

Notices for March 2022

Stockwood Free Church

SUNDAY SERVICES AT 10.45am ON SFC PREMISES AND ON FCC

<https://www.freeconferencecall.com/wall/sfcbristol/viewer>

During this month we will finish our series based on Luke's gospel, looking at some of the major themes of Jesus' ministry.

20th Lance Mason
27th Martin Stephens

COVID SECURITY UPDATE

Covid is not going to go away and sooner or later we all need to find ways to live with it. At our recent leaders' meeting, there was unanimous agreement that we need to move on now. The vaccines, especially if you have had all three jabs, have clearly made a miraculous difference to the course of the pandemic. However you measure these things, the latest variant of the virus seems to be significantly less dangerous than its predecessors. We have recently had a lot of church households affected by the virus and the worst reports, in just a few cases, are of ongoing tiredness, as one might expect from a bad head-cold. We are proposing to keep our hand-gel dispensers - sanitising hands regularly is good practice in any case. We are more than happy for people to continue to keep social distance and wear their facemasks if they would like to, but from now on we are going to let people decide what feels right to them. For those who have particular high-risk circumstances, notably Carol Mason for obvious reasons, we will continue to stream our regular online services. Please note that we are NOT saying that we are not wearing masks from now on, as many will continue to choose to do so, merely that we are going to give everyone the discretion to decide for themselves.

NEWER & ONE-OFF ITEMS:

UKRAINE

A couple of weeks ago I suggested three things that we can all do: Watch, Pray, Give. Let me expand on all of these:

Watch – In order to pray effectively we need to understand the real situation which is unbelievably complex. The internet, if used wisely, is a rich source of information and helps to explain the background to the unfolding tragedy that is taking place in Ukraine right now. Also, if you have friends from neighbouring countries, notably Poland, it is good to talk to them about what they know and are hearing on the ground.

Pray – This Wednesday (16th March) we have supplanted our normal monthly prayer meeting with one to pray for Ukraine. Join us on the church premises at **4pm** if you possibly can. For those who feel the call, the day might also include an element of fasting which always provides powerful added fuel for effective prayer.

Give – We agreed in our Sunday service to send initial gifts of £600 each to TEAR Fund (one of the 15 member charities of the Disasters Emergency Committee) and to the Transform Europe Network (who support our partnership with Moldova and have a long history of partnering with churches in the former Soviet Union). If you would like to contribute to this giving please either give money in an envelope marked **"UKRAINE CRISIS"** or via bank transfer with **"UKRAINE"** as a reference. I am fairly certain that, once we have covered our initial gifts, we will eventually be able to give some more.... but this will get us started.

MOLDOVA

I am still in regular contact with Andrei, our partner in Moldova. During the week I asked him what the atmosphere is currently like in the country. He told me:

You know, the situation is pretty complicated, tense because of the risk of a war, then internal tensions with Russian speakers and Gagauzia. Then it became more expensive because Moldova imported most of its products from Ukraine. Then it became more expensive because Moldova imported most of its products from Ukraine, for example gazolin was 19 lei now 27.

You need to know that Gagauzia is a province within Moldova that is quite pro-Russian and is very close to Burlacu. Also, there are roughly 24 Lei to the pound, but this price increase represents a hike in fuel costs of over 40%! Most folk in Moldova just won't be able to afford to pay these prices for long.

One of the older women in Burlacu is currently housing a family of nine(!) from Ukraine with support from the church there. I am working on how we might be able to support the church more directly.

Some good news, though. You will remember that Andrei's and Eugenia's eldest daughter, Ema, got married recently. Well, their second eldest, Livica, who is only 18, also got engaged this week. (Or was it last week)?!

SCHOOLS WORK

It should encourage you to hear how many things we are involved with in Waycroft and Woodlands schools:

- assemblies where we get the chance to tell a Bible story, explain what Christians believe, apply the story to our everyday lives and pray
- "Christmas in a Box" and "Easter in a Box" where we explore these important events in deep detail with the children
- mentoring children who struggle for all sorts of reasons
- listening to children read
- many other activities that support the children either directly or indirectly
- summer fairs (this summer I hope!)

.. and then, of course, we host holiday clubs and activity days and un-Hallowe'en parties on the premises and hold barbecue events in the Cottle Road Park. So, we have numerous and varied opportunities to explore faith with young people in Stockwood.

OLDER FOLK

I would like to commend two church-based activities to you. The Lunch Club on Mondays is a very popular service of the Church to quite a few folk who would otherwise have little social interaction. And on Wednesdays, with a more "spiritual dimension", is our rapidly-growing Wednesday Fellowship. Both of these, very different, groups really enrich the lives of some of our older folk.

VERY YOUNG FOLK

.... and one more! Our two Toddler groups, which meet on premises on Wednesday and Friday mornings, are flourishing and provide an excellent service for quite a lot of parents and guardians who might otherwise be quite isolated.

FOOD CLUB

It's a very long time since I talked about this. People often forget that we have poverty on our own doorstep here in Stockwood. I am currently working with the Children's Centre to make the Food Club independent of Family Action who have sponsored our initial set-up. It will give us the opportunity to develop some related projects and to work more closely and effectively with our local Foodbank at Counterslip who have been very supportive to us. We also want to do more work around supporting those who are, or soon will be, in fuel poverty. Via the Children's Centre we have also been able to support some families in acute financial need over recent years.

MENTAL HEALTH

I was at the launch of a new initiative called "Thrive" a few years ago. Because a few of us banged on about it, they are currently laying on some excellent training in South Bristol to help us to support other people. If you are interested at all, drop me a line and I will tell you what is on offer and point you in the right direction.

FELLOWSHIP NEWS

Pauline Kelly's daughter Kate – Please pray especially for Kate who has had a really rough time health-wise over a considerable time. She has just had two more emergency operations and is currently very weak.

Rebecca Mason - We are thrilled by the progress that Rebecca is making. She even managed to go up three steps - and come back down - in the week. She is, as you all know, desperate to get home!

LANCE'S LABOURS

I am putting some thought into our Easter events. Don't we just need to celebrate this most significant time of the Christian calendar properly for the first time in three years?!

WHERE IS LANCE?

Yet again, no great surprise here ... Lance & Carol are still around all month.

MEETING TOGETHER

Just a thought. The writer to the Hebrews wrote these words:

24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, **25** not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews chapter 10). Many Christians around the world, and I suspect currently in Ukraine, would love to have the opportunity that we have to meet together face-to-face in complete freedom to worship, study the Bible and pray. I am thankful that we are so blessed.

ENCOURAGEMENT

One last thing while I am talking about encouragement.... I have been listening to a series on Radio 4 on Sunday afternoons called "The Archbishop Interviews" where Justin Welby explores faith with all manner of famous people. I have found them quite captivating and stimulating. You can find the recordings on BBC Sounds.

THE VERY LAST WORD

And, as if this isn't encouraging enough, why not come along to the AGM this Thursday evening?!

REGULAR WEEKLY/MONTHLY ITEMS:

SERVICE LINK

You have the option of downloading the video (mp4), audio (mp3) and online (mp4). The online version which was capture from live includes the presentation. ***Remember that you can still tune in to the service each week either at the time or later on, even if you have no computer access***

Sunday 13th March

Video

<https://fccdl.in/1FDKjniWqu>

Audio

Dial: 033 00 88 1945

Access Code: 353390#

Service Ref No: 797#

HOME GROUPS

Mondays: Each week at 7.45pm on Zoom (contact Howard Penney)

Thursdays: Each week at 7.45pm – 83 Stockwood Road

Thursdays: Each week at 7.45pm – meetings are continuing on Zoom during March

INTERCESSORY PRAYER MEETING

Wednesday 16th at 4pm on Church premises

AGM

Thursday 17th at 7.45pm on Church premises

FILM EVENING

Sunday 20th at 6.30pm – God's not Dead – A Light in Darkness

TODDLERS

Every Wednesday & Friday from 9.30-11.30am.

They could still do with a bit more help on either day – if you think you could spare some time, please speak to Hilary or Yvonne

WEDNESDAY FELLOWSHIP

Each week from 2.30-4pm

MONTHLY PRAYER LIST – MARCH

Fellowship:

Ryan Collins, Christine Clothier, Alan & Christine Cowley, Bernard & Christine Crabbe, Barbara Dore

Neighbourhood:

Hollway Road & shops, Hollway Close, Selden Road, Harden Road, Eaton Close, Bluebell Gardens, Haberfield House, Waycroft Academy, Medical Centre, Dentist, Materman Road, Goslett Road, Woolley Road, Battson Road

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

CHURCH SPRING CLEAN

Saturday **30th April** – more details to follow.

CHURCH OUTING

We are off to Weymouth (of course) on Saturday **16th July**. Steve Birch and his coach are booked!