

Make Lunch Boxes of Hope food parcels

Last week we gave you an update on the Make Lunch Boxes of Hope project especially in regards to Christmas.

We have been overwhelmed by your generosity. But there is still time to donate! Our children range in age from two to 16 so presents for those ages will be gratefully received.

As planned we will be delivering our Christmas food and gift parcels on Friday December 18 and because of your generosity and that of others, they will be fantastic parcels.

So much has been received already with a wide range of items, from Christmas puddings to shampoo, savoury snacks to shower gel, books to toothpaste, and more. In addition, those who have been unable to get to the shops, have donated money.

We are aware that with 'lockdown' the church building has been closed so some of you may have things at home waiting to be brought in – it is not too late! If it is any easier for you just give Richard or me a call on 01926 930312 and we will come and collect.

So what are some of the amazing things that have been happening?

One couple we know from near Leicester wanted to support us and so have paid for nine board games to a total value of £100.

Another anonymous donation of £50

came through the post and then there is the £5 that has been given which is just as important to us as larger amounts.

A neighbour has donated some Christmas wrapping paper and whilst talking to a cashier at Sainsbury's she was offered Christmas paper, gift tags and gift bags.

Our local Residents' Association is also arranging a collection on our behalf.

Richard and I are also now collecting surplus food from Aldi and Lidl, most of which is just damaged packaging – it all helps.

We took a bag of these 'damaged goods' to our families the other day, and their appreciation said it all.

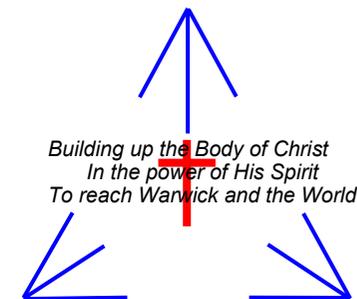
We have so many stories to tell, we are so excited about what we believe God is doing through us at St Paul's Church Warwick. As long as Covid-19 is with us, as long as families are in need, then we shall be there to support them in whatever way we can. Please stand with us, pray with us and donate if you can.

This has been a challenging year for us all, but as we have joined together we have brought hope and a smile to those less fortunate than ourselves.

Thank you all so much!

Audrey, Richard and the team.

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**November 29, 2020
Advent Sunday**

Rev Jonathan Hearn

Today's 10am Service - Advent Sunday

If you are a newcomer to our Church, or a visitor to the area, please introduce yourself to one of the welcomers, or to the clergy.

This week - November 29

Next Week - December 6

10am Advent Sunday

10am Holy Communion

Readings

November 29

December 6

Isaiah 64: 1-9
Mark 13: 24-37

Isaiah 40: 1-11
Mark 1: 1-8

Our Bible verse for the year

Never doubt God's mighty power to work in you and accomplish all this. He will achieve infinitely more than your greatest request, our most unbelievable dream, and exceed your wildest imagination! He will outdo them all, for his miraculous power constantly energises you. Ephesians 3: v20.

Praying for the Persecuted Church

Barnabas Fund sources have been given a rare insight into the persecution endured by Christians living under the totalitarian North Korean regime.

Sookyung Kang, a Christian, fled her homeland to be able to worship freely without risking her life.

She said: "The North Korea regime tries to control people by idolising and divinising the leaders. I believe the Gospel gives freedom to everyone. But the North Korea regime takes away freedom and won't allow people to think freely." Kang explained officials deny citizens food, sleep and safety in order to force them to focus on getting these basic needs met.

She said: "They persecute Christians most harshly. Sometimes they are executed or sent to political prison camps."

Kang's uncle was a Christian missionary who "put his life on the line and lived each day as if it was his last". He was eventually imprisoned and Kang recalled how she began to see the reality of the regime's repression once she started to visit her uncle in prison to take him food.

In 2011, Kang, then aged 17, escaped to South Korea where she found refuge and was able to worship God freely, without having to risk her life.

She said: "I was so thankful for this freedom ... My heart was so full of gratitude."

In November, Christians working in the region described how North Korea set up "quarantine camps" for Covid-19 patients, where they are deprived of food and medicine, causing many to die of starvation.

Open Doors UK estimates there are approximately 300,000 Christians in North Korea, from a population of 25.7 million. It's very difficult to know exactly how many believers live in North Korea because they must keep their faith completely secret.

The country has been at the top of the Open Doors' World Watch List since 2002 and is still the most dangerous place in the world to follow Jesus. Believers have been executed simply for owning a Bible. Tens of thousands of Christians – sometimes entire families – have been incarcerated in labour camps where they are abused, tortured and worked to death. In fact, Open Doors estimates there are between 50,000 and 70,000 Christians currently imprisoned in the camps. It's difficult to overstate the reach of North Korean authorities and the obedience and leader-worship they demand. Police raids to identify and arrest citizens with 'deviating thoughts' have increased.

Since the beginning of 2020 there have been added challenges – not least Covid -19. There are no tests or medicines. Markets have closed, and if they are open, there is little food to buy and prices have quadrupled. It costs a couple of months' salary to buy a kilogram of rice. Alongside this, there has been heavy rainfall, mudslides and a heatwave. Many people have been resorting to criminal acts, just to survive.

Lord, we can barely imagine what it's like to follow You in a country as oppressive as North Korea – but thank You that You are sovereign and victorious despite this. Please continue to grow Your church and give solace to Christians who are in prison, courage to those who are secret believers and protection to Open Doors secret workers providing Bibles and vital support.

Source: *Barnabas Fund and Open Doors UK*

Thought for the Week - are we there yet?

Are we there yet? I can think of a few times when I've used that expression myself, and many others when I have heard the question asked.

I can imagine it's not an unfamiliar question to many of you. Certainly if you have young children and you've been on journey (and it doesn't have to be a long one) it's a question that may be repeated many times over until you actually arrive at your destination.

The other scenario that comes to mind is when I've been walking and you ask the person ahead of you: "are we there yet?" ever hopeful that we've actually arrived at the top – only to discover it's a false summit and there's more climbing to come.

I wonder if it's feeling a bit like that as

we waited to discover which tier we were going to end up in as we came out of the current lockdown.

Are we there yet? I sense there has been a fair amount of disappointment to discover we're in tier 3 rather than tier 2.

But wherever we are, and whatever the limitations and restrictions we face, our Lord is Lord of them all.

And whether we are there yet - wherever that might be - Jesus is not at the end of the journey, he journeys with us.

May we be conscious of his presence as we begin this Advent and as we journey on.

Oh come, O come, Emmanuel.

Blessings, Jonathan.

Next Sunday

I'm pleased to say that next Sunday we can meet in church. We still can't sing, we can't socialise and we will still need to wear masks. However, we can come together and enjoy the presence of God in the church and join with those who have not been able to share with us over zoom.

We will also get to use our new path and enjoy the new heating!

This Sunday our link for zoom for the service is as before:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87328195643>

Meeting ID: 873 2819 5643

I do hope you can join us.

Blessings, Jonathan.



Foodbank

Once the Church is back open, we would still welcome donations to the Warwick Foodbank. Please put any toiletries and/or dry, non-perishable food in the Foodbank collection box. If you need a voucher please collect one from the office between 9am and 12 noon Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays once the Church is back open.

The Foodbank is open between 1pm and 3pm each Friday at Saltisford Church in Albert Street.

