

Minister: Rev Derek McLean

26<sup>th</sup> August 2020

Dear Friends

*Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and praise the Lord! (Psalm 134:2 NIV)*

There is a scene in “The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe” in which it becomes apparent that the reign of the White Witch is coming to an end. The snow is beginning to melt and the world seeks to return to normal. It feels a bit like that now. However, the parallel goes beyond that: the start of the thaw was just the beginning. Lots still needed to happen before “normality” could be restored. (Yes, I have read a lot during my week’s break; no, Narnia wasn’t one of the things which I re-read!)

We have used the church building for our act of worship. Our test event on the 16<sup>th</sup> August was reasonably successful, albeit with some inevitable teething problems. There were eighteen of us in the building and nearly fifty online. We will therefore go ahead with opening for worship this Sunday (30<sup>th</sup>) and will continue in mixed-mode with worshippers able to participate remotely.

However, please be aware of the limitations: those in church must wear masks, sanitise their hands on arrival, sit where they are directed, they cannot sing, there is no coffee available, and little opportunity to chat. Feedback from those attending was understandably diverse. Some thought that the precautions meant that it felt safe to attend. Others found the limitations deeply uncomfortable. We are trying to strike a difficult balance here and must comply with our moral and legal responsibilities.

**Please continue to participate in worship remotely if you possibly can, so we can use our limited capacity for those who can only attend in person.** Whilst we maintain social distancing in church, our capacity remains severely restricted.

The “thaw” is commencing in other areas too:

- We hope that the Saturday prayers will start soon: we are aiming for 19<sup>th</sup> September. Don’t forget that this ministry has also continued throughout lockdown and resources will still be available if you want to pray with us without coming onto the premises.
- Zeph’s is reopen. People are gradually regaining confidence to come in and are really appreciative of the way in which we are able to provide space to remain safe. Fish Fryday was an immense success with 53 attending.
- We’ve got our first external booking back. It will be a long time before the building is back to being the brilliant community hub that it was at the start of the year, but this is an important milestone.

These steps are dependent on a huge amount of work which has been done on our behalf. I will single out Jon & Eliza for all the work they’ve done to make it possible for external bookings, to thank Penny for her tireless efforts for Zeph’s, and to thank Barry for taking on the role of COVID officer... but in doing so, I know that there are others who I could also name whose work has also been wonderful.

We are also reminded of the extent to which the world needs to see the compassionate results of us following Jesus. The Food Bank saw eight new client families last week.

God bless you all – and stay safe.

Rev Derek

**Welcome Service** There will be a Circuit Welcome Service on the evening of **Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> September**. Rev Debra Chidakwa-Akue joins the Circuit to serve Christchurch and Nativity. We will also be welcoming Rev Kate Cook who has just moved to Oadby – it has been lovely to welcome Kate to our worship in recent weeks. Please get this date in your diary.

### **Mixed-mode Worship**

We continue to worship Sunday by Sunday. Some of us gather in the church whilst others join us online from homes far and wide.

Please let me know if you would like to join online, and I can send you a link, and also talk you through setting this up. Email for information: [derek.mclean@methodist.org.uk](mailto:derek.mclean@methodist.org.uk)

Don't forget that it is possible to phone in, even if you haven't got a computer.

Details of September services will be available shortly. Most probably, I will lead the service on the 6<sup>th</sup> September. The link to join the service will remain the same each week.

### **Prayer Pointers this week**

We continue to pray for all those involved in education.

- We pray for those who have recently received exam results.
- We pray particularly for those attending schools in the Leicester area who have returned to school this week.
- We pray for those ensuring that this is a safe environment and that pupils can safely return and flourish.

We pray for those known to us who are sick.

- We particularly remember one of our Members who has been readmitted to the LRI
- We pray for the father of one of our regular premises users
- We pray for those undergoing treatment at this time who are known to us and who have asked for our prayers but requested that their names should not to be shared.

We pray for churches as they seek to reopen

- We pray for each of the three churches in this section, in Houghton, Great Glen and Oadby, as each reflect on their particular mission priorities.

We hold in prayer those who have recently been bereaved.

- We pray for the two church families who have funerals on the 27<sup>th</sup> August and the 4<sup>th</sup> September.

**Zeph's** It has been good to see Zeph's busy again. Please continue to support it through the regular opening hours. The next Fish Fryday is 4<sup>th</sup> September and I know it will be popular. Don't forget that you need to pre-book.