways: Sustainability of cemeteries, alternative souvenirs and an app designed to help people explore ecosystems enhancing awareness and good responses. Emily sent us a few words about her project:

Preserving the Biosphere explores our interaction with the environment around us and how we can adapt our lives to protect the landscape in which we live in. I explored Brighton and Lewes Downs Biosphere, a UNESCO World Heritage Site located on the South East coast of England. Since studying in Brighton for my degree, I have gained a deeper connection with this landscape and decided to explore how people perceive the environment they live in. I chose three locations to create a series of responses. Each location investigates issues related to pollution and damage to the environment. The responses explore possible resolutions that involve sustainability and our interaction with nature.

I am passionate about the conservation and how we interact with our environment. This has led me to creating work that educates people about our planet and sustainability. Throughout the final year of my degree I explored Cinema 4D. It gave me a new perspective on how to reach and educate wider audiences both in the physical and digital worlds. After consideration I have decided to do an MA where I will focus on interactive and digital design. In the future I hope to explore motion graphics and visual effects in addition to working in the community and educating children and adults.

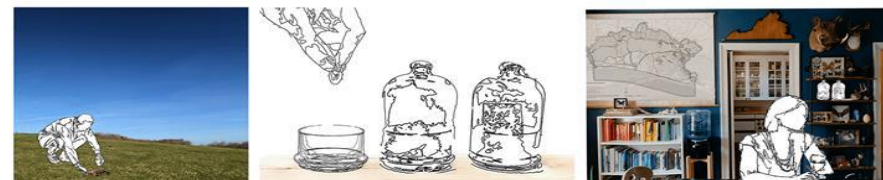
Additionally she sent a thank you via the University : *"Thank you very much for selecting me to receive the Faith and Spiritually Wellbeing Prize. It was a most welcome surprise at a very important time and has given me the encouragement*

to continue developing my concepts and skills. I can only express my sincere thanks.

I would also like to thank you the Methodist Church who funds this award. To be recognised and my work acknowledged for social justice and love for person and the planet has truly left me with an overwhelming sense of gratitude. I am delighted with the outcome and will continue educating and encouraging people to explore and love the environment around them. I have attached images explaining the interactions at each location within Brighton and Lewes Downs Biosphere; these images depict the different landscapes within the biosphere and how people interact with the environment, all of which educate people on sustainability."

03 A Living Souvenir

Alternative solution to the waste created by tourism on the environment.



02 Future Fossils

Interactive journey using an Augmented Reality App
App uses device to scan texture and triggers animation.



01 Composite Gravestones

Memorial made from a natural composite decomposing over time.
Plot of land can be continuously reused.



I am pleased to say that our work at Sussex University has also been carrying on remotely and we were recently awarded a silver certificate in the Green Award we had applied for. So next year we will be working towards gold.

We still don't really know what the future holds at the universities. Will we be able to offer anything at Christmas? If so what will that look like? At the moment we just have to wait and see and carry on doing our very best.

Lunch Positive report

Lunch Positive new support:

Since adapting community support for people with HIV at the end of March, Lunch Positive has prepared and cooked over 6000 dishes, and made over 1400 home deliveries. This support has reached many new people, including people who are being 'shielded', those who are self-isolating, people living alone whose support networks have been diminished or lost because of the removal of social contact. Many people living on very low or constrained income, in temporary accommodation or without adequate cooking facilities are also being supported. The Lunch Positive volunteer team has been undertaking this essential support work as part of a city-wide response to help feed people, to help people stay connected and feel less isolated. Volunteers have been working in completely new ways, taking on new roles, working extra days and shifts, and giving over 1600 hours since we started! Every week the volunteer team has prepared from scratch a range of healthy and freshly cooked food which is chilled or frozen and doorstep delivered to people's homes. This is accompanied by a bag of groceries. From May onwards the delivery menu will also include a selection of fresh salads and vegetable dishes. Stocks of food to enable this service have been donated through local supporters, catering businesses, Brighton & Hove Food Partnership, and FareShare – the food

redistribution charity. However, Lunch Positive still needs to purchase food items, and is actively fundraising to support the service. The charity has maintained ongoing contact with people using the service through regular follow up phone calls. Feedback from people receiving the support has been enthusiastic and often very moving. Many people have described the food as "a lifeline" and "the only nutritious meals of the week". Reflecting many people's sentiments, one person living alone in temporary accommodation recently described the offer and supply of food as "the only example that people still care".



Alongside this outreach food support, Lunch Positive has also been providing regular 'friendship calls'. Volunteers are available to take calls very day, to share a general chat and 'check-in' with people, and to help people find any information or sources of advice that might help. This service is entirely confidential and anyone with HIV living locally is invited to call in on weekdays between 12 noon and 3pm.

Gary Pargeter, Service Manager:

The commitment and energy demonstrated over the last month, together with continued enthusiasm, ideas and plans for the future, are all amazing examples of the supportiveness of our volunteers, members and the wider community. In a very short time we have completely turned around our usual service to provide something hugely needed and completely new for these unprecedented times. In time our usual services will resume, but until then we want to support people with HIV in our community as much as possible in these new ways. Please do look at our website to find out more about how we can help, and how people can support our work.

www.lunchpositive.org

Barnstormers Louisa Taylor

Back in February this year the cast and crew of Patcham's Barnstormers were reaching the pinnacle of over seven months of rehearsals for our flash, bang, wallop production of 'Kipps, the Half a Sixpence Musical'. For the uninitiated into theatre life the final weeks meant copious run-throughs, revisions and notes, building the stage and set into Patcham Church's empty hall, final costume alterations and wiring up, designing and skillfully creating the sound and lighting needs the director throws at the teams. Not much to do in a couple of weeks!

Rehearsals can often become a bit of a grind for a few months between the excitement of starting to rehearse a new show in the early weeks, and the final weeks of trepidation before the curtain goes up in front of the audience. Not so for Kipps. The creative team of Amber Harrington (as Director and Choreographer) and Russell Taylor (Musical Director) had great excitement and vision for the show and that remained as strong in the final weeks as it was right at the start of rehearsals.

The cast and crew were just as enthusiastic about getting the show onto the stage for the audience to enjoy. This was incredibly clear when we sold out all our performances as early as 31 December 2019 (often tickets are only just going on sale with this many weeks to go before the show so this was a huge achievement, helped by Seb Harrington's drive as Producer). The combination of comedy, fantastic melodies and harmonies, decisive direction and beautifully choreographed musical numbers made this show so much fun to rehearse and an absolute winner from the start. Who doesn't love a rags to riches (then back to rags and back to riches again!) story with a bit of 'eart and 'alf a sixpence to boot?

When the news broke about the early crop of COVID-19 cases in Brighton in early February we desperately hoped we would

still be able to do the show. It was in considerable doubt for a few nervous weeks. But we were incredibly fortunate and our prayers were answered. Kipps was an absolute joy to perform and we hope the audiences loved it as much as we did. Certainly the comments pouring in suggested this was indeed our 'best show yet', and we were also able to raise a profit of £3,553 which has been put towards Barnstormers share of the previously agreed new stage. We also had a fantastic after dress rehearsal party at Dan's manse - that already seems to have become the stuff of legend.

Being in the audience for a Barnstormers show perhaps doesn't give you any idea what it's like to be part of Barnstormers' cast and crew. This isn't your ordinary amateur theatre group. We talk a lot about our "Barnstormers family". Cheesy, perhaps, but true. We love to spend time together, we have fun together, we look after and support each other, we enjoy being around each other and build strong friendships that continue beyond the rehearsal rooms. When lockdown began plans immediately went into action to create an online gathering for Barnstormers on Friday nights. With Alex Harrington's expert tech support the platform was arranged, a group of us tested the technology and on 1 April 2020 'BLOG' (Barnstormers Live Online Gatherings) was born led by Russell Taylor, with guest 'takeovers' by the fabulous Amber and Seb.

BLOG is a space where Barnstormers folk on-stage or off can gather online for quizzes, games, get to know each other better with a regular chat slot and interviews, watching back clips from earlier shows 'From the Archives' and a bit of fun with the Caption Competition drawn from photos from 'Kipps'. It's been a fantastic support to everyone throughout the lockdown especially while two of our members fought COVID-19 on the front lines, and it drew us even closer together than our usual activities. BLOG ran weekly until 3 July, when we dropped to once a fortnight to give people space to get out and about more as lockdown started to lift.

Barnstormers folk have also been at the frontlines of supporting the Circuit to go 'online' with Barnstormers running the first test online call to help Dan get to grips with the technology (back on 20 March) and with Alex, Natalie Steel and Russell regularly leading/supporting the tech needs each week.

What comes next is still to be agreed depending on when we are able to get back to rehearsals (suggestions are many including 'can we do Kipps again please'), and what is for certain, if Barnstormers are involved it's going to be fun, in capital letters.

PEOPLES and GROUPS in NEW TESTAMENT TIMES

Mick Hickman

This series of articles will look at a number of matters relating to peoples and groups in the Mediterranean world in the period c. 150 B.C. to 96 A.D.

3 – The HERODS – WHICH HEROD?

Last time we looked at the Hasmoneans. They were succeeded as Jewish rulers by the family of Herod. Before we look at how Herod the Great came to power and kept it, we need to look at the use of the name Herod in the New Testament. In the same way that most Roman emperors used Caesar, and Egyptian kings and queens used Ptolemy and Cleopatra, as one of their names, so Herod's descendants used his name.

The Gospels and Acts do not distinguish between all the Herods (those who first heard these stories would have known who was meant, we may not). For example, Acts 12 v 1 and Acts 23 v 35 both refer to Herod. The first reference is to Herod Agrippa I, the second is to his son, Herod Agrippa II. Herod Agrippa II is called Agrippa in Acts 25 vv 13-27.

They all ruled under the authority of Rome and Roman emperors appointed or removed them or added to or took away their territory according to perceived Roman needs. The title Herod the Great was used only once in ancient writing, by the historian Josephus to distinguish him from his lesser successors. It has been used ever since as a convenience for the same reason. Using the New Revised Standard Version, although almost any translation would give the same results, the biblical references are:

Herod the Great, king of Judea, Samaria, Galilee, etc. reigned 37 B.C.-4 B.C. Mt 2 vv 1-22: Lk 1 v 5

Archelaus, son of Herod the Great by his Samaritan wife, Malthace, ethnarch/ruler of Judaea, 4 B.C. to 6 A.D. dismissed by the emperor Augustus. He occurs once in the New Testament and as Archelaus. Mt 2 v 22

Herod Antipas: son of Herod the Great by his Samaritan wife Malthace, ruler of Galilee 4 B.C. to 39 A.D. On his coins he called himself Herod, the name by which is known in the New Testament, usually with his title as ruler over Galilee, tetrarch.

Mt 14 vv 1-6: Mk 6 vv 14-22, 8 v 15: Lk 3 v 1, 3 v 19, 8 v 3, 9 vv 7-9, 13 v 31, 23 vv 7-15: Acts 4 v 27, 13 v 1

N.B. The name Antipas occurs only in Rev. 2 v 13 where he is an early martyr and, as far as is known, completely unconnected to Herod's family.

Herod Philip: son of Herod the Great by Cleopatra of Jerusalem (**not** Cleopatra of Egypt), ruler of an area east of Galilee 4 B.C. to 33/34 A.D. In the New Testament he is either referred to as Herod's (Herod Antipas) brother or as tetrarch to distinguish him from the apostle. Mt 14 v 3: Mk 6 v 17: Lk 3 v 1

Herod Agrippa I: grandson of Herod the Great by his son Aristobulus and Bernice (both executed by Herod the Great),

born 10 B.C., ruler of Philip's lands, 37-41, and king of Judea (including Samaria and Galilee) 41-44 A.D. Agrippa's grandmother was Mariamne, a wife of Herod the Great who was executed by him. Mariamne was a Hasmonean princess, so when he ruled from Jerusalem 41-44 A.D. Jews could feel that they were once again under Hasmonean rule.

Acts 12 vv 1-21

Herod Agrippa II: son of Agrippa I and a great-grandson of Herod the Great. Born c. 27 A.D., ruler of much of Galilee from 53 A.D. to 70 A.D., his territory was then expanded into part of Lebanon. He died in 92 or 93 A.D. still ruling this area.

Termed Herod in Acts 23 v 35. Elsewhere just called Agrippa, e.g. Acts 25 and 26

I have referred to the Herods ruling under the authority of Rome and we shall look at Rome next time.

Who Jesus is?

An article by Jonathan Gravestock

Have you ever seen the television programme, 'Who do you think you are?' It follows well-known personalities' attempts to discover who their ancestors were and thus to learn more about themselves. Sometimes their research reveals surprising and moving things about those people from the past. One of the most significant is what they did, which helped to define who they were. Many of us Christians long for such a window into the life of Jesus, the founder of our faith. We must largely rely on the generations of disciples who have reflected his Holy Spirit, however, for we have little independent, historical, records to refer to, apart from Scripture. A rare exception was recorded in 93-94 CE, by the Romano-Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, who mentioned Jesus in his 'Antiquities of the Jews'. That reference confirms the historical existence of Jesus but to learn about his nature we must rely on The New Testament.

Let's begin with the claim that Jesus was to be the Messiah, the Christ, meaning God's anointed one. That annunciation is made by an angel, to Joseph in Matthew's gospel, and to Mary in Luke's. Luke also tells us that, before his birth, Jesus was predicted to become Messiah by Zechariah (a temple priest) and his wife, Elizabeth (who was Mary's cousin). Their son, John, would grow up to be the prophet who would baptise the people as a mark of repentance and point Jesus out as the Messiah.

Regarding Jesus' conception, Matthew quotes Isaiah's prophecy, chapter 7 and verse 14, 'A virgin will conceive and bear a son', translating the Hebrew word, 'almah', into the Greek word, 'parthenos'. Now 'almah' just meant a young woman and did not imply virginity. Even the word 'parthenos' did not always imply that, unlike the English translation, 'virgin', which supported the theological claim that the birth of Jesus was supernatural.

Then, instead of a surname for Jesus, we have two, differing, genealogies and birth-stories, which are only mentioned by two gospel-writers. Luke's gospel says Jesus' birth happened when Quirinius was the governor of Syria and that it occurred in Bethlehem because of the census he ordered. Now independent, sources tell us that census occurred in 6 CE, 2 years after Herod's reign ended, whereas Matthew says Jesus was born during Herod's reign. Apart from historical inconsistencies, however, there are others, for example, after Jesus' birth, Matthew records that the infant was payed homage to by wise men from the East; while in Luke, it was by shepherds.

Later, Luke documents his parents taking Jesus to the Temple to be redeemed as their firstborn male child, by offering a sacrifice for him, of a pair of turtle doves. The significance of their child's identity was recognised by two elderly and holy people, Simeon and Anna, who reiterated his destiny, plus the sadness it would bring his parents. Matthew, on the other hand, tells of the grief Jesus' birth brought to many other parents in Bethlehem, because their baby boys were slaughtered by Herod's men, in an attempt to kill Jesus.

Then there is almost total silence across all four gospels, broken by just one story from Jesus' childhood, in Luke 2, telling of his visit to the Passover festival in Jerusalem, when he was twelve. That story is even more significant, for it describes how Jesus went to the temple to debate with the teachers, thus demonstrating both exceptional understanding and concentration. When his parents remonstrated with him for not telling them where he was, he asked, 'Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?' Although he continued to accept their parental authority, that story might mark a turning point when Jesus 'came of age spiritually', prioritising his heavenly father over his earthly one. The next insight we gain, into Jesus' developing call as Messiah, comes from John the Baptist, now a prophet in the wilderness and attracting humble folk for baptism as a sign of repentance. John protests that he should be baptised by Jesus, rather than the other way around, but then consents to Jesus' request, and baptises him. Thus, Jesus receives the Holy Spirit, which then leads him off alone into the wilderness, where he endures, and triumphs over, tremendous temptation. It is probably no exaggeration to say that the enormous challenges which Jesus was to face, were really overcome back there in the desert. In the course of that battle, Jesus became fully aware of the nature and implications of his identity as the Messiah. Those dangers became apparent soon afterwards when John was arrested and executed by Herod. Jesus then took on John's mantle and extended it to preach, 'Repent for the kingdom of heaven has come near.' Mark refers to the good news Jesus heralds, as the proximity of 'the kingdom of God'. But what is this kingdom Jesus spoke of? Luke says that Jesus outlined his mission when he returned to his home synagogue in Nazareth on the sabbath. Jesus was handed Isaiah's scroll and found chapter 61, verses 1 and 2. He read, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.' Then he rolled up the scroll and gave it

back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of all on the synagogues were fixed on him as he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.' So, Jesus fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy for the people. His name, Jesus, is derived from Joshua or, in Hebrew, 'Yeho-shua', meaning 'God saves'. He identified himself by what he did for us all, by becoming our saviour.

HOLIDAY @home CLUB 2020

The ever-popular summer holiday club at Dorset Gardens had to think outside the box this year to provide some awesome activities for more than 50 children. We were heartbroken not to hold the three-day extravaganza in the church...but we are so much more than a building, so we shifted everything @home instead.

There was colouring, word searches, creative crafts and cookery, and some silly games and challenges too. Friends and family may be far apart right now, but you are all still in our hearts! We mapped out our place in the world and did a bit of globetrotting from the sofa too.

Children were sent a free craft pack with all materials provided, as well as instructions and top tips on how to have maximum fun. We posted videos on the church website and on our Facebook page: **Tearaway Tots at Dorset Gardens**, and the children shared photos of their work to help create a display in the front window at Dorset Gardens.

Rev Deborah introduced the event with a video showcasing some spectacular sea views and children's worker Liz Neale did her best Blue Peter impression with crafty how-to videos. Rosemary Cuthbert's cookery videos were beautifully presented.

We truly proved: Close together or far apart, you are all still in our hearts.



Liz presents one of the creative crafts videos
 Rosemary's delicious decorated biscuits
 Craft materials ready for a heart-inspired collage

Liz Neale

Children and families' support worker at Dorset Gardens
 Methodist Church

John Gothard

John Gothard, our good friend and long serving member of Patcham Methodist Church has died aged 92. He was taken ill on 21st March and admitted to R.S.C.H where he was later diagnosed with COVID19 and subsequently died on 28th March.

John was born in 1928 in Sydney, Australia then moved to the U.K with his parents when he was 2 years old and settled in Yorkshire. The family later moved to Brighton and John trained as a carpenter when he left school.

His early working life was spent repairing bomb damage to buildings during World War 2. When he was 17, he met Cyril Weaver, a carpenter friend and they both attended Islingword Road Mission, Queen's Park. One evening John heard an evangelist Jack Sands preach about the cross at Bond Street Chapel. Folk were invited to step forward, and in John's own words "I ended up at the front and received prayer and the free gift of Salvation through Jesus".

John later married Vi and they went on to share the Gospel message with many, especially the children at the mission. John and Vi moved to Patcham in the 1970's and they joined the Methodist church where they became involved in leading the young people's groups for many years. John has been described as an amazing Sunday school teacher, in fact his last DBS when he was 80 is dated August 2008, the best part of 60 years service. John's cremation took place at the Downs on 22nd April and it is hoped to hold a commemoration service for John when we eventually get back to normal.

Alan Imms

And finally

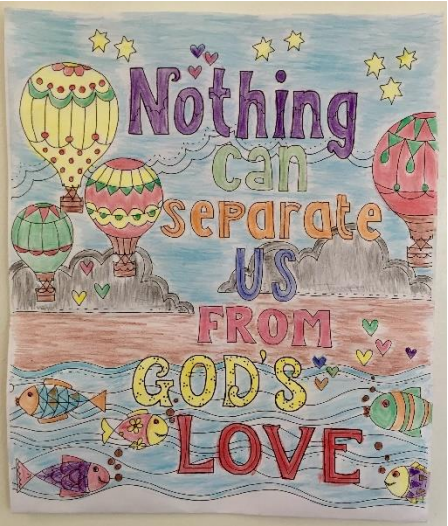
A picture from a sunny day in June and Margaret Gray having a VE Day tea.



And finally, finally

Some art produced over the last few months

from Kushmar Massey



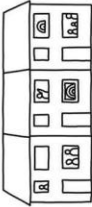




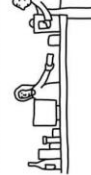








and David Sharman



And really, truly finally

a set of Beatitudes found by Deeptima Massey

BEATITUDES
FOR A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

<p>BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO STAY INDOORS</p>  <p>FOR THEY HAVE PROTECTED OTHERS</p>	<p>BLESSED ARE THE UNEMPLOYED AND THE SELF-EMPLOYED</p>  <p>FOR THEIR NEED OF GOD IS GREAT</p>	<p>BLESSED ARE THE CORNER SHOPKEEPERS</p>  <p>FOR THEY ARE THE PURVEYORS OF SCARCE THINGS</p>	<p>BLESSED ARE THE DELIVERY DRIVERS AND THE POSTAL WORKERS</p>  <p>FOR THEY ARE THE BRINGERS OF ESSENTIAL THINGS</p>	<p>BLESSED ARE THE HOSPITAL WORKERS, THE AMBULANCE CREWS, THE DOCTORS, THE NURSES, THE CARE ASSISTANTS, AND THE CLEANERS</p>  <p>FOR THEY STAND BETWEEN US AND THE GRAVE, AND THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS SURELY THEIRS</p>
<p>BLESSED ARE THE CHECKOUT WORKERS</p>  <p>FOR THEY HAVE PATIENCE AND FORTITUDE IN THE FACE OF OVERWORK AND FRUSTRATION</p>	<p>BLESSED ARE THE REFUSE COLLECTORS</p>  <p>FOR THEY WILL SEE GOD DESPITE THE MOUNTAINS OF WASTE</p>	<p>BLESSED ARE THE TEACHERS</p>  <p>FOR THEY REMAIN STEADFAST AND CONSTANT IN DISTURBING TIMES</p>	<p>BLESSED ARE THE CHURCH WORKERS, THE DEACONS, PRIESTS AND BISHOPS</p>  <p>FOR THEY ARE A COMFORTING PRESENCE IN A HURTING WORLD AS THEY CONTINUE TO SIGNPOST TOWARDS GOD</p>	<p>BLESSED ARE THE SINGLE PARENTS,</p>  <p>FOR THEY ARE COPING ALONE WITH THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES AND THERE IS NO RESPIRE</p>
<p>BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE ALONE,</p>  <p>FOR THEY ARE CHILDREN OF GOD AND WITH HIM THEY WILL NEVER BE LONELY</p>	<p>BLESSED ARE THE BEREAVED,</p>  <p>FOR WHOM THE WORST HAS ALREADY HAPPENED THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED</p>	<p>BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE ISOLATED WITH THEIR ABUSERS</p>  <p>FOR ONE DAY - WE PRAY - THEY WILL KNOW SAFETY</p>	<p>BLESSED ARE ALL DURING THIS TIME WHO HAVE PURE HEARTS; ALL WHO STILL HUNGER AND THIRST FOR JUSTICE; ALL WHO WORK FOR PEACE AND WHO MODEL MERCY</p>  <p>MAY YOU KNOW COMFORT, MAY YOU KNOW CALM, AND MAY THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND THE LOVE OF GOD, AND THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, BE WITH US ALL. AMEN</p>	

TEXT: JAYNE MANFREDI