

FEBRUARY SERVICES

Due to recent high local case rates for COVID, worship for the churches of the South West Hants Group continues online – we are keeping the situation under review and will resume in person worship when it is safe to do so.

Sun 7th Feb – Online worship led by Rev Sarah Hall on Youtube.

Sun 14th Feb – Online worship with Holy Communion, led by Rev Mark Robinson, followed by a Zoom meeting with Rev Sarah Hall.

Sun 21st Feb – Online worship led by Rev Sarah Hall.

Sun 28th Feb – Online worship led by Rev Mark Robinson, followed by a Zoom meeting led by Rev Sarah Hall.

Sun 7th Mar – Online worship led by Rev Mark Robinson.

If you need a minister, please phone (023) 80575909.

For online worship go to:-

- “Rev Sarah Hall” on YouTube or
- <http://thissalt.com> to join Rev Mark Robinson
OR
- asaunc.org.uk (the website of our sister church of Avenue St Andrews) to download the service script or download the audio as an mp3 file.
 - OR Telephone Church – dial 023 82352055 to hear the online service on your phone. Calls charged at the local rate.

You can also go to dailydevotions@urc.org.uk for URC worship.

ISAAC WATTS MEMORIAL CHURCH



MESSENGER



FEBRUARY 2021

www.isaacwatts.org.uk
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EVENTS/MEETINGS

Ash Wednesday 17th February – 7.30pm Prayer Group – please let me (Chris Noyce) know beforehand, contact details above, and I will send you a Zoom link.

Due to Covid-19, the following activities are suspended at the time of publication, but will resume when circumstances permit:-

Mondays in termtime – Boys’ and Girls’ Brigades from 6pm to 8.45pm (separate sections for different age groups from ages 5 to 18). For more details (including of when the Brigades restart) please speak to BB Company Captain Mr Doswell (tel: 023 80872648) or GB Group Leader Mrs Naomi Howard (tel: 023 80873769).

Thursdays – 10.30am to 11.30am, Nibble and Natter in the Church

Fridays - 2pm Badminton/Social Group in Church Hall

Our monthly Community Lunch and Community Fellowship Meeting continues to be suspended also.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

“In the same way the Spirit also comes to help us, weak as we are. For we do not know how we ought to pray; the Spirit pleads with God for us in groans that words cannot express. And God, who sees into our hearts, knows what the thought of the Spirit is; because the Spirit pleads with God on behalf of His people and in accordance with His will.” Romans 8:26-27 GNB

Dear Friends,

There have been numerous times over the past months where we have been called to prayer for someone or some situation of concern to us. And particularly with the pandemic causing illness, distress and uncertainty, the call to prayer can seem urgent. And we have turned to God in prayer, to offer our best to God. However, Paul writes that we don’t know how to pray as we ought.

I wonder is Paul saying that we find it difficult to pray? Is he saying that we say the wrong things to God in prayer? Is he saying that when we pray, we pray incorrectly?

I know that there are times when I find it a bit difficult to pray, difficult to find the words that I would like to say. I guess there are times when we all find prayer difficult. And this can be for a number of reasons. Even Jesus’ disciples struggled with prayer, or at least they felt it was a struggle. So they asked Jesus to teach them to pray.

Prayer is talking and listening to God. Just as we talk and listen to each other in a close relationship. In prayer we can use words to convey love, and to talk about things closest to our heart, and we can ask for help. To talk about things closest to our heart means that we need to know the one we are speaking with... and to feel comfortable with whom we are speaking. Prayer can even be wordless, while sitting, standing or moving in silence.

Within the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples, He encouraged them to begin to develop a close relationship with God. Yet Paul says the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought, so God’s Spirit intercedes so that the truth of what is on our heart is raised up to God, from our heart to God’s heart. The Spirit raises up what and how we truly feel.

The problem of course is that while our heart longs to love God, we are sometimes conflicted with the things of the world. Conflicted with injustice, with hatred, with prejudice and more... These are things that frustrate and cloud our judgement from sometimes praying in the way that we ought. Yet, what prayer does is allow us to open a pathway through those conflicts, through which God's light can shine to lighten the path before us.

Prayer can be difficult at times. If it were not difficult, the Spirit would not have to intercede for us and God would not have to search the intentions of our heart. So pray in any way you feel; thankfully God's Spirit helps in prayer.

Let us keep each other in prayer.

Blessings,
Mark

NEWS OF THE FAMILY

Deepest sympathies are with Irene Carroll following the passing of her husband Barry in early December, following a long illness. Thanks to Irene's care he had been able to stay at home until the last few months. Thoughts and prayers remain with her, her two sons and the rest of the family at this difficult time.

Likewise thoughts and prayers are with Malcolm Green who has been in hospital during January, as well as with all of you who are continuing to have to shield yourselves during the current period. Keep praying for our healthcare professionals and all those involved in the vaccination programme that their efforts will be rewarded and that we can all start to get out and about again.

Keep up the communicating and do join the regular Zoom get togethers after services if you can do so. Group Zooms are announced in the weekly Hope Harbinger notice sheet and also happen in between times within our own congregation – they are a good way of seeing others and catching up on news (see Sarah Wood's note elsewhere in this issue).

Remember also that if you wish to talk to someone, or have someone pray for you, you can always contact Mark, Sarah or myself.

SOME SEASONAL THANKS

This year's Christmas arrangements did not go quite according to plan with one in-person service (on 20th December) at IW before rising Covid cases forced a review. However I would like to express my appreciation to all who helped prepare the building. This year's decorations were more muted but, given the circumstances, most appropriate. A simplified nativity scene was still there for our service (and present for anyone looking through the windows to see), with the Christmas tree by the organ, thanks to Dave and Rose Doswell. The windows on the further side of the church housed flower arrangements, whilst Eve prepared an advent wreath which could be displayed in the doorway for all to see. Thanks to Mandy Renshaw all the Luccombe Road windows were decorated with silhouette nativity scenes (courtesy of Andrew Renshaw's artistic skills!), and Dave kindly provided timed illuminations for these and the wheeled Christmas Tree in the Winchester Road doorway. In these ways it was good to remind people about Christmas despite the restrictions imposed upon us.

A small party braved the elements to go Carol-singing to a number of our members and friends on the Saturday before Christmas. Although there was a little rain our prayers for no hail were answered! Thank you to our singers: your efforts were appreciated. This initiative (other churches in Southampton were doing the same in response to a suggestion through/ from Communicare) is one worth using in future, especially as we look to try to take the church out into the community.

Chris



NEWS RELEASE

With continued lockdown measures across the UK and coronavirus infection rates rising, remaining hopeful can be difficult. We want to encourage you with stories of those we have helped through our coronavirus appeal, as well as thank you for standing with your global neighbours.

Pictured below is Mark Daga, from Christian Aid Nigeria, at a hygiene kit distribution event. Through the gifts of our generous supporters we've now been able to provide hygiene kits in three communities in Benue State.



We also want to tell you about Shima's story. Shima is a barber and has polio which has caused severe shrinking of his muscles, making it difficult for him to get around.

Before the coronavirus lockdown in Nigeria, Shima was able to afford his daily needs through the money he makes from his salon business. But during and after the lockdown, his income reduced drastically, and things got really difficult for him.

'I cut people's hair for a living,' he says. 'As a result of Covid-19, I was out of customers. The biggest challenge I faced was that I was out of business and I could not afford to eat or afford soap to wash. I thank Christian Aid for these gifts.' Shima has been gifted with the essentials he needs!

Your support has brought hope to the most vulnerable people – thank you!

'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.'
Romans 15:13.

About our Coronavirus Appeal

Christian Aid is responding now to the coronavirus outbreak in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.

We're working together with partners and faith leaders to inform people about the risks, offering vital hygiene training, equipping health facilities with supplies, and providing food packages to the most marginalised families.

Together with our local partners, we are working quickly to limit the impact of coronavirus in some of the most vulnerable communities around the world.

- We are drawing on our experience from the Ebola crisis and helping communities to prevent and delay infection.
- We are providing essential soap, water and handwashing training.
- We are ensuring urgent health messages get through to help keep people safe.
- We are working through our networks of church partners and faith-based organisations to reach the most vulnerable at this critical time.

With your help we can do even more (please see Christian Aid's website).

New Year Prayer

Give thanks for new beginnings. January marked the start of a new year but it is also a time when many churches reflect on the baptism of Jesus and members of congregations renew their baptismal vows and commitments to God. Pray for 2021 to bring a sense of new life and hope, and that through our actions this year we will learn more of God's heart for the world and its people.

Christian Aid

NOT GIVING ANYTHING UP FOR LENT?

This year as usual I won't be giving up anything for Lent. What I will be doing is what Jean Symmons got me to do about 10 years ago and I've been doing each year since, which is a positive diary. Each evening I

sit down and write a good thing that happened. In the dark days of February this is hard and it's often difficult to think of anything. But as the days get warmer and you get used to looking for good things it gets easier. It's the opposite of watching the News which concentrates on the bad things that have happened.

We all tend to follow habitual behaviours. We can change these habitual behaviours and create new habits - it's meant to take about a month for new habits to become embedded so Lent at 40 days plus Sundays works well. The good things could be a first crocus, an email from a friend, something nice to eat, an interesting book, a programme on tv.... it doesn't matter what, it's about how you perceive the world around you and your outlook on life. It makes me start seeing the good things around me more, and being thankful for them.

Sarah Wood

ISAAC WATTS ZOOM CALLS

I'll be continuing to organise post service Zoom calls on the Sundays when there isn't a group one, usually at 12 noon. For those who haven't done a Zoom call before, they are video calls where we can see and hear each other on a computer or phone. If you have internet they are free. For the Isaac Watts calls we have only ever had up to 5 people, so it's always been people I know and we don't have the problem that can happen with a big group that it's difficult to speak. I send out a link and you click on that and follow the instructions.

If you'd like to give it a go but are unsure how the technology works send me an email and we can do a trial one at another time with me talking you through the stages on the phone at the same time. So far I've organised them on Zoom but if anyone can't get to use Zoom but can use microsoft teams please let me know and we could change over. If you'd like to be added to the circulation list please email me on SarahL.Wood@yahoo.co.uk

I've really enjoyed chatting on Zoom when we can't see each other in person and hope you'll join me.

Sarah

AND GROUP ZOOMS...

You will notice that Group Zoom calls are scheduled for 14th and 28th February (these will also be at 12 noon). Details of Zoom calls are emailed out beforehand usually with the Hope Harbinger produced by Rev Sarah Hall – if you are concerned that you are not getting these please let me (Chris) know and I will include you on the list. These too offer opportunities to meet others more widely. Whilst we can use breakout rooms if numbers are too large, often this is not necessary, but the conversation is good and, whilst we cannot meet in person, this is an excellent way to catch up with others.

READINGS FOR FEBRUARY

Some Lectionary readings for you to reflect upon through February are as follows:-

Sunday 7th February – Proverbs 8:1,22-31; John 1:1-14; Colossians 1:15-20; Psalm 104:24-34

Sunday 14th February – Psalm 50:1-6; Mark 9:2-9; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6; 2 Kings 2:1-12

Sunday 21st February – First Sunday of Lent: Psalm 25:1-10; Mark 1:9-15; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Genesis 9:8-17

Sunday 28th February – Psalm 22:23-31; Mark 8:31-8; Romans 4:13-25; Genesis 17:1-7,15-16

Sunday 7th March – Psalm 19; John 2:13-22; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; Exodus 20:1-17

THE SUNDAY LINK

If you would like a **hard copy** of the **Sunday Link** (or know someone who might) then please let me know: I am delivering these monthly.

Chris

ACCOUNTS UPDATED

ISAAC WATTS CHURCH ACCOUNTS			
6th April 2020 to 6th December 2020			
Income		Expenditure	
Envelopes	£4,175.00	M & Ministry	£11,648.00
Loose cash	<u>£458.00</u>	Heat & light	£312.25
sub total	£4,633.00	Maintenance	£5,850.86
Communion collections	£0.00	Water	£205.19
Use of premises	£2,832.00	Insurance	£1,813.88
Messenger	£20.00	Pulpit	£150.00
Special events	£0.00	Music	£210.00
Donations received	£2,497.25	Cleaning	£2,426.64
Tax rebate	£0.00	Group Expenses	£343.00
Interest	£160.92	Messenger etc	£68.32
Other	£0.00	Stationery	£117.96
		Giving to others	£80.00
TOTAL	£10,143.17		£23,226.10
Income-spend difference	-£13,082.93		
Bank Account: On 6-04-20	£20,777.15	On 5-12-20	£87,171.24
Building Society Account 6-04-20	£79,438.00	Closed in October, to bank account with interest noted above	

Of Note:-

- Some hall lettings in gaps between lockdowns
- Occasional service with reduced congregations due to Covid
- Insurance rebate of £137
- Post service coffee money of £352
- Hymnal repair of £30
- Income – expenditure £276 better than 5th October

Sarah Wood

Whilst the situation looks superficially good, the eagle eyed among you will spot that expenditure continues to exceed income by a considerable margin. Please remember that even if we cannot meet together in person you can still send your offering to the church by post (cheques please). If you are a UK taxpayer and part of our weekly offering scheme you can still claim Gift Aid back – please leave your offertory number with the donation. All such offerings are always handled in the strictest confidence, and sincere thanks go to those who have been able to support our Church in this way.

Editor

GROUP MINISTRY TEAM

Most worship at Isaac Watts is led by members of the South West Hants Group Ministry Team, which comprises the following people:-

Sarah Hall and Mark Robinson (stipendiary ministers)
Bernie and Gwen Collins (retired ministers)
Leanne Langley (elder and member at Avenue St Andrews)
Chris Noyce (non-serving elder and member at Isaac Watts)
Sue Scott (elder and member at Chandler's Ford)

RETIRING OFFERTORIES in 2021 will be announced later.

PRAYER GROUP

Your presence will be welcome at our monthly prayer group. We are continuing to meet by Zoom, and all are welcome. If you are unable to attend but would like a person or situation to be remembered in prayer then please let me know.

CLOSING DATE FOR MARCH 2021 MESSENGER

Sunday 21st February 2021.

N.B. All uncredited items are by the Editor.