

THE HADLEIGH MESSENGER

February 2017



The Magazine of the
United Reformed Church, Hadleigh, Essex

SUNDAY SERVICES

at 10.30am (every Sunday) & 6.30pm (1st Sunday)
with Holy Communion on 1st Sunday evening
and on 3rd Sunday morning of each month

Monthly Midweek Service

at 10.30am on 4th Thursday of each month

PREACHING ARRANGEMENTS FOR FEBRUARY 2017

Sun 5 th Feb	10.30am	Morning Service	Rev. Jack Roche MA
	6.30pm	Evening Service	Mr Jim Clubb
Sun 12 th Feb	10.30am	Morning Service	Mr Keith McCullough
Sun 19 th Feb	10.30am	Covenant Service with Holy Communion	Rev. Jack Roche MA
Thu 23 rd Feb	10.30am	Midweek Service	Mr Jim Clubb
Sun 26 th Feb	10.30am	Morning Service	Mrs Janette Stevens

SUNDAY MORNING DUTY ROTAS FOR FEBRUARY 2017

	ELDER	STEWARD	REFRESHMENTS
Sun 5 th Feb	Malcolm Brown	Marion Fidell	Jean Reeve
Sun 12 th Feb	Jean Reeve	Ann Purkiss	KayWatson
Sun 19 th Feb	Heather Brown [Holy Communion]	Malcolm Brown	Marion Fidell
Sun 26 th Feb	Malcolm Brown	TBA	Janet Wimbledon

FLOWER ROTA FOR FEBRUARY 2017

Sun 5 th Feb	
Sun 12 th Feb	
Sun 19 th Feb	
Sun 26 th Feb	

ELDERS' MEETING

Wed 15th Feb 7.30pm

CHURCH MEETING

No meeting in February

HADLEIGH URC OFFICERS

Minister:

Rev. Jack Roche (01268 455194)

Hon. Secretary:

Mr Royston Brackin (01702 558862)

Acting Hon. Treasurer:

Mr Royston Brackin

Serving Elders:

Mr Royston Brackin

Mrs Heather Brown (01702 557678)

Mr Malcolm Brown (01702 557678)

Miss Jean Reeve (01702 554907)

Useful information

Address: Church Road, Hadleigh, Benfleet, SS7 2DQ

Website: www.hadleighessexurc.org.uk

An invitation

We invite you to join us for worship and fellowship at any of our services where a warm welcome awaits. If you are in need of help that the ministry of the church can supply then be assured of our interest and concern. If you are suffering from ill health, loneliness or bereavement and feel that we could help, or if you would like to ask for a prayer or personal visit then please let our Minister or any of the other church officers know. All such requests are treated in the strictest confidence.

From the Minister

“Be still, and know that I am God.” – Psalm 46:10 KJV

“Peace, be still” – Mark 4:39 KJV

Dear friends,

2017 is going to be another year of anniversaries. Two of the events were, in their different ways, massively significant. A hundred years ago, this October, saw the final triumph of the Russian Revolution and, five hundred years ago, also in October, Martin Luther sparked off the Reformation when he nailed his 95 Theses, criticisms of the Church of his day, to the door of the church at Wittenberg

Just twenty years before Luther’s world-changing gesture and just five years after Christopher Columbus, a little wooden sailing ship left Bristol and, fifty days later, made landfall somewhere on the coast of North America. Like Columbus’ ships, *The Matthew* was a caravel, a Portuguese design that first made such voyages possible. It had a crew of just eighteen men, including the captain Sebastian Cabot. It was an age of Faith and no doubt they felt safer because the little craft in which they were braving the unknown was named after an Apostle and Evangelist.

Even now, in spite of technological advances, there is the occasional tragedy to remind us that any kind of sea voyage is a huge act of faith; casting yourself onto a vast and unpredictable expanse of water so deep that a human body would be crushed by the pressure before reaching the bottom. (If you have a sea voyage planned, pleased don’t be put off – after all, flying seems even more preposterous and we can get used to that fairly easily!)

A replica of *The Matthew* is docked at Bristol, as is its much younger, and bigger, sister, the SS Great Britain – the first all-iron, screw-propelled ship to make the same journey, in 1845 – in just fourteen days !

Not so accessible is the vastly bigger, faster and even more celebrated *Titanic*, hailed as the ultimate achievement in maritime technology, Confidence in its safety is summed up in the assurance to passengers that ‘even God couldn’t sink this ship’!

I don’t think for a moment that the fate of the *Titanic* was some kind of Divine retribution, but it does remind us to have great respect for the ‘cruel sea’ that is totally unconcerned about the humans that venture into its domain.

The New Testament takes us into the realm of stormy waters and the perils of the deep. Acts offers a graphic description of storm and shipwreck that deposited the Apostle Paul on the shore of Malta, whilst the Gospels recount the terrifying storm on Lake Galilee that Jesus quelled with a word.

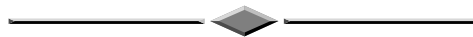
In both cases, the key word is Faith: Paul told the crew and passengers to trust in God who had shown him that none of them would perish while Jesus rebuked his disciples for their little faith.

Another feature of this, still quite new, year is uncertainty, apprehension of stormy waters ahead matched by fear, anger, resentment and recrimination; old certainties are crumbling around us and the future seems unknown and menacing.

If we feel that the wheels of history are turning then it is the God of history turning them and what we don’t yet understand, we can only approach in hope and trust. We are given those words of Scripture to say to us, in the face of the unknown, ‘Don’t be afraid – have Faith’!

Your friend and Minister,

Jack



From the Bible

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came towards Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, ‘Lord, save me!’

Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. ‘You of little faith,’ he said, ‘why did you doubt?’

And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshipped him, saying, ‘Truly you are the Son of God.’

Matthew 14:25-33 (NIV)

From the Editor

Welcome to the February 2017 edition of the Hadleigh Messenger. The New Year seems to be speeding ahead but at least that means Spring will soon be with us.

I have spent several days recently at the Echo newspaper offices in Basildon rescuing press cuttings and photos relating to Hadleigh and Thundersley. The Echo company are selling the offices and moving elsewhere and, apart from bound volumes of past newspapers, they have offered their archive to Rayleigh Town Museum. The museum has kindly allowed local community archives the opportunity to retrieve items relating to each of their areas. Some interesting material has turned up and I hope to use one or two photos in the magazine in due course.

I forgot to mention in the December edition that donations towards the cost of printing the magazine in 2017 would be welcomed. Please give or send any donations to Heather or myself. The suggested donation is £5.00. If you receive the magazine by post, please also include the cost of postage (55p for 2nd class) if possible.

I have mentioned in the past the possible need to reduce the frequency of publication of the Hadleigh Messenger. I will endeavour to keep monthly editions going for the time being but given my difficulties in getting the magazine published on time, the lack of contributions, and Jack's impending departure, the subject may need to be considered again in coming months.

Malcolm Brown



Dates for your Diary

Event – Date & Time

Church AGM – Thursday 16th March at 12.30pm

Maundy Thursday Passover Communion – Thursday 13th April at 7.30pm

Friends from other churches may attend. Afterwards, the church will be prepared for the Good Friday Walk of Witness refreshments.

Churches Together Good Friday Service – Friday 14th April at 10.15am at the Methodist Church followed at 11.00am by a Walk of Witness to our church where tea/coffee and hot-cross buns will be served.

Easter Day Sunrise Service – Sunday 16th April at 5.45am at Hadleigh Castle

Minister's Farewell Service & Lunch – Sunday 23rd April

The morning service at 10.30am will be the last occasion on which Jack will preach as our Minister. A farewell lunch will be held at 12.30pm, to which friends from other churches will be invited.

Churches Together Prayer Meeting – Thursday 1st June at 2.00pm at the SA Hadleigh Temple

Church 113th Anniversary Tea – Sunday 18th June at 5.00pm
followed by an evening service at 6.30pm

Church Harvest Supper – Saturday 23rd September at 6.00pm

Church Harvest Festival service – Sunday 24th September at 10.30am

Church Christmas Celebration – Sun 17th December with Celebration Tea at 5.30pm
followed by an evening service at 6.30pm

In addition to the events listed above, there will be a concert at the church by a new ladies choir named *Chanteuses* on Saturday 25th March, one of whose members is Kay Duell, leader of the Ever Green Singers. The church will also organise an autumn concert. For those interested in archaeology, there will be another HEFA Hadleigh Dig, based at the church, on Wednesday 7th and Thursday 8th June. This will be the last HEFA dig here.

Malcolm Brown

Wives' Fellowship Programme for February 2017

Date	Time	Meeting
Tue 14 th Feb	2.30pm	Talk on 'Hearing Ability' by Julie Leggett with a cochlear implant patient's testimony

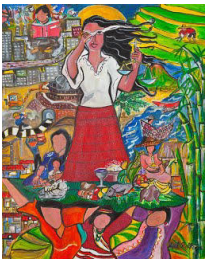
Meetings are held in the Small Hall with refreshments served at the end.

Entrance £2.00 – first time free

Small coins collected for Rayleigh, Rochford & Castle Point
Talking Newspapers for the Blind

Women's World Day of Prayer 2017

The local service for the Women's World Day of Prayer will be held at our church on Friday 3rd March starting at 2.00pm. Refreshments will be served afterwards. Please join us.



On Friday 3rd March, over 5,000 services will be held in the British Isles on the theme of 'Am I Being Unfair to You?' The Christian women of the Philippines have written the service and it has been translated into 1,000 different languages and dialects, to be used, throughout the whole world, starting at sunrise over the island of Samoa and continuing until sunset off the coast of American Samoa.

In 2013, Typhoon Haiyan - named locally as 'Yolanda' – struck the Philippine Islands in the western Pacific Ocean. This was the most severe storm ever to hit land and it claimed thousands of lives. The typhoon is mentioned in the service but you will also hear the stories of a girl, a mother and an older woman, recounting their situations and their hopes and fears. The service focuses on the Bible story of the workers in the vineyard: Matthew 20 v 1-16. There is also reflection on the artwork designed by Rowena 'Apol' Laxamana-Sta.Rosa.

The Philippines

Background – The Philippines comprises a group of islands located on the Pacific Ring of Fire close to the equator. This contributes to the high incidence of typhoons and earthquakes (around 20 per year.) Climate change has led to an increase in storms, droughts and severe typhoons.

Politics – The Philippines is a constitutional republic with a democratic government led by the President. However, the predominantly Muslim island of Mindanao has its own autonomous regional government. 17% of elected government posts are filled by women. There have been two women presidents – Corazon Aquino and Gloria Arroyo, both of whom come from families with a long political tradition.

Women – Before Spanish colonisation in the 16th century, women occupied some status in the community. However, the Spanish introduced feudalism, leading to the subordination of women throughout the archipelago. Today many Filipino women take on the role of breadwinner, often

working abroad as service crew, domestic helpers or skilful professionals in the medical field. The Philippine Constitution provides for equal rights, yet in practice Filipino women are often discriminated against and treated as subordinates in the home, in the church and in society.

Education – Public education is sponsored by the government but there are also private schools. Children start school at age 4 and elementary public schools are free.

Economy – The Philippines is one of the fastest growing Asian economies with labour migration a major economic force. This has impacted on the social fabric of the country. Ninety per cent of domestic workers are women – of which the majority work in the Gulf countries. Primary exports include semiconductors, coconut oil, fruits, garments and products relating to electronics, transport, copper and petroleum. Tourism accounts for 10% of national employment and contributes to almost 6% of the Philippine GDP.

Everyone is welcome to attend the service in their locality – men and women, of all ages. For further information and resources, see the WWDP website: www.wwdp.org.uk

Vera Knapton

WHAT'S ON

A round-up of future events in the area

Mon 6 Feb 2017	- Thundersley Community Forum at Cedar Hall School at 7.30pm.
Wed 8 Feb 2017	- Coffee Morning with home-made cakes at St Michael's Church, St Michael's Road, Daws Heath from 10.00am to 11.45am.
Fri 10 Feb 2017	- Do you enjoy having a chat and crafting? If so, come and join Castle Crafters at Hadleigh Library from 1.00pm to 2.30pm (every Fri).
Sat 11 Feb 2017	- Coffee Morning at Hadleigh Methodist Church. 10.00am to 12 noon
Mon 13 Feb 2017	- Hadleigh & Daws Heath Community Forum Meeting at Hadleigh Old Fire Station. Meeting with local councillors and residents. Starts at 7.30pm.
Thu 16 Feb 2017	- Poetry Reading Group Meeting (subject Dylan Thomas) at Hadleigh Library from 2.30pm to 3.30pm. All welcome. ditto - Hadleigh Gardening Association Display & Talk by Owls 'R' Us at Hadleigh Old Fire Station. Meet from 7.30pm for 8.00pm start. Admission: Members £1.50, Non-members £2.00.
Sat 18 Feb 2017	- Hadleigh Heritage Centre Coffee Morning with the theme of 'The Salvation Army Hadleigh Farm' at St James the Less Church from 10.30am to 12 noon.
Mon 20 Feb 2017	- CAVS Ways To Wellness drop-in at Hadleigh Library from 1.30pm to 3.30pm. CAVS Ways to Wellness aims to improve your health and wellbeing by linking you to activities and opportunities available in your community. No appointment necessary - just pop in.
Sat 25 Feb 2017	- Chess at St James the Less in St James the Less Church Vestry from 2.00pm to 4.30pm. Chess Master or Beginner? Come along to the Chess Club at St James the Less. Tuition available.
Sat 4 Mar 2017	- Southend Symphony Orchestra Concert at SA Hadleigh Temple starting at 7.30pm. Tickets £10.00 (conc. £9.00, under-12s £1.00) at the door or from Benfleet Music, Roseberry Walk, Church Road, Benfleet.
Mon 6 Mar 2017	- Benfleet & District Historical Society Illustrated Talk on 'The 17 th Century Housewife' by Ann Hardy at Richmond Hall, off Richmond Avenue, Benfleet. Starts at 8.00pm. Visitors welcome - admission £2.00.
Sat 11 Mar 2017	- Hadleigh & Thundersley Community Archive Drop-in at Hadleigh Library from 10.30am to 12 noon. Bring along old photos and documents for scanning or chat about your memories of the area. ditto - Slideshow And Talk on 'Thundersley & Daws Heath' by local historian Bob Delderfield at St Michael's Church Hall from 2.00pm to 4.00pm. Tickets £5.00, incl. tea and biscuits - to book, phone 01702 555573.
Thu 16 Mar 2017	- Hadleigh Gardening Association Talk on 'Hyde Hall - Past, Present & Future' by Robert Brett (RHS) at Hadleigh Old Fire Station. Meet from 7.30pm for 8.00pm start. Members £1.50, Non-members £2.00.
Sat 18 Mar 2017	- Hadleigh Heritage Centre Talk on 'The Salvation Army Hadleigh Farm' by Graham Cook at St James the Less Church. From 10.30am - 12 noon.
Sat 29 Apr 2017	- Variety Concert with Fish & Chips Supper at Hadleigh Methodist Church. Starts at 6.30pm. Tickets £10.00 - phone 01702 551786.

More events listed on the HELIX website at <http://www.hadleighsex.info>.

News from Churches Together in Hadleigh

The latest meeting of Churches Together was held at our church on Tue 10th Jan 2017

Opening – The meeting was chaired by Major David Woodman, leader of Churches Together. The meeting opened at 7.30pm with some thoughts on the Epiphany and a prayer by our minister, Rev Jack Roche.

Treasurer's Report - Paul Short reported that the Churches Together Christmas cards cost £25 to print. The current bank balance is £159.36. With the closure of the HSBC Bank in Hadleigh, it was agreed that the account could be transferred to Lloyds Bank.

Lent Course – It was agreed to follow the York Course *Receiving Christ*. The following dates and locations were arranged for sessions 1-3 and 5:

- Wed 8th Mar – Methodist Church
- Thu 16th Mar – SA Temple
- Fri 24th Mar – URC
- Tue 4th Apr – St James the Less Church

Major Woodman agreed to ask the Baptist Church if they could cover host session 4, in the week commencing 27th March. All sessions will commence at 7.30pm with refreshments served from 7.15pm.

Maundy Thursday – An invitation was extended to the Passover Communion at our church, starting at 7.30pm. Numbers of attendees are to be advised to me for planning purposes. Afterwards, seating and tables in the church will be arranged in readiness for the Good Friday Walk of Witness refreshments.

Good Friday – The traditional united service will take place as usual at the Methodist Church, starting at 10.15am and will be prepared by a team from various churches. A retiring offertory for Christian Aid will be taken.

The service will be followed at 11.00am by a silent Walk of Witness to our church. The walk will take place along the pavement as there is no police marshalling available.

Easter Day – A Sunrise Service will be held as usual at Hadleigh Castle. The time was not fixed at the meeting. Breakfast will be available at the SA Tea Room afterwards.

Note: The time has since been fixed at 5.45am.

Pentecost – It was agreed no to plan any Pentecost event in 2017.

Prayer Meeting – After the success of the first ecumenical prayer meeting last year, it was agreed to hold another one on Thursday 1st June at the SA Temple, starting at 2.00pm. Prayer requests from each church are welcomed.

News from around the churches

Methodist - A new male Youth Worker has been employed, to be shared with Benfleet Methodist and Wesley Methodist churches. He will be assisted by his wife and will run bible clubs in schools and encourage children to attend clubs at the churches. The Hadleigh Methodist club will be held on Sunday evening at 6.00pm.

St Barnabas – Ann Lowes reported that she had retired from Open the Book. More volunteers are needed. Ann mentioned that Hadleigh Junior School now hold assemblies at 3.00pm which is not a good time.

Salvation Army - The rebuilt cottages are to be officially opened on 16th January. They will be used initially for a job club and for Family Mosaic surgeries. An Alpha Course starting on Friday 20th January will also use the cottages.

St James the Less – Rev. Gemma Stock left on 1st January and has moved to St Thomas, Becontree, where she will be licensed on 31st January. A second advert for a Team Rector Designate has been placed after no response to the first advert.

St Michael's – Rev. Sue Croucher reported that she is joining the Open the Book team. A second advert is to be placed on 1st February for the post of Team Vicar Designate at St Peter's Church.

Dates of next meetings

Tue 25th Apr (AGM) – SA cottages – 7.30pm
Tue 17th Oct – St Michael's Church – 7.30pm
Refreshments will be served from 7.15pm before each meeting.

Closing - The meeting closed at 9.00pm with everyone sharing the grace.

Malcolm Brown

Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." – Matthew 9:37-38

Feasts & Festivals

The following article is based on material from the United Reformed Church website.



2017 is a year of celebration, a year for the whole United Reformed Church to celebrate all that we have been, are now and are called to be as we

continue walking the way of Jesus Christ today. It's 500 years since the Lutheran Reformation, 100 years since the ordination of Constance Coltman, the first woman to enter congregational ministry, 45 years since the URC came into being, more than 80 years since Pilots started and 25 years since Commitment for Life began. So, let's celebrate! And, in doing so, let's think about who we are, what we're about and how we can support one another as we all, in our own ways and contexts, seek to be better disciples of Jesus.

Every family has its own way of marking special events such as birthdays or Christmas. Some gather for a special meal, some give gifts. Whatever the means we use, these events remind us of who we belong to, where we have come from and what we can bring to the future. For a lot of people, the events of 2016 make the whole idea of 'celebrating' anything difficult to grasp. The world's peoples seem further apart, with walls rather than bridges being talked about by political leaders. Yet in different times and places, God's people have been called to 'drink deeply of the wells of salvation' (Isaiah 12:3). When we drill down deep into God's Word, we find a stream of refreshment to counter weariness and renew our hope for the refashioning of society.

For every month of 2017, as part of our focus on Feasts and Festivals, there will be Bible passages, brief reflections and worship materials, together with ideas to carry out into the wider community. The material has been crafted by people across the spectrum of the Church in the hope that you and your church will find something there to support you in your life together. Those with Internet access can find the resources at <http://www.urch.org.uk/feasts-and-festivals.html>.

One of the earliest Christian communications is believed to have been written from prison by the apostle Paul to the community at Philippi. The letter, although written at a time of threat for the Church, is marked by rejoicing. A spirit of joyful

confidence in Christ will hopefully mark our anniversaries and celebrations in 2017 while shaping the attitude with which we face whatever the year will bring. Beyond 2017 lies our new emphasis on adventurous discipleship: Walking the Way – living the life of Jesus today. May we 'drink deeply' and rejoice in 2017 and beyond.

January – Celebrating one Church

'Towards a Charter for Children in the Church' says that the United Reformed Church will only do separately those things which cannot, in all good conscience, be done together. While in this the context of the charter it relates to children and young people it does also directly refer to how we get along with our fellow Christian denominations. And we do a LOT of things together! Street Pastors, Food Banks, asylum seeker and refugee projects are just a few examples of where Christians in different local denominations put aside their differences and work together for God's Kingdom.

Praying and working with other churches for the visible unity of the whole Church is second nature for the United Reformed Church. The United Reformed Church came into being in 1972 through the union of the Presbyterian Church of England and the majority of churches in the Congregational Church in England and Wales. In 1981, we joined with the Re-formed Association of the Churches of Christ and in 2000 with the Congregational Union of Scotland. We also have strong relationships with Churches and Christian organisations around the world, including the Council for World Mission, World Communion of Reformed Churches and the World Council of Churches.

The Church worldwide celebrates a Week of Prayer for Christian Unity each year from 18th-25th January. Locally, Churches Together in Hadleigh organised several prayer meetings on the theme of reconciliation, using material prepared by Christians in Germany and based on 2 Corinthians 5:14-20. Our oneness in Christ was also celebrated with a pulpit exchange on the morning of Sunday 22nd January and united Songs of Praise service in the evening.

February – Rejoicing in our intercultural Church

For many years, hundreds of URC members have gathered for multicultural celebration. Every other September since 2007, Christians from England, Scotland and Wales have come together with Christians from Ghana, Korea, Jamaica, Nigeria and many others to celebrate the rich tapestry that makes up the United Reformed Church. It is a joyous gathering with lots of singing, dancing, story telling and poetry. There is a story award and an art competition. And most of all there is food, hot, tasty and plentiful.

We acknowledge that we need to do more than celebrate our multicultural church, the URC maintains that justice and love must be at the centre of all our intercultural ministry, in order to challenge all that opposes the fullness of life in Christ. Enabling racial justice advocates, supporting and enabling ethnic minority lay and ordained ministers, and becoming better host churches – are just some of the ways in which we have been living out our commitment to rejoice in the gifts of our members and show that the love of God is radical and inclusive.

We therefore continue to find new ways, models and tools to rejoice and embrace the diversity of humanity, and we invite you to journey with us, step outside of your cultural comfort zone and reflect on what it means to be a truly inclusive church...

Reflect together

As a church, or in groups, read Luke 10:25-37.

- Ask ourselves who do we identify with in the text and discuss with each other the social and religious barriers that are apparent in this narrative.
- What are the barriers before us that limit our ability as churches to be embracing of all groups – particularly those who have been marginalised throughout history?
- How can we engage in truly mutual relationships that embody and express the full range of voices and gifts present in the URC and wider communities?
- Do we have the systems in place to invite and welcome people – especially those on the margins of society – to ensure that all are welcome, and all gifts and perspectives are heard, visible and valued in our congregations, ministries and structures?

Continuing to reflect

Feasts and Festivals are important in the Bible. They are the focus of community life from the very beginning. Anything important that happens seems to have a feast or a festival. When a battle is won there is a feast. When God does something the community wants to remember and celebrate there is a festival, and that involves eating too. Here are some ideas to help us start exploring the eating and celebrating in the Old Testament.

When Abraham and Sarah receive three strange guests at the Oaks of Mamre (Genesis 18) Abraham seems to know it is the LORD. He makes them welcome and lays on a feast. The best flour is baked and a tender calf is cooked. After the eating and drinking Sarah who, like Abraham, is by now very old, overhears one of the visitors telling Abraham that she will have a son.

Being attentive to God is important and eating together is one way to do that. When we gather around a table we practice (in both senses of the word) hospitality and openness, compassion and gratitude, love and care.

Food, dancing and music are central to the life of the Jewish people. The central act of Jewish faith is the Passover Feast, where they remember God freeing the Hebrew slaves from Egypt. For Christians this meal is also important because during it Jesus took bread and wine and gave them new meaning. We call this feast Communion or the Eucharist.

As the newly freed Hebrews wandered in the wilderness, they ran out of food but God provided all that they needed (Exodus 16:2-20). Manna, bread from heaven, appeared for every day each morning. It had to be used or it would go bad. We pray for 'our daily bread' in the Lord's Prayer. Like those wilderness wanderers we learn that God provides food for the journey.

Psalm 23 speaks of a table groaning with food prepared in front of all our foes and a cup overflowing with goodness and mercy. Psalm 150 encourages us to sing and dance and play music to praise God. This month you could:

- think about how you welcome and entertain uninvited guests;
- look ahead in your church diary and plan a special meal;
- think about including those who never usually get invited.

Prayer Reflection

"When Winter comes can Spring be far behind." – Shelley ~ *Ode to the West Wind*

Give thanks that the darkness and cold are receding, although winter does not officially end until March and it can still deliver unexpected and unwelcome surprises. If we can't actually rejoice in 'deep freeze' conditions then we can at least give thanks that it cleanses the earth of pests and bugs that trouble human as well as plant organisms. Then it is the change in soil temperature that triggers germination of the seed that has been lying in the cold earth all winter.

When I have come home, gratefully, to a warm house in the recent icy conditions, my thoughts have strayed to those who are, somehow, surviving out on the streets, with nowhere else to sleep, and I have felt better because we regularly support the Southend HARP project. The warmer weather may improve the lot of the homeless from impossible to tolerable but, if we fear that

we may 'lose out' from 'Brexit' or from anything else, spare a thought for those who won't because they have nothing left to lose!

Barnabas Fund, MSF and other care agencies continue to report the plight of refugees from Syria who are still being accommodated in, mostly, tented camps in Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan. For many, their experiences will have made them reluctant to return home, in spite of recent peace discussions. Adequate food, shelter and clothing are in short supply and Middle Eastern winters can be bitterly cold.

As part of a monthly prayer rota for our congregation and wider fellowship, please pray for Pamela George and family, Margaret Irribarren, Mary Milne and John and Pat Porcher.

Rev. Jack Roche



Lord, there is nothing in our world which is hidden from your eyes

Lord, there is nothing in our world which is hidden from your eyes.
You see those whose benefits have shrunk to nothing,
and those whose disability allowances fall short of their daily needs.
You see those who apply for hundreds of jobs with never an interview or even a reply.
You see the high fliers with their huge bonuses measured in millions,
and the low paid outsiders facing poverty.
You see those choosing beautiful second homes, and those who sleep on cardboard in shop doorways.
You see the families who have been evicted and live out their days in temporary accommodation.
You see the children going to school without breakfast,
and the mothers who deny themselves so that their children can have meals.
You see the parents creeping in shame to the food-bank, when their income falls short yet again.
Help us to see too.
Lord Jesus, give us your compassion, your generosity of mind, and your free, giving spirit.
Help us to see through your eyes without prejudice or selfishness.

Amen



From the Moderator's Blog

Showers of Blessings – a post by Kevin Watson from 26th Jan 2017



This is the first home we have lived in with an ensuite bathroom – certainly a first world blessing! Unfortunately the shower looks as though it suits more the

showers that my dad had at the pit-head baths, and didn't work much better either – fixed in one position from the ceiling, giving a blast of water that felt as though your skin was being stripped away, and at a temperature only I could bear. For eight years I managed to use it, but in the Autumn it finally broke and parts could not be found!

Sometimes the Lord provides by taking away! It was agreed that a new shower could be fitted. It then proved difficult to get quotes, let alone a workman prepared to do the job. Eventually a plan was in place but it required a tiler to come and remove the old shower and tiles, then return later when the installation is finished; an electrician to wire it all up; and the plumber to put the shower in! It even needs me as a volunteer to take all the rubbish to the tip, and Lynne to keep the craftsmen plied with refreshments.

Five people needed to install a shower, each needed with different skill sets, but needing to co-ordinate their time and work together to make it happen with the result – a bathroom fit for purpose and looking good! There must be a message here for the Church – when something is shown not to be fit for purpose, even broken – let's pull together and pool the resources God has given us to repair the old or even create the new, and restore the beauty of God's world.

It's the same whether a door needs attention in a church building, or whether modern slavery needs eradicating from the face of the world.

We watched again the very inspiring film, "Amazing Grace" – the story of William Wilberforce's fight against the slave trade and then slavery itself. Someone who saw this at the cinema said how they wanted to stand and cheer when the victory was won!

Although Wilberforce is certainly an inspiring figure himself, what comes over so powerfully is that it took many people to be committed to the cause, and to work and plan and sacrifice together – a hard fight, but it was possible when they were one in Spirit. For that's how God's Spirit works, working in individual lives, giving us all different talents and characters, and then working in, and through and beyond the Church as individuals are prepared to come together.

I know that as we begin to "Walk the Way" and rediscover what Discipleship means, we will see that discipleship is not just an individual's faith journey, but is a shared experience of Christians living Christ's risen life together.

Ezekiel looks forward to this time, when the Lord says, "I will make them and the places surrounding my hill a blessing. I will send down showers in season; there will be showers of blessing. The trees will yield their fruit and the ground will yield its crops; the people will be secure in their land. They will know that I am the Lord, when I break the bars of their yoke and rescue them from the hands of those who enslaved them.....Then they will know that I, the Lord their God, am with them and that they, the Israelites, are my people, declares the Sovereign Lord. You are my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, declares the Sovereign Lord." (Ezekiel 34:26-30)

Let there be **Showers of Blessing!**

Kevin Watson

Verses of Renewal and Hope for the New Year

"And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." – Rev. 21:5

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." – Lam. 3:22-23

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." – 2 Cor. 5:17

Valentine's Day humour

A woman was taking an afternoon nap on 14th February. When she woke up, she told her husband, "I just dreamed that you gave me a pearl necklace for a Valentine's Day present. What do you think it means?" "You'll know tonight," he said. That evening, the man came home with a small package and gave it to his wife. Delighted, she opened it to find a book entitled 'The Meaning of Dreams'.

Jeremy visited a florist's shop which showed a large sign that read, 'Say It With Flowers.' "Wrap up one rose, please" Jeremy demanded of the florist's assistant. "Only one?" she enquired frowning. "Yes, just the one", Jeremy replied. "I'm a man of very few words."

Jim asked his friend, Tony, whether he had bought his wife anything for Valentine's Day. "Yes," came the answer from Tony, who was a bit of a chauvinist, "I've bought her a belt and a bag." "That was very kind of you," Jim added, "I hope she appreciated the thought." Tony smiled as he replied, "'So do I, and hopefully the vacuum cleaner will work better now."

Computer Corner

Dan Snow's History Hit

Interesting website

This is a new website from Dan Snow, the well-known TV historian and presenter. The site's About page grandly states: "History Hit brings you the most extraordinary, dramatic, tragic and fascinating stories of our shared past". The content comprises videos and podcasts on variety of historical topics, including religion.

URL: <http://www.historyhit.com>

New York Times – The Daily

Interesting podcast

For anyone interested in United States news, the New York Times has just launched this weekday podcast. Hosted by Michael Barbaro, the 15-20 minute audio briefing features 2-4 segments per episode highlighting culturally relevant news of the day.

URL: <http://nytimes.com/thedaily>

Donation to Embrace

At the morning service on Sunday 11th December, Rev. John Ambrose invited the congregation to donate to the charity Embrace, which supports refugee families in the Middle East. John explained that for £20 the charity could provide a winter survival kit. He was very pleased when a total of £100 was donated at the end of the service, enough for five kits. After sending the donation to Embrace, John received the following letter of thanks (which I have cropped slightly) that he thought readers might like to see.

EMBRACE
the Middle East

Rev Ambrose
Hadleigh United Reformed Church

24 London Road West
Amersham
Buckinghamshire
HP7 0EZ

01494 897950
info@embraceme.org
www.embraceme.org

Ref: 395146

23 December 2016

Dear Mr Ambrose

Thank you so much for forwarding the generous donation of £100.00 to our Christmas appeal on the behalf of Hadleigh United Reformed Church.

Life for refugees people is both hazardous and desperate. They arrive in Lebanon with very little of their own, very often with just the clothes on their backs. Every day is a struggle for survival.

This situation has been made even more treacherous because winter is fast approaching the Lebanon. For people who have no protection, this can be very dangerous.

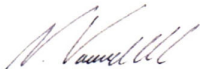
No-one can predict when the devastating conflict in Syria will come to an end, but it is certain that the Syrian people will need our help for many years to come. Thanks to the compassion and generosity of donors like you, we will continue to be able to provide vital support for people whose lives have been turned upside down.

Your kindness will transform their lives and give them hope. They have no choice, they cannot help themselves; they rely on people like you to support them.

We think this is the first time that your church has sent us a donation – please let us know if this is not the case as we are keen to keep our records up to date.

Seeing a family in desperate need receive help and support is wonderful. You have made this happen. Thank you for the precious gift you have provided.

Yours sincerely



Nigel Varndell
Director of Fundraising and Marketing

Embrace the people of the Middle East and help our Christian partners tackle poverty and injustice.

Registered charity number 1076329. A company limited by guarantee registered in England & Wales number 3706037.
Registered office: 24 London Road West, Amersham, Buckinghamshire HP7 0EZ.

Sent with the letter of thanks were two magazines that are now available from the charity literature stand in the church foyer. From the charity's website at <http://www.embraceme.org>, I was surprised to learn that this Christian charity was originally established in 1854, as The Turkish Missions' Aid Society. Founders included Sir Culling Eardley (a founder of the Evangelical Alliance) and Lord Shaftesbury, who was the first president. At that time its aim was to support missionary work among Armenian Christians in Turkey.

Malcolm Brown

CHURCH DIARY FOR FEBRUARY 2017

DAY	TIME	EVENT
Thursday 2 nd	10.30am - 12 noon	Coffee Morning - refreshments served until 11.45am
Saturday 4 th	Cancelled	Men's Breakfast Meeting
Sunday 5 th	10.30am 6.30pm	Morning Service - Rev. Jack Roche MA Evening Service - Mr Jim Clubb
Monday 6 th	8.00pm	Ladies Recreation Group
Tuesday 7 th	Cancelled	Alphabet Club for Parents/Carers & Tots
Thursday 10 th	10.30am - 12 noon 12 noon - 1.30pm	Coffee Morning - refreshments served until 11.45am LifeBuilders and prayer time - starting with packed lunch
Sunday 12 th	10.30am	Morning Service - Mr Keith McCullough
Monday 13 th	8.00pm	Ladies Recreation Group
Tuesday 14 th	No session - half term	Alphabet Club for Parents/Carers & Tots
Wednesday 15 th	7.30pm	ELDERS' MEETING (postponed one week)
Thursday 16 th	10.30am - 12 noon	Coffee Morning with bric-a-brac table for Christian Aid
Sunday 19 th	10.30am	Covenant Service with Holy Communion - Rev. Jack Roche MA
Monday 20 th	8.00pm	Ladies Recreation Group
Tuesday 21 st	9.30am - 11.00am	Alphabet Club for Parents/Carers & Tots
Thursday 23 rd	10.30am	Monthly Midweek Service - Mr Jim Clubb
Sunday 26 th	10.30am	Morning Service - Mrs Janette Stevens
Monday 27 th	8.00pm	Ladies Recreation Group
Tuesday 28 th	9.30am - 11.00am	Alphabet Club for Parents/Carers & Tots

Poetry Corner

He knows no winter, he who loves the soil,
 For, stormy days, when he is free from toil,
 He plans his summer crops, selects his seeds
 From bright-paged catalogues for garden needs.
 When looking out upon frost-silvered fields,
 He visualizes autumn's golden yields;
 He sees in snow and sleet and icy rain
 Precious moisture for his early grain;
 He hears spring-heralds in the storm's ' turmoil
 He knows no winter, he who loves the soil.

Sudie Stuart Hager, *He Knows No Winter*



"Why, what's the matter,
 That you have such a February face,
 So full of frost, of storm and cloudiness?"
 William Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*

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