***THE AVENUE***

**STANFORD AVENUE**

**METHODIST CHURCH,**

**BRIGHTON**

October – November 2021

**Minimum Donation 50p**



**THE AVENUE**

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**A Letter from our Minister**

**Do we need Gender affirming Toilet Signs?**

There has been a lot of debate over the last few years about the gendering of toilet signs in public spaces. Is it necessary? Is it going too far? Do people need them to feel welcome? I briefly raised the point at the end of our momentous church council where we voted to allow same sex marriages to take place at Stanford Avenue Methodist Church. At this meeting I said I would raise the subject again at our next church council. My plan was to explain the issue and why I think we need to consider our toilet signs, and in fact adopt a gender affirming approach. Then I thought the whole church should be brought into the discussion, so I saw this as a perfect opportunity.

First, the issue in brief. There are people within society which do not identify with the well-known binary genders, male and female. A person may be born biologically male or female, but not feel that this represents what is going on within them or how they feel about themselves - this is gender.

Though, it’s worth remembering that not even biological sex is as easy as male and female. As there are many people who are biologically intersex. To quote ‘interadvocates.org’: “Intersex is an umbrella term for differences in sex traits or reproductive anatomy. Intersex people are born with these differences or develop them in childhood. There are many possible differences in genitalia, hormones, internal anatomy, or chromosomes, compared to the usual two ways that human bodies develop.” I believe this is a helpful start, as, even if we are strongly attached to biological sex, we must allow space for people who might not be able to identify their gender in such straightforward terms as many people do.

Furthermore, there are as many intersex people in this country as there are ginger people. Therefore, if you know a few ginger people, and I know from direct experience that you know at least one, then you probably know a few intersex people too.

So, if biological sex opens the door to gender identification being something that’s not firmly attached to the body we were born into, then it’s not much of a jump to think that anyone, regardless of their biological sex, might question their gender identity.

It’s a regular criticism of people who question their gender that this is a new thing, that we’ve got on just fine before, and that gender identity is just a symptom of a snowflake generation. Social media is awash with images such as this.

So, some history. There are very few societies that have existed where you can’t find evidence for the identification of more than two genders and their inclusion in that society. Regrettably, later Christian culture has tended to vilify any gender identification beyond male and female. However, even when this has happened the issue didn’t disappear, it was just discriminated against.

For example, there are many online articles discussing those native to North America who considered there to be five genders. Loosely translated the Native Americans referred to people as having the spirit of gender, or in some cases two spirited. The five gender identities were male, female, two spirit female, two spirit male, and transgender.

This gender tradition, which was affirmed by Native American culture, ended when Christians from Europe arrived and subjugated the natives, including insisting that they adopt a system of binary gender male and female.

So, if you are hearing discussions on this topic more and more, it’s not because it’s a new thing it’s because our society has only just reached the point where people feel comfortable to publicly identify with a gender that does not correspond neatly with their biological sex.

What about gender today? First, if a person identifies with the gender that their body seems to indicate, e.g. I was born a girl and I have always felt like a woman, then they are known as cis gender. Cis being the loosely translated Latin of “on the same side”.

Beyond this, I find the image of umbrellas to be helpful, albeit not perfect.

In this illustration if a person does not identify their gender with the biological sex they were born as they are broadly considered to be ‘transgender’.

From here there are two other categories. First, ‘binary transgender’. This is where a person is born biologically as one sex but fully identifies with the opposite gender. So, their gender is in fact the well-known binary male or female, but just the opposite to the gender we might initially associate with their biological sex.

Then there are non-binary transgender people. These are people who, put very simplistically, identify with a mix of both genders or no gender at all. We might find it helpful to see this as a gender spectrum, and like all spectrums there is a huge range of possibilities for where a person might sit on that spectrum. Therefore, there are a huge array of words people might use to describe their gender. Including, taken from the Native Americans, ‘two spirited’. More commonly people use the terms genderfluid, genderqueer, non-binary or agender, and the term transgender is used much less when referring to people who are non-binary.

Flowing from this people will identify with different pronouns and find it safe and affirming when others take the time to learn and understand these. Binary transgender will most likely want to be referred to as he/him or she/her. Non-binary people might choose one or more from he/him, she/her, they/them or even any/all (as in they identify with all and so have no preference). There are many other pronouns beyond these that a person might use, though, these are less common.

It’s also important to remember that people who identify as transgender, or trans for short, are probably on a journey of discovery. It’s very likely that they were cis gendered as a child and felt compelled, often through fear, to play this role out. Then when they feel safe, can’t hold it in anymore, or a mix of the two, start to explore their gender. This starts as an internal recognition, which can be as scary as an external one. Following this they may start dressing differently and might ask for their pronouns to be expressed differently. However, because it’s a journey, don’t be surprised if a person changes what they would prefer to be referred to as. This isn’t a sign of indecision, it’s a sign that a person is untangling a mess mostly not of their own making, or simply growing and exploring.

Regarding changes of appearance, people who identify as binary or non-binary transgender might begin to make changes in their appearance. This may include but is not limited to, beginning to dress in clothes that better represent their gender. They may start wearing makeup or cease to wear makeup. They could cut their hair short or grow it long. Some, particularly binary transgender people, may begin taking hormones, have gender affirming surgery so their body better represents how they feel as a person, and change their name. Vitally, a person may do none of these things but still identify as transgender. It’s very important to remember that trans people do not owe others an outward sign of their gender. Therefore, it would be considered very insulting and oppressive to comment that a person does not look as you think they should look given their gender identity or use their former name, commonly referred to as their “dead name”.

So, how does all this relate to toilet signs and why does it matter? Recently people have felt more comfortable about discussing and expressing their gender identity, but in response many of them have experienced varying degrees of abuse, up to and including murder. ‘Trans Day of Reembrace’ is the 20th of November, where people who are dead because of their gender are remembered.

Sadly, a common battleline has been the use of toilets, and many physical assaults have been because of the perceived misuse of a toilet. There have also been many scare stories in the papers about the use of bathrooms. So, there is a lot at stake here. Imagine being in a public space and being afraid of what might happen if you simply went to relieve yourself; knowing that some people have lost their lives because they used the “wrong” toilet.

Given something that to most seems so simple is so extraordinary stressful to others we need to consider how we as a public space respond.

To help us think this through I want to make a distinction between welcoming, hospitable, affirming, and what I’m going to call affirming+.

So, it would be welcoming to say to a person who identifies as trans: “Our toilets have binary toilet signs, male and female, but use whichever toilet you like, there won’t be any problems here”. This is good, it’s welcoming, but it’s not affirming for a person to have to have someone explain how toilets work. What’s more, we can’t have this conversation with everyone, and most of the time you won’t even know that a person is trans. Furthermore, this may not take away the fear a trans person has. “What if there is a problem? What if there is a person in the building who thinks differently? What if I use the men’s toilet and someone is angry with me and calls me a woman?”

Next, it would be hospitable to direct trans people to the single toilet rooms, as these have always been toilets for all. This solves some problems, as a trans person will know they will be safe because there’s no binary gender signs on the door. The problem here is, why can’t they use the toilets other people use? Why do they have to go to a specific part of the building to use the loo?

**MEDITATION & MUSIC.**

Meditation & Music meets every 3rd Wednesday of the month in the Church at 19-30 pm. We have recently had hope for our theme and our next one is on Flowers & Gardens. This is a time to relax & share with others. All are welcome with no age barriers!

I find the poems and the Geoff Harrington find suitable music.

Hopefully a good time is had by all. **TASTE & SEE.**

Best wishes Sylvia Lord.

**GARDEN of GRATITUDE.**

Having spent the last 18 months living with Coronavirus, we are all thankful for the selfless work of the NHS staff. There are so many others to thank who kept the country going. Supermarket workers, binmen, police & fire personnel, bus drivers, farmers, lorry drivers and so many more who were able to work through it all. Many of us are thankful to individuals who helped us cope with the isolation, friends, family AND OF COURSE Alan Mackenzie who produced the weekly newssheet with lots of information and his ministry to us all. We all agree how great it was. Thankyou ALAN.

Following on from our Thankfulness badge at Girls Brigade we thought it would be great to turn the base of the tree outside the Church into a “garden of gratitude” with painted pebbles and plants but we want anybody who would like to decorate a pebble to be included. Ideas for suitable plants would be great too.

Let Amy, Lis, Karen & Sam know if you can help.

**FUNDRAISING UPDATE.**

Although the weather was not as dry as forecasted and we had to hold our sale indoors. We were able to sell some of the donated items in Room 2 to make £67.73 (3p found in the street). Thanks to everyone who helped sell or came and bought. The next event is the online Quiz on Zoom on Friday 22nd October @ 7-30pm. We are aware that not everyone is able to join us but please let Lis know as soon as possible liscoblenz@yahoo.co.uk or 07730773891 if you can make a team indoors with your email address. The previous quizzes were great as Pete & Lisa always have a great variety of subject rounds.

Saturday 27th November is our Christmas Crafty & Fair which will be a great day with not only Church stalls but local groups and crafters joining us. We plan to make it as safe as possible with lots of ventilation and a one-way system in operation. Please come for a festive time where you will be able to purchase all kinds of gifts etc. Always if you have any ideas for fund raising events, please let us know. One we are in the planning stage will involve flower pots, so start saving your plastic pots now and think what amazing sculptures/models you could make.

Did you try the BRIGHTON SANDWICH recipe? If not give it a try as it is very delicious. Here is another easy recipe to try.

**BRIGHTON ROCK CAKES.**

7ox self-raising flour

1.5 oz ground almonds

Pinch of salt

3oz butter

3 oz currants

3 oz castor sugar

1 large egg beaten

Sift flour, almonds, salt & rub in butter

Stir in sugar dried fruits & egg to a stiff dough

Makes 12

Place on baking tray – fork up surface

Bake 190 degrees for 15 min

Sprinkle with more castor sugar

**LIFE AS A REDCOAT.**

**Part 4**

Come with me in imagination to the 2,500 seat Gaiety Theatre. I remember it as if it were yesterday!

Standing behind the curtain while the compare introduced me as the voice who woke them in the morning on Radio Butlin. I was trying to remember the words the two songs I was about to sing – “Secret Love & Climb Every Mountain”. Then the music started, the curtain rose, I walked to the mic and the words “Once I had a Secret Love came and it was a wonderful experience. As I walked to the wings, I realised I had to repeat the performance twice more as we did ‘The Redcoat Show’ three times every Thursday evening. As I said last time, the professionals were in the Theatre the rest of the time. Ann Emery (Dicks’ Sister) was top of the bill that season and was very friendly. We did a different show the following week, so two different songs. This was because a lot of families were there for two weeks.

Recovering at home, just before Christmas I received a telegram from the Entertainments manager asking me to ring him at Westward Ho Devon. So I did, Result, I joined him and his family the next May when I became a Bluecoat. (More next Magazine).

*Martyn - Thanks Wynn, there was never a dull day for you...*

**RIDDLES FOR YOU TO SOLVE.**

1. I’m tall when I’m young, and I’m short when I’m old. What am I?
2. What question can you never answer yes to?
3. There’s a one-story house in which everything is yellow. Yellow walls, yellow doors, yellow furniture. What colour are the stairs?
4. You see a boat filled with people, yet there isn’t a single person on board. How is that possible?
5. I am an odd number. Take away a letter and I become even. What number am I?
6. Mary has four daughters, and each of her daughters has a brother. How many children does Mary have?
7. What begins with an “e” and only contains one letter?

**INTERESTING FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW.**

A bolt of lightning contains enough energy to toast 100,000 slices of bread.

The inventor of the frisbee was turned into a frisbee after he died.

Marie Curie's notebooks are still radioactive.

Cold water is just as cleansing as hot water.

Beloved children's book author Roald Dahl was a spy.

The Aurora Borealis has a sister phenomenon in the southern hemisphere called the Aurora Australis.

Crocodiles are one of the oldest living species, having survived for more than 200 million years.

There was a fifth Beatle named Stuart Sutcliffe.

Great Britain once had a Cones Hotline for people to report rogue traffic cones.

Astronaut Alan Shepard hit two golf balls on the moon's surface.

**A FEW JOKES FOR YOU.**

**What did Adam say when he was asked his favourite holiday?**

(“It’s Christmas, Eve.”)

**What did pirates call Noah’s boat?**

(“The arrrrrrk.”)

**Why didn’t anyone want to fight Goliath?**

(It seemed like a giant ordeal.)

**7th Brighton Scouts**

Hi Everyone .

Hope all of you are getting back to ‘near normal’. At present, who knows what’s around the corner!

We have been meeting face to face since late June ,with a few meetings outside at Parkwood in Henfield.

Now in the Autumn Term ,we have some new Cubs taking our numbers to around 20 and the Scouts have about 10 (although there are some Cubs going up at end of this term)

We have a few outdoor bits to complete some Silver Awards ,which should be finished by end of October.

Our Group hope everyone will enjoy using the new mugs in the kitchen Pink, and in the Fellowship Room Orange, which we have bought for the Church.

The Scout Leaders will be moving the outside Prayer Chapel to its temporary home in the next few weeks as was agreed at the last Church Council, until its decided where it will be placed.

Thanks to everyone for their support

Liz Wakeling

*Martyn, Keep up the good work you are doing with the young folk.*

**9th Brighton Girls Brigade**

We are just returning to weekly meetings again and are looking forward to another happy session.   Should you know of any girl of 5years or more who would like to join us they would be most welcome on a Wednesday evening.  We start at 6.15 pm and are taking steps to be Covid safe.

We have a busy schedule planned up until Christmas and the more girls we have the easier it is to do some of the tasks.

We will keep you informed of our progress.

**Shoebox Appeal.**

I realise that this is a rather late notice, but I do have leaflets for this year’s appeal and will leave a few in the fellowship room should you feel able to take part in this appeal.    At Girls Brigade we have been collecting items over the last 20 months or so and plan doing our boxes before half-term.    If you are able to assist us with the cost of sending our boxes it would be greatly appreciated as it is £3 now for each box.

All boxes have to be ready by 1st November 2021.

Thank you for your continued help and support.

Amy

*Martyn – You and your officers & helpers are doing a great job.*

**CHURCH FAMILY NEWS**

We continue to pray for June & Bob Lawson,

Joan Dengate, Nadine & Gary Pugh, Ann Collins,

John Pollard (Vic & Margaret’s Son), Sylvia & Ray Smith, Debbie, Jean Griffin, Abbi,

Liz Wakeling & Amy Codling (Leaders of Scouts & Girls’ Brigade), Phil Codling, Maureen Knell, Sheila Whyte, Syd Beck, Jean & Geoff Starks and Gill & Shirley Challen.

Especially at this time for Malcolm Robinson & Mark Bishop on the sad loss of their Mothers. Our prayers go out to you and your family at this time.

Congratulations to the Jack & Monica Pook on the Baptism of Evie Rose Patricia Pook & also Roy & Melissa Pook on the Baptism of Arlie Jack Alexander Pook also Faye & Colin on the Baptism of Ivy Swift Coblenz Stillwell.

It is with great sadness that we inform you of the passing of our dear friend Joan Dengate & Bob Lawson. The Church will sadly miss them both and our prayers go out to their families.

There are also two joyous events one on 27th September of Sylvia Lord on reaching her 90th Birthday and Pam Challis will also be celebrating her 90th Birthday on 7th October.

Congratulation also go to Jeanette & Des Pierce on celebrating their 59th Wedding anniversary on 22nd September.

As always, please let me know if you want me to remove any names, add to them or update us with news of any of the above.

We of course continue to pray for our Circuit staff as they minister to us – namely – Revd’s Andy Lowe, Deborah Cornish, Dan Woodhouse, Heather Leake Date, Major Connie Croly, Sue Harrington, and all our Lay Workers and Local Preachers.

**J.M.A. Christmas Box**

Please note that we are having the usual Christmas Posting Box. If you wish to avail yourselves of this and make a donation to J.M.A.

**A.F.C.**

Thanks to the generosity of box holders and donors, £459.86 has been banked for the August collections which will support the invaluable work of the charity.

As mentioned in the last magazine, if there was a volunteer, I would retire having been the representative for many years. Gaynor Paul has been a supporter for several years and has agreed to take on the role of A.F.C. representative for Stanford Avenue. Do please support her as you have so loyally supported me and the Charity.

Many Thanks

Margaret.

*Martyn – Thankyou once again on behalf of everyone form Stanford Avenue in the work you have done over all those years and enjoy your retirement.*

**Contributions Needed.**

I have only received contributions for the magazine from the usual two of three people. This is your Church magazine, and it would be really nice to have more people making the effort to put something in. It could be about Hobby, Craft, Special Holiday, Puzzles etc. So please come on and let me have something or it may not be possible to produce them into the future. Please, Please help out the Church and scribble something down.

Please send them to the stanfordmethodist@btconnect.com or dropping them through the Church letterbox.

Remember we do not have anyone producing the weekly notices provided by Alan MacKenzie, so it is important that we get as much information out to everyone as possible

*Martyn.*

**PAUSE FOR THOUGHT**

On 24th August I was glue to the TV watching the Opening Ceremony of the Paralympics from Tokyo. I wanted to watch a great deal of the following :-

Swimming, Cycling, Athletics and many more. I kept getting very emotional as I watched people with all types of disabilities. Some were disable from birth, others because of illness and many through accidents. Great Britain ended up 2nd on the Medal Table behind China.

As I write this, I remember a particular swimming race – Women’s Butterfly. One of the contestants had no arm or legs and came last. Other contestants, trainers, carers and helpers gave her a standing ovation.

Staying with swimming, a young swimmer from GB on her birthday came 5th. After the race she gave an interview that was both moving and uplifting. The next day it was in most papers. Her name Ellie Robinson and the following was in my paper :-

“She may not have won a medal, but swimmer Ellie Robinson has been hailed as a true champion. After finishing 5th in an event she won in Rio, she insisted it was still one of the proudest moments of her life. Miss Robinson, who was celebrating her 20th birthday, revealed the yearlong battle she had faced simply to compete in Tokyo. She suffers from an agonising hip condition that deteriorated dramatically during lockdown. She was advised to stop her training and have surgery. In an interview that left commentators and viewers in tears, she said “There’s been so many times when I remember saying “If I have to crawl to the staring block on my hands and knees, I will do it. ‘And I am just so proud of myself for getting this far because I’ve been in agony this whole year. This is a story of triumph; this is not a story of defeat.’ He four-minute interview

 On Channel 4 won support from sports stars including Boris Becker and Gary Linekar.

Linekar tweeted: ‘You don’t have to finish first to be a hero. What an inspirational young women.’

Miss Robinson’s mother Hannah said she was ‘bursting with pride’ over her daughter, who has a form of dwarfism, adding ‘Twenty years ago a tiny premature Ellie Robinson was born fighting, and she’s been courageous and determined fighter ever since.

This was just one inspirational moment, there were many more, I wonder what or who has inspired you, and who inspire you now.

Throughout my life so many people have inspired, challenged and encouraged me. And many still are but often unaware. One of my favourite hymns never ceases to comfort, challenge and inspire.

WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE IN JESUS

ALL OUR SINS AND GIEFS TO BEAR

WHAT A PRIVILEG TO CARRY

EVERTHING TO GOD IN PRAYER

CAN WE FIND A FRIEND SO FAILTHFUL

WHO WILL ALL OUR SORRES SHARE?

JESUS KNOWS OUR EVERY WEAKNESS

TAKE IT TO THE LORD IN PRAYER

DO YOU FRIENDS DESPISE, FORSAKE YOU?

TAKE I TO THE LORD IN PRAYER

IN HIS ARMS HE’LL TAKE AND SHIELD YOU

YOU WILL FIND A SOLACE THERE.

So we go on, We will be inspired by many, and may, just maybe we will inspire someone ourselves.

Love and Prayers Wynn.

*Martyn – Wynn how do you keep going after all your own trials & tribulations.*

**Services at Stanford Avenue & Dates for your Diary**

3rd October – Circuit Together Service – Patcham

10th October – Sunday Morning Worship – Major Connie Croly

17th October – Sunday Morning Worship & Communion – Rev Dan Woodhouse

24th October – Sunday Morning Worship – Rev Dan Woodhouse

31st October – Sunday Morning Worship – Mr Robert Winton

22nd October – Quiz Night via Zoom

7th November – Circuit Together Service – Hove

14th November – Sunday Morning Worship – Mr Geoff Harrington

21st November – Sunday Morning Worship – Major Connie Croly

28th November – Sunday Morning Worship – Mrs Cynthia Tudor

27th November – Christmas & Craft Fair

***Answers to the Riddles.***

1. A Candle.
2. Are you asleep?
3. There aren’t any, it’s a one-story house.
4. All the people on board are married.
5. Seven
6. Five – each daughter has the same brother.
7. An envelope.

**LAST DAY for DECEMBER 2021 – JANUARY 2022 magazine contributions will be MONDAY 22nd NOVEMBER.**

You will be able to send contributions via E-Mail: stanfordmethodist@btconnect.com, or, by post to Stanford Avenue Church with ‘For Magazine’ on the front of the envelope.

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