



June – August 2020

# outlook

Newsletter of **Pond Square Chapel** – Highgate United Reformed Church



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# Who Would Have Thought?

**H**ow much our world has changed in such a short period of time! Who would have thought just back at the start of the year a few months ago that the whole world would go into lockdown as the result of the spread of the coronavirus pandemic? - national economies in collapse, thousands of deaths, health services stretched to their limit, and in some countries almost to the point of breakdown.

There were certainly some hints even before Gwen and I left for our holiday in Australia at the end of February - we were all aware that what had started in Wuhan, China was spreading to other countries. But the service I conducted on 23rd February, the very day we later departed for Melbourne, turned out to be the last service (with a congregation) I've conducted in our church building for the last 3 or 4 months! We miraculously got on an earlier flight to arrive home on 22nd March, with 'lockdown' announced on 23rd!



**Who would have thought that we would become 'virtual church'?**

We've never had delusions about being the most technologically sophisticated church, and up till recently had certainly never streamed live church services. But extreme times call for extreme measures. And just a few days after my return from Australia our very first virtual joint Elders/Managers meeting decided we should use the 'zoom platform' for our Sunday morning worship. Well, who would have thought that something good for our church would come out of these very challenging

times? The numbers at our virtual services have sometimes been double the number we usually get for services in our building, with attendances in the 30's and 40's rather than the teens and 20's! Admittedly, numbers have been enhanced partly because we're able to send the link to other friends and family members who are normally unable to attend services in our building, but I think our sense of fellowship and togetherness has actually been enhanced by this unexpected turn of events. So much so, that we are giving much thought as to how we may carry some of these benefits forward even once we're back in our building.



Now, let me turn to this important time of the year in the Christian calendar -

**Who would have thought that an implement of suffering could become a symbol of hope?**

We may not have been able to be physically present with one another over the Easter period enjoying the Easter services and joint-church events we normally appreciate so much, but what a wonderful series of services we have experienced - with more people participating, news of how people are keeping in touch, and the joy of seeing new faces joining us from time to time.

It is the cross and the empty tomb which are still the focus of our worship week by week. The cross reminding us, in these times of pandemic, that our Lord also suffered in order that we might be brought back into relationship with our Father,

brought back to God's love. The empty tomb reminding us that "neither death, ... nor things present, nor things to come, nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 8: 38 and 39)

Not easy for us to take on board sometimes, but just amazing - "we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called .... Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." (1 Corinthians 1: 23 and 24)

### Who would have thought this broken band of followers could change the world?

As we mentioned in one of our services recently, the situation of these first followers of Jesus was in some ways very similar to our own situation at present. After the death of their friend and teacher, they were uncertain what to do next - "On the evening of that day ... the doors being shut where the disciples were ... Jesus came and stood among them ..." (John 20:19). But they were given even greater resolve, they were renewed and empowered for the task which lay ahead when 'they were filled with the Spirit' on the Day of Pentecost. And much of the remainder of the book of Acts as well as other historical sources tell us how the early church grew from strength to strength, through good times and some very challenging times.

### Who would have thought?

We're not the biggest church in London. We're not even the biggest church in Highgate. But what a wonderful contribution we're making to our local community. In better times, the church building is well used as a community resource. We partner effectively with other organisations to provide - weekly lunches (with Highgate Newtown Community Centre), school assemblies (with Pathway), and winter shelter for the homeless (with C4WS). And even in these challenging times during the Covid-19 pandemic we again partner with HNCC to help provide food bags and hot meals to the most vulnerable.

My prayer is that we now build on the membership base which we have, and continue to grow as a congregation.

Wishing all our members and friends God's blessing and peace in these uncertain and challenging times.

**David E.P. Currie**  
*Minister*



# Letter from the editors

Dear Friends,

May God be with all of us in these challenging times. We give thanks that technology allows many of us to continue to meet for our weekly Zoom-Service, and also to share this new edition of Outlook, albeit electronically (for most of us).

A few editions back we, Michelle and Dietrich, have taken over as Outlook-editors from Sue Chinn. I think we speak for all of us when we want to say a massive thank you to Sue for her many years of putting together our church magazine, with its interesting and varied content, that we all enjoy greatly! We ask for everyone's help to allow us to continue this tradition: Please, please keep the poems, articles, pictures, thoughts, and prayers coming! The more people contribute, the more interesting and inspiring our magazine will remain.

Michelle and Dietrich are taking turns with editing the magazine, but if you are unsure who is putting together the next one, just email either or both of us with your contributions ([michelleswer@aol.com](mailto:michelleswer@aol.com), or [dietrichh@gmail.com](mailto:dietrichh@gmail.com)), or – once we can all meet in person again – just hand us a piece of paper. Lastly, we also want to say a massive thank you to Laura Templeton, who continues to do the real work behind the scenes, formatting all the articles and pictures into the finished product.

God bless, Michelle and Dietrich



**Church Patio  
In April**

## What did your Director of Music do in the lockdown?

**L**ocked down in Exeter without internet access or a car Robert Manning was unable either to "zoom" in on Highgate URC services or – for those practical reasons – join the swathes of heroes helping out in the community in a substantial way. So he set to work on a project he had begun in December 2019. This was to write short organ pieces based on hymn tunes suggested by friends he had worked with for the Open University, to celebrate firm friendships established then which continue now.

By 23 March 2020 and the start of lockdown he had completed three; he has now completed ten, with one or two more currently projected. The project is expanding to celebrate other people too, and will probably be open-ended. It links with an idea of many years ago that was never realized: to produce a "Little Highgate Organ Book" of pieces that could be used within worship at Pond Square Chapel.

At least three of the pieces he has written could be adapted for cello and keyboard, and played in duet with Noah.

Also during the lockdown your Musical Director read a large history of the Bible by Professor John Barton, but that's another story.....

Robert Manning



# Sunday's COOL

at Pond Square Chapel

Sunday's Cool has changed a lot since the last Outlook. We are currently doing Sunday's Cool over Zoom which is going well but very different! I am also making children's talk videos and putting them online. There is a video each week for each group. It's been interesting to try new things during the videos. We have been to New York, Alexandra Palace (without even leaving our homes!) and



Despite the change of how we are doing things we will still have our Try Something New for 2020

## TRY SOMETHING NEW FOR 2020

**May** – Try a New Bible Story– *Sunday's Cool* will hear some Bible stories that the children may not have heard before.

**June** – Try Giving – *Hearing Bible stories of people who gave something for someone.*

**July**– Try the Book of Joshua – *The children will hear about the book of Joshua*

Please stay safe and I look forward to being back at the Church!

Stephen Michael-Rainford  
Children's Leader

# Pond Square Chapel

## During Lockdown

**T**he church building has been closed since 23 March, but occasional visitors have been able to enjoy its space. Two Communion services were aired from the building as David and Patricia experimented using the church building for worship. The first time on Easter Sunday and again for communion on Sunday 10 May.



Also behind the closed blue doors, with appropriate social distancing and hygiene measures we have been carrying out the planned tea point refurbishment and upgrade. In early April, an electrician installed new lighting, electric points and a new escape light on the stairs. Two painters and decorators followed on, sourcing paint from Scotland when supplies in North London were unavailable. Please be aware that due to difficulties in matching the original colours new ones have been used.





The cabinet maker will be installing new cupboard fronts and drawers during the first week of June. And new flooring will follow soon after. In terms of upgrade, additional plug sockets will allow for soup and occasional food warming up to take place and a slimline dishwasher is being installed to improve hygiene levels and facilities for community lunches.



This refurbishment has been made possible by donations from the National Lottery, the Laing Trust and the Garfield Weston Foundation, as well as church funds. We are also grateful for assistance received from HNCC in seeking these grants.

The Elders and Managers are discussing ways to make our special building and its facilities a safe place to use once restrictions are ended – we look forward to sharing this with you then.

**Helen Roe**



# Letter from Japan

Yuka Suzuki

**P**lease forgive my poor English. I am not good at writing English. Even so, I am writing this article as I really would like express my gratitude for the Online Services. Under this tough situation, it has given me the grace of comfort. I believe this is truly a gift from our Lord. I deeply believe so.

Firstly, I would like to introduce myself. Some of the friends at the church don't know about me. I used to live in London for 3 years. It is already more than 10 years ago. It has been almost 5 years since the last time I visited Highgate. However, I never forget those brilliant days in London, especially at Pond Square Chapel. For me, Highgate is my second home town. Now, with my experience in London, I work as an editor-in-chief of a Japanese travel magazine - English version.



Pam Furse and Yuka

When I heard about the COVID-19 pandemic in London from the media, I was really worried about all of you in Highgate. That was at the end of March. Then I looked at the church website casually and unconsciously, without seeking anything in particular. By chance, I found the information about the first virtual worship service on the website! I saw a glimmer of hope there. Soon after, I asked David if I was able to join the Online Service from Japan.

Around this time, the Japanese government also asked people to self-isolate. Therefore, my Japanese church in Tokyo decided not to hold Sunday Services during this state of emergency. Instead of our church service, our

Japanese minister sends us his sermon by email. Of course, as I need the word of God, it is really hopeful for me.

But the uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 is an incubator for anxiety for me. I need also the fellowship of the church under such an exceptional circumstance. Fortunately, I can join your Online Services even from Japan. In addition, despite the geographical distance, I can also meet old friends. Although caught in a world crisis at the moment, it's really a wonderful time for me! Our Lord God opened the door for me with modern technology! It is simply amazing!

This incident reminds me of these words in the Holy Bible -  
*"For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things."*

Matthew 6:31-34

These words are always true for me. The words of the Holy Bible, prayer, hymns and people's smiles ..... all of them give me great comfort and reassurance. I never feel lonely.

Thank you for giving me a precious opportunity. I earnestly pray our lives will soon return to normal. Once the Coronavirus has settled down, I would like to join the Sunday Service again for real in Pond Square Chapel.

Your friend,

**Yuka**

15 May, 2020

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## Diary Dates

Please note that following URC advice as we await Government guidance on the reopening of places of worship, the church will remain closed for Sunday morning services until further notice. Likewise, for the time being, we are giving no indication as to when the Meditation Group and the Home Group may recommence. As soon as present restrictions are relaxed and Leaders feel it safe to start again, we will be in touch.

During the period we continue to use the 'virtual service' format, Sunday's Cool will continue to meet at 11.40 am, following the Sunday morning service.

# Diary Dates

## June

Sun 7	10.30 am	Trinity Sunday
Sun 14	10.30 am	Second Sunday after Pentecost and Sacrament of Holy Communion
Sun 21	10.30 am	Third Sunday after Pentecost
Sun 28	10.30 am	Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

## July

Sun 5	10.30 am	<b>Book-Giving Service for Sunday's Cool</b>
Sun 12	10.30 am	Sixth Sunday after Pentecost, including Sacrament of Holy Communion. <b>Followed by Annual General Meeting</b>
Sun 19	10.30 am	Seventh Sunday after Pentecost
Sun 26	10.30 am	Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

## August

Sun 2	10.30 am	Ninth Sunday after Pentecost
Sun 9	10.30 am	Tenth Sunday after Pentecost, including Sacrament of Holy Communion
Sun 16	10.30 am	Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost
Sun 23	10.30 am	Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost
Sun 30	10.30 am	Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

## September

Sun 6	10.30 am	Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Sun 13	10.30 am	Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost, including Sacrament of Holy Communion
Sun 20	10.30 am	Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Sun 27	10.30 am	Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

## **A Constant Friend**

written by Gwyneth Wilson, and read by her at our  
'virtual service' for Highgate United Reformed Church  
on Sunday, 3rd May 2020.

### **A Constant Friend**

Alone but never lonely  
secure in the love  
of a constant friend,

if I still my body  
silence my mind  
I find this love.

Beyond my understanding  
wanting to listen  
help and guide,

unravelling my thoughts  
to a clearer understanding  
of who I am.

A caring presence  
knowing me well  
yet loving me still,

my gentle Jesus  
loving God  
redeeming Spirit.

**Gwyneth Wilson**