



Welcome to the April 2020 newsletter from Inclusive Church!

April 2020

The Inclusive Church Newsletter is a digital publication produced every month. It aims to provide supporters and members with the latest news and information from around the life of Inclusive Church and our partner organisations.

From the National Coordinator

Hello everyone, and welcome to your monthly newsletter.

We are living in the middle of unprecedented times. I can't write a 'normal' newsletter with 'normal' lists of events etc. Instead, I have written a piece below to make us all think - with plenty of links to other articles you can read.

What is normal? For some people, this 'lockdown' situation is their normal. For many disabled people, not being able to go shopping and relying on online shopping or the help of friends or family is normal. For many disabled people, a social life and work life conducted online is normal. For many disabled people, not being able to get out of the house for long periods of time is normal. For many older people, the vulnerability and isolation they were already experiencing is being exacerbated by this virus.

Sadly, whenever there is a crisis, it tends to affect those who are already vulnerable, isolated and marginalised more than those who are not. In this newsletter, you will find links to articles about the detrimental effect on people of colour, disabled people etc. We must continue to work for a better and more just world now and when this pandemic is over.

Thank you for your continued support. Enjoy the newsletter!

Ruth Wilde. National Coordinator

A Coronavirus Crisis 'Shaped by Inequality'

A crisis brings out the best in people. The care we have for one another, which seemed lost for years in the bickering of the Brexit war of words, has reappeared. We want to look after not only our friends and family, but also our neighbours and even those we don't know. [This article](#) says that polling shows that the British public values compassion over economic stability. That is truly something to celebrate!

The respect for and valuing of those who care for us in our most difficult times is evident in the outpouring of love for the NHS. Everyone, from left to right on the political spectrum, appreciates the work of doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals, as the weekly '[clap for carers](#)' has shown. Nigel Lawson once commented that the NHS is the '[closest thing the English people have to a](#)

[religion](#)' (the Church of England might take offence at that one!) Following this pandemic, it is hard to see how any government could get away with underfunding or privatising our health system.

So that's the good news. And [here's some more](#), for those of us in need of a positive boost in these hard times. The lockdown is certainly good for nature, if not for us!

However, crises also bring out the worst in society, and this one is no different. As I said above, the Coronavirus Crisis exposes the inequalities already present in our country and exacerbates them. This crisis is 'shaped by inequality' (in the words of Frances Ryan). Here is [Ryan's article](#) about the hidden crisis of inequality.

There has been much written about how ethnic minorities are worse affected worse by coronavirus. The government has even opened an [official enquiry](#) into this phenomenon. Afua Hirsch also writes about how the disease discriminates against BAME people [here](#). The lockdown has also pushed people without technology - those who are '[digitally excluded](#)' - further to the margins; and there has been a worrying increase in domestic abuse with everyone stuck at home together- more about that [here](#).

Meanwhile, not many of us think about how disabled people might be affected by Covid-19. On the extreme end, there have been [court cases filed against the government](#), because of the advice given to hospital staff on whose life should be prioritised in the case of a shortfall in medical equipment, including ventilators. On the other hand, many people have been making jokes which are insensitive to disabled people, many of whom already live with self-isolation as a norm. This excellent [article in the New Statesman](#) explains more and says that we need to think more about vulnerable and disabled members of society in our response to the crisis.

I want to leave you with two more pieces written from a place of lived experience. Here is a blog about [online church and disabled people](#) - 'nothing new' - and here is a [short blog](#) by autism advisor Ann Memmott about the people who are likely to be excluded in our churches - even more so in these 'online' times.

Stay safe, everyone, and keep working for inclusion and justice!

Ruth Wilde, National Coordinator

Creating Sanctuary Resource

A new website has been launched to aid churches in welcoming LGBT people with resources and training. The resource is called 'Creating Sanctuary' and is not to be confused with 'Seeking Sanctuary', 'City of Sanctuary' or anything else related to refugees and asylum seekers. This 'sanctuary' is the safe space in church for people on the LGBT+ spectrum who have been hurt and excluded and who often carry specific church-related pain.

Check out the new website [here](#).

General Synod Elections 2020

At the time of writing, the General Synod elections are still due to go ahead later in 2020. The timetable is for nominations to open at the end of July and close at the start of September. Voting will then take place online and by post from mid September through to early October, with results announced in mid October.

However, with the Coronavirus lockdown the Deanery Synod elections have already been pushed back from the Spring to October 2020. As Deanery Synods form the electorate for the General Synod elections this will impact who gets to vote if the General Synod elections are run in September. There is also a clause in the Coronavirus Act 2020 which creates a mechanism to delay the dissolution of General Synod and subsequent elections. The Lambeth Conference has already been delayed for a year, and arrangements for the General Synod meeting scheduled for 10th – 14th July have yet to be confirmed.

In terms of the Inclusive Synod election campaign, we are therefore planning for several eventualities. It may be that the elections are run on the original timetable, or that they are delayed until later in the autumn or even until summer 2021. We will be keeping a close eye on any announcements from Church House in case there are any changes, and structuring the campaign accordingly. In unsettling times this is a relatively minor disruption to have to manage, but the outcome of the elections will be shaping the life of the Church of England long after the pandemic has passed and it is important that we are in a position to engage positively with them, whenever that may be.

If you are interested in standing as a candidate for the elections please contact our Elections Organiser, Nic Tall – synod@inclusive-church.org

Inclusive Church Ambassadors

We have a great network of ambassadors covering different parts of England and Wales. They are the representatives of Inclusive Church on the ground. You can find out who the ambassadors are – and where they are by looking [here](#).

Details of the role description for ambassadors is available [here](#). If you want to be an ambassador for your area, get in touch with [National Coordinator](#).

From Birmingham ambassadors, Ruth Yorke and David Butterworth:

'Like many others, we are moving fellowship groups online, and have been trying to pay particular attention to how we include neurodiverse people in online meetings - remembering that it is particularly hard for some people who are autistic, and ensuring we make specific space for them. Sometimes the online forum can mean 'quickest speaker gets heard', and it's important to hear those people, but not only those people. So remembering to ask people what they need and trying to communicate with people also by email, text or phone as works best for them.

We've been trying to keep aware that people without internet access can feel quite excluded at the moment, so we've posted out church information as well and, for Holy Week, we posted out a suggestion to read particular Bible passages at a set time so that we could all read them together, even if all over the city.

We recorded an ecumenical message and blessing which went online but also got onto the local tv station, which meant people without internet were able to see church leaders 'standing together'. We recorded an ecumenical 'virtual walk of witness' including the 'stations of the cross' and this has been accessed online for over 1000 people (around 250 usually come on the walk), so some of our different 'virtual' activities are including people who aren't usually involved.

We are excited that Birmingham is having a 'virtual pride' where there will be a kind of parade, messages, and performances from artists online and speakers such as Peter Tatchell still taking part. Actual Pride is hoped to still happen in September. We will be marking the original Pride date too and still having Pride themed services as planned, they will just be online.'

Events

DISCLAIMER: We cannot be sure that these events will go ahead, even though they are happening in July and August.

There are plenty of online events happening, including church services. Please get in touch if you're looking for something in specific.

Modern Church Conference 2020: Living in Love and Faith

This year's Modern Church conference will be taking place from the 13th-15th July at High Leigh Conference Centre in Hertfordshire. The conference is named after the Church of England's latest project on sexuality, due to report in July 2020. This conference will hear from speakers how the Christian Gospel affirms, accepts and welcomes everyone, whatever their identity, gender or sexuality, without reservation or ambiguity. Speakers include Tina Beardsley, Susannah Cornwall and Adrian Thatcher. Book through the Modern Church website [here](#).

Free to Believe Conference

This conference will be taking place at High Leigh Conference Centre on the 30th July - 1st August 2020. The theme is 'What is liberal faith and what does it offer to the world?' For more information, go to the website [here](#).

Supporting the work of Inclusive Church

Are you a church with money to spare for mission and causes you believe in?

Are you a person looking for a charity to give to monthly?

Are you someone with a great story to share about how Inclusive Church changed you and/ or your church?

We would love to hear from you. Please get in touch with Ruth: office@inclusive-church.org

Inclusive Church exists only because of the generous giving of our members and supporters. The more money that is given, the more capacity we have to do great things! If you value the work that IC does and are a member or supporter, maybe you would like to give to our work, either as a one-off donation or on a monthly basis. Why not take a collection in your church for IC?

You can donate quickly and easily by following [this link](#).

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The content of the newsletter is drawn from a number of sources including individuals and partner organisations. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect a 'formal viewpoint' of the Inclusive Church trustees, individual members of Inclusive Church or registered Inclusive Churches. Contact The National Coordinator at Inclusive Church by phone 07935 374877 or email: office@inclusive-church.org