

“Be still and know that I am God”

October 2020

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Deadline for material for the next issue is **Monday 30 November** by email to louise@maceng.karoo.co.uk

In the six months that have passed since the Covid-19 pandemic first hit our country, all of our lives have changed in extraordinary ways. Many of us have been isolated at home for weeks at a time; others have had to work from home, been furloughed from work or, sadly, been made redundant as the economic impact of the lockdown took hold. Children and young people have had to be educated at home; social activities have reduced to a minimum or in too many cases ceased altogether. On top of all this of course huge numbers of people have become unwell with the virus and, heart-breakingly, far too many have lost their lives during this time, whether directly or indirectly as a result of the health crisis.

And just as we were looking forward to life returning to some kind of ‘new normal’, it seems that we may well be facing a return to many of the restrictions that were relaxed earlier in the summer, with the prospect, even here in East Yorkshire, of being once more unable to visit friends and relatives at home or enjoy a drink or a meal out with them.

Throughout all this time churches have worked to offer support in spiritual and practical ways to our local communities. Since March we at St Barnabas have continued to meet as a church family, initially remotely through ‘worship online’ on YouTube followed by ‘zoom coffee’ time; and since July meeting again for services in the church streamed live for those unable to attend in person, including songs and hymns faithfully recorded each week by our musicians and often by video from our youth and children’s teams. We are so thankful to have been able to do this thanks to modern technology and the hard work of many of the church family. More recently we have also been holding a quieter communion service mid-week, providing a much-needed moment of stillness in the whirlwind of change and confusion around us.

In such times, it is easy to dwell on our problems and forget to look beyond ourselves. And that is why it is so good to come before God each week, with others, in worship, ‘live’ or otherwise: to be reminded that we have a God who cares for us, who watches over us, who constantly offers us his friendship and blessing. Each time we ‘re-connect’ with God through relationship with

his Son Jesus, we find ourselves fixing our eyes on Him who is ‘the author and perfecter of faith’, and hear His promise, ‘never will I leave you, never will I forsake you’ (Heb. 12:2, 13:5).

One of the psalms we are currently starting each Sunday service with reminds us:

“Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall;
he lifts his voice, the earth melts.
The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress...
Be still, and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46 v.6,7,10)

Amidst all the uncertainties of this time, may you know the stillness of God's presence and the assurance of his promise that for those who trust in Jesus, nothing – neither death, life, powers or pandemics - can separate us from his love.

Your friend and vicar,

Francis Scott

Details of how to join our services remotely, or what to expect if you come to worship in person, can be found elsewhere in this ‘virtual’ magazine.

Re-opening of Swanland Village Hall

We are delighted to announce that Swanland Village Hall reopened on 17th August for activities and events that can comply with government guidelines. As well as our normal terms and conditions for hire, the Trustees have drawn up special conditions to ensure the health and safety of our hirers. These special conditions can be viewed on the website together with our Risk Assessment.

If you are interested in hiring the hall please contact our booking secretary Terry Phillips on 07525798449 or by email to booking@swanlandvillagehall.info to discuss possibilities.

We look forward to welcoming back our long term users and new hirers and are committed to making the hall safe for all who use it.

Sheila Ireland (Chair)

People keep asking “is Covid 19 really that serious?”

Listen up:

Casinos and churches were closed. When Heaven and Hell agree on the same thing, it's probably pretty serious.



Swanland Village Association

In September Swanland was happy to take part in the national Keep

Britain Tidy campaign and, once again, many villagers - ranging



from young children to pensioners - turned out to ensure that every street in the village had a litter pick on the same day. The Village Association provided sacks and litter-pickers and the results were a total of over 20 sacks - plus one milk crate! (Why did someone think a hedge was a good place to deposit this, we have to wonder?).

One volunteer commented that they picked up 145 cigarette ends which makes one wonder if the smokers never heard of a bin? The SVA would like to thank McCarthy & Stone for their donations of hoops and pickers, and thank all those that took part and hope it might encourage more people to take care of their own patch on a regular basis.



Swanland Heritage Centre

Despite the lockdown, your Heritage Centre Committee has not been idle. Although they have been unable to open at the regular times, they have opened (to one or two people from the same household) by appointment only - at agreed times. This is proving to be a most acceptable alternative of which several people, both local and from away, have taken advantage during the national Heritage Open Days.

The Centre's web administrator, Ian Macfarlane, has added many photographs to the online collection <swanlandheritage.info/piwigo/ [1]> Also thanks to Ian, the delightful book about early 1900s Swanland, written by Elizabeth Dyson, entitled "Down Memory Lane" has been edited with photographic illustrations and, at the time of going to press, is being published by the Centre, with assistance from McCarthy & Stone. Also in preparation, are Ian's calendars illustrated with pictures of Swanland life that have proved so very popular over previous years. As the current restrictions have curtailed the necessary regular fund-raising activities this year, we do hope that readers will consider purchasing the books and the calendars so that the Heritage Centre can continue its ongoing work to record, retain and publish Swanland's history.

Details of how to purchase the book and calendars will be posted in due course on the notice boards and in the windows of the Centre.

For further details on this or anything about the Centre please contact the Chairman Martin Parry <mlp@dparry.karoo.co.uk> 632576 or Secretary Janet Barnes <janet@pwb2.karoo.co.uk> 633286.



Swanland Screen

It was with great regret that Swanland Village Association had to cancel the showing of the last films in the 2019/20 season at the Village Hall because of the lockdown imposed by the government. We have been approached by Cine North (from whom we borrow the equipment and hire the films) to see if we would be prepared, once the restrictions are lifted, to start showing films again. As the average age of the villagers who help to put on the films and those in the audience must be well over 70 years of age, this has not seemed to be a viable option so far. The cost of hiring the hall, hiring the film, paying for publicity etc., means that we need an audience of over fifty people to break even financially. With any social distancing imposed, then this would not have been possible unless we seriously increased the price of the ticket. Selling refreshments at the interval has always helped to raise the income when our audience figures have been low but this is an option that will not be available to us for the foreseeable future. Now some good news - Cine North have obtained funding that would enable them to reduce the cost to us so now we need you to let us know if you would be prepared to come to support Swanland Screen, if we were to book films and hire the hall in 2021? Please would you let us know by contacting one of the Swanland Village Association Committee or writing to us at Mere House (opposite the pond). There is no use our going ahead and booking if no-one will come to watch. As we shall almost have to start from scratch again, we would very much like to welcome more Swanlanders to help organize, promote and put on these film nights so, if this appeals to you, please call Yvonne on 01482 634863.



Swanland Live Shows

Because of the restrictions imposed on all Village Halls due to the covid-19 restrictions, we have been unable to book any live shows this year. However the performing arts are fighting to survive and several performers have been producing shows that can be watched online, in the hope that donations will be made after the viewings. The Swanland Village Association has been announcing these on our Facebook page and on the Next Door local forum. If you would like to be notified of any that are soon to be shown, please contact Yvonne Dumsday at 01482 634863 or <yd@swanlandvillagehall.info>.

Glorious Insults: an occasional series:

"I am enclosing two tickets to the first night of my new play; bring a friend, if you have one." - *George Bernard Shaw* to *Winston Churchill*

"Cannot possibly attend first night, will attend second ... if there is one." - *Winston Churchill*, in response.

"He has never been known to use a word that might send a reader to the dictionary." - *William Faulkner* (about *Ernest Hemingway*).

Understanding the politics of lockdown

With more political disagreement over lockdown measures, how should Christians navigate the ever-changing context?

Danny Webster, Evangelical Alliance (EA), 14 October 2020

The continued resurgence of coronavirus cases across the UK has led to a fresh wave of restrictions. Much of Scotland's most populated areas are in a two-week 'circuit breaker' lockdown, and Northern Ireland will follow a similar path including the closure of schools for at least two weeks from 16 October, with the hospitality sector closing for four weeks.

The system of individual local lockdowns in England has now been replaced with a three-tier set of restrictions, with every local authority placed in one of the three categories. At the time of writing only the wider Liverpool City Region is in the highest tier of restrictions, which sees the closure of many bars and pubs, but alcohol can still be served in conjunction with a 'substantial meal'. The other areas of England that had previously been in local lockdown are in the middle tier, which largely replicates the restrictions that had previously been in place. The bottom tier comes with the restrictions that are in place nationwide.

At present these restrictions do not see the closure of churches, and many other activities and business that are able to operate in a COVID-secure manner are able to continue. However, there will be an impact on how churches operate. The restrictions on household mixing in the areas of England placed in the high and very high tiers will make many pastoral activities including home groups almost impossible. In addition, the limits on 'mingling' that are in place elsewhere in England, and stricter rules in other nations, mean that the social element of gathering together for worship is extremely limited.

A further notable development in recent weeks is the increased political debate and scrutiny on different measures that are being discussed and implemented. When the whole of the UK went into a coordinated lockdown in March, the differences between the four nations of the UK were minimal, and there was no regional or local differentiation. The desire to lift restrictions, and to only apply them again locally, is based on the understanding that while they were effective in restricting the spread of the virus they came with severe negative consequences. Much of the discussion has focused on the economic cost, but there is a growing realisation that the impact is felt far more widely, not least on children's education, our mental health, and the social and spiritual welfare of the population.

There are at least three dimensions in which to consider restrictions and their impact. First of all, are they necessary? Some commentators are sceptical as to whether restrictions are necessary to stop the spread of the virus and limit its most damaging consequences. There has been much discussion of the alternative approach taken in Sweden, which never saw a national lockdown and the ensuing repercussions.

Second, if it is necessary to put measures in place to stop the spread of the virus, there is consideration of whether the particular measures being put in place are effective in achieving that. For example, there has been significant comment

on the unintended consequences of requiring all pubs, restaurants and takeaways in England to close at 10pm, creating a bottleneck of people all leaving at once, using public transport, and purchasing alcohol for consumption elsewhere.

Third, there is consideration of what the negative impact of particular measures will be. For example, the UK Government has made it clear that it is prioritising keeping schools open, as they view the negative consequences of closing schools as severe, both for the welfare of children and the ability of parents to work.

Debate therefore rages as to which measures are most effective, and which measures have the least damaging consequences. These are legitimate political disagreements, and debate and scrutiny are essential as options are weighed and decided, even when needing to happen at speed. The polarisation of opinion, seen in politics and the press, of either wanting to lockdown everything or 'let the virus rip', is unhelpful as very few people hold the views at either pole.

As Christians engage in public debate at this time, it is vital that we are aware of these dynamics and where our opinions and experiences place us. We should seek to engage with grace, wisdom and discernment, and an understanding that we will disagree about how to interpret the situation and the best course of action in response.

Specifically, in relation to how the rules apply to churches, it is also important to see that our response will be influenced by the same questions about the value and purpose of lockdown measures. Are they effective, and what are the negative consequences?

This means that for some there is a greater willingness to accept restrictions because they are viewed as both necessary and effective; and for some churches the restrictions are felt more severely than for others. For more sacramentally-oriented churches, the restrictions on sharing communion in both kinds is a severe limitation; for churches where sung worship is integral, the advice not to sing is highly restrictive.

This has an impact on how Christians read and apply teaching relating to obeying government authority and how that interacts with defending and promoting the importance of religious freedom. If you think measures are highly effective and only have limited impact on your religious freedom then you are more likely to welcome them, whereas if you are dubious about their effectiveness and view them as restricting your religious freedom you will be much more resistant. There is a crucial place for a wise consideration of government authority and religious freedom protection in the current political environment. It is, however, not simply a matter of our theological position, nor our support for particular political parties. It is intertwined with our approach to science, our personal experience of lockdown, the tradition in which we worship, and many other factors.

The restrictions on the freedom to assemble do have an impact on our freedom to worship, because gathering together is integral to our worship. The church in the UK made admirable and significant efforts to ensure worship and teaching could continue when we couldn't meet in person, and for many that is still the best way to draw the whole congregation together. But there was an impact nonetheless. And, as further measures may be announced, there is a vital need for dis

cernment and an understanding of how they affect our freedoms.

In the months ahead there will be limitations on how we meet as churches, and some of these will be costly to the spiritual welfare of our congregations and our wider communities. These costs need to be considered alongside the other factors – economic, educational and social – of lockdown measures. In how we respond, and how we judge the Government’s actions, we need to know the cost and respond with grace to those who view things differently. Whether this is relating to wider political discussions, or restrictions specific to churches, we should act with grace and pursue truth. We should cherish the freedom we have to worship dearly and continue to stand with those – across the world – for whom it is withheld.

Danny Webster oversees the EA’s public policy work across the UK and engagement with the parliaments, assemblies and respective governments.

Christmas Craft & Produce Mini-Market

We all need some festive cheer in the village, this winter, amid all the doom and gloom. The Ferriby Village Hall would like to announce that it is holding a Christmas Mini-Market on:

Saturday 28th November, 10 am – 2.30 pm,
at North Ferriby Village Hall, Church Road, HU14 3AA.

To fall in-line with COVID19 rules there will be 8 stalls selling a wide range of products, both local crafts and produce. These will include handmade chocolates, local gin, charity Christmas cards, handmade jewellery, Usborne books, Christmas patchwork decorations, knitwear, handmade wooden items and more.....

The kitchen will be serving delicious **festive refreshments** all day.

Admission £3 to include raffle tickets too, with fabulous prizes.

Entry will be by timed tickets to ensure social distancing, **Advance Booking only please.** Phone Ferriby Village Hall on 07555 347968 to book your preferred time and leave your details – (before Saturday 21 Nov please). Numbers allowed at each time slot will be limited. Each time slot will be for 45 minutes. Track & trace will apply.

We do hope that you will **come and join the festive fun**, support local enterprise, see your friends and neighbours in groups of 6 and choose some lovely Christmas treats and presents. Masks will be required. This will also be a good opportunity to see the refurbished Village Hall.

For any further information please see the website – www.ferribyvillagehall.org.uk.

Worship at St Barnabas during the coronavirus pandemic.

Please note – this information is correct as of 18 October but of course details may have to change at any time, please check our website for the latest information.

Worship in person

Services are currently held each Sunday morning and Wednesday afternoon. Please check the church website for current times and if possible let us know, by phone or email to the church office, that you are planning to come, thank you.

Before you come:

- Space is limited (due to the need for social distancing), so there is no expectation that people will come to more than one service each week (Sunday or midweek).
- Please be careful to assess your own risk of coming to an indoor meeting. There is NHS guidance on those who may be at higher risk of coronavirus here: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/whos-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/>
- In particular, please do not come to the church building:
 - o If you have any symptoms of Covid 19
 - o If you are self isolating (i.e. you must not leave the house)
 - o If you or a member of your household has been advised to ‘shield’
- In these cases you should join our worship online, not in person.
- Please consider bringing your own hand sanitiser (though this is provided)
- A face covering must be worn (unless you are exempt) – this is to protect others from the virus but does not remove the need for good hand hygiene, social distancing, and self-isolating if you have symptoms.
- The front doors and some high windows will be kept open to provide ventilation – please dress appropriately! (though the heating will be on)

When you arrive

- At the door, there will be a register to take contact details. These will be kept for 3 weeks after the service in case we are contacted by NHS Test and Trace service.
- You will be asked to sanitise your hands before you go your seat.
- Seats are spaced in small groups 2m apart from each other. Please go straight to your seat and remain there throughout the service.

During the Service

- If there is a notice sheet on your seat; please take this home with you afterwards and recycle. There will not be Bibles on the seats, so please bring your own.
- Words for prayers, etc. will be projected onto the large screen.
- To reduce the risk of spreading the virus, there can be no singing during the service (we are ‘humming’ along under our masks). Song words will be projected so we can join in in our heads.

- For families with children, there are activity sheets to read/fill in - please bring your own pens & pencils and/or 'quiet' toys and books.
- We share the peace by making a 'peace wave' to those in other households.

At the end of the service

- Please leave via the rear corridor, maintaining 2m distance until you are outside, and not chatting as you leave. Once outside you are welcome to talk in small groups of not more than 6 in the car park, staying 2m from people from other households.
- If you test positive for coronavirus at any point in the fortnight following the service, please contact the office by phone or email to let us know (and so that we can pray for you).

Wednesday afternoon communion service:

- This is a shorter, said service. There are no songs to 'hum' to, but quiet music is being played to enhance our worship
- Communion is celebrated in both kinds (bread and wine) but only the consecrated bread is distributed, in the form of a wafer. We are following national guidelines for safe distribution and the procedure will be explained each time beforehand.
- If you do not wish to receive communion, you are welcome to come forward for a blessing if you wish, or simply remain quietly in your seat.

Worship at home (search on YouTube for *Swanland Church St Barnabas*)

If you are unable to come along in person, you are really welcome to join us online – we are open to all! The service will be live-streamed from the hall on YouTube. You can 'subscribe' to our YouTube channel so that you are notified automatically when we 'go live'.

Or you can check the site at around 10.10am to 'check in': -
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCVsWWyduvWKv615oi0E_6Dw

To watch on 'catch up' later, you can go to our website www.stbchurch.org.uk to access the latest online service (and all previous services).

To join our 'zoom coffee' online gathering after the service, please contact the office for details of the up-to-date zoom link.

Last Minute

A minister waited in the queue to have his car filled with petrol just before a long holiday weekend. The attendant worked quickly, but there were many cars ahead of him. Finally, the attendant motioned him toward a vacant pump. "Reverend", said the young man, "I'm so sorry about the delay. It seems as if everyone waits until the last minute to get ready for a long trip." The minister chuckled, "I know what you mean. It's the same in my business."

Christ Church

We continue with Sunday morning worship at Christ Church Swanland and we continue to monitor the Covid-19 situation from week to week. Infection levels have continued to increase in East Yorkshire and we may reach a time when we decide it is unsafe to continue morning worship. Therefore the following preachers and dates are provisional.

Please note there is a change to our usual 10.30a.m. start time for 8th November. The 29th of November should have been a URC team service which will not happen. We are not sure that we wish to run two consecutive Local Arrangement services, hence the statement below.

Sunday 1st November - Mrs Ann Baker

Sunday 8th November - Mrs Paula Turner - Remembrance Sunday, worship to start 10.15a.m. Act of Remembrance at War Memorial 11.00a.m.

Sunday 15th November - Rev Ann Rigby-Jones – Communion

Sunday 22nd November - Local arrangement service by church stewards and worship leaders

Sunday 29th November - details of any service to be confirmed during the month

We continue to ask that anyone planning to attend one of these services contact either the church secretary Roy Kennington (Tel. 631424) or the senior steward Rosemary Short (Tel 633457) by 6.00p.m. on Saturday if you plan to attend the service on the following day. Covid-19 regulations require us to limit numbers and to keep a record of people attending for track and trace purposes.

LOCKDOWN away from home

When I returned from Athens to Hull in March, I didn't expect to get caught up in a four-month lockdown. However, staying with Kathy Howlett was indeed an enjoyable, refreshing and productive time.

When able, we enjoyed trips out in the car, with picnics, particularly to York, Lincoln and Hornsea. Our trip to Epworth meant that we walked in the footsteps of the Wesleys....highly recommended, but perhaps wait till the buildings are open again!

We both found the Sunday morning services online and Zoom coffee mornings, as well as Bev and Phil's evening worship very helpful and want to say a big thank you to all involved.

As well as the usual Scrabble, jigsaws, knitting and sewing we also did some volunteering work which included shopping for the housebound in the community and on several occasions we went into the Hull Help for Refugees store to sort clothes to be sent in a container to Greece later this year.

On my 70th birthday, Kathy and I walked over the Humber Bridge (something I have always wanted to do). I was sponsored through Hull Help for Refugees for this event and now I am back in Athens I am able to buy clothes, food and hygiene products for the many refugees. Any further donations can be passed on to me through Kathy. *Anne Bates*



It's August 2020 and temperatures are reaching 40 degrees. Refugee families are being removed from the island of Lesbos and sent to the mainland to start a new life with no accommodation or cash card. Most families are from Afghanistan and the authorities say there is no war there....but I hear many stories of bomb blasts and horrific murders by the Taliban. The families, which include tiny babies, children, heavily pregnant women and grandparents make their way to Victoria Square. It is here they sleep on the hard ground and try to survive and find work and accommodation. There are no toilets or showers but the local tasty Afghan restaurants help where they can. They could go away with the brutal police to a

'closed ' camp miles away from anywhere.

The Hope Cafe team, including myself, is visiting most mornings to distribute water, fresh fruit, croissants, clothes, pampers and baby milk.

As I write I am negotiating with the Medical Volunteers based in Athens to join us to access the situation. Many children are not eating but this could be because of the heat and trauma.

These are inhumane conditions in Europe.



Photos from Anne Bates in Athens

Swanland Snippets

29: Older errand boy



Let's return to my days as an errand boy. It's a family joke started by me a long time ago that I was headhunted because of both my survival and skills whilst riding the Cafe's carrier bike. The truth is I went to work for someone else because he offered me more money! I now had a pay increase and earnt 10/- (50p) for working a Saturday. Another consideration was that his bike was in much better condition. It was checked regularly and serviced every year by an old gent in Hessle.

My new employer was John Tuck, who began his business some time in the late 1950s selling fruit and veg from a van, but it was 1963 when I started working for him. By this time his mobile shop was a converted Bedford O.B. coach. Its passenger carrying days were well and truly over. The seats had been stripped out and shelving installed. He sold fruit and veg and a limited amount of tinned and dried goods and fizzy drinks, and in winter he sold firewood.

We knew him affectionally as "Tuckie", and his mobile shop is still remembered as "Tuckie's" bus. On Woodgates Lane there was a large garage which housed the bus but also acted as his warehouse. His delivery area was Swanland and North Ferriby. His route went along Ferriby High Road from what is now the Hallmark Hotel and along to Corby Park and around the rest of the village then up to and around all of Swanland. His arrival was announced by him blowing the bus's horn. He had a good reputation because he only sold first class fresh produce. His knowledge of the merchandise was second to none and his customers would ask him questions regarding the time when certain fruits and vegetables would be available. In those days less food was imported and often small local growers sourced local shops to sell their produce to. He taught me such a lot. One memory I have is of him telling me that Golden Delicious apples were mainly grown in two countries, France and South Africa. He would have preferred to sell the South African variety all the time but they had a very short season. The French ones were available most of the year but did not sell as well and that did not please him. The main role of the errand boy was to go ahead of the bus and collect orders from customers who were often housebound or had drives that were not accessible to the bus. One perk of the job was that I used to get a cup of tea and a biscuit at one house on Kemp Road. With hindsight I would never have accepted it now from the state of the kitchen!

John Tuck was a joy to work for; he had an eagle eye and watched you to make sure you handled the fresh food very gently. I often look at the fruit and veg being loaded onto the displays in supermarkets today and say to myself "Tuckie" would not have tolerated the way you are throwing that about.



Swanland School Update

Managing CV-19 has proved just as challenging for the Nairobi schools as for us here in the UK. Schools have been closed for around 6 months across the middle of the year and are just now starting to open up again. However, items such as free school meal vouchers, access to laptops and online learning platforms, from which children in UK schools have benefitted, are just not possible in Nairobi.



We wanted to support the staff as much as we could through difficult times, and we agreed an 80% payment of their salaries through this period. Although the schools have not been open for face to face learning, the staff have been compiling weekly workbooks for the children to complete and provided as much support and feedback as the constraints have allowed. We also paid for a new printer/copier and materials to allow them to

produce these in house rather than use outside support.

We have also provided them with additional desks and chairs to help the spacing and separation in class as well as money for face masks, sanitiser and hand washing stations.

It's been a challenging year all round with still much uncertainty ahead, but the school has played a vital role in the community and we look forward to continuing our financial support of these vulnerable and deprived children. **Thank you for sticking with us and allowing us to help continue to bring care, education and a hope for the future!**



Esther's School Update

These additional hand washing stations were some of many additional features required after a government inspection of Esther's school to ensure they could re-open and be fully CV-19 compliant.

Esther wrote to us after the inspection...

The ministry of education recommended six more washing points and were very impressed with the two that we have already bought. Further, they recommended that we can have two tents to act as temporary classes and to help us achieve social distance.

In the lower section, children use tables which we need to replace with desk/lockers to be able to maintain social distance. Other recommendations include creating a sanatorium/isolation room, purchase of enough soap and detergents and enough thermal guns and masks which we will do with the monthly grant.



Overall EPS is one of the schools that impressed the ministry of education in terms of infrastructure and preparedness. We cannot thank SEAT enough for the great support you have given to us through the years.

On behalf of the EPS fraternity I thank SEAT very much for uplifting our school to this level.

What a lovely endorsement of the value that our support as a charity can bring! As I'm sure by now you know, SEAT does not hold large funds in reserve and our policy is that every pound you give goes out to the schools, with no charity overheads. If you are able to help with some of these requests then do please consider making a donation or increasing your monthly giving. Whilst we recognise that times are challenging for many of us here in the UK, giving what we can to support those less privileged is a wonderful statement of solidarity and partnership!

If you would like more information of ways to support the schools then please contact Richard Swain at richardmswain@gmail.com or you can give through www.swanlandschoolnairobi.org.



Swanland Pond Partnership

There have been some queries from people who are presumably new to the village, regarding the appearance of the pond after the latest maintenance day. Alyson Ell, who leads the group which carries out the maintenance, has sent me the following photographs, which she hopes will clarify.

As you can see, the volunteers work very hard to clear away the dead vegetation, so that the water isn't polluted by it rotting down. If anyone would like to help with this job, which takes place twice a year, please contact Alyson Ell or any member of the SVA committee.



Pond cleaning in progress, autumn 2020





Above: pond immediately after cleaning, autumn 2018

Below: pond in high summer, 2019



Church after COVID—Why Bother Going Back?

- *Carmen Joy Imes*

It's Sunday morning. I sit by the gas fireplace snuggled up in a warm blanket, relishing the quiet. Before long, the rest of the family will stir, and we'll have a choice to make:

- Get ready to go to church?
- Livestream the service at home?
- Watch it later?
- Or skip it altogether?

Some of these options have emerged in 2020, as a result of the global pandemic. After 6 months of worship at home with church on Zoom or YouTube, rhythms that used to be automatic are no longer a given.

In our county of rural Alberta, Canada, we currently have no cases of COVID19. Province-wide, students are back in class, and churches are allowed to meet again. Still, many precautions are in place. Attending church is more complicated now. Some churches require pre-registration, masks, and hand sanitizer. Most have chairs spaced apart or pews blocked off to ensure social distancing. Some won't let you sing. Many have cancelled programming for children. And frankly, with no handshakes and no visiting in the lobby—in one door and out another—why bother going?

During the stay-at-home orders, many churches stepped up to the challenge of livestreaming services, investing in equipment and training to foster a sense of continuity. Churches that did this well are facing a new challenge: making the case to return to in-person services.

One rural pastor told me that his low-budget, inexperienced attempt at connecting digitally with his congregation has had a happy result: no one is clamoring for him to continue online services! They are all eager to come back to church. Another pastor told me that re-starting his church was proving harder than starting it in the first place.

Frankly, our church has done an excellent job of digitizing services, and our leaders have decided to continue livestreaming now that we're meeting in person. This is partly for the sake of those who cannot yet safely gather because they are immuno-compromised, partly for those who are sick or in quarantine, partly to reach a wider audience beyond our small town, and partly because we can't all fit into the building Sunday mornings with the chairs six feet apart.

Let me first say that if your state or county is prohibiting services, then by all means, stay home. Your government leaders are doing their best to keep you safe. This will not last forever. Eventually the restrictions will lift. When that day comes, why shatter the peace of the weekend by going through all of the COVID19 rigmarole, exchanging distant greetings, and singing muffled songs? Why not just tune in at home?

This pandemic has foisted an even bigger question on all of us —what is the point of church anyway? Can it be done online as well as in person? And if so, then why go back at all?...

With this in mind, here are four reasons I am choosing to attend church in per-

son again, now that it is allowed where I live:

1. Weekly fellowship in a church body orients my loves.

Each week my heart is re-calibrated in tiny ways that keep me facing Jesus rather than drifting in another direction. This is true even if I don't *feel* particularly inspired or challenged on a given week. Church is not a vending machine, designed to meet my immediate needs. It is a field that, when cultivated year after year, will produce spiritual nourishment. The fact that I don't walk out every Sunday with a full belly does not mean it is pointless to go. Little by little, week after week, I tend this field until it yields an abundant harvest.

2. Weekly fellowship in a church body reminds me that following Jesus means joining God's family.

When I signed on as a Christian, it was not a transaction designed primarily to secure my eternal destiny. Becoming a Christian means becoming part of God's family and changing how I live here and now. Spending week after week with *these* people, sharing *this* experience, eventually adds up to a network of caring relationships. It doesn't happen overnight (remember, it's a field, not a vending machine), but as we do life together, we lend support to each other on our faith journeys. Simply watching from home positions me as a solitary consumer rather than an active participant. While digital worship has been a gift to keep us connected during this strange season, it is not a sustainable way to cultivate the community of faith.

3. Weekly fellowship in a church body enables me to participate in God's work of grace in others.

My effort to show up encourages my leaders, upholding their ministry. Any pastor who has tried preaching to a camera knows that it is *not* the same. My presence supports the work of my pastor and worship leader to study, plan, and prepare. It lends energy and solidarity to their message.

My presence also affirms the value of corporate worship for all those in attendance. My smile and my wave from six feet away and my voice lifted in praise (behind my pandemic mask) manifest the Spirit's presence to others who have come. This is what it means to be the image of God. Our identity as God's image is expressed physically—an embodied reminder of the presence and rule of God. We represent the unseen God to one another. I am not my own. I am a member of something bigger than myself—Christ's body on earth. For those who have been isolated at home and traumatized by the incessant trials of this difficult year, my physical presence may be a lifeline. Caring eye contact may lend strength for another week.

4. Weekly fellowship in a church body is a means of declaring allegiance to the kingdom of God.

On the outside, the church may not seem like much. It may seem weak. But the church is a visible witness to the unseen reality of God's kingdom. Being present each week testifies to this. It acknowledges that God's invisible kingdom is more substantial and more lasting than the other concrete institutions in my community. It will outlast the postal service, local businesses, schools, and politicians and their offices. It will outlast the pandemic and the hurricanes and the wildfires and the ugly inequalities in our world. My participation ensures this. It testifies to

that greater and lasting kingdom.

So, for these and other reasons, I go. I hope that as soon as you are able, you will go, too. Our circumstances may still be less than ideal, but the long-term benefits of embodied worship far outweigh the hassles. Whether I feel excited about it or not (and usually I do!), the church is my family, and I cannot be who I am meant to be without it.

Carmen Joy Imes, Christianity Today 'Jesus Creed' blog, 28 September 2020
Article contributed by St Barnabas Church

