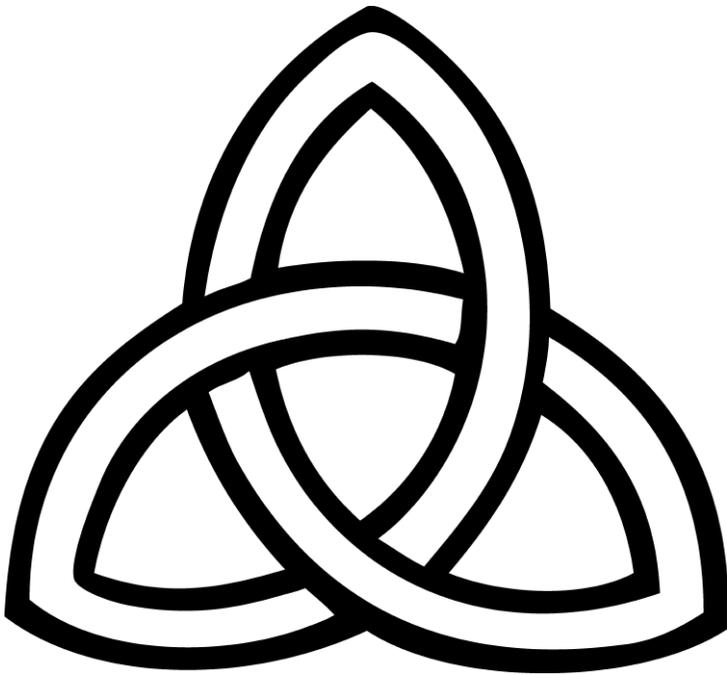


THE LINK

The Magazine of Portsmouth
Methodist Church



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Message from the Manse

“Be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” – 1 Thessalonians 5:16

Rising Covid infection rates. UN reports on species extinction. Huge forest fires in the US. The return of our old friend ‘Brexit uncertainty’. That was just a snapshot of the news on the day before I sat down to write this. In addition, I’d been cut up by a car whilst riding my bike and had a brief ‘discussion’ with the driver. “Be joyful always” Paul says. Easy for him you and I might say. Well let’s remind ourselves that Paul’s missionary life was one of beatings and imprisonment, shipwreck and fleeing angry mobs. He also knew that the recipients of his letter in Thessalonica were suffering similar persecution for their faith. Even more reason, we might think, for Paul to share a message of doom and gloom, and in the rest of his letter to the Thessalonians Paul doesn’t shy away from the hardships facing them.

However, he writes “Be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”. I’m sure that he doesn’t mean ‘stick your fingers in your ears and pretend the bad things aren’t happening’. After all he urges the Thessalonians to pray continually. Instead he is urging them to focus on the signs of the Lord working among them. He goes on to say “Hold on to the good”. Be grateful for these signs of the kingdom. Not long after I’d been cut up on my bike on the bad news day, I jointly conducted a funeral. Far from adding to the gloom I came away thankful, thankful for the Christian love and devotion that shows itself in the dedicated care for others that had been expressed in the eulogy. As we listened to ‘Love divine all loves excelling’ I felt again that great sense that we are loved by God and held eternally in that love.

I’ve talked many times about an ‘attitude of gratitude’. It doesn’t mean that we should pay no attention to the many problems of the world (or indeed our own) and sail on in blissful ignorance or detachment. Jesus was moved to compassion, and at least once to tears over suffering, and so should we be. However, keeping this intention with ‘an attitude of gratitude’ allows us a better chance of maintaining a right perspective.

Being thankful to God in all circumstances isn't about being polite, it's a recognition that all that we have and are is ultimately from God, who is sovereign.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Continuing the theme of gratitude, we give thanks for the safe delivery of Theo and Dorothy's daughter Melissa Callista on September 4th and the baptism of Effe and Michael's daughter Lyra at Trinity on September 20th. Praise God for the gift of new life, both physical and spiritual.

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Unfortunately there is also sad news

Many of you will know by now that Eastney centre has suffered two sad losses in the last few weeks. Both Des O'Keeffe and Duncan Riddell have been called home by our Lord. Both have been stalwarts of Eastney for a number of years, taking many roles within the church, and they will be sadly missed. Their funerals are on consecutive days, Des's at 1.30 on September 30th and Duncan's at 10.00 on October 1st. Under current restrictions funerals have become largely invitation only, (although it is possible of course to stand outside), but please hold both families in your prayers at those times.

A Message from the Editor

When The Link re-launched last month, the stated intention was that the magazine would reflect the voices of the membership of PMC and not just be a conveyor of facts and information. However, this month the content has rather reverted to type as the main content *is* information. I suppose this will be unavoidable from time to time, particularly in the current climate of uncertainty. Also, reflecting the 'voices' of the members means that the members need to make those 'voices' heard. We had a good response to our appeal for 'Lockdown' stories last month, but we need to keep that up – please! Our next 'themed' issue will be the December issue and the theme, inevitably, will be Christmas! We'd like your stories, anecdotes, memories, etc. of Christmas past, present and to come. You can send them in any way that suits you, either directly or via your centre contacts (**Eastney** – Fran, **Copnor** – Barbara or

Catherine and **Trinity** – Christine or Ralph). So please get writing and let's hear those 'voices' loud and clear!

Lockdown and beyond ...

Denise Foster has asked that thanks are expressed to all those who sent in 'Lockdown' stories for publication. Meanwhile, our friends Bob and Emily Bramley who live in Northern Ireland, sent the following:

'Our church here, Connor Presbyterian, had its first church service last Sunday (23rd August) - all socially distanced. We had 135 out for our first service and that included using the church hall with the service broadcast on a big screen. From today we must all wear masks during the service. It was so lovely to be able to worship our Lord together as a church family. We both have dearly missed worshipping with our friends at Trinity. We trust you are all well. God bless. Bob and Emily'.

Girls' Brigade and Boys' Brigade update

Portsmouth Methodist Church sponsors lively Boys' and Girls' Brigades, based at our Copnor centre. Both 8th Portsmouth Girls' Brigade (GB) and 4th Portsmouth Boys' Brigade (BB) groups have resumed face-to-face meetings.

BB started on 10th September and, in order to meet COVID-19 guidance, has split into two groups of children meeting on alternate weeks. Activities enjoyed so far include traditional party games, guess who, and looking at what the Bible says about greed.



GB started back on 14th September and all the groups considered what makes us special and why team work is important. The younger girls meet in two separate groups on one evening with the older girls meeting on Zoom. Then the following week the younger girls have worksheets and activities to do at home and the older girls meet face-to-face.

GB Team Leader Catherine said that both the girls and the boys coped very well with the new way of working and that it was lovely to see them in person.

Please continue to pray for the GB/BB leaders as they adapt to the meeting restrictions and also for the children and young people themselves as they get used to us doing things a bit differently; may they not be nervous or worried about returning to their GB or BB family and know that God is always there with them.

For Information ...

Covid security

It's great to see that each of our centres is open for worship now. There has been a lot of work done to ensure that our buildings are 'Covid-secure'. Please help us to maintain high standards by complying with the regulations that are in place. However, we know that despite all the precautions we take as individuals and the regulations put in place in shops, social spaces and in churches, we cannot guarantee that we will not become infected. So please read the section below carefully.

What do I do if I have been in church on a Sunday and test positive for Covid in the days following?

Counter perhaps to our natural reaction - **Don't** tell everyone that you have been in church with that you tested positive. This can lead to unnecessary speculation and even panic. Instead, self-isolate as instructed and wait to be contacted by the Test and Trace service. They will go through a number of questions with you. They will assess whether anyone you have been in 'close contact' with needs to self-isolate and they will contact those people.

However, it is unlikely that anyone who was in church with an infected person will need to self-isolate. This is because there is a clear definition of 'close contact' and all the measures that have been put in place in churches are to ensure that 'close contact' as defined should not have been possible, if people were complying with those measures.

Do let the 'responsible person' know. They may need to organise a 'deep clean' before the following Sunday. The overall responsible person

is John but the responsible person for each centre is: **Copnor** – Stephen, **Eastney** – Theo, **Trinity**- Shirley.

Hopefully, the need to follow this procedure will not arise, but it is helpful to know what to do if it does.

Digital Church

During the lockdown and beyond much of church life has continued on line. Several churches in the circuit have created services via Zoom, including our own Sunday evening one (see below). The circuit has now created a digital church service for each Sunday, led by our own preachers, which can be accessed on-line. If you are unable to get to church on and you have internet access you can find a link to the service at <https://youtu.be/DDpGnBoX31Q> or alternatively you can type 'Digital Church from ES&D Methodist' into the search bar on YouTube. It is also a resource than could be used for local arrangements and gatherings for worship. If you'd like the link to the Sunday evening Portsmouth/Portchester Zoom service then please contact John.

Zoom services

Throughout much of lockdown some 15 to 30 people each Sunday evening have shared in worship together. Several people have commented how these short services of 30-40 mins have helped them to remain spiritually connected throughout these difficult times. We're continuing with these services even though we are back in church, not least because we can sing! If you have an internet connection via your computer or phone and you'd like to join in but you're not sure how then please talk to John, Barbara, Fran, Shirley or anyone else who might be able to get you connected. The services are from 6.30 every Sunday evening.

News from the Circuit

Deacon Laura Evans will no longer be attached to Portsmouth Methodist Church for part of her time. She takes over pastoral responsibility for Cowplain. We wish her well in that new ministry and thank her for all that she has done in Portsmouth. I know that she has touched many lives with her warmth and care. Of course, the good news is that she remains

in the circuit and we'll still see her from time to time. She is currently off sick and we pray also for her speedy recovery.

The Circuit also welcomes a new minister. The Rev Elize Goddess has joined us from South Africa. She takes on pastoral responsibility for Drayton, Wymering and Havant churches. We pray that she settles well into life in the circuit and city and that the Lord will bless her in her ministry, among us.

Around our Centres

Preachers for October

<i>Date</i>	<i>Copnor</i>	<i>Eastney</i>	<i>Trinity</i>
4th October	Joint Harvest Festival	Harvest Festival at Copnor	Harvest Festival at Copnor
11th October	Rev John Mills Holy Communion	Gathering for Worship	Gathering for Worship
18th October	Gathering for Worship	Rev Dr Beryl Wright	Gathering for Worship
25th October	Mrs Shirley Haynes 12:30 Zimbabwe Fellowship (Rev Bill Stillwell)	Gathering for Worship	Rev John Mills

**As you can see, our joint Harvest Thanksgiving Service will be held at Copnor on 4th October. This will be a traditional Harvest Festival. Folk are being asked to supply food (tinned, packeted, long-life goods) as in previous years and collections will be made at each centre. There will also be 'All We Can' envelopes available at each centre for those who wish to donate in that way.

Please be alert for further details of this event.

** A further alteration to the services originally planned for October is that there will be no Evening Service with Holy Communion at Trinity on 18th October. However, there will be the regular Zoom Service as described earlier in The Link.

And finally ...

Israel's Foxes

In Luke 13:32 the Pharisees warn Jesus about Herod wanting to kill him and Jesus replies "Go and tell that fox." before lamenting for Jerusalem and how it kills the prophets and stones those how are sent to it. Describing Herod as a fox, has a very different connotation in 1st Century Israel to how we would use the word now. First thought, we have to be clear which Herod this is. This is not the Herod who the wise men visited who did indeed display a lot of cunning in his governing of the Jews, as well as cruelty. This is that Herod's son, Herod Antipas, one of the tetrarch who had a quarter of Israel each to rule and who had Galilee.

Now although Herod Antipas often tried to appear the pious Jewish leader, he had more than a few problems maintaining the loyalty of his Jewish subjects. His first problem was his very authority; he was put in power by Caesar Augustus, the Roman Emperor and then in 17 AD, to honour his Roman overlords, he build a grand new capital city named Tiberius, after the new Roman emperor. However, this was built on top of an old Jewish cemetery. No pious Jew ever entered it, and was initially inhabited almost exclusively by Greeks and Romans, which was why it survived as did not revolt against Rome.

He also had serious women problems. He divorced his first wife, which had been a political union, as she was the daughter of an Arab ruler, in order to marry Herodius. She had been the wife of his half-brother, also called Herod just to confuse us. It was not unheard of in those days to marry the ex-wife of one's brother, but she was also the daughter of another half-brother, Aristobulus. Marriage to one's niece was also permitted, but marriage to a woman who was both one's sister-in-law and ones' niece was certainly very questionable. This is the same Herod who had John the Baptist killed, Jesus's cousin. So be in doubt there is no hint of a compliment here.

Israel actually has four types of fox, one of which is the red fox that we are used to but far more common are two others the Blandford fox and the Ruppell's fox. In Jewish terms this use of the word has none of the sly or cunning notations, this is not the world of Roald Dahl's Fantastic Mr Fox. Equally it does not have the attractive qualities we might

indicate by use of the word foxy. To a first century Jew, the fox is a religiously unclean animal. In rural Galilee the fox was without doubt a pest, a nasty creature that lives in the ground and preys on the small animals that you breed for food. The relationship is quite different. So, this is a very clear insult more akin to us referring to someone as rat or, as the Australians refer to their equivalent, the dingo.

Mark Barton

PMC Calendars

I'm pleased to report that I've had enough initial interest in the calendars to make the project a 'goer'. I'm still open for expressions of interest until the middle of this month, but I don't need any money yet. It's possible there may be a few calendars left after the initial orders have been met but it would be very helpful if you could indicate your intentions before I place an order with the printers (I really don't need a calendar in every room!). Please contact me at ralph.snelling@googlemail.com or give me a ring on 02392 615590 (there's an answer phone!) if you're interested. I hope the price can be held at £6.00, but this will depend on orders. Just as a taster, I've included a picture from last year's calendar on the next page.

Ralph Snelling

Deadline

The deadline for our November issue of The Link is Sunday, 18th October.

Remember, we do want to hear 'other voices' and welcome contributions of all types and in any form. Could **you** send something in?

