

December 2020

Dear all,

This year has been a very challenging and tough year for us all. Who'd have thought, this time last year, we would be facing Tier 4 lockdown for Christmas. I want to take this opportunity to write to you to reflect on the past year.

A lot has happened this year. Church buildings were closed yet church didn't. As we know, church is the people and not the building. With the wonder of technology, we were still able to meet for our Sunday services. We may have missed that personal contact with others, but we were still able to take the time at the beginning of the services to chat – even if it does take us all 20 minutes to say hello to everyone! As well as the Sunday services, two other meetings were set up in the week - devotions and prayer meeting. Many of us would not have been able to join these in normal circumstances so I feel this was one of the positive outcomes of this situation.

We mustn't forget those in our fellowship who have not been able to join in with the services but everyone has had telephone calls, cards through the post or a quick hello in passing as we are out for our 'daily exercise'. There have been many offers of help from those who are able: shopping, collecting medical supplies, meeting for a socially-distanced cup of coffee to name but a few. We thank God every day that each one of us can bring a bit of happiness to others through Him.

Many events in the calendar this year have been cancelled. The first one for us was Mothering Sunday followed by all the events that surround Easter. The Maundy Thursday service, Good Friday walk of witness, the planting of the crosses and singing in the car park on Easter Sunday all had to be cancelled. This did not stop us remembering Holy Week and our Lord rising from the tomb – it just had to be done in a different way to how we would normally remember.

Youth work has still continued throughout the year. An array of activities have been put on the church website for all to access with many thanks to all those involved with that, especially Marc, Elizabeth and Carol. There was a Light Party created in Dover which is available online. This was accessed by many children across Dover and other parts of the world. A Light Party Christmas show with Dougie Dug Dug has been produced also. Both are available on YouTube. To complete the year of children's work there was a nativity family service on Zoom. This was very different to previous years with less panic from the Youth Ministry team as there were no children to dress in their costumes on the morning! All this was done from the comfort of their own homes. A huge well done to all involved and for Carol and the Youth Ministry team for their work throughout this time. It has been wonderful to see all the children participate in the services every week showing their talents in art and craft as well as showing their growing faith and confidence in Jesus.

After six months of the church building being closed, we were finally permitted to open again at the end of September. Thankfully, this allowed those who couldn't access the Zoom meetings to go to church on a Sunday once again. Although numbers were limited due to space, we were able to accommodate those who wanted to attend. Praise God that our numbers of attendance have totalled 70 on a few occasions where regularly, there are 38-40 screens on Zoom.

Last month came the news that a vaccine had been created. The work that has gone in to that discovery is remarkable. Our hope and prayer for the coming year must be that this vaccine works and will prevent the spread of the virus any further.

Our Lord is in control and we must put Him at the front of everything we do.

*We put our hope in the Lord. He is our help and shield. Psalm 33:20.
You are my refuge and shield; Your word is my source of hope. Psalm 119:114*

As Christmas is approaching, and many of us have had to change our plans, remember one thing – God is still there with you. He loves you and cares about you always.

My prayer for you all this Christmas time is that you know God's love for you. May His peace surround you at this time and may He keep you all safe.

God bless you

Alison