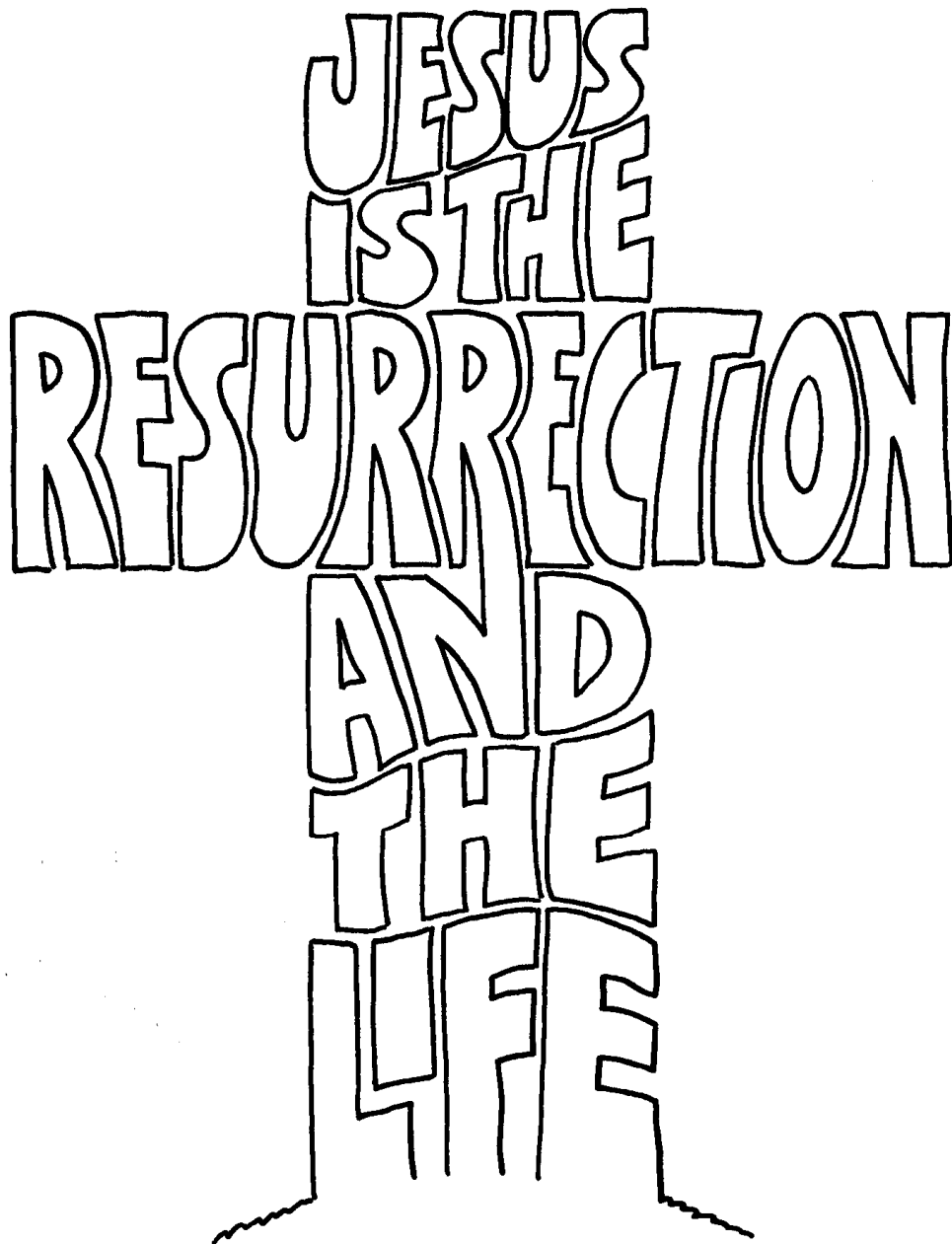


THE HADLEIGH MESSENGER

April 2020



The Magazine of the
United Reformed Church, Hadleigh, Essex

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH



The United Reformed Church (URC) began in 1972 by a union between the Congregational Church and the Presbyterian Church of England - hence United. The Union has since been extended to include the Re-formed Association of Churches of Christ, which joined in 1981, and the Congregation Union of Scotland, which joined in 2001.

The description 'Reformed' refers to the doctrine of the church, which derives from the Reformation of the 16th century. There is a full Statement of Belief in the Basis of Union determined by the Act of Parliament in 1972. Briefly, however, it may be stated thus:

- We believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- We believe that the Word of God in the Old and the New Testaments, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is the supreme authority for the faith and conduct of all God's people.
- We believe that Jesus Christ, born into this world, living as a man among men, dying upon the cross, raised from the dead and reigning for evermore, is God's gift of himself to the world whereby his love and mercy are revealed, offering to all men forgiveness, reconciliation, and eternal life.
- We believe that the Church is God's people, gathered by his love to serve Him in reconciling the world to Himself.

The URC is governed by God acting through its members who are guided by the Holy Spirit in their councils – the Elders' Meeting, the Church Meeting, the provincial Synod and the General Assembly. Local churches belong to an Area Partnership (AP), which meets approximately twice a year. At Hadleigh, we belong to the South Essex Area Partnership, which is part of the Eastern Synod.

HADLEIGH URC OFFICERS

Interim Moderators:

Rev. Dr. Jim Tarrant MA MTh

Rev. Celia Whitman

Hon. Secretary:

Mr Royston Brackin (01702 558862)

Acting Hon. Treasurer:

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Mr Royston Brackin*

Mrs Heather Brown* (01702 557678)

Mr Malcolm Brown* (01702 557678)

Miss Jean Reeve* (01702 554907)

Mrs Mary Milne

Elder 'emeritus': Rev. Peter Brewer

Each Serving Elder has a list of Church members and adherents for whom they have a pastoral responsibility. Please speak to your Elder if you have any problems, news etc.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address: 1 Church Road, Hadleigh, Benfleet, SS7 2DQ

Website: www.hadleighessexurc.org.uk

URC website: www.urc.org.uk

URC Eastern Synod Office contact info:

Address: Synod Office, The United Reformed Church,
Whittlesford, Cambridge, CB2 4ND

Tel no: 01223 830770 E-mail: eastern.admin@urc.org.uk

Website: www.urc-eastern.org.uk

An invitation...

If you are not currently connected with this church or any other place of worship then we assure you of a warm welcome at our services. Why not join us next Sunday? Alternatively, drop in to our coffee morning on Thursdays.

If you are in need of help that the ministry of the church can supply then you can 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 any of the church officers know. All such requests are treated in the strictest confidence.

Letter from Adrian

Dear friends,

In the current situation where we are isolated from the fellowship, it is difficult to know where to start. The normal flow of face-to-face communication is forbidden and, we are told, even dangerous. Behind locked doors, we can become depressed, feeling totally isolated, but no government edict can prevent our closest friend from visiting and bringing us comfort and a real sense of fellowship.

Christ is risen! As we once more celebrate the resurrection of the Lord, it is a time to dwell on our own reaction to it; a time to re-energise our faith as we are reminded of all that Jesus experienced and accomplished during the first Holy week. From the exhilaration of Palm Sunday, through the cruelty of Good Friday, to the victory of Easter Day, it is an emotional and spiritual roller coaster both for Jesus and the disciples to live through and for us to experience in association with Him as we meditate and worship.

It is interesting to consider the various reactions on that first Easter Day as the news of the Lord's appearances began to spread. The two Marys were bewildered. They didn't know what to think, so much so, that to start with they kept it to themselves. The news was too good, it didn't make sense. Sometimes, we, too, are almost afraid to speak of the reality of the victory of Easter for fear of rejection or misunderstanding.

Then we have the record of Peter and John at the tomb when John's faith is rekindled as he begins to understand the meaning of what he is experiencing. He saw and believed; not really understanding what it was all about but reacting to this situation as he had to many others while he had been with Jesus; first believing but also having the confidence to know that understanding would ultimately come. We can understand and identify with this as we are led by Jesus into new areas of service for Him. First the simple belief in what he is calling us to and then the unfolding of His detailed plans.

Next, we have Mary Magdalene and her face-to-face meeting with the gardener. Still so blind to the wonders of the day that she did not recognise Jesus until: "Mary." – "Rabboni!" Then she believed. She understood all the implications in a flash as she experienced the living, resurrected Jesus. Recall the moment when we first came face-to-face with Jesus and surrendered our life to Him because we experienced that same reality as did Mary at the tomb.

Then we have the record of the men on the Emmaus road. I think the best description of these two is 'confused'. Yes, they had heard the story of the empty tomb but not the facts of the resurrection. To these men Jesus came to bring the theology of Easter as he opened to them the scriptures which detailed the events of the Easter story. So that, looking back on it, they realised that they should have known who was speaking to them. "Did not our hearts burn within us?" Then suddenly their eyes are opened, and they see Jesus. We too can share this experience as in our daily walk with Him, in the face of a companion, or the words of a song, suddenly we meet him face to face and we know the reality of Jesus in a very real way.

Finally, we have dear Thomas. In essence, this news is too good as he thinks 'I just cannot get my head round it. I have got to be able to touch to understand and to believe.' But in the end he was convinced: "My Lord and My God." I am thankful for Thomas because if the evidence was sufficient to convince the scepticism of Thomas then it must be true. Even today, it is the unlikely convert, the one whose eyes are opened from scepticism to faith, whose testimony carries the most conviction because these sceptics need the proof that carries conviction.

In each experience of the Easter story we can know the same experience in our lives, carrying the conviction of the living Jesus drawing us unerringly to His side. May God bless you as we journey together to Emmaus.

Yours in Him,

Adrian



From the Bible - John 20:26-28 (NIV)

A week later his disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.'

From the Editor

Welcome to the April 2020 edition of the *Hadleigh Messenger*, which is unlike any other owing to the coronavirus pandemic.

Many of the usual sections concerned with church life are missing because of the temporary closure of the church. I am grateful to Pamela George who has written about her holiday of a lifetime to Antigua. I am also grateful to Adrian Tinning for writing his usual letter and for sending Holy Week services and meditations that I have circulated to friends via e-mail along with past services kindly sent by Rev. Jim Tarrant.

One of the advantages of being on the Internet is the access to a wide variety of material, both religious and secular. It has been particularly heartening to see how many churches have responded to the coronavirus crisis by offering services in the form of audio recordings or by video streaming. This is a novel experience for many of the ministers concerned and, although sometimes the audio or video quality might be better, there is a still a sense

of being together in Christ when sharing worship in this way. The nature of these services often results in a sense of intimacy that is not achievable in a church full of people.

Sadly, we probably all know someone who has contracted coronavirus and we may know someone who is in hospital or who has died from it. I would ask you to pray for Allan Webb who runs the Art Ministry based in Riffhams hut adjacent to our church. Allan has been sedated and on a ventilator for over a week. The outlook is not good although he has now been selected to take part in a clinical drugs trial, which offers a glimmer of hope. Please pray also for Allan's wife, Sheila, and the rest of his family.

Finally, some of you may be feeling lonely and isolated at present, but remember that we are never alone. God is always near. However, if you would like a chat on the phone or a video call at any time, please feel free to contact me.

Malcolm Brown

Family News

On the Pilgrim Way by Sheila Maxey

Called by God? At my age? Surely not!



One morning, during my prayer time, I felt called by God – called to be an elder and even a church secretary. Surely not? At my age? (nearly 82). I was well aware of the need: elders' elections

were looming, two key elders were standing down and no one was apparently able or willing to stand. But still...

This call was against at least two of my long-held principles. Firstly, retired ministers should not become elders. Especially not in the church where they had once ministered. There were too many examples of serving ministers (and churches) having difficulties because of them. Secondly, my husband and I have long thought it a bad idea to have both husband and wife on the eldership team at the same time, and my husband is the treasurer. Couples can be too powerful. Or, their personal dynamic tensions could play out in the meeting.

But my sense of call did not go away and I had long internal discussions with myself. After all, it is 27 years since I ceased being minister of this church. Do I really want this extra work? Do I just want power? I find administration quite easy and not stressful, so why am I denying the church this gift? I am, at present, fit and well – and is 80 not the new 70?

I took all this to the wise nun I see from time to time, to get her help in discerning whether or not this was really God's call. I usually stay overnight at the convent, so I had lots of silence before and after seeing her. I poured out all the stuff in my head to her: the pros and cons, the doubts etc. Her one question went straight to the heart of the matter: 'Is this a matter of duty or, in your heart, do you have some joy or excitement or enthusiasm?' We sat in silence while I tried to get in touch with my heart, with my true feelings. And then I knew it was not duty – it was a new challenge that I looked forward to. It was somehow life-giving.

I then consulted our present minister, who seemed pleased. He put the word around that I was willing to be nominated. However, in the days that followed, I was dismayed to find a bad spirit invading my joy. I realised that offering for a job, rather than being invited or even pressured, made me much more vulnerable. I began to imagine that my good friends in church saw me as pushing myself forward – and pushing them aside.

Then, one morning, one of the elders phoned and said, so warmly, how absolutely delighted she was. I found myself thanking God out loud as I put the phone down. It has all been a learning experience along my pilgrim way.

Sheila Maxey

Reform, April 2020

Editor's note: Sheila is a retired minister and now Elder at Brentwood URC. She writes this regular column in Reform and past columns may be viewed on the URC website at <https://www.reform-magazine.co.uk/category/columnists/on-the-pilgrim-way>.

On getting old...

- Old age is not so bad when you consider the alternatives. - *Maurice Chevalier*
- I've learned that life is like a roll of toilet paper. The closer it gets to the end, the faster it goes. - *Andy Rooney*
- I'm at an age when my back goes out more than I do. - *Phyllis Diller*
- Nostalgia is heroin for old people. - *Dara Ó Briain*
- Regular naps prevent aging, especially if you take them while driving. - *Author Unknown*
- The secret of staying young is to live honestly, eat slowly, and lie about your age. - *Lucille Ball*

Coronavirus: does the amount of virus you are exposed to determine how sick you'll get? – Sarah L Caddy (Clinical Research Fellow in Viral Immunology and Veterinary Surgeon, University of Cambridge) – 7th Apr 2020

Healthcare workers are likely to be in contact with many COVID-19 patients every day. Being in contact with more people with the disease means that, in theory, they will be exposed to higher doses of the coronavirus over time. Does that mean they are at greater risk of contracting the disease, as reports from some countries suggest?

We know for some diseases that the dose of virus a person is exposed to will directly correlate with how severe the disease is. A good example of this is influenza. A 2015 study from the US showed that the higher the dose of influenza virus given to healthy volunteers, the worse their symptoms. Viruses are tiny particles that must get into our cells in order to replicate, so the logic is that the more starting virus particles there are, the more cells will be infected.

However, viruses replicate exponentially. A single infected cell can produce hundreds, if not thousands, of copies of the particle. This means that for some viruses, even a tiny dose of virus is enough to cause an infection. For example, for half the population, it takes just 18 particles of norovirus to cause an infection. This can lead to the classic clinical signs of vomiting and diarrhoea. In such infections, the virus replicates so fast that the starting dose can become much less relevant.

Is the initial dose of SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) related to the disease severity? At the moment, we just don't know. The only way to answer this question definitively is with "experimental challenge studies", which involves intentionally infecting healthy volunteers in order to study diseases and their treatments. These would be ethically questionable because of the potential severity of the disease.

Once a patient is infected, it is relatively straightforward to measure how much virus they are making – a value known as the "viral load". This is because the standard international test for coronavirus is quantitative. Instead of just a positive or a negative result, diagnostic teams also get a number from zero to 40. This number is known as the Ct value or threshold cycle.

Counter-intuitively, the lower the number, the more virus a patient sample has. Any number less

than 15 corresponds to very high levels of virus, whereas samples greater 35 only have low quantities of virus.

In the absence of infectious dose data, researchers have been trying to determine whether a high viral load corresponds to worse illness. A report from China suggested that there is no difference between how much coronavirus a person is exposed to and how sick they get. But another report showed that patients with milder disease had lower levels of the virus.

Other factors to consider

It is important to bear in mind that the amount of virus it takes to cause infection is only one part of the story. How the body responds to the virus can also be critical. This is because the immune response to a virus can be both beneficial and harmful. If the immune system isn't adequately activated, the virus can replicate faster. On the other hand, if the immune system is over-activated, it can damage healthy tissues.

There is a long list of medical conditions that can increase the chances of having a severe case of COVID-19, from diabetes to high blood pressure. But what about factors such as exhaustion or extreme stress? We expect many frontline medical staff to be under significant pressure in the coming weeks and months; could this affect their susceptibility?

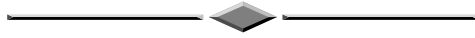
Sleep deprivation has been shown to affect your chances of getting infected with rhinovirus, also known as the common cold virus. Scientists in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, monitored sleep patterns in 164 adults over a week and then exposed them all to rhinovirus. Those people who slept fewer than five hours a night were significantly more likely to develop a cold than those who slept seven or more hours.

We don't know whether these findings can be applied to SARS-CoV-2 as the new coronavirus is very different from rhinovirus. But we can speculate that the immune responses of severely overworked healthcare workers will not be optimal compared with a well-rested person at home. This could be an additional factor explaining why more frontline staff are seemingly becoming infected with COVID-19.

Despite all these uncertainties, of course, it is still essential for healthcare workers to minimise exposure to the virus as much as possible. From

wearing as much protective equipment as available to practising social distancing with colleagues – every measure will count.

Reproduced with permission from The Conversation website at: <https://theconversation.com/coronavirus-does-the-amount-of-virus-you-are-exposed-to-determine-how-sick-youll-get-135119>



Organisations offering support during the coronavirus crisis

If you need help during the coronavirus crisis, there are a number of organisations that may be able to offer support.

Essex Welfare Service

The Essex Welfare Service is a single point of contact for anyone in the Essex area who is in urgent need of help. It is also the place to report anyone who you are concerned about. The service is run by Essex Coronavirus Action which is a collaboration between Essex County Council, The Essex Public Health Team, and local Facebook groups. The service will help you to find and access support. If you need help regarding Government advice, or with daily living tasks or wellbeing contact the service as follows:

Phone: 0300 303 9988

E-mail: proviide.essexwelfareservice@nhs.net

Opening hours: Mon – Fri: 8.00am to 7.00pm, Sat – Sun: 10.00am to 2.00pm

Website: <https://essexwelfareservice.org>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/essexcoronavirusaction>

Castle Point Association of Voluntary Services – Ways to Wellness Team

If you are self-isolating or have a long term health condition, lonely and isolated, housebound, in need of picking up shopping or in need of a friendly phone call then please contact the CAVS Ways to Wellness team who will be happy to help.

Phone: 01268 214000

E-mail: wellness@cavsorg.uk

Opening hours: Mon – Fri: 9.00am to 5.00pm. (Out of hours, leave a message or send an e-mail.)

Website: <https://www.cavsorg.uk>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/cavswaystowellness>

Benfleet Community Helpers (BCH)

This is a group of local volunteers covering Benfleet, Hadleigh and Thundersley who will help arrange transport, bring urgent supplies, pick up prescriptions, take post to a postbox, arrange dog walking, help top-up your mobile phone or just have a chat. They have established a food bank at the Penn UK shop in Kents Hill Road and will willingly deliver a free box of essential provisions to anyone who has difficulty in obtaining supplies. All delivery volunteers are DBS checked and follow the social distancing rules. They will never ask you for money, passwords or bank details.

BCH are generously supported by Morrisons of Hadleigh who donate £1,000 worth of food each week. Hadleigh Community Group has donated £1,000 and the White Hart Pub has donated £2,500. These cash donations are used to purchase food and other items that are not otherwise donated. The group also has a PayPal fund via which anyone can donate online. You do not need a PayPal account to donate. See the Facebook page for more information.

Phone: 07487 769404

E-mail: benfleetcommunityhelpers@gmail.com

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2717864471667036>

A Ray of Glorious Sunshine – A Holiday of a Lifetime

More than six months ago, long before the current coronavirus crisis was even thought about, I booked to go with my daughter Christine to Antigua, in the Eastern Caribbean, for a week's holiday of a lifetime.

As time went on and we saw in 2020, we began to wonder whether it would ever actually happen but as the destination was not considered to be hazardous, we progressed towards our leaving date of Saturday 14th March. There was some trepidation, especially as Christine would be leaving her husband Ian and two sons behind, but we both felt that if we could, we should.

So off we set – a slight technical problem on the runway at Gatwick delayed us for about an hour – but then we were off on our Virgin Atlantic flight. We were very well looked after during the 8/9-hour flight and eventually landed in Antigua at about 4.30pm local time – they are about 4 hours behind us. We arrived on a lovely, warm, early evening and were met by our car driver who took us to our hotel complex. Our arrival time meant that we were able to go to our rooms, change, and have dinner before retiring.

What a beautiful place the hotel was with everything provided including all meals, drinks, mini bar, etc. We were each presented with a water bottle with our name on it in order to fill up from water stations all around the complex. There were also ice containers to fill our ice buckets and take to our rooms. The photo shows part of the beach and area where we walked every morning down to have our leisurely breakfast.



This area was known as Pelican Bay, and, sure enough, every day we saw at least one pelican, sometimes up to four, flying past to where they dived for their fish. There were also innumerable birds invading the restaurant looking for treats and although the staff had a very well stocked bird table nearby, the grass is always greener!

The views were outstanding, beautiful sandy beaches, several swimming pools, so we had a lot of time to just relax, explore the grounds, meet some lovely people, and the staff were beautiful people, so kind, nothing was too much trouble. This was even though they knew that at the end of March they would all be losing their jobs because the Covid19 virus was just about to affect them (they had just one case brought in by a visitor to see parents!) She had been immediately quarantined in the one hospital on the island. All the schools were already closed. So we all had to be careful, lots of hand washing, but by the time we left there was still only one case, I believe there are a few more now. Tourism is, of course, their one and only industry now.

We did do some exploring, we took a taxi around the island, driven by our courier's partner, and he was Antiguan born and bred. He took us to where he grew up, went to school and obviously loved his island. We stopped by the roadside and he got us some fresh mango and pineapple where we talked to the children who were already "bored" by being home!



We then proceeded to a place called Shirley Heights and entered what is the National Park. From this very high point there are magnificent views of much of the island and in normal times it is very busy and there are also excursions to go there of an evening to have dinner and listen to a steel band. However, on this day we were only two of about half a dozen people. We saw a short film show of the history of the island and then had a good look around. We could see Nelson's Dockyard and English Harbour below us. We were so lucky, we also saw a Frigate Bird. There is now a population on Codrington Lagoon, 12 miles long and one of the largest in the world. This was decimated by the 2017 hurricane and is only just reviving. This was some way away from where we were so we lucky to see this lovely bird.

We then drove down into the historic Nelson's Dockyard in English Harbour. In the 18th Century, Britain's strength lay in her navy and the waters around the valued sugar and spice islands of the Caribbean. Privateers were at large, anxious to seize the valuable cargoes of sugar and other products being sent from the West Indies to Europe. This was further complicated by the American War of Independence and the attempts by Britain in the last quarter of the 18th Century to restrict trade with her former American Colonies. So English Harbour was developed into Britain's main naval base in the Eastern Caribbean.

English Harbour also grew in importance as a hurricane refuge and a place for looking after His Majesty's Ships, commanded by well-known seafarers such as Rodney, Hood, Nelson and Lewis. The name Nelson's Dockyard was derived from the fact that Captain Nelson was made temporary Commander of the Leeward Islands Station (1784-1787).

There is a lot of history, including of course, aspects of the Slave Trade in which slaves were used and abused in the production of sugar and rum from the sugar cane. Whilst in Nelson's Dockyard, we visited a museum, did some shopping and viewed some of the millionaires' boats docked there.

We then moved on towards the centre of the island through the rain forest. Although the island is suffering something of a drought just now, we got a feel of the real Antigua, passing through many villages with many churches. One of the oldest churches is shown in the photo.



Eventually we pulled into a small restaurant – it certainly looked different to what we were used to – but it was where the locals ate and they were so kind and we had a lovely lunch together.

From there, we went over to the East Coast, much more barren, where the Atlantic Ocean is more of a force. We saw what is known as Devil's Bridge, carved out of limestone rocks by

the waves rolling in from Africa. The sad history is that this is where African slaves who had escaped went to throw themselves into the ocean and were drowned. On the day of our visit, the sea was, apparently, unusually calm.



On then back towards the North Coast, calling in at Betty's Hope with a small museum and two windmills, one of which has been restored. The windmills provided the power to crush the cane and boil the syrup. This was the pioneer sugar plantation established in the 1650s by Governor Christopher Keynall. It was very prosperous thanks to slave labour for over 250 years. It was taken over by the Codrington family who owned nine other plantations in Antigua during the 18th Century plus others in Barbados. With the decline of the sugar trade, the estate was allowed to fall into complete disrepair. However, in 1990 the value of the site was recognised and a conservation project was initiated.

On the last part of the tour we headed back towards our hotel. It had been a lovely day and one in which we felt we had seen a part of the real Antigua, not just the tourist one. For a few more days, my daughter took advantage of the yoga and Pilates workouts. We both swam but I stuck to the pools whilst Christine also went into the sea. We also had a garden tour by a man named John, who loved his island and was very proud of all his plants and flowers.

All too soon it was time to return but would we make it? There was some talk of people being "bumped" off flights as they were over-booked and there was only about a week to go before the whole island was closing down. But the "George" luck held and we made our final farewells. There were no problems at the airport so we boarded our overnight flight back to Gatwick. A car was waiting to bring us back to Hadleigh where Christine settled me in again. We were thankful to be home and lucky to have these lovely memories.

Pamela George



A message to all who are the United Reformed Church

From Derek Estill and Nigel Uden, Moderators of the General Assembly...

Amid this Covid-19 shaped world, we greet you in the name of God –

by whose grace we were created,

by whose mercy and love we are sustained,

by whose love we will be held forever.

Even as we are Moderators of the General Assembly, so we are immersed in local churches, and it is as your companions on the way that we wished to write to you this weekend. Our experiences mirror yours – we, too, are distancing ourselves physically from others, we too are feeling uncertain, sometimes even fearful.

Coronavirus Covid-19 has been creeping up on us. We watched its effect upon other countries and washed our hands as we sang 'Happy birthday'. Now it is affecting us, and last Sunday Nicola Sturgeon, Scotland's First Minister, punctured any complacency there may have been, saying, "life should not feel normal", and if it does, you should ask "if you are doing the right things". It's a new world, and we don't always feel so brave.

How should we react? There have been essential things to do. Far from having less on our agenda, many of us have been burning the candle at both ends. And there was no alternative; stuff was happening, and we needed to deal with it. But it seems Covid-19 will shape our lives for some time to come.

In the coming weeks it will be good if we can regain a balance between activity and reflection, for few of us can thrive on the freneticism and angst that has suddenly overtaken us. It has been said that a person best deals with a new situation not by hitting the ground running, but by hitting the ground kneeling.

The place of prayer in this coronavirus situation, we would suggest, is vital. Prayer can maintain our own equilibrium, as it opens us to the peace and grace of God. We will also surely want to intercede in prayer, holding before God people

who are unwell or bereaved, people who are giving their all to bring us through the pandemic, and people whose all has been taken from them through the death of a loved one, the loss of a job, of a business or of mental health.

And then there is the need for prayer with those in countries that have neither the finances nor the health service of ours. The call to pray last Sunday evening at 7.00pm, placing a candle in a street-facing window, was moving. May we commend that to you as a weekly observance? Even when we are feeling frustrated that we cannot do much to help, we can all pray, and there is something strengthening when we do so together, simultaneously.



Part of what is carrying us through is the devoted and tireless leadership of many people. We are more grateful than we can say for our General Secretariat and all their colleagues at Church House, for the Officers of the Assembly, for our committees, for our Synod Moderators and all who work with them in those thirteen councils of the church. And we are mindful of all those who are leading the responses of local churches.

We hear of ministers and elders, members and friends who have strained every sinew to arrange pastoral care, to make it possible for us to worship in our homes, and to be part of our neighbourhoods' reaching out to people in need.

Other than mixing 'from' and 'form', one of Nigel's most frequent typos is to press the w and the e at the same time when starting the word elders. Yet how right that is; welding joins two

pieces of metal so that they become one, and so that they withstand the forces to which they may be subjected. Many people are welders in every sphere of the church, as well as in every layer of government, and in society at large. For each sense in which are being held together, we give thanks for welders.

Who knows where this will lead us? Quite probably, not to exactly where it found us. Society will be different; we will each be different; and the church will be different. In 1949, R. W. Hugh-Jones was called to be the minister of Warwick Road Congregational Church in Coventry. The city remained devastated after the blitz of November 1940. It needed rebuilding, renewing. Something different was being asked of the church, too.

Years later, Hugh-Jones recalled that he had been persuaded to accept the call when a deacon said to him, 'there is nothing in this church that cannot be changed as long as the Gospel is preached, and the Kingdom of God extended.' Even if we might use slightly different words, pondering what rebuilding and renewing the future will require, maybe what that deacon said could speak to us, even for us all.

And what of God? Sam Wells, Vicar of London's St Martin-in-the-Fields, speaks of God being 'for', and being 'with'. Wells under values neither, but observes that in the Jesus narratives, God's work for is focussed on a brief moment in Jerusalem, 1% of his life, whereas Jesus is faithfully with us far more, 90% in Nazareth, 9% in Galilee. Is that not a central conviction of the Bible?

Hebrew and Christian writings alike have God with us, a light to accompany us through the shadows. Given we appear to be in this crisis for the long haul, if we're walking the way and living the life of Jesus today there will be things we can do for each other and be they great or small they will matter significantly.

But we must never underestimate the value of being with each other. Consistently and reliably, thoughtfully and sensitively with each other, and with God because God is always with us.

In our prayers, unto God's gracious mercy and protection we commit you.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Nigel Uden and Derek Estill

Posted 26th March 2020



A Prayer for Uncertain Times

by Rev. Nigel Uden & Derek Estill

As so much is re-shaped by Coronavirus Covid 19, let us pray with people left unwell, beckoned by death or bereaved; people providing professional health care and advice, looking after loved ones at home or working to create treatments and cures; people shaping the response of nations and neighbourhoods, of commerce and industry, of service and voluntary organisations and of communities of faith; people who are anxious or afraid, alone or isolated.

Living, loving God,
we praise you,
and through times of peril we lean into you,
for in Jesus Christ
you have trodden paths as difficult as ours,
revealing there a love that nothing defeats,
a love that bears us through.

Even as we strive to behave responsibly,
and to care reliably,
so we feel after you
that in these uncertain times we might trust you are with us,
our refuge and strength,
and our faith, hope and love might be renewed,
through Jesus Christ, *Amen*.

A modern biblical plague and a pandemic

June writes: This is a piece that I read in *The Week* magazine of March 14th, written by Jenni Russell, and it makes you think when you consider what the world is going through now.

“We seem to be living in Old Testament times”, says Jenni Russell.

“We’ve had fires, floods and the threat of global pestilence; now come reports of a plague of locusts. Swarms are spreading across east Africa on a scale not seen in living memory, annihilating crops and pastureland. A square kilometre of locusts eats enough food for 35,000 people every day, and some swarms are the size of cities. The largest this year was 40km wide and 60km long. And the locusts are multiplying all the time: numbers could increase 400-fold by June. The only solution is aerial spraying with pesticide, backed by trained spray teams on the ground.

But Kenya, Ethiopia and other countries are getting only a fraction of the foreign aid they need to pay for the equipment. It’s all too reminiscent of Africa’s last locust outbreak 15 years ago, when an original request for \$1m escalated to \$10m, then \$100m, as targets were missed and the devastation grew. It cost \$500m to bring that outbreak under control. The price of delayed action now will be poverty, hunger and agony for millions”.

And now the world is trying desperately to stop Covid 19 which, again, will cost millions and millions of dollars. This is called a pandemic but the result could be similar unless we can bring it under control.

June Gargrave

Former PCE missionary schoolteacher becomes world’s oldest man



The world’s oldest man, who once taught at a Presbyterian Church of England missionary school, recently celebrated his 112th birthday.

Born in Yorkshire on 29th March 1908, Bob Weighton had his Guinness World Record confirmed despite current rules around social distancing. Bob, whose wife Agnes died in 1995, has two sons and a daughter, 10 grandchildren and 25 great-grandchildren.

He told the BBC: “I have not lived my life avoiding being run over by buses or getting cancer or anything else. I've done nothing to deserve or achieve this age. I'm just one of the lucky ones.”

One of seven children, Bob’s father paid an extra £3 per term to ensure Bob could stay in school until the age of 16. From there, he began a marine engineering apprenticeship before he later moved to Taiwan where he spent a couple of years learning Mandarin before he began teaching at the missionary school.

He had met his wife while studying in England and they married in 1937. They decided to return to the UK in 1939, after their first child was born in Taiwan, but were diverted to Canada after the start of the Second World War. The couple had two more children in Canada before returning to the UK following the end of the war in 1945. Bob then took up a teaching position at City University in London.

Bob, who now lives in a care home complex in Hampshire, shares the title of Britain’s oldest living person with Joan Hocquard, from Poole, Dorset, who was born on the same date.

New Westminster College Principal



Rev. Samantha White was appointed Principal for Westminster College, Cambridge – a United Reformed Church resource centre for learning – in March. Ms White is currently Director of Pastoral Studies and Director of the Cheshunt Foundation. Her term as Principal is for seven years from September. The college’s current Principal, Rev. Neil Thorogood, is returning to local church ministry.

Computer Corner

Nautical Archaeological Society (NAS) Talk about The London shipwreck

Interesting video

A recent talk by the NAS's Chief Executive Officer Mark Beattie-Edwards. In his talk, Mark discussed the amazing wreck of The London, which blew up in the Thames Estuary in 1665. Protected in 2010 by Historic England, the site is on the Heritage At Risk Register, due to the constant erosion that is taking place on the site as it lies so close to the commercial shipping channel. Mark talks not only of the work done to date to save artefacts from the wreck, but also about plans for the future to create a facility to house and display the site for the public.

URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TIapXlSLZDI>

Tidying Up

Interesting radio programme

Sarah Gristwood is worried that the vogue for tidying will make history harder to uncover. Sarah writes history books and has relied heavily on documents which might easily have been discarded. But that's not all: she wonders, too, how her successors will access our digital clutter in 500 years' time. (A subject very close to the Editor's heart!)

URL: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000czxq>

The Conversation

Interesting website

The Conversation features news and other articles sourced from the academic and research community. The aim of the website is to improve understanding of current affairs and complex issues and hopefully allow for a better quality of public discourse and conversations. It is open access, free to read and articles are free to share or republish under Creative Commons licensing.

URL: <https://theconversation.com/uk>

Word Search – The Easter story

I	L	X	I	V	I	T	S	B	Z	P	A	J	W	F	Z	E	Z	E	K
G	G	V	A	C	Y	K	P	H	R	B	X	K	J	T	I	S	F	Q	
E	L	X	S	K	N	S	T	J	X	T	J	C	E	A	B	P	Y	F	S
T	W	P	R	E	V	L	I	S	I	D	H	K	L	A	A	G	R	U	J
H	Z	M	O	Q	X	L	I	I	Z	T	N	I	R	A	E	C	N	I	Y
S	W	I	N	O	B	B	A	R	I	O	P	A	R	M	A	B	H	I	Y
E	G	Z	U	W	H	Y	D	R	I	R	B	Y	M	V	M	I	U	Y	K
M	W	L	W	I	T	F	I	T	I	B	U	A	G	H	Q	S	E	I	T
A	F	P	S	M	O	P	C	N	A	I	U	O	W	L	L	O	K	G	A
N	S	B	Z	P	S	E	M	S	V	S	L	Y	S	E	V	E	I	H	T
E	F	A	G	A	R	I	W	T	N	G	E	M	S	U	F	E	I	T	M
S	F	E	Y	R	U	O	E	R	O	V	H	F	U	W	S	Q	U	X	R
I	B	Y	U	Z	X	R	N	T	E	C	D	F	W	J	K	F	C	R	X
R	L	S	G	V	F	V	H	A	A	V	D	F	U	Z	X	L	E	N	U
V	E	C	V	T	D	A	C	T	L	P	O	W	O	V	S	P	Y	W	S
R	F	Y	B	A	C	O	J	H	X	P	D	S	Y	P	P	G	D	O	L
K	F	B	V	M	A	X	R	Y	W	R	A	P	S	U	C	P	L	R	I
R	K	E	P	Q	O	D	Q	E	S	M	X	Q	S	A	C	A	O	C	A
R	C	R	O	S	S	T	G	S	H	C	M	U	Y	N	P	S	W	J	N
J	W	Y	M	M	C	R	U	C	I	F	Y	K	D	X	P	T	N	S	J

BARABBAS
CROSS
CROWN
CRUCIFY
EMMAUS
GETHSEMANE
GOLGOTHA
HEROD
KING
NAILS
PASSOVER
PILATE
RABBONI
RESURRECTION
RISEN
SILVER
SPIRIT
SUPPER
THIEVES
TOMB

Words may appear in any direction including diagonally, back to front and upside down.

It is well with my soul

The story behind this well-known hymn strikes a chord in this awful time of coronavirus and the words are also relevant to Easter. I came across a performance of the hymn on YouTube by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and the following text appears there in the description...

Life can be so unpredictable – joys and sorrows, beautiful blessings and distressing difficulties, can come unexpectedly. Our life's dreams and plans can change in an instant. We all know this to be true. So how can we find peace amid such turbulence?

Horatio Spafford knew something about life's unexpected challenges. He was a successful attorney and real estate investor who lost a fortune in the great Chicago fire of 1871. Around the same time, his beloved four-year-old son died of scarlet fever.

Thinking a vacation would do his family some good, he sent his wife and four daughters on a ship to England, planning to join them after he finished some pressing business at home. However, while crossing the Atlantic Ocean, the ship was involved in a terrible collision and sank. More than 200 people lost their lives, including all four of Horatio Spafford's precious daughters. His wife, Anna, survived the tragedy. Upon arriving in England, she sent a

telegram to her husband that began: "Saved alone. What shall I do?"

Horatio immediately set sail for England. At one point during his voyage, the captain of the ship, aware of the tragedy that had struck the Spafford family, summoned Horatio to tell him that they were now passing over the spot where the shipwreck had occurred.

As Horatio thought about his daughters, words of comfort and hope filled his heart and mind. He wrote them down:

*When peace like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll –
Whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to know
It is well, it is well with my soul.*

*It is well with my soul,
It is well, it is well with my soul.*

Perhaps we cannot always say that everything is well in all aspects of our lives. There will be storms to face, and sometimes there will be tragedies. But with faith in a loving God and with trust in His divine help, we can confidently say, "It is well, it is well with my soul."

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
Let this blessèd assurance control,
That Christ hath regarded my helpless estate,
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.

My sin - oh, the bliss of this glorious thought! -
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

For me, be it Christ, be it Christ hence to live:
If Jordan above me shall roll,
No pang shall be mine, for in death as in life
Thou wilt whisper Thy peace to my soul.

But, Lord, 'tis for Thee, for Thy coming we wait,
The sky, not the grave, is our goal;
Oh, trump of the angel! Oh, voice of the Lord!
Blessèd hope, blessèd rest of my soul!