

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN FARNHAM

August 2020 E-News

During the current Corona virus pandemic, our services, prayer meetings and other events have either been cancelled or gone on line.

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR OF CHURCHES TOGETHER IN FARNHAM

Dear Friends

We approach September, continuing to struggle with the Corona virus, full of uncertainties and in recession, but also aware it is all part of life's complexities and is in God's hands. We continue to support each other in whatever way we can. Our churches are now open, with restrictions and it appears a vaccine has been developed by Oxford University and AstraZeneca - we await further news.

This month:

- We bring you a press statement from CTE Presidents, calling all churches to address racial injustice in church life and wider society.
- We herald this years Season of Creation, when Christians around the World will celebrate with thanksgiving, the beauty and wonder of our World but pausing - pausing to examine carefully our relationship with the environment and each other.
- We publicise Surrey Churches Ride and Stride on Saturday September 12th.
- We bring you links to Christian Summer Conference Festivals online.

Blessings

Michael McDonnell

Chair of Churches Together in Farnham

NOTICES – Lockdown restrictions are gradually easing and many of our churches have opened or are preparing to open for private prayer. Please consult their individual websites for details as times of opening will be limited and special arrangements may apply. Next month it may be possible for some congregational worship to resume.

In the meantime anyone with online access or even just a telephone can enjoy an amazing variety of services, prayer meetings, etc, both locally and further afield via Zoom or equivalent technology. If you need help in joining in, please contact the church involved for advice.

CTE PRESIDENTS CALL ALL CHURCHES TO ADDRESS RACIAL INJUSTICE IN CHURCH LIFE AND WIDER SOCIETY – Presidents of Churches Together in England, with the support of the Fourth Presidency Group, have issued a statement calling on churches to travel together on the journey of racial justice, addressing injustices both within our church life and in wider society. **They write:**

“We as Presidents of Churches Together in England have responded to the killing of George Floyd in the United States, and the widespread call for real change to combat racial injustice in our world, above all in our own country. We have spent time over the past few weeks listening to voices of people from the black community, especially the younger generation. This has been a deeply moving experience and illustrated powerfully the many profound changes of heart and actions that need to be made. The attitude that regards black people - and indeed other people of ethnic minorities - as inferior is evil and mars our common humanity. We challenge this unreservedly, recognising the constant experiences of racism, including micro aggression, which black people face.

“We believe that churches have a significant role to play in combating racial injustice. If we are to be effective in doing so, we must look at ourselves.

“We are painfully aware of the racism that blights the life of our churches. We are intent upon a process of identifying racial injustice within our churches - current and historic - repenting of it and taking action to effect real change. This includes the potential for discriminatory behaviour in the way that we make church appointments, which we know can happen at the conscious or unconscious level. We want to ensure that

these processes are just and demonstrate the so often neglected gospel truth of Colossians 3:11: "There is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all". In this verse Paul makes it clear that racial injustice and discrimination is not only profoundly unjust and an affront to God but also the very denial of Christ who reached out to all human beings.

"Some Member Churches of Churches Together in England have already embarked upon this journey of tackling racial injustice. The Church of England plans a new action group, and among the Free Churches work by the Methodist and United Reformed Churches, together with Baptists Together is already under way, as is also true for the Catholic Church. The Pentecostal Forum has long held this issue in its view, as have the Orthodox Churches.

*We call upon all churches to travel together on this journey of racial justice so that together, as one community of churches in England, we may reach out in love and respect to one another in pursuit of our common witness.

"An area of great concern to us as Presidents is the relationship between the black community and the criminal justice system. We will therefore be facilitating conversations between young black women and men and senior members of the police service. We are also seeking to engage both the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice in further considering the day-to-day experience of many young black people in England.

"We encourage all churches throughout England to do all they can to build trust and improve accountability between black communities, the police, civic bodies and wider community groups. In particular we call upon groupings of Church Leaders throughout the nation to reach out to their black colleagues in church leadership who are currently absent from their membership, making more inclusive ecumenical leadership. Our desire is that these groups will create spaces for those in authority to listen, as we have, to the powerful testimony of young black women and men as a step towards greater social cohesion.

"We see these issues as matters of gospel and faith for all who follow Jesus Christ, the one who calls every nation and people to the justice of the Kingdom of God."

Signed by Presidents of Churches Together in England: Archbishop Justin Welby (Archbishop of Canterbury); Cardinal Vincent Nichols (Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster); Revd.Dr.Hugh Osgood (Free Churches Moderator); His Eminence Archbishop Angaelos (Coptic Orthodox Archbishop of London and CTE President for the Orthodox Churches); Pastor Agu Irukwu (head of Redeemed Christian Church of God UK and CTE Pentecostal President)

SEASON OF CREATION – 1st September to 4th October 2020 – This year, amid crises that have shaken our world, we're awakened to the urgent need to heal our relationships with creation and each other. During the season this year, we enter a time of restoration and hope, a jubilee for our Earth, that requires radically new ways of living with creation. Christians around the world will use this period to renew their relationship with our Creator and all creation through celebration, conversion, and commitment. This year's Season of Creation is a time to consider the integral relationship between rest for the Earth and ecological, economic, social, and political ways of living.

This particular year, the need for just and sustainable systems has been revealed by the far-reaching effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic. We yearn for the moral imagination that accompanies the Jubilee. As followers of Christ from around the globe, we share a common role as caretakers of God's creation. We rejoice in this opportunity to care for our common home and the sisters and brothers who share it.

Websites with information:

- <https://ctbi.org.uk/season-of-creation-creation-time-2020/>
- <https://seasonofcreation.org/>

CHRISTIAN SUMMER CONFERENCE FESTIVALS ONLINE – Grace Keal, Ecumenical Coordinator for Churches Together in Surrey has sent some websites for Christian Summer Conference Festivals Online:

- **Revive:** <https://www.youtube.com/user/IchthusCF>
- **New Wine:** <https://www.youtube.com/user/newwinetube>
- **Keswick Convention:** <https://www.youtube.com/user/keswickconvention>

Or you can Google "Ichthus Revive youtube" - "NewWine youtube" - or "Keswick Convention youtube"

2020 RIDE & STRIDE CORONA SPECIAL – Saturday 12th September – It is coming up to the National Ride & Stride time and I hope that your church will be able to take part - particularly this year when churches have lost income because of the virus. **Good Reasons to take part:**

- The Surrey Churches `Ride + Stride' is a great way to raise money for your church.
- 50% of the funds raised are returned immediately to your parish.
- 50% goes to funding grants for the maintenance of our Surrey churches.

- A healthy and inclusive way to involve all age groups and all abilities.
- A worthwhile way to actively promote your church

Because of Corona Virus there are some changes this year. Churches don't have to be open, or display a WELCOME SIGN-IN notice. Please be good enough to visit

<http://www.surreychurchespreservationtrust.org/> and click on the **RIDE & STRIDE** entry

If you have not taken part recently, we suggest you identify at least one cyclist, walker or youth leader that the parish can sponsor. Fill in their name(s) on the attached publicity sheet and encourage them to find kindred spirits. Please let me know if I can help in any way - and have a look at the web-site for a list of recent grants awarded and the work we are doing to support Surrey Churches. If you are not able to be personally involved this year please forward this email to a colleague at your church. (from **SAM OSMOND**, Area Organiser)

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN FARNHAM MONTHLY ECUMENICAL PRAYER MEETING – This takes place on Zoom on the third Tuesday of each month at 11:00 a.m, when we get together virtually to chat and then take part in prayers, meditations, reflection and intercessions. Everyone is very welcome!

Just contact organiser Bob Skinner on bobskinn@aol.com so that he can send you a Zoom invitation to join us.

CORONAVIRUS HELPLINE IN FARNHAM – If you need help during the COVID-19 emergency and have no access to family, friends and neighbours, call the **FARNHAM AND VILLAGES HELPLINE** at the Farnham Co-ordination Centre on **01252-745446** (9:00 a.m to 8:00 p.m) or e-mail help@farnhammaltings.com. There is a recorded message on the phone line outside hours.

DIARY – Our regular monthly E-News includes a Diary Section giving notice of some special events in the following weeks. The CTF website provides more details of many of these activities.

During the current COVID-19 virus pandemic, the vast majority of church and other local activities are not taking place, but the Diary Section will return as the emergency eases and we are again able to start enjoying these events.

The CTF website is at:

<https://www.churchestogether.org/farnham>

where you will also find links to our member churches and associates' individual websites, with details of services and other activities.