



Churches Together in Sleaford and District

Thoughts from the Chair.

Dear Friends,

Although we have been through some difficult times over the last few months with the lockdown, I and many others have been heartened by the response of most people in this time of pandemic. People seem to have recovered a sense of community spirit that many of us thought had disappeared forever. Neighbours who had never even spoken, started to support one another. People in neighbourhoods began to look after the elderly in their area and strangers even talked and joked with one another as they passed on their daily walks. The support shown to NHS staff, delivery drivers, care workers and other key workers was wonderful; with many of us clapping and banging pots and pans on Thursday evenings as a mark of respect and a way of saying thank you.

In our churches we may not have been able to worship in our buildings, but we have found new technology that allows most of our church families to engage with our Sunday services. And it would appear that these electronic offerings have attracted unchurched people to come and find out more. I know from discussions with people who don't come to church that crossing the threshold our buildings can be quite daunting for those who are not used to churches. I think the big heavy wooden doors with clanking door handles that we find in some of our older church buildings can be quite intimidating for newcomers!

I have been wondering, therefore, like many other Christians, if God is calling us to come out of our buildings and learn how to better engage with our communities face-to-face, the way Jesus did. We are visible in the wider community through the work we do to support others, either on a one-to-one basis, or in a more structured way, through the Sleaford Larder, Evergreen, the Youth Club etc. But do we now need to physically come out more into the community as the restrictions begin to ease? We can take heart from the wider engagement achieved through our digital outreach. So, should we now look at how to develop opportunities to physically engage with our wider community? As followers of Christ, we all work together very well: let us now consider how to work even more collaboratively in the future to draw more people to find out about God's love for all of humanity and his love for all of his creation.

Every blessing

Mark

Diary Dates

CTSD Exec. Meetings at the Methodist Church ay 7:30pm:

Thursday 17th September

Wednesday 18th November

St Denys'

It was a sad day when churches were ordered to close! Our services went online (twice weekly) and as time went on they became more ambitious. Our director of music worked remotely with the choir to keep them singing and providing material for inclusion in the virtual services. A regular newsletter (The Coronacle) was set up and distributed both electronically and by post to keep in contact. The website was also changed to be more useful for both prayer and information in the ever-changing context. The church groups were used to maintain contact and meet essential needs for those in the congregation who needed help. The vicar continued to maintain contact with local schools and provide pastoral support for the Head Teachers, other churches in the deanery and other agencies.

Sleaford Methodist

The Methodist response to the crisis has largely been at the Circuit level. Sleaford is one of nine churches in the area which has been receiving a weekly bulletin and locally-produced Worship Sheet.

The aim has been to reach everyone with a combination of email attachments and paper copies. Our pastoral visitors have been keeping in touch by phone, and for those on the internet Paul has been producing a weekly service on YouTube.

We are only beginning to explore the possibility of safely re-opening some of the churches for Sunday worship.

Riverside

We have been keeping in touch with our congregation through phone calls and the internet. We produce a podcast for our Sunday worship and put it on the website using recordings of our own music group for the songs and hymns. These have been well received and listened to by more than our usual congregation.

Peter and Robert have also been posting reflections every day on the news page of our website, producing some 45,000 words so far over the last 4 months. Some of us have been shopping for our neighbours and members and helping out at the Larder. Some of the house groups have continued to meet in Zoom meetings, as does the Leadership Team.

New Life Community Larder

In March, we wrote that our shelves were incredibly full... what a difference the last few months have made! The effects of Coronavirus have been vast, and are set to continue. By the end of June, we saw a 94% increase in demand in comparison with the same point last year. This year we have supported 1,606 people (584 last year) through 588 referrals. Within the first 3 weeks of lockdown, our food stocks were empty.

Please do pray for us as we continue to support families struggling with extra costs of having children at home for longer, people who are furloughed, those who have been made redundant and those who are awaiting their first benefit payments. We've had so many good connections with people over the lockdown period – please join us in praying for these people and with our connections with them. We want them to see there is hope beyond their circumstance!

Thank you to the churches, businesses and individuals who continue to support our endeavours – it really is appreciated, both by us and by the recipients of the food parcels.

Our Lady of Good Counsel

The Church has reopened for private prayer every Sunday (2-3pm). Public Masses will be celebrated from 25th July. Due to social distancing rules the congregation will be limited to 30 people. Each person will have to pre-book a seat (www.massbooking.uk). Funerals, weddings and Baptisms can now be celebrated in church but with a maximum of 30 in the congregation.

Second Chance

What a strange time we're living through. Some normality is returning to Second Chance as we prepare to re-open on July 27th. Such a lot has to be done so that we can offer a safe environment and our volunteers are working hard to achieve it. It won't be the same though. No lingering chats with customers, no cups of tea and hugs for the lonely, no time spent listening to stories about the loved one just lost and whose possessions have been donated. It does make us realise that Second Chance is more than just a shop. It will feel diminished somehow. Let us pray that this contactless community will not be the new normal.

Youth Club

As with everything else, we've been restricted in what youth work we're able to do. All face to face contact stopped and we moved as much of our work online as possible in March. On Fridays we run an Instagram Live on our Youth Club account, engaging young people in challenges, games and chat. We've been really busy filming lots of activity/challenge videos for our social media accounts, as well as trying to keep in contact with as many of the young people we'd usually see as possible - this has proven to be difficult simply because of how many of them there are!

We've also moved Soul Search (Sunday nights) online via Zoom. It's been difficult to replicate what we usually do, but we've seen God moving through the young people we see online.

We'd really appreciate prayer as a team, for wisdom in developing a new 'normal' over the next year or so. Please also pray for the young people in our area. This period has been incredibly hard for many of them – it's shaped and changed all of them more than we know.

Salvation Army

From March we had to close the Hall and suspend all local activities. We immediately organised communication with all our members and regular worshippers. Everyone continued to receive The Link with the back page edited as a newsletter with prayer requests and news items. Bible Study notes have gone to the whole fellowship, together with a "promise box" page and a Sunday meditation. These have been sent either electronically or by post. Individuals have used the telephone to maintain personal contact.

We look forward to the arrival of Major Dawn McGarvey as our new leader from August. We are hopeful that some activities may resume before too long once risk assessments are completed. News from individuals proves that God has indeed continued to bring support and encouragement to local Salvationists.

What we regret is the loss of contact with the much wider constituency of those who, despite not appearing on official 'membership' lists, are still part of our spiritual family. They are all part of Sleaford Salvation Army's family and we miss them and cannot wait to renew our contacts.

New Life

It may not be a season of our choosing, but the church has adapted. Pastoral and group leaders have been staying in contact with the congregation; Group and Team meetings have met online or shared together through chat platforms; prayer times too have been made possible online, as well as team meetings. Our Sunday services are pre-recorded and premiered on YouTube, alongside our Children's programme NLKidzTv. The season has seen so many people's creativity go to a new level, and lots of people getting involved and pulling together. Social media activity has increased greatly with links to resources alongside our weekly 'Minute with Mark', and our worship playlists.

St Botolph's

After the lock down we started to record our weekly service and put it on YouTube. Our musicians recorded hymns each week with others singing along as well. We also began to record members of the church family reading the bible passages, delivering the prayers and we even had children dancing and singing along to their choruses. In terms of pastoral support, we have a team of four people who phone a quarter of those on our contact list. Morning Prayer and weekly Bible studies have proved to be a great success.

Evergreen Sleaford

Demand for our local befriending service remains high. During lockdown we suspended face-to-face visits, moving to phone calls instead. This has been a trying time for our elderly who have found themselves increasingly cut off from the outside world. We currently have 60 ongoing friendships and have also been able to support an extra 20 isolated elderly people with phone calls during this time, some of whom we expect to transfer across to our main befriending programme.

Please continue to pray for the elderly in our community, particularly those who will find easing of lockdown and shielding hard. Pray too for the right volunteers to enable us to meet the demand and for ongoing finances. We've been hit hard with our collection boxes being in closed shops and loss of other funding streams.

To get involved in supporting or volunteering with Evergreen Sleaford, please contact us on 07707 260822 or email info@evergreensleaford.org.uk

On-Line Services & Locations At A Glance

Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic Church

Website: <http://our-lady-of-good-counsel.org.uk/>

Services: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCaf7upUMsn3Kl8GD79FotjQ>

Mass & feria celebrated by Bishop Patrick McKinney (Nottingham)

Salvation Army

Website: <https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/sleaford>

St Botolph's - Quarrington

Website: <http://www.quarringtonchurchsleaford.co.uk/>

Services: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJh-vZSMamAWy41zVkZI5xw>

Services including prayers, sung worship, readings and sermon

St Denys' - Sleaford

Website: <https://www.sleafordparishchurch.co.uk/>

Services: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpUrWrTxo5t0egurXsLyeGQ>

Services including prayers, music, liturgy, Communion, readings and sermon

Sleaford Methodist Church

Website: <https://www.sleafordmethodistcircuit.uk/>

Services: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2Q9RTkWiQ4d07Csxs8fBtA>

Sung worship, prayers, readings and sermon

Sleaford New Life Church

Website: <https://www.nlcm.org.uk/>

Services: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCI6CAIUhb2uOsw2wJXPexfQ>

You Tube channel includes full services, New Life Kidz TV, worship tracks & playlists

Riverside Church

Website: www.riversidesleaford.org.uk

Services: <https://www.riversidesleaford.org.uk/index.php/worship/podcast-audio>

Podcasts including sung worship, prayers, readings, sermons and communion

Contact us.

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