Pastor’s Overview for AGM, November 2020.

My mind goes back to March, where we ran activities almost every day of the week, all were growing in various ways, and Sunday morning numbers had grown to around 40. Then COVID came, the laws closed churches, and for the last 9 months we have been adjusting to unprecedented changes, which continue today.

Martyn Skinner preached in March on a thing called ‘zoom’, that most of us had never heard of, and as far as computer meetings went, seemed to be the best. Zoom is now the preferred platform of the Baptist Union.

We acknowledge not everyone has Wi-Fi, laptops, or the technical knowledge to ‘zoom’. My own Mum falls into this category. We handed out spare laptops, I set them up when requested, as it has become apparent that ‘on-line’ church is here to stay. In this month’s posted newsletter, I have put a 4 point way of accessing and using zoom. If any advice needed, phone me anytime.

We have posted over 300 entries, mainly videos, onto our website at ‘mortonnewday.co.uk’ We have moved through Judges, 1 Thessalonians, Prayer, and are just finishing Elisha in 2 Kings.

On-line we currently enjoy Wednesday Bible study in the morning, Home Group in the evening, and Thursday coffee mornings. We have explored Encounter services, weekly Kids Vidz with craft they can do at home, through to Steve Clewlow’s on-line birthday party!

Particularly popular are our on-line family quizzes, the next being December 11th at 7pm.

The Chapel is open for private prayer between 4pm & 8pm every Tuesday.

Tom and his team have done an excellent job re-opening our church shop, MND2, when the law eased restrictions in June. Tom even made his own screen, which was better than the bought one! The Government recognise our shop through the Business Rates scheme, and as our Treasurers note, the shop received £10,000 compensation. There may be a smaller grant for our enforced closing again this month.

Our church water boiler had to be replaced during lockdown. The new one is much more efficient and economic. You will not be able to see it as is discreetly boxed in as part of a much-needed refurbishment of the rear of the church. Maureen has led the way in getting our toilets, corridor, and back room completely redecorated. All new cupboards and sinks fitted throughout which have greatly improved storage, safety, and appearance. Thank you all that helped.

Finances is not my area of expertise. Obviously, Sunday Service giving is no more, and we rely on folk continuing to give, but in new ways. There is a tab, top right of our website, which simplifies this.

When the restrictions eased in June, we already had our new Risk Assessments in place, signs and kit in situ, and a £200 ‘UBIFOG’ disinfectant spray gun, (used in hospitals & planes) kindly donated for free. We complied with all the laws, and planned to recommence Sunday services this Sunday just gone, the 15th. But here we are back on zoom!

Kay, Vickie, Nick & Charlotte have already made our Nativity video. The worship team are recording Carols as I type. I am planning a joint zoom talent show with Rev Neil from Morton C. of E. This will be on the evening of the 18th December. I am also compiling a montage short video clips of many of us on our doorsteps sharing Christmas messages. We are missing each other! Please send me a 10-20sec clip if you want to do in home before December 14th so I can get yours in the video. We will continue to have live zoom services, and this includes Christmas.

Some of our ladies are busy making a special gift package for every home connected to church, and another special gift package will be hand delivered to our Tots parents.

My biggest struggle this year has been with our folk who are not on-line. These are predominantly our over70’s, who often live alone. They genuinely need support groups like White Heather. The main point of the latest lockdown, dated 5th November, is simply ‘stay at home.’ This is more so if you are vulnerable. Exceptions are allowed, but this exception needs to outweigh the risk to the lives of anyone meeting in church. Our leadership take this very seriously and continue to review and debate on a weekly basis. Our heartfelt thanks to Daphne, Janet & Jenny for their patience with us, and moreover their consistent, passionate care for all our folk.

I preached last week from Psalm 27. 1-5. I feel we are moving from God’s refuge onto solid rock. God’s solid rock. He has set us high upon this. We are stood high, on view, on His immoveable rock. Others around can see us. God has put each of us in our unique situations. We have had months of prayer, reflecting in journals, of God ‘IN.’ I feel now is the time, especially approaching Christmas, for us to be God’s love ‘OUT.’ Wherever you are, please intentionally look out for those thar are struggling, who need your ears, maybe your hands. Let others see God in each of us, His arms & feet, His church.

Be blessed, Pastor Andy <><