



Youth Activity Packs
for the Summer

Kinver and Kingswinford Open for
Private Prayer



July 2020

Letter to the Vale of Stour Churches

Dear sisters and brothers

The situation around us is ever-changing. Churches are allowed to open for private prayer and worship **but only after a detailed risk assessment has been completed, reviewed and then approved by the church council.** We fully understand that

some churches may sensibly choose not to open as many key stewards are in an at risk category. There is therefore no pressure to open.

By God's grace morning worship will begin again in August but sadly with no singing or Holy Communion. We only have enough preachers for six churches across the circuit: Brierley Hill, Kingswinford, Kinver, New Road, Overend and United Lye. We will therefore continue to provide worship online through our Virtual Church Platform as this has proved very popular. We are exploring how we might resource Sunday mornings whilst Sunday evenings in VoSWorship will remain the primary circuit wide evening service.

We remain deeply conscious of many members who may not feel safe coming out and do not have the technology to access virtual church. We will therefore continue to provide a weekly full text service sheet for people to reflect on at home. This can also be used by any of our churches that choose to safely open for fellowship as a 'readers service.'

We are in this journey for the long haul and we must pace ourselves. I have noticed some tiredness in myself and the folk around me - who have worked so very hard over the last few months - hoping that this difficult situation will resolve itself quickly. But until a vaccine is available we must live in this interim phase, always being attentive to the risk of transmission and sensitive to the needs of the very young, the elderly and the vulnerable amongst us.

God's chosen people endured over long periods of time, especially in the wilderness. Actually, there were many times when they didn't do it very well... In Exodus 14, chased by Egypt's army and facing the Red Sea they doubt God crying "was it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness?"

Take a moment to read Numbers 11, 12 and 14. Follow the sweeping turmoil of God's people wrestling with freedom, wilderness,



disobedience and faith... Their journey takes a long time and at one stage they get so tired and hungry they think years of slave labour in Egypt sounds better than God's miraculous freedom (Numbers 11).

In Exodus 32 when Moses has been up on the holy mountain with God longer than expected, they soon give up, gather together gold, cast an image of a calf and seek to worship it.

We must beware despair! So I wonder, how did the Israelites endure?

The simple but perhaps unhelpful answer is; 'trust in God.' We know this but it can be hard to do, as we saw in the Exodus story it's so easy to trust 'for a while' and then to drift. Interestingly, in both Exodus and Numbers, what we see is how God sustains the faith of the many through the faith of the few.

It is so true isn't it – often when we stumble, when we doubt, the one thing we need is someone to come alongside us who – at that moment – has enough faith for both.

In Numbers 11:16 onwards, in response to Moses cry for help, God asks Moses to gather 70 elders and they are blessed with the Holy Spirit to help with the leadership and sustaining of God's people. Indeed, in verses 26-30 we read of two elders who missed the call to gather and instead received the Holy Spirit and prophesied where they stood in the midst of the camp. When a young man reported this to Moses, his assistant Joshua says 'My Lord Moses – stop them.' **But crucially Moses says; "I wish all the Lord's people were prophets with God's spirit upon them!"**

Surely this is the key to us enduring this crisis. Through Christ's death, resurrection and ascension, all are offered the gift of the Holy Spirit. On any given day, if we approach God with humble faith, we can all be leaders, we can all come alongside our friend and neighbour who is in trouble and bear them up. We may give on one day and receive on another, watching over one another in love and tirelessly encouraging one another's faith.

May God bless you and keep safe – Rev Alan Combes

A prayer: *Dear God, renew in me today, the deep sense of love, peace and joy I first knew when I gave my life to you. By your Holy Spirit strengthen me that I may encourage those around me. Amen*

News: There is much news to share as we continue in changing times...

Kinver and Kingswinford OPEN for private Prayer: After much careful preparation and risk analysis both churches welcome you for safe, quiet reflection through prayer stations. KS - Wednesdays and Saturdays 3-5pm & Kinver - Monday 9.30-11.30am & Thursday afternoons 2.00-4.00pm. **Lawrence Lane** hopes to open soon.

Action for Children: we hold AfC in our prayers. Our summer circuit event run by Olwyn Dimmock had to be postponed. Instead a Cake Bake Box Fundraiser was organised local to Kingswinford. They baked 66 Brownies, 32 Flapjacks and 24 slices of Banana cake which went into 122 beautiful boxes made by Diane (ably assisted by Iain). This raised a tremendous total of £292.50. Thank you to all - a great joint effort.

Circuit Youth Plans (with thanks to Claire Biggs our Children and Families Worker): We remember our children whose schooling has been disrupted. Our holiday clubs have been postponed, but across the circuit different churches are offering online resources and goodie bags with activity resources. We've moved Full of Spirits online with much appreciation from the children and Birch Coppice Youth group are meeting online too! AND watch out for the Bedtime Story Initiative on the Circuit Facebook Page.

Virtual Church Goes Livestream: Our Sunday morning services are going live stream to reach a wider audience and will be recorded so you can watch the service whenever it suits you. Go to the circuit website virtual church tab for details...

Worship to restart in August: See details in the letter above...

Daily Reflections on WhatsApp: will pause over the summer and then restart in September.

We Prayer Especially for: the bereaved, the isolated and the lonely. We remember those whose hospital treatments have been delayed by Covid19. We pray for those areas of the world where Covid19 is still on the rise. We remember those areas of the world such as the war in the 'Yemen' which were in crisis before Covid19 and the children of that area who are just one example of the 'often forgotten.'