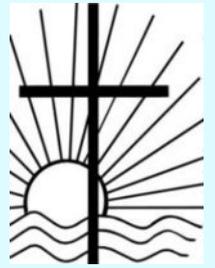




# *Advance*



*August*

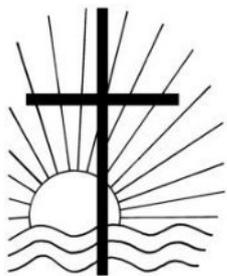
**2020**

**St John's United Reformed Church**

I Cowper Street, Ipswich IP4 5JD

Web Address: [www.stjohnsurcipswich.org.uk](http://www.stjohnsurcipswich.org.uk)

## NEWSLETTER FROM ST JOHN'S URC



**Minister:** Rev David Rees

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### Minister's Letter

#### Choosing The Best

The enigmatic story of Mary and Martha has always fascinated me.

Jesus has been welcomed into their home, and Mary sits and listens to the engaging conversation, while Martha is in the kitchen preparing refreshments for the guests. Martha is peeved and complains to Jesus that her sister is shirking from the necessary work needed for good hospitality. (Luke 10:38-42)

I remember hearing about a church study day where the speaker, looking at this passage, had spent most of the 2 morning sessions criticising Martha and extolling Mary for 'choosing the better part' (v42).

It came to lunch, normally a highlight of the day, and as they trooped into the dining hall, nothing had been prepared. The tables had not been set, the food had not been cooked, in fact, no one was in the kitchen at all. The women who had been assigned these un-started tasks were rounded up and interrogated.

They replied that, after listening to the speaker in the first session, they believed it was their Christian duty to 'choose the better part', and be inspired by the wisdom of the speaker by staying in the second session, rather than preparing lunch.

The speaker, who was known to be fond of a good meal, was left speechless.

Frequently, when we engage with the bible, we pick up the wrong part of the story. The story of Mary and Martha has been cast as a choice between spirituality and service, with a strong emphasis that spiritual should always trump service.

The message however isn't that one is good and the other bad, but one of priorities at any given time. As the writer of Ecclesiastes says, 'There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven' (Ecc 3:1).

As we slowly crawl out from under the lockdown rock, and look around and see life that is starting to be just a bit more normal, though with far more uncertainty, what are our priorities?

Will we begin to run around and engage in every activity under heaven? Will we sit back and decide that the world out there is far too dangerous? Will we risk new worship forms or grumble that the old ways are the best? Will we step back from practically serving others even as loneliness, isolation, unemployment, family breakdown, etc, increase?

The priorities we set in the coming weeks and months will have a profound effect on our society as well as ourselves. Let us prayerfully choose 'the better part' whichever that may be in our situation.

*David*

# ***Opening for Individual Prayer***

We hope to open the church starting on **Sunday 9th August** so that you can come for 15 minutes or so at any time between **10:30 until 11:15** before we close the church again for the necessary cleaning required at **11:30**.

The idea is to avoid too many people arriving at once. Please note no toilet facilities will be available. You must stay outside St John's until called forward and stay two metres apart from others waiting to enter.

You must not enter the building if you have any of the symptoms of Covid 19 or feel unwell.

You will need to have a face-covering on at all times, from just before entering the church, until you are outside again.

There will be a **one way system** to ensure social distancing of two metres is possible. This will be marked by arrows on the floor.

You will enter the left hand doors and turn left to enter the sanctuary (there will be hand sanitiser available).

As required by Government for church premises, we will ask you to sign a form to say you agree to our keeping your details; once signed, we will keep that whilst we are operating the church in this way. We will then take your details: See example of the Form below which says we will only keep a note of the date and time of any visit for 21 days. This is to provide the necessary details for **NHS Track and Trace**, and whilst not compulsory, the elders would urge you to provide this information.

A steward will guide you to a seat which will be socially distanced from others.

There will be no singing possible and you are requested not to engage in conversation with others until you have left and are outside the building.

You will leave the sanctuary via Room 1 as guided by a steward.

Despite all the above, we would really love to see you if you can visit safely. You might like to fill out the form below before you come.

## **From the Elders of St John's**

### **Consent form for places of worship**

To support the NHS Test and Trace programme, we are taking contact details (name and telephone number) for all visitors, as well as recording times entering and leaving St John's URC Ipswich.

In line with guidance issued by the Department for Health and Social Care, we will keep your details safely and in compliance with GDPR legislation. We will keep your visit details for 21 days before securely disposing of or deleting them. We will only share your details with NHS Test and Trace, if asked, if it is needed to help stop the spread of Coronavirus. We will not use your details for any other purposes or pass them on to anyone else. Thank you for your understanding.

If you agree to providing your information for this reason, please complete the following form:

Name

Tel. No

Signature

Date

