

Thought for the week: "Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase".
Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Their Redeemer is strong He will thoroughly plead their cause, that He may give rest to the land and disquiet the inhabitants of Babylon." Jeremiah 30:34

REMEMBER-----Zoom Coffee morning

We have not had one of these for quite some time, so let us meet on ***Saturday 1st May, between 10.30 – 12.00.*** Let us share what we have been feeling, what we have discovered, what we would like to be doing. And as soon we will be celebrating worship again, let us share our thoughts on what we would like to go on at Immanuel.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81773057749?pwd=Y0dKOC9OQmZiaGsyNXZrOGU5MkIBQT09>

Meeting ID: 817 7305 7749 Passcode: 961486

The Honesty Box – This section of the Newsletter, is open all of you. You are invited to share your thoughts, your expectations, your hopes, even your frustrations as Immanuel continues to journey forward. We do well to realise that each of us is in a different place, copes in different ways, needs different things; we won't all respond to the same situation in the same way and at a similar rhythm. It would be great if we can share your story: how has this time affected you, what has it done to you; this way we can feed into each other's needs and times. This is something we will have to learn on the way ahead. So please write...We would welcome something once a week for all to read and reflect upon, so feel challenged and send in your contribution, either to Ceri (immanuelweeklynews@yahoo.co.uk) or Robert (robert.jordan@btconnect.com). If in one week we have a large amount, we will spread them over different weeks.

What do we expect of Immanuel Congregation as we return to Public Services???

Whether we have personally had Covid or not I believe we are all changed as a result of the pandemic situation. Those who have had the Virus are still probably battling with health/isolation/ financial/ family issues and problems. Of course we have to think of those involved in Front-Line/Care situations and the effect on them both mentally and physically.

This means we need to be careful about expecting them to pick up where they left off with church/Business/social activities. This thought comes from my own personal situation and talking to others. I know I will not be as able to do the things I used to or one after the other as I have in the past.

There will possibly be a reluctance to return to Services as well. We may have to be happy with a small congregation for a while, but I feel we must make a start as soon as possible and encourage others to come. (without pressure of course)

Many people will have found their Services on the telly, radio or on-line and have become comfortable with that way of worshipping. Some Churches will still ZOOM their Services by using their live Service platform. Perhaps this is something Immanuel needs to consider so as to reach some of our missing congregation.

Hopefully we can soon become a Together Group again. By David Leadbeater

Election of Elders

Elders have agreed a plan for election of Elders, considering that last year this did not happen, and Elders who had completed their term were asked to stay on, never imagining this would be for a whole year. The plan is as follows:

As from **April 1st**, list of eligible members list and nominations forms will be distributed by Elders to their pastoral list, in doing this they will arrange ways to pick up/forward the forms to the Church Secretary. Nominations will close on 2nd May, and the Church Secretary will produce a list of nominees, after which the Church Secretary and/or Minister will approach these Nominees to seek agreement on nomination. These names will be published in the Weekly Newsletter on two Sundays, and then on a Sunday to be determined, after the Service, we will hold a short church meeting where voting will take place, Only Church Members can vote, and votes will be those present and those who cannot come to church who have sent in their voting paper.

This weekend the process for electing new Elders begins a new stage. Nominations close on Sunday and then a list of nominees will be prepared, and we will be approaching those on the list to see if they would be willing to be nominated for election. It is for these steps that I call on each and all of you to reflect and pray. We do need to elect 10 people, some could be nominated for their second period, others will be proposed for their first time, or again after some years. This is where it becomes complicated. PLEASE consider, if you are approached, whether you could say “YES”. Eldership is one of the characteristics of our identity as Reformed Churches, and without the needed number of Elders it makes the running of the church exceedingly difficult. We really do need you to consider the possibility, without a “NO” being your first thought. There have been some Elders who last year agreed to stay on for a time, given COVID, probably never imagining that time would be a whole year. To you our deepest thanks and appreciation. It is important and we do need all human help we can get, convinced that God will walk with the team, but there must be a team. (Robert)

Christian Aid Week – this year it will be 10-16 May, and due to the restrictions over the last year, as all Charities, Christian Aid needs all the help we can give them. The Sunday we resume worship (16th May) is the last day of this Christian Aid week, so if you are coming to church, bring your donation, there will be envelopes for you. We are also circulating envelopes, less than the usual in past years, so if you have one and wont be attending worship let us know, and we will make sure it is counted, and if you don't get an envelope but wish to contribute – let us know, we will make sure your contribution is counted as well. Thank you!

One can at a time: Last week we mentioned the death of Ray who together with Wally, collected cans for charity (Cancer Research UK). I was impressed when during the service, Wally mentioned the collection, and asked Wally to share this for the Newsletter. Hope you find this as inspirational as I did (Robert)
“Ray and I started saving empty drinks cans about 10 years ago, I think. We took them to a big container at Tesco and got Clubcard points for them, but it took a long time as we put in each can individually. We then took them to Thamesdown Recycling and could get about £20 for a car full. All the proceeds go to Cancer Research U.K. We did very well until the first lock down and then the company no longer took cans and the price for them dropped so much, we only got £3 for a car load. We now take them to European Metal Recycling and the price is slowly increasing again. Really sadly, Ray passed away the week we hit £3,000 for the cans. I now intend to carry on the aluminium can recycling in his memory”.

Resuming worship at Immanuel: after consulting with the members on their lists, Elders met through Zoom to consider the way forward. There were a few different responses on the matter, and the decision is to return to worship on **Sunday 16th May at 10.30**. This is the Sunday before Pentecost, allowing us all to prepare for the celebration of Pentecost. We will also celebrate Communion.

Of course, this decision is subject to no further changes on the “roadmap” set out by the Government and guidelines from the URC. It is also subject to having enough people to staff the services as needed. The use of masks and distancing is still to be complied with.

Old Town Partnership of Churches. The confirmation service this year, will also be the birthday celebration of the Partnership. We will celebrate at Christ Church on Sunday 30th May at 10.00. Bishop Viv will be with us. That Sunday this will be the only service in the Partnership Churches, due to current restriction on numbers, could you **please let me know by May 16th** if you are considering attending this service, as we must let Christ Church know in advance. Thank you! (Robert)

Please Include in your prayers:

- Let us learn to be “we” not “them/us”.
- Christian Aid Week
- Election of Elders
- Partnership Confirmation Service and Birthday Celebration
- Highworth URC
- Those who are recovering from health treatments.
- Those who are mourning the death of family or friends.
- All those we know who are facing exceptionally difficult circumstances.
- The plight of the Palestinian people.
- 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.
- The homeless, and rough sleepers
- Courage of faith to confront injustice, discrimination, hatred, racism.
- All areas of the world living violence, hatred, war, famine...

Please remind me: Soon it will be Immanuel’s turn to prepare the Daily Prayer Diary, and I know that the three months we were asked to cover, received volunteers to do this, but I have misplaced (lost?) the paper where I wrote those names down. Can you remind me who you are, please? Thanks – (Robert)