

November 2020
Trinity Church Lancaster
www.trinitychurchlancaster.org.uk

'Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care' 1 Peter 5:2

'I have other sheep that are not of this sheepfold. I must bring them also' John 10:16

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The Covid season has found us thinking a lot about sheep. We see a lot of sheep around here. Sheep are so important even the local comprehensive has its own flock and the kids all get to do a farming GCSE with hands-on experience of sheep turning. In ministry, the challenges are simple: how to care for the sheep and how to seek the lost. This is what has always mattered, but working within the various restrictions we have faced has been challenging. It has felt since the summer that as soon as we make a plan, announce it; then it has to be cancelled. We hold all plans loosely and try to be flexible whilst seeking to be faithful in our task. As a church, it has felt as though our wings have been clipped - all our ministry has previously been home-based. But we rejoice that the Lord is our Shepherd and He is in control because we are very aware that we aren't!

Shepherding the flock

Like many, we have recorded our services and have streamed them on YouTube and Facebook. The community centre we use has been closed since March and has no plans to re-open. However, the parish church in a village just south of the university generously offered us the use of their building. We initially met on Wednesday nights in September, but their PCC then agreed that we could use the Church on Sundays at 4 pm. This is brilliant for us because it means families with children can, at last, be in Church together and a few new students found their way to us as well. So we have had around 35 coming albeit strangely unable to chat together. Please pray that we will be able to meet physically soon and that the government doesn't keep Lancaster in extra lockdown after December 2nd forbidding public worship.

Our bible studies have been on Zoom. This year we are looking at Romans together. Zoom bible studies are limiting, but some find them really encouraging. Most find it a bit of a struggle - relating online is not the same. Others never join. Please pray in particular for students who are on the fringe of Church. We are concerned that some will drift. We have one family who was struggling before lockdown, and this has given them an easy way to cut Church out of their lives altogether.

We have not yet been able to use the rule of 6 to meet together (Lancashire lockdown). We had hoped to use homes, then we booked a function room in a pub for the beginning of the term, but that proved impossible too. Please pray that we will be able to meet physically soon - it means a lot to our church family.

One to ones are happening - initially in a local Covid secure pub, then sitting outside with a hot chocolate but now on walks. Again this is not ideal! Please pray for more freedom soon.

Pray for those who struggle with their mental health. One young woman had a severe crisis and moved into the Soole home for a while. Pray for her that she will know the care of her good shepherd in her fragility.

Reaching out to the lost

During the last lockdown, we ran a Friday night quiz - hosted by Rory, who our neighbours all love! We returned to it last week with an invitation to join us for Christianity Explored this Thursday. Please pray that as our friendships develop some of this community will be interested to find out more. Pray that those invited to CE will come and discover the joys of the gospel.

We have some contact with a few students who are reading 'The God Who Is There' by Carson - please pray for young man W. and young woman M. Pray that the truth will convince them of the gospel. W. has no background, whereas M. comes with lots of damage from a broken Christian home.

We have no specific plans for Christmas yet because we have no idea what December holds.

It is tough to invite friends to online Church, but the restrictions with Covid secure Church are also frustrating. Please pray that all of us will have the energy and imagination we need to keep on reaching out with the gospel.

Other news

Trinity is re-organising its structures in line with the new formalised Anglican Mission in England convocations . Please pray that this will be useful for ministry and the church family.

Rory Baxter has become an elder and is joining Martin and Andy. Pray for unity and wisdom for them all.

Since the lockdown, we have had a few new people join us. We are rejoicing in these new relationships and their unity in the gospel. Please pray for them as they settle - it is hard to form friendships when we cannot offer our usual hospitality. Pray that as a church, we will be able to love and support one another despite everything!

We are grateful for your prayers knowing that you share the same challenges. We are praying for you too.

Grace and peace to you all

Martin, Karen, Andy and Rosie