

The 'Lockdown and Beyond' Banners 2021

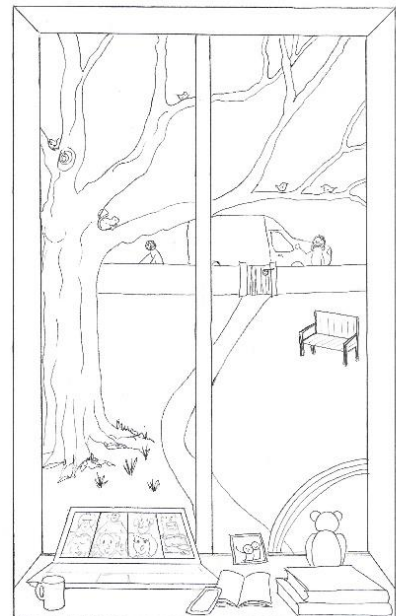
The Covid 19 pandemic was an extraordinary time in the life of our country and of our church. From March 2020 we went into 'lockdown' and were required to stay in our homes unless you had a role as a 'key worker'. Shops were shut, but deliveries could be made, Schools were shut and children were home schooled by teachers online and parents in the home, some of whom were also trying to work from home. Apart from a daily outing for exercise (up to one hour) we were to limit any journey out to only 'essential'. Church services were delivered online, Bible Studies and prayer meetings happened through WhatsApp and Zoom. People were encouraged to keep in contact by telephoning, texting etc.

Lockdown was designed to limit social contact and thereby reduce the spread of Covid 19. It had many negative effects, but also some positive. The church conducted a conversation (survey) across its membership to explore how people were coping and to consider how we might resume services in Church again.

During this time, we started the 'Lockdown and Beyond' banners. These banners were an opportunity for us to capture something of what lockdown had meant to us and our hopes for coming out of Lockdown. They also reflect some of the content of the Church conversations about Lockdown. They were designed so that anyone could contribute and feel that although we were separated, we were joined together in this joint project. The Banner Group developed the ideas on Zoom calls and then Sue Griffiths introduced the idea to the church in a Sunday service and followed it up with an explanation (below in *italics*) and an invitation to take part.

*We started with two pictures: the first picture represents **Lockdown**. It shows a view from inside the window, looking out onto a garden. It is winter time, the trees are bare, but you can see the birds and squirrels. Although the garden appears bare, if you look carefully there are new bulbs coming through, new signs of life, new things to come, signs of hope.*

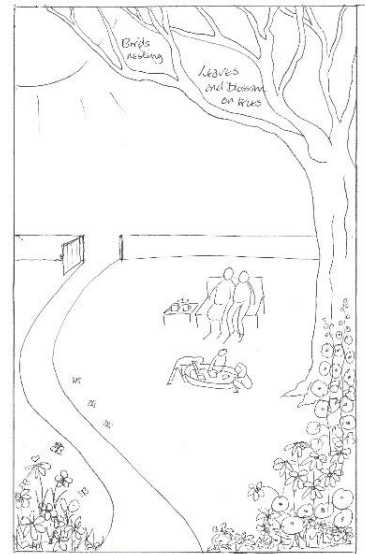
There is a path to the garden wall and beyond a delivery van has parked and two people are walking by, with face masks on and socially distanced. One is waving, they can't come in, the gate is closed, the person watching is staying in to keep safe, but would love to be outside with their friend. The chair in the garden is empty- and the person inside remembers people who have sat on that chair and chatted. Times we took for granted.



Meanwhile inside we talk to people on the phone or 'meet them' on the computer or tablet, having a cuppa together, but each in our own home. There are books to read, work to be done, home schooling all without leaving the house. A teddy is in the window looking out too, for any child on a bear hunt, next to a rainbow of hope. The words at the bottom remind us that in all seasons of life God is with us.

The second picture is **Beyond Lockdown** and this captures some of our hopes and dreams for this time. The season is summer. This picture is the same garden, but taken from a slightly different angle, reflecting that we will be slightly different when we come out of Lockdown and may see things slightly differently. From the conversations we had last summer there were lots of hopes for the future that we would continue look out for each other and care for the environment we live in better.

In this sketch you will see people sitting close together on a bench and children playing close by- perhaps these are children in the photo that have not been able to visit for a long time. The gate is open and there will be people coming in to visit and enjoy a meal together again inside. There may be a cat or dog or other domestic animals that people would like to include. The trees will have leaves and blossom and birds nesting. There are lots of flowers in bloom, including the polyanthus plants that were due to be given out on Mother's day last year! The sun is out and there are bees pollinating the plants and butterflies speaking to us of transformation and freedom. 'Lord of all joy' will be the words at the bottom of this banner.



People were invited to take part and packs with instructions, patterns and materials were provided. Where possible we tried to match up items with people's interests and skill level to enhance the opportunity for meaning and reflection- e.g. the food delivery van and the rainbow were both done by Keyworkers, the teddy bear by the children's worker, photograph of one couple's grandchildren not seen for a long time, etc.



Over 25 people took part, and these two pictures show the banners we produced ready for our first service back together taken by our Minister Jane Wade and our Moderator Geoffrey Clarke on 18th April 2021.