

Immanuel Newsletter

Sunday 28th February 2021

Website: <http://www.immanuelurc.org/>
<https://www.facebook.com/ImmanuelURC>

Thought for the week “Sometimes, carrying on, just carrying on, is the superhuman achievement.” Albert Camus

Family news:

With sadness we share the news of the death of David Barnes, which happened on Monday night. There are no details yet on the date and time of the funeral. Please keep the family in your prayers.

Last week we received the sad news of the death of Pat Lawrence, a person very involved in the life of Christ Church/St Mary's, who for quite some time was a regular attendee at our Immanuel Evening Services, together with her daughter Anne.

100 not out! Special birthday celebrations were the order of the day last Friday (26th Feb) for our oldest and longest-serving church member, Iris Quinn; and rightly so as she celebrated her 100th birthday. Sadly, lock-down restrictions meant that most of the greetings from family and friends were of a 'virtual nature' but she did appreciate all the cards and messages that she received. Had we been in normal times she would have liked to be able to share a birthday cake after church on Sunday morning but instead sends her greetings to us all and asks that we share a virtual slice of cake!

Fairtrade: We are right in the middle of Fairtrade Fortnight 2021. It began on February 22nd and will continue till March 7th. This year it will highlight the growing challenges that climate change brings to farmers and workers in the communities Fairtrade works with. The facts are straightforward. Farmers and workers in the global south, who have done the least to contribute to climate change, are disproportionately affected.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us more than ever how interconnected we are globally. This interconnection is at the very heart of the Fairtrade message and is where your role begins. You are part of the Fairtrade movement and you have the power to drive long-term change, not only with your shopping choices but with your support in spreading the message. We just have to do this a little differently in 2021!

Please Include in your prayers:

- Fairtrade
- Highworth URC
- For all those we know who are facing exceptionally difficult circumstances.
- For the vaccination in our country and the world.
- The Old Town Partnership of Churches
- The URC: nationally, the 13 Synods.
- The South Western Synod: Ruth the Moderator, Gwen the Synod Clerk, and all who work for the Synod Office, and the churches of the Synod.
- for the homeless, and rough sleepers
- our leaders in politics, economics, churches, culture, health, commerce, industry, trade unions, armed forces, and all walks of life: wisdom and call to serve.

From the news this week – The world faces a pandemic of human rights abuses in the wake of Covid-19 - António Guterres (Secretary General of the United Nations).

Even when we don't meet for worship, we don't stop being what we are, and what we believe in. And at Immanuel every service the Amnesty Candle is lit, because for us as church it is an important light to shine, that is why I share with you extracts from the article that was published this week... From the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic almost one year ago, it was clear that our world faced far more than a public health emergency. The biggest international crisis in generations quickly morphed into an economic and social crisis. One year on, another stark fact is tragically evident: our world is facing a pandemic of human rights abuses.

Covid-19 has deepened pre-existing divides, vulnerabilities and inequalities, and opened up new fractures, including fault lines in human rights. The pandemic has revealed the interconnectedness of our human family – and of the full spectrum of human rights: civil, cultural, economic, political and social. When any one of these rights is under attack, others are at risk.

The virus has thrived because poverty, discrimination, the destruction of our natural environment and other human rights failures have created enormous fragilities in our societies. The lives of hundreds of millions of families have been turned upside down – with lost jobs, crushing debt and steep falls in income.

Frontline workers, people with disabilities, older people, women, girls and minorities have been especially hard hit. In a matter of months, progress on gender equality has been set back decades. Most essential frontline workers are women, and in many countries are often from racially and ethnically marginalised groups.

Most of the increased burden of care in the home is taken on by women. Violence against women and girls in all forms has rocketed, from online abuse to domestic violence, trafficking, sexual exploitation, and child marriage...

The latest moral outrage is the failure to ensure equity in vaccination efforts. Just 10 countries have administered more than 75% of all Covid-19 vaccines. Meanwhile, more than 130 countries have not received a single dose...

Human rights defenders, journalists, lawyers, political activists – even medical professionals – have been detained, prosecuted, and subjected to intimidation and surveillance for criticising government responses to the pandemic. Pandemic-related restrictions have been used to subvert electoral processes and weaken opposition voices.

At times, access to life-saving Covid-19 information has been concealed while deadly misinformation has been amplified – even by those in power. Extremists – including white supremacists and neo-Nazis – have exploited the pandemic to boost their ranks through social polarisation and political and cultural manipulation.

Covid-19 has reinforced two fundamental truths about human rights. First, human rights violations harm us all. Second, human rights are universal and protect us all...

The virus threatens everyone. Human rights uplift everyone. By respecting human rights in this time of crisis, we will build more effective and equitable solutions for the emergency of today and the recovery for tomorrow. I am convinced it is possible – if we are determined and work together.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/feb/22/world-faces-pandemic-human-rights-abuses-covid-19-antonio-guterres>



WORLD DAY OF PRAYER 5th March 2021

Praying for Vanuatu

For many years members of the churches in Old Town and the Town Centre have worked together to organise the World Day of Prayer in one of our churches. This year we invite everyone to join in prayer for Vanuatu at a time that is possible for you. The theme, "Build on a Strong Foundation" calls us to reflect on the Gospel of Matthew 7:24 - 27. Visit the website: www.wwdp.org.uk and follow the link on the Home page for the 2021 Service. There is a recording of a service prepared by the international committee and a short video: "Introducing Vanuatu." You may also choose to "attend" one of the Zoom or Live-Streamed services which are listed. The website gives details about ways you can contribute to the many charities and projects supported by the World Day of Prayer.

Discussion Group: Our next Zoom Discussion Group – "Reflecting on the Reflection", will be next Tuesday, 2nd at 2:00 for about 35/45 minutes. The link for the meeting can be found at the foot of the Reflection each week. Looking forward to seeing you and sharing thoughts, as we Reflect on the Reflection.

Hymn for today

Sing, my soul, when hope is sleeping,
Sing when faith gives way to fears;
Sing to melt the ice of sadness,
Making way for joy through tears.

Sing, my soul, when sickness lingers,
Sing to dull the sharpest pain;
Sing to set the spirit leaping:
Healing needs a glad refrain.

Sing, my soul, of him who shaped me,
Let me wander far away,
Ran with open arms to greet me,
Brought me home again to stay.

Sing, my soul when light seems darkest,
Sing when night refuses rest,
Sing though death should mock the future:
What's to come by God is blessed.

(John L Bell. Rejoice and Sing: 307)

Question: how can you relate this hymn to the Reflection for today?