

Trinity News

November 2020

No.503



**Trinity United Reformed Church
Mansel Road, Wimbledon**

From the Church Secretaries

“Living well through the next six months”

As winter comes, reported cases of the virus increase, and new restrictions are imposed, the Government is encouraging us to stick to “The Rule of Six”. The [Bishop of Oxford has written](#) about some of the lessons this number can hold for Christian communities during this difficult time. What can Trinity learn from these reflections?

Six months is the new horizon

Focus on Easter and lean back into the great themes of the church year.

This pandemic is “a marathon not a sprint”. Trinity will be providing “Worship At Home” at least until the end of 2020 and probably for longer than that. The next six months are especially important for us as we settle into ministerial vacancy and prepare the ground for calling a new Minister. How can we remain patient and prepared over this winter?

Six days to work and a sabbath to rest

Reclaim the gift of one day each week for rest and re-creation.

This is a tiring and demanding time for all of us, and church life is no different. Our staff, leaders and volunteers are working hard in new ways to sustain the church and nurture its people. What can we do to “encourage one another and spread the load”?

Six people to journey with

Rediscover church as small groups of people supporting one another.

Our church activities are smaller and more intimate, with restricted congregations, and teams and groups meeting remotely on Zoom. Who are the small groups you can connect with online, over the phone or even in person (socially distanced, of course)?

Six ways to be salt and light

Identify the people and community organisations you can support.

The pandemic brings with it an economic crisis affecting people's livelihoods, jobs and businesses. Our charities and community organisations are ever more important, but are operating in an extremely challenging environment. What local organisations can you find to support? Can you set up a regular donation to the Wimbledon Foodbank, or Merton's Faith in Action, for example?

Six percent to your church

If your income is stable, increase your giving to sustain the local church.

Trinity's work and that of the wider church is resourced through our giving. We also benefit from the income we raise through hiring out rooms at the Mansel Road Centre. This income has dropped significantly, with the buildings closed for much of the year, and only limited activities able to return even now. If you are in a fortunate position, can you increase your giving to help us through this time?

Six people to pray for

Pray for people you know to discover the riches of our faith.

As ever, our most powerful tool in times of crisis and difficulty is prayer. Join us and all God's people in regular prayer for ourselves, our church and for others who you know. Which six people might you pray for?

These are difficult times. As a church we have faced enormous challenges, but also benefited from God-given energies and creativity in renewing our worship and our ways of doing things. These challenges will be all the more acute in a period of vacancy, and our response must be equally sharpened if we are to journey through it.

It will not be easy, and we will certainly make some mistakes along the way. Together though, and with God's help, we know we can come through this season all the stronger for it.

"For I am convinced that neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8.37-39)

Wishing you blessings and peace in the days ahead

Catherine and Sam

Building works begin

After a great deal of planning, the building works began on our flèche and smaller spire today (19 October). A large quantity of scaffolding will be erected over the next two weeks in readiness for work to begin. You will notice some signs of this when you come to the buildings over the next couple of months – there will be some scaffolding inside as well as outside the buildings – but we hope that our activities will continue throughout with as little disruption as possible.



November worship

We are delighted to be able to hold services in church again and look forward to seeing you there soon on Sundays at 11:00am.

We've taken a lot of steps to make sure that our buildings and practices are Covid-secure. Things may seem a little different at present but please do remember the necessary restrictions are in place for the safety of everyone in church.

The service will last approximately **35-40 minutes**.

Please email churchsecretaries@trinitywimbledon.org to register by the preceding Friday if you'd like to attend a service. This pre-registration is essential at present.

If you are unable to attend, you can still worship at home using our weekly recorded service. Details are sent out by email to church members and can also be found on the church website (www.trinitywimbledon.org).

1 November – Holy Communion. Gift Day “For Others”
– led by Mark Dennis

8 November – Remembrance Sunday
– led by Trinity’s elders

15 November
– led by Mark Dennis

22 November
– led by Revd Bruce Stuart

29 November – Advent Sunday
– led by Revd Alistair Cumming



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In addition to those mentioned last month, our good wishes go to all those who have begun university studies: Eddie Henning (Liverpool) and Mariella Rice-Jones (a Masters degree at Bath)

Birthdays in November

Many happy returns this month to David Chan, Sam Elliot, Brian Lewis-Lavender, Sandy McLeish, Jethro Pratt, Alan Young and Ernest Yu.

Have we omitted anyone recently? If so, please do let us know so we can remember them in future.

Appointments

Andrew Sutton has acted as Elders' Secretary for around thirty years. Most people at Trinity would have no idea what lies behind this role because Andrew has carried out the duties so efficiently and with good humour over very many years. He has looked after the arrangements for Communion services - caring for our Communion silver and linen, preparing the bread and wine and ensuring that everything is correctly set out on the Communion table before the service, confirming that the serving elders are present and know their duties for the service, and generally ensuring that everything went smoothly. Week by week Andrew has been responsible for coordinating the elders' Sunday duties – a task for which he deserves our particular thanks! Andrew has now taken a very well-deserved retirement from all these duties. We thank him and wish him a peaceful and restful retirement.

We are very grateful to **Alison Trehearn** who has taken over as Elders' Secretary from Andrew, and pledge to support her in this important new role.

Our gratitude also goes to **Dodie Khurshid** who, for a number of years has organised the rota of Door Stewards and their duties. We are glad to report that **Eric Chau** has agreed to take over this role from Dodie, who is now our Property Team Leader.

Gift Day 'For Others' – 1 November

We are hoping to raise at least £10,000 this year which, with the benefit of Gift Aid, will increase the total figure to over £12,000.

The funds raised this year will again be allocated in accordance with the vote taken recently by Trinity members and friends from a list of charities. The following charities have been chosen and will receive £500 each:-

Local Charities

Merton Winter Night Shelter
South London Refugee Association

Wimbledon Foodbank
SW London Samaritans

National Charities

Alzheimer's Research
Mind

Cancer Research UK

International Charities

Medecins sans Frontieres
Barnabas Fund

British Red Cross

Following provision of £2,000 for Disaster Relief, the remaining funds will be split 2/3rds to Faith-In-Action and 1/3rd to Water Aid.

If you would like to donate by debit/credit card go to Trinity's website (www.trinitywimbledon.org) and click on the Virgin Money Giving button this will allow you make your donation to Gift Day at Trinity via this online giving website.

Should you be attending the service at Trinity on 1 November or in the following weeks in November there will be Gift Day donation envelopes available to donate on the day. Alternatively, you may post your cheque payable to Trinity URC to our 'For Others' Secretary, Robin Ingram c/o Trinity Church.

So, will you please help us raise sufficient money in order that we may meet the challenge of our mission to serve our local community and the needs of the wider world?

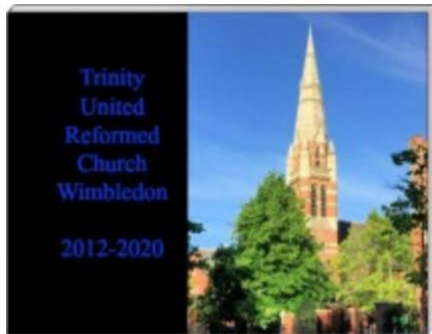
Trinity thanks you in advance for your support.

Farewell to Dominic & Miriam

Sunday 4 October was a day of many emotions at Trinity. Our annual Rededication Sunday coincided with Dominic's last Sunday with us. At two fully-subscribed services, in morning and afternoon, it was good to see many friends in church again to reaffirm our shared participation and commitment to Trinity's work and witness.

Dominic's powerful sermon, based on John 21.15-24, is reproduced on the following pages.

Later in the day we had an opportunity to join together on Zoom to say our thanks and farewells. We presented Dominic and Miriam with a book of Trinity photo memories, a cheque and flowers.



Sermon preached by Revd Dominic Grant for Rededication Sunday, his final services as Minister of Trinity

Title: Notes to Self

Date: Sunday 4 October 2020

Venue: Trinity URC Wimbledon

Bible: Micah 6.6-8 John 21.15-24

Ref: Rededication Sunday; minister's final service before moving

When you come to the end of a story, it's nice to see the tying up of loose ends. A quest completed; a mystery solved; honour satisfied; the main characters reconciled. All that sort of thing. It's satisfying, it's tidy, it's "they all lived happily ever after".

It doesn't always work out like that.

The Bible reading we've heard just now comes from the very end of John's Gospel (his account of the life and ministry of Jesus). Well, almost the very end – I've been a bit cheeky and left off the final verse of the final chapter of John, so if you want to tie up that particular loose end you'll have to go and read it yourself. But whether with or without that stray verse, there's something I find rather beautiful about the way this passage brings John's narrative to a close. It speaks of endings, yes, but it also opens up a path for what is still to come. Some loose ends, it picks up and gently ties into a precious bow; but others, it leaves for us to do with what we may.

Which makes this, I think, rather an appropriate text on this day of Rededication and of parting ways.

And as you might imagine, it's a text that has been much on my mind during the preparations for this day. So I hope you'll indulge me if I share with you, just this once, not a sermon full of things I want to tell you – but instead, just a few things that I think God might be saying to me as I read this Gospel passage. Not that this day is all about me, of course – no, our focus is on God's summons and God's service, today as every day. But to be honest, most preachers will tell you that they're often really preaching to themselves, saying what

they themselves need to be told. So on this Rededication Sunday, as I come to take my leave of you, I offer you in all honesty a few "notes to self". And if they're helpful to you, then great, I'm glad; and if not, well, at least you've gained a little peek at what's been occupying my mind.

Note to self: Remember to spend time with Jesus. Make a point of it - make time to spend time with Jesus. Sometimes it could be in the context of a gathering - perhaps the church as it meets for worship; perhaps the table like this one where Communion, the Lord's Supper is shared; or perhaps around the meal table at home or out in the open or wherever people meet. Or sometimes it could be just one-to-one - a quiet time, a prayer time, a snatched moment, or an invitation to step aside for a while because Jesus has business with you and this is important.

Verse 15: "When [the gathered disciples] had finished breakfast, Jesus [spoke] to Simon Peter." Time together in company; time together alone.

And another **note to self: Be prepared for questions.** Now that may seem like an obvious thing to say - in the Gospels, people were often asking Jesus questions so that they could hear his answer. And in your discipleship today, often you'll want to bring your questions to God in prayer - and that's valid and good to do. But don't be surprised also, in the time you spend with Jesus, if he lobbs in a question or two of his own. Because if he does, you can be sure it's a question that matters.

Verses 15 to 17: Jesus asked Peter "Do you love me?" Indeed, three times he asked it - drawing out from Peter his "Yes, Lord, you know it." Three times - once for each time Peter had denied him, on the night of his condemnation, before the cock crowed.

Piercing questions may well lead to a conversation that needs to be had. But if that sounds intimidating, well, here's a third **note to self: Take heart.** Remember - whatever shortfalls you see in yourself, you are the person whom Jesus has called. Jesus believes in you - so even if you can't believe in yourself, believe in his belief in you. And find your courage there.

Verse 18: Jesus said to Peter, "You used to go wherever you wanted; but [days will come when you are taken] where you do not wish to

go." And indeed it may well be that your walk of faith, and the tasks that God sets before you, becomes demanding and difficult and not entirely to your liking. But still, the one who went to the Cross, and on it broke even death's power, for you, says Follow me.

Follow. Such a small, innocuous word; but it has the power to set you on the journey of a lifetime. And sometimes it'll be a geographical journey, sometimes it'll be a growth journey, but either way – "Follow" means staying where you are is not on the menu, and so you have no other option than to "walk humbly with your God" - as our first Bible reading put it.

Which perhaps makes it inevitable that you'll be left with some loose ends – because even when it's God you're walking with, no two journeys are identical. No, instead paths are liable to overlap for a time and then diverge. And that's OK.

Verses 21 & 22: Peter pointed out another disciple and said to Jesus, "What about him?" and Jesus said, "Well, what about him? You – follow me." Tie up what loose ends you can, and leave the rest with God.

Over the last few days I've been occupying myself with various loose ends. Some of them I've managed to tie up, or thereabouts, and that's good. Some of them perhaps will still be left for others to pick up; friends, forgive.

But now, by God's grace and in a spirit of mutual love, the time approaches when paths that have overlapped must diverge. For my part, I'll be working on those "notes to self": remembering to spend time with Jesus, and being prepared for the searching questions he may ask me, and taking heart and finding my courage in him. And as my parting charge to you, I can do no better than to point you again to God's call through the prophet Micah: that you do justice, and love kindness, and walk humbly with God.

For in your Sunday gathering here, and in your weekday dispersal out there in a hundred different places – the places that need to experience God's justice and God's mercy and the invitation to walk with God:

You are the Church. You are God's people. Never forget it.

The ministerial vacancy – an update

Now that Dominic's time as our minister has ended, Trinity is able to seek to declare the vacancy to begin formally to follow the process required to find his successor.

In his monthly letter in March's *Trinity News*, just before the start of the Covid-19 lockdown, Dominic outlined clearly the process that would be followed. You may find it helpful to have this short reminder.

In the June edition of *Trinity News*, it was explained that a Vacancy Team had been constituted by the Elders' Council and its membership was named. It had been intended to ask a Church Meeting on 29 March to endorse these members to enable the Team to begin its work, but due to the Covid-10 pandemic, that meeting had to be cancelled, but the intention remains to seek such endorsement at the next possible Church Meeting.

The Vacancy Team has met by videocall five times since March to undertake some of the preparatory groundwork, prior to drafting a detailed Pastorate Profile which will not only describe Trinity's background, current context and realities, but will describe also our aspirations for the future. Having done that, we will be able more clearly to define the role of our next minister, and the related skills of the person that we hope to identify and accept our call. The views of the congregation will be sought and discussed as an essential part of finalising the content of the Pastorate Profile, and the Vacancy Team will find effective means of arranging such consultation, even whilst in-person Church Meetings remain impossible.

The URC's South London Synod Area has nominated the Revd Stephen Lewis, Minister at Twickenham and Hampton Hill URCs, to be the Interim Moderator to work with the Vacancy Team and the elders at Trinity in preparing to call a new minister. Early next steps are to meet with the new Southern Synod Moderator and the Interim Moderator.

Once a Pastorate Profile and various other documents have been finalised, the vacancy will be officially "declared" by our Synod and will therefore be included on the list of ministerial vacancies discussed monthly by the Moderators of all 13 URC Synods. In broad terms, vacancies are handled on an "introduction" basis: sometimes the

Moderators approach a suitable minister, sometimes the initial expression of interest comes from the minister herself or himself, but in either case only one minister at a time would be introduced to the church for consideration.

It is difficult to predict how long our ministerial vacancy will last – occasionally, it can be just a matter of months, but often it could be much longer. It is important not to try to speed through the process but rather to ensure that the optimum outcome may be secured.

In his March 2020 letter, Dominic suggested wisely what all Trinity members might do to help ensure a smooth vacancy and a positive outcome. Those questions remain just as pertinent eight months later, and included the hope that members will:

- continue to be **faithful in their attendance, and generous in their offering** of time and talents to Trinity, since at its best, a ministerial vacancy can be a time of real cohesion and growth for a church, and since this is always a collective endeavour
- **pray** for those who will be seeking to guide and assist Trinity through the vacancy process, for the Vacancy Team and the Elders' Council
- **pray** for the person who will in due course be called as Trinity's next Minister.

It is planned to provide regular progress updates to the congregation in *Trinity News* and by other suitable means. In the meantime, please do ask or email me if you have any questions.

- **Sandy McLeish**



From the archives

The debacle of Trinity's first Manse



In the early years of Trinity's history it was customary for a minister to provide his own accommodation and so it was that the first three ministers, Messrs Maxwell, Macgregor and McRitchie lived in, presumably rented, properties at their own expense - in Elm Grove, Thornton Hill, Belvedere Grove, Murray Road and Mostyn Road.

Just before the First World War it was recognised that it would be desirable for the Church to own a manse, so a Manse Fund was set up. By the time war broke out it had raised over £800. But for the time being that was that. Not until 1951 was the matter seriously considered again although the interest on the Fund was paid annually to the minister.

During the vacancy in 1951 it was decided that it was essential to purchase a manse. Number 13 Mansel Road was thought to be available for about £6000 but late in the day the vendor decided not to move. There was a shortage of suitable properties on the market

and when 22 Devas Road in West Wimbledon, which was considered ideal, became available, a satisfactory survey was completed, and the property was duly purchased for £5200. In retrospect it might have been better to wait for a new minister to be called but it was felt preferable to purchase now rather than in a hurry when a minister was anxious to move. The purchase price, less the amount in the old Manse Fund, was raised by means of a special appeal to the congregation.

The Revd and Mrs Bruce and their two children moved south from Aberdeen and, in October 1951, moved into Trinity's first manse. At Mr Bruce's request the house was named "Lintrathen". But problems lay ahead. Within six months Mr Bruce reported that, among other faults, the house was full of woodworm. Reading between the lines it appears likely that the Bruces did not like the house, which was considered to be unsuitable as a manse, and were aware that 8 Parkside Avenue, a much larger and more convenient property in Wimbledon Village, was available as an executor sale for £5750.

Many meetings of the Property and Finance Committees and Deacons' Court discussed what should be done. The matter finally came to a special meeting of the congregation. The congregation was split, many people feeling that the woodworm should be treated, together with any other faults, and that matters should be left to stand. But in the end, and the voting in the congregational meeting (79 for, 29 against) was certainly nowhere near unanimous, it was agreed that Devas Road should be sold and 8 Parkside Avenue purchased in its place. The woodworm was treated by Rentokil for £220 but the property proved difficult to sell and it was not until early 1953 that the sale was complete - the sale price being just £4400. Bridging loans had been required and the Mr & Mrs Bruce had long since moved into their new home - which was to be Trinity's manse until 1975.

This left the question of a possible claim against the original surveyor of 22 Devas Road. Much correspondence and more than one face-to-face meeting took place, but the surveyor denied all responsibility, eventually agreeing to make an ex-gratia payment to Church funds of £50.





A [campaign](#) calling for debt cancellation for people who have been swept into unavoidable debt in recent months launched on 4 October by a group of four denominations representing two-thirds of a million Christians and ecumenical charity, Church Action on Poverty.

An estimated six million people in the UK have fallen behind on one or more household bill as a result of Covid-19, with the biggest increases in debt amongst the poorest households. It is not right that those with the fewest resources should bear the heaviest burden of the lockdown, potentially for years to come.

People who were previously able to keep their head above water are now in severe difficulty. Others, who had been just staying afloat, now face being overwhelmed by circumstances entirely beyond their control.

Now is the time for a solution to be found.

The United Reformed Church, the Baptist Union of Great Britain, Church Action on Poverty, the Church of Scotland, and the Methodist Church urge the government to create a Jubilee Fund to provide grants to pay off and cancel unavoidable debt accrued by the poorest households during the lockdown period, giving them a more stable platform from which to face the difficult winter ahead.

For further details see: <https://resetthedebt.uk>

This is an urgent problem that demands a solution.

New for the 2021 URC Diary - daily lectionary readings

The 2021 URC Diary includes the following:

calendars to 2023, notable dates for the URC and the wider Church, metric measures, Assembly officers and URC staff, useful addresses, Assembly committee details, Synod information, August 2020-December 2020 diary one week to a page, 2021 diary one week over two pages, January 2022-June 2022 diary one week to a page, notes for the rest of 2022, world map and UK map. The pocket edition includes a National Rail and London Tube map.



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