



CONNECTED

Week Beginning Sunday 29th March 2020

“So why do you condemn another believer? Why do you look down on another believer? Remember, we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.”

Romans 14: 10

Beloved St Swithin's Family

Thank you for taking the time to read and listen and contribute to the life of St Swithin's. In this incredibly difficult season for all of us, when we're scattered across the city and beyond, we want to encourage each other to grow in our connection with God, with each other and to still believe that in these testing times we are good news to our hurting world. We are enriched by taking time together in our front rooms or at our kitchen tables.

This news sheet is a response to the unique times we are living in. As a diverse community, we are aware that some of us will be really struggling, whilst others will be seeing new opportunities open up. Either way, we are continuing to be a people of faith, prayer, love, generosity and hope in our city. We are a church family, a body united by Christ. And although our publicly gathered rhythm needs to adapt to the season, we are still renewing our trust in God, committed to loving one another and passionate about serving the world around us.

As One At 10

Thank you for all your positive feedback from our first As One At 10 last week. Many of you have commented on how helpful you found it to know that as you sat down at 10am on Sunday morning, you were joining with so many of our St Swithin's family, scattered around the city.

Do join us again this Sunday morning at 10am as we continue to keep that time set aside for God in prayer, worship and by opening His word - with the whole church family. We want to stay and grow in our connection with one another at this time.

We are learning and adapting as we go along so this week you will find a similar but evolving resource for 'As One At 10'.

We encourage everyone to use this time to engage with God and find His strength, to hear His voice and follow where He is leading.

As last week, you may want to wrestle a bit more with what comes up and we highly recommend talking to someone about it, perhaps by picking up the phone and calling someone else from church, or by organising a communal gathering over Zoom with your Life Group (which we know many of you have already done!)

News

- In line with government advice, **the staff team are working from home** as much as possible at this time, but please still feel free to phone the church office and leave a message. We are able to pick up messages remotely so someone will get back to you.
- **If you are self-isolating** and would like some help, please let us know on **office@stswithinswalcot.org.uk** or 01225 789168.
- In the city there are still lots of opportunities to serve, Genesis - <http://genesistrust.org.uk> - are still looking for help to support the vulnerable and homeless in the city, especially with the soup run, if you are in a position to help and would like to get involved, do contact them.
- A network of voluntary organisations across Bath and NE Somerset are looking for volunteers at this time. You will find more information at <https://www.3sg.org.uk> that will give you lots of opportunities to help. There are so many inspiring stories of people looking out for others at this time, and on the website there is a section on compassionate communities and how as a city we can play an active role, for example signing up to be a compassionate community connector.

St Swithin's 'SWAT' (St. sWithin Assistance Taskforce) team

The plan is for Life Groups to provide the main focus for supporting one another through this difficult time, but situations may arise that are outside the ability of Life Groups to cover alone. To that end we are looking to set up a pool of volunteers (the SWAT team) who are able to provide help as and when needed. This could be at different levels, such as:

- Phoning those who are self-isolating (the 'SI's), due to illness or vulnerability, to have a chat and checking that they are OK.
- Cooking a meal for SI's and delivering it (could be delivered by someone else). This should be a 'last resort' option.
- Collecting prescriptions for SI's.
- Doing shopping for SI's.

Becs Armstrong and Alastair Gibson have agreed to be the point of contact for the SWAT team so please could you email or phone them to let them know if you would like to be part of the team – indicating the sort of support you would be able to provide. Contact details are as follows:

Becs: 07779 102165 becs_armstrong@yahoo.co.uk

Alastair: 07767 202830 ag@charlcombe.com

Please Pray

- For all those feeling fearful about the future as we deal with uncertainties around the coronavirus situation. Please pray for those who are sick, for those in the front line caring for them and for those working long hours in other ways helping to keep this country running as smoothly as possible during these unique times
- For St Andrew's School and the wider community. Pray for Mrs Jayne, the staff and helpers, for strength, for compassion, for humour and peace as they stay open over Easter to serve the children of key workers
- For our mission partners—Hazel Maunsell in hospital, Mike and Jenny Russon, Paul and Alison Guinness in Burundi, David and Olivia Gatehouse, Jimmy and Katia Rocks in Brazil, Genesis Trust, Tearfund, The Warehouse, CHIT, Wycliffe Bible Translators, CMJ
- For our neighbours. Pray by name for a local business or organisation. Pray God's blessing on them, for protection, provision, guidance and peace.

- Pray the Lord's prayer with Snow Hill and the Gateway Centre in mind
- Pray for the customers and organisations who have used the church building as a place of service, peace, home and blessing

Loving God,

We pray for all those who are suffering because of the coronavirus, may they know your healing power.

When we are afraid for ourselves and our loved ones,

give us your strength and courage.

When we feel alone and isolated, reassure us with a sense of your presence.

Give wisdom to those in authority and may our community work together for the good of all.

We give thanks for those who care for others

and ask you to bless them in all they do.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, healer and physician. **Amen**

God Is Here

Last week we wrote: Sometimes we might begin in gathered worship with, "The Lord is here. His Spirit is with us." We would love the connected news sheet to be a place where we can share stories and encouragements (big or small) of where we have seen God at work and want to give thanks. Please would you let us know by emailing office@stswithinswalcot.org.uk with the subject heading, '**God is Here**' so we can share those with the wider church

Just look at some of our responses! Thank you.

Daffodils



It was a wonderful gesture and really lightened up what could otherwise have been a very gloomy day - Jane

Thank you to St Swithin's Church for this gift. E-Hugs to St Swithin's church family & thoughts & prayers with anyone self isolating - Stephen

Thank you to the most thoughtful and loving team, we received flowers and a lovely card, so thoughtful, God bless everyone during these challenging times! - Joe

As One At 10

A huge and heartfelt thank you for your prayers, guidance and support. I actually felt like I was at church this morning; it was so lovely to hear familiar voices and to know that, across our church family, we were worshipping as one - Laura

Everyone was so touched to receive this gift of love. How precious it is to be part of this loving church family and, more especially, to belong to The Lord at this time! - Alastair

What a precious time - Keith

NOW we can have church at home. - Karyn



Stained Glass window by James

Amanda's thoughts on fear and faith...

The two mandarin characters for "crisis" are danger and opportunity. There is danger with Coronavirus, yet we have the opportunity to grow in intimacy with Christ and strengthen our bonds with others. Our lifegroup had a wonderful zoom meeting last night and I have so enjoyed frequent FaceTime calls with my son and daughter in London. I was thrilled that a neighbour who's a chef offering to shop for me this morning. Likewise, it was such a lovely surprise to receive the St Swithins Mother's Day flowers delivered!

Although the natural reaction is to be anxious or have fear, we can choose faith not fear. That in the divine exchange, we give our anxieties to Jesus and he gives us his peace and his power to overcome as we put our minds on good, noble and lovely things (Philippians 4:6). We can renew our minds (Rom 12:2) with the living word of God and grow closer to our loving Heavenly Father. As we enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise (Ps 100:4), it's good to be grateful and thankful for everything.

One songwriter pens, "when all us stripped away and we simply come." In this time of testing we can discover that Jesus is truly enough. I recommend Julian's prayer (Julian of Norwich), which I pray every morning after my sunrise walk to Charlcombe ancient church garden and well ...

*God of goodness give me Yourself.
You are enough to me.
I can ask for nothing else,
for then I would not be worshipping you.
And if I ask for anything less,
I will always be left wanting.
Only in you
Do I have everything!*

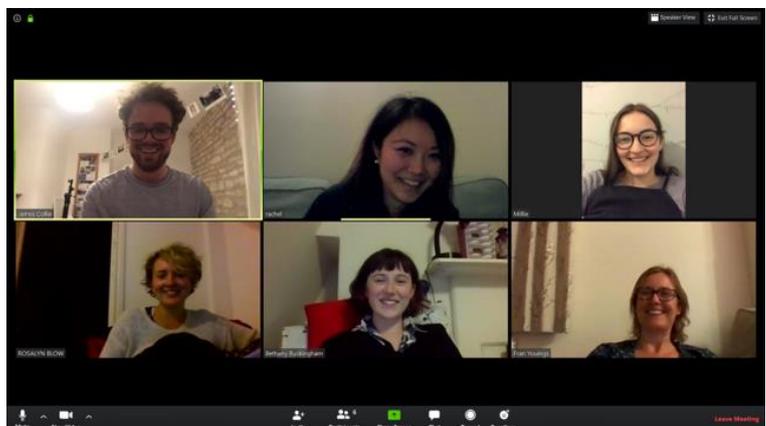
An encouragement from Fay

Has anyone else noticed how apt our bible readings are at the moment? No matter which bible notes/prayer topics you choose to use, God has been there before us!!

I have been truly amazed, and humbled, to see how the Lord has provided exactly the right words of encouragement, compassion and counselling for this strange time in which we are living. Considering how long ago many of these notes and topics were prepared, surely this can only be the work of the Holy Spirit!! We can have confidence in God alone.....Praise to His glorious Name!!!!

Zoom

Some of our students continue to meet with James and Fran on a Wednesday evening but in a different way!



Message from Emily

I started reading the Bible from start to finish using this lovely guide with a study group before I had Lizzie x then I had a baby and basically was way too tired to even read....so going to start at the very beginning....in the words of Maria....and see how I do over these next few uncertain weeks