

THE HADLEIGH MESSENGER

October 2020



The Magazine of the
United Reformed Church, Hadleigh, Essex

SUNDAY SERVICES - SUSPENDED

10.30am every Sunday
with Holy Communion on 3rd Sunday of the month

6.30pm on 1st Sunday only
with Holy Communion



Working together in God's mission

Rev. Clare Downing writes...

One of the joys of being a Moderator is in presiding at inductions. It has been my privilege, as Wessex Synod Moderator, to celebrate the beginning of many new ministries, and I am now experiencing this on a wider level as a Moderator of the United Reformed Church (URC) General Assembly.

In the last few weeks, I have ordained one minister and inducted two in Wessex, and, from the comfort of my own study, inducted Rev. Jamie Kissack to serve as Yorkshire Synod Moderator. By the time you read this, the two inductions that I'm looking forward to – another minister in Wessex, and that of the Rev. Samantha White to be Principal of Westminster College – may have already happened. Most are happening in the strange combination of "live" and "virtual" that we are currently experiencing.

I don't think that I am a control freak (though my husband may disagree), but the challenge of hoping that these services run smoothly when, as a worship leader, you can't see all of what is going on "on screen" is certainly an interesting one. It involves trust in both the people controlling the computers, but also a degree of faith in the technology itself. It's not always easy.

Trying to ensure that new beginnings are memorable for the right reasons is important. For those starting in new ministries, inductions mark the transition, and give the opportunity to reaffirm faith and commit to a new role. But they are more than a commitment one way. They involve the congregation making promises too; promising prayer, support and encouragement.

In this way, we covenant together to work in God's mission, to bring about the growth in God's kingdom. It's just a small reflection on the way in which God makes a covenant with God's people, but it's an important one. Jamie and Sam have been entrusted with challenging roles by the United Reformed Church. So, whether you were at their inductions or not, please join me in continuing to pray for, support and encourage them in their new ministries.

You might just have a think about other inductions where you have made those promises too. Your minister might just appreciate not only your prayers, but your encouragement. Maybe you could just write them a note to remind them of it.

God bless,

Clare Downing

Posted 23rd September 2020

The Wit and Wisdom of Winston Churchill

It is well-known that our current Prime Minister is an admirer of Sir Winston Churchill. Here are a few examples of his wit and wisdom from a book that I found in a charity shop recently.

- 'To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often.'
- 'We are all worms. But I do believe that I am a glow-worm.'
- 'Sometimes truth is so precious it must be attended by a bodyguard of lies.'
- 'I am a sporting man. I always like to give trains and aeroplanes a fair chance of getting away.'
- 'Do not let the better be the enemy of the good.'
- 'It is wonderful how well men can keep secrets they have not been told.'
- 'Everyone will have equal rights in Heaven. That will be the real Welfare State...'

Malcolm Brown

A Message from Jack

How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land – Psalm 137:4 (A.V.)

I heard a story some time ago about a holiday visitor to the Costa somewhere who complained to the travel agent that it was full of Spaniards! Clearly, they should have been warned that 'abroad' was mostly inhabited by 'foreigners'!

The story speaks of a time, a few short months ago, before foreign travel became fraught with uncertainties, inconveniences and financial losses resulting from COVID-19 restrictions. Not so long ago it wasn't too difficult to take ourselves, in a relatively short time, to 'a strange land' or, at least, to a 'strange land' that had become not so strange due to our familiarity with its ways. How we react makes all the difference to our holiday experience. We may find difference, strangeness, or foreign-ness stimulating and enjoyable or, like our disillusioned sun-seeker, threatening and disturbing.

I have yet to hear the present health crisis called 'a disaster of biblical proportions', a cliché frequently used to signify uncontrollably massive and unimaginable awful events. There is an example of one such disaster, literally of biblical scale in the final chapters of the second book of Kings and the Lamentations of Jeremiah.; the destruction of the City of Jerusalem and the deportation of the people of Judah.

Like all enslaved and deported peoples, for all time and in all places, they had no choice at all about their journey to a strange land. In their case it was somewhere near the city of Babylon in what is now Iraq. In the longer term, many of them settled down and prospered in their "strange land" but the memory of that first traumatic experience lived on. There was hurt,

bewilderment and grieving for lost friends and family and, in addition, the dark sense of loss and despair echoed in the anguished cry 'How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?' It was as if they felt that even their God had abandoned and forgotten them.

In terms of church life, we have found ourselves in a very strange land. Friends, familiar routines, many of the things we loved are beyond our reach and we can't sing the Lord's songs except to ourselves, at home! Now, with summer passing, the weather growing colder and days shorter, our uncertainty, anxiety and stress may begin to feel darker and grimmer, our sense of isolation and loneliness more acute. We may find it even harder to 'Sing the Lord's song' in our once familiar 'strange land' but what matters is realising, like the people of Judah in Babylon, that it is where God wants us to be and discovering what it is that he wants us to do there.

Out of the tragedy and despair of the biblical exiles grew a faith and trust that God had neither forgotten nor abandoned them and would, in His time, bring them to a good place; not the 'old normal' as it had been but a better, 'new normal' in which they would be free to worship, trust and serve as God had planned for them.

The place of our discipleship is today, not some idealised past or an uncertain and in some ways forbidding future. It is this world, here and now in which we are placed: to work, to prove the quality of our faith and to do God's will in trust and obedience. And we have an extra resource: Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and for ever!

Rev. Jack Roche

Editor's note: Jack is a former minister of our church and is currently an Elder of Christ Church Wickford for whom he writes a weekly message. He occasionally leads online services for Christ Church along with Minister Rev. Samuel Cyuma and Rev. Trevor Williams. The services may be viewed on YouTube by searching for 'Christ Church Wickford'.



From the Bible

"Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn, your vindication like the noonday sun. Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him..."

Psalm 37:3-7a (NIV)

From the Editor

Welcome to the October edition of the *Hadleigh Messenger*.

The church remains closed but, hopefully, the Elders will meet soon to discuss the possibility of re-opening. One building that will never re-open is The Crown pub in Hadleigh, which has been demolished over the last couple of weeks.

My desire to record the gradual removal of The Crown was partly responsible for the delay in publishing the magazine. I hope to compensate to

some extent by writing an article about the pub in a future edition. In the meantime, I have included a couple of photos.

I had also been struggling to find material for the magazine but came across a sea-faring story posted on Facebook that I thought would fill a (large) space. Unfortunately, with the inclusion of some of the accompanying illustrations, it turned out to be a three-pager – a rare event – so that has necessitated a slight re-ordering of the pages.

Malcolm Brown

Demolition of The Crown, Hadleigh



Harvest

Heather and I attended the Harvest service at Hadleigh Methodist Church on Sunday 11th October. They had a small harvest table and a collection of food items for the homeless plus a number of shoeboxes for the Shoebox Appeal. The following passage from Psalm 65 was suggested earlier by June Gargrave.

“You care for the land and water it; you enrich it abundantly. The streams of God are filled with water to provide the people with grain, for so you have ordained it. You drench its furrows and level its ridges; you soften it with showers and bless its crops. You crown the year with your bounty, and your carts overflow with abundance. The grasslands of the desert overflow; the hills are clothed with gladness. The meadows are covered with flocks and the valleys are mantled with grain; they shout for joy and sing.” – Psalm 65:9-13

Malcolm Brown

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An invitation

When the church re-opens, we invite you to join us for worship and fellowship at any of our services. In the meantime, 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 one of our church officers know. All such requests are treated in the strictest confidence.

Family News

A prayer for the world

God of love and hope,
You made the world and care for all creation.
But the world feels strange right now.
The news is full of stories about Coronavirus.
Many people are anxious because of it.
Many people are anxious that they might get ill.
Many people are anxious about their family and friends.
Be with them in their worries and help them to find some peace.
We pray for the doctors and nurses and scientists who are working to discover
the right medicines to give hope to those who are ill.
Thank you that even in these strange and worrying times, you are with us.
Help us to look for the signs of your goodness and love towards us.

Amen



Please remember friends in need of prayer...

- **All our friends who are feeling sad or lonely as a result of the coronavirus and the effects on daily living. We particularly think of those who live alone and those in care homes who may not have had visitors from outside for many weeks.**

URC News

Eastern Synod Moderator Paul Whittle returning to Scotland

Rev. Paul Whittle, the Moderator of the URC



Eastern Synod, has been nominated to become Moderator of URC National Synod of Scotland for a three-year term, following the move by the Rev. Dr David Pickering to return to pastoral ministry.

Paul has served as the Moderator of Eastern Synod since July 2008 and celebrated the 40th anniversary of his ordination in 2019. Paul's ministry began in Scotland in 1979 when he was ordained and inducted as the Minister of Beith Congregational Church. He went on to serve in north London, the Republic of Panama, and Birmingham.

Providing details about the reasons behind the move, Rev. Dr John Bradbury, General Secretary of the URC, explained: "Following consultation between the Officers of the Assembly and the Officers and Executive of the Synod of Scotland, it was discerned that the National Synod of Scotland would benefit from someone who could exercise a ministry of an interim nature at this moment in its life. I'm delighted that Paul has felt able to respond positively to this nomination, he brings gifts and graces that from which the Synod of Scotland will greatly benefit."

The nomination will be put before the Mission Council, the executive body of the church's General Assembly, when it meets in November.

Speaking of his return to his roots, Paul says: "I have long since discovered that God is full of surprises. I fully expected to be serving in Eastern Synod until retirement and will really miss my many friends and colleagues. I will be genuinely sorry to move. However, I do feel a strong call north and am really excited by what I see and hear of the Synod of Scotland, with the bonus of returning to my roots."

"I am not a Scot, but I feel as though I should be," he explains. "Scotland is, in many ways, home. I went to school, university, trained for the ministry and had my first pastorate in Scotland. It is a special place to me and, though I was not expecting it, I am delighted to be finishing my stipendiary ministry in Scotland. I am also proud

of the fact that my Congregational/URC training was at the Scottish College."

In *Living Priesthood* – a book written by Roman Catholic priest Michael Hollings, an early influence on Paul's ministry – the author writes that it is "only possible to come to the core-meaning of [ministry] by being nebulous and diffuse, grasping at hints, going off at tangents" of which there is "there is only one centre point – Christ".

In a blog entry to mark his 40th year of ministry in his personal blog 'Getting the church sorted', Paul wrote that he was looking forward to listening to God's call among the next bunch of hints and tangents that would come his way.

"The National Synod of Scotland faces particular challenges, as do all Synods" continues Paul. "I believe that challenges are opportunities. I look forward to getting alongside the office staff, the Synod officers and the serving ministers as, together, we seek glimpses of the Kingdom. I will be looking for ways of nurturing the good Kingdom things, especially in unexpected places. This call is unexpected and I am looking forward to more surprises in this new role."

Reflecting on his time in Eastern Synod, Paul adds: "I have had a great twelve years plus in Eastern Synod. Interestingly, we lived in Mundesley (Norfolk) before moving to Scotland in the very early 1960s, though only briefly and I don't really remember it. I have loved being in East Anglia. I leave behind a Synod in a good place and have complete confidence that there are competent folk to move things forward until a new Moderator is in place."

Editor's note: Rev. Paul Whittle chaired the latest Eastern Synod meeting on 10th October, which was held online via Zoom. This was Paul's last Synod meeting as Moderator but there was no formal farewell as it is hoped that the March 2021 will be held normally and Paul will be a guest.

At the Synod meeting, Paul said he felt a bit like Elijah coming to the end of his ministry with just a few things left to do. He had thought those things would be done in the Eastern Synod but instead he was being called back to Scotland. As in the case of Elijah, it was important to listen to God. Elijah looked for God on the top of a mountain but sometimes God is not where you expect to find him; not on the mountain, not in the wind, not in the earthquake, not in the fire, but in a still small voice that asks 'What are you doing here?'.

Minister writes poetry to support her churches

URC minister Rev. Naomi Young-Rodas has



produced a booklet of poetry that she's been selling to support the churches she serves. Proceeds from *The Corona Poems* are going to her two Essex-based churches: Christ Church Rayleigh URC and the

Bridgwater Drive Church, Westcliff-on-Sea. The initiative has raised £200 so far.

“Reflecting on the sadness, injustices and emotions brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic, I turned to poetry,” Naomi explained. “As local church finances have taken a hit since buildings had to close in March, it seemed fitting to offer my poems in support of the communities I serve.”

The Corona Poems costs £5 for the paper version and £3 for the digital PDF version. To buy a copy, please email:

minister@christchurchrayleigh.org.uk.

Churches call for action to help people forced into debt by Covid-19



A campaign calling for debt cancellation for people who have been swept into unavoidable debt in recent months launched on 4th October by a group of four denominations representing two-thirds of a million Christians and ecumenical charity, Church Action on Poverty.

The United Reformed Church, the Baptist Union of Great Britain, Church Action on Poverty, the Church of Scotland, and the Methodist Church urge the government to create a Jubilee Fund to provide grants to pay off and cancel unavoidable debt accrued by the poorest households during the lockdown period, giving them a more stable platform from which to face the difficult winter ahead.

It is thought that 6 million people in the UK have fallen behind on rent, council tax and other household bills because of coronavirus and almost one in five have borrowed money to pay for everyday essentials such as food. Low income families have been particularly badly hit, in particular those with children. Younger workers, those from BAME communities and those with caring responsibilities have been disproportionately affected by job losses due to the pandemic, and many therefore have been forced to borrow to make ends meet.

Rachel Lampard, Team Leader of the Joint Public Issues Team for the four Churches, said: “As Christians, we see Jubilee as being about more than just economics. The Jubilee principle allows relationships to be reset, communities to be re-balanced, and people's dignity to be restored. This is the wellbeing that God desires for all people. That is why we are asking the Chancellor

for a Jubilee Fund to pay and cancel the debts of people who have been swept into debt by Covid-19.

“Covid-19 has shown us that we are all far more reliant on each other than we had previously acknowledged. Yet those we have come to rely on for our essentials are often those who have been hit hardest by lockdown debt. Without a debt Jubilee, those who are least able to bear it will continue to carry the heaviest financial burden long into the future.”

Director of Church Action on Poverty, Niall Cooper, said: “Over a third of families with children lost income as a result of lockdown. The past few months have been hard enough for all of us, but for those families who have lost income and been saddled with unpayable debts and possible eviction, the pressure is unbearable. To enable these families to get through the hard months ahead, it is essential that the burden of unpayable Covid-19 debts is lifted.”

Churches have seen for themselves the impact of debt in recent months. Rev. Dave Warnock, the minister responsible for five churches in and around Wythenshawe, has recently opened a debt counselling service in one of his churches:

“Being near Manchester airport many people have lost their jobs since the decline of air travel due to Covid. We have seen an increase in demand for food donations (most days one of our churches does about 10 deliveries of food to local families) and digital poverty means the government support that is available can often not be accessed because everything is done on the phone or internet.”

Supporters of the campaign are asked to write to their MP and support the campaign online and in their church communities.

Presidential Address at York Diocesan Synod

The Archbishop of York, the Most Reverend Stephen Cottrell, gave his first Presidential address to the virtual York Diocesan Synod on 29th September 2020. Stephen grew up in Leigh-on-Sea, attending Belfairs High School, and worshipped at St Barnabas Church in Hadleigh. This is a condensed version of his address....

Like most clergy I have a standard wedding sermon that I can rework for most occasions. I haven't used it much recently, but it goes a bit like this: never get married when you have fallen in love. Wait till you land.

What I mean by this – and what I go onto elucidate in the wedding sermon – is that falling in love, that romantic infatuation or even physical desire, can happen easily and frequently. But it isn't love. Because love isn't a feeling. Love isn't just desire. Love requires commitment. Love takes time. Love – the real thing - starts to grow when falling in love is left behind. Sometimes the greatest test of love is when hardship and challenge rear their unwelcome head. But in facing and overcoming these things, love is deepened. It doesn't always work out. It is never easy. But it is worth pursuing.

St Paul, when he was searching for the right image to describe the relationship between Christ and the Church, says that it is like a marriage and that we belong to him who has been raised from the dead, so that we can bear fruit for God (see Romans 7.4). This analogy is taken further in his second letter to the Corinthians and in the Book of Revelation where the Church – that is us, the redeemed people of God – are referred to as the bride of Christ (see 2 Cor. 11.2 & Revelation 19.7).

Therefore, there will be times in our Christian life – particularly at its beginnings – which will be like falling in love. But in order for our Christian life to deepen and mature we have to land. It is in those times of trial, hardship and challenge – times like these – that this happens.

I am delighted and humbled to be the 98th Archbishop of York, but I know I begin my ministry at such a time of hardship and challenge. Many of the familiarities of our life are being stripped away and this, of course, affects the church as well. Many, many people in our diocese and our nation have not been able to gather for worship, not received the comfort of the sacraments, have had to have weddings, baptisms, confirmations and ordinations postponed; even funerals have been affected and sometimes bereaved families have had to sit in separation from each other or not even be able to

attend the funeral at all. All this is enormously hard and the church itself has had to make painfully difficult decisions about how we order our life and respond to both the coronavirus itself and the regulations imposed by government.

But I also want to say, that painful and challenging though these times are, this is also an invitation for us to deepen our faith. For when all the familiarities of our life and worship are stripped away, what we are left with is Christ, and only Christ.

As some of you know I am heading up a process for the Church of England, discerning vision and strategy for the next 10 years. At some point I hope to share this with you more fully. However, I note that at the heart of this vision and strategy are two phrases which I believe are very relevant for where we are at the moment as a diocese and as a national church: we believe God is calling us to be a *Christ centred* and *Jesus shaped* church.

On the one hand, this is a perfectly obvious and unsurprising thing to be saying; on the other, it is an invitation to a radical re-aligning of our life around that which is most basic to our vocation: the call to be a Christ centred church, is the call to a renewal of prayer and worship; a declaration that both the highest doctrine of the Church and the most basic way of understanding the Church is that we are the women and men whose lives have been so impacted by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that we are formed into a community around him, and it is his life, his values, his teaching that are the pulse and yardstick of our lives. Therefore – the second phrase at the heart of the vision – we are called to be Jesus shaped. This is actually a phrase that is widely used around the Anglican Communion and it flows from what are known as the five marks of mission:

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
- To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

Or in their more popular and memorable form: *to tell, teach, tend, transform and treasure*.

... All my instincts as a minister of the gospel is to want to get stuck in by getting out and about in local communities, meeting people, getting to know them and sharing the good news of Christ as best I can. This is hard to do in these constrained times, and I'm doing the best that I can on zoom conferences and in whatever actual meetings are safe and possible.

But do not think this means I will be any less committed to the diocese than my predecessors... I am humbled to be following in their steps. All I can promise you is that I will give my best powers of wit, energy and creativity to making Jesus known in this diocese and in this nation so that the world may believe and Christ's kingdom be established. More than ever, our nation needs the stability that comes from faith in Christ.

And that word stability feels to me to be an important one for our life together at the moment. It is one of the three vows of the Benedictine life which, of course, has had such an influence in shaping the Church and culture of Europe. Benedict's rule opens with his clear intention to "establish a school for the Lord's service". In this school of discipleship, we learn how to navigate our way through the chances and challenges of life by holding onto Christ and following him, and also, because we have our security in him, being sent out to do his work.

Stability comes when we order our lives according to the way of Christ. In the early catechumenates of the Church this was achieved by receiving and shaping one's life around key biblical texts, particularly the Lord's Prayer and the Beatitudes. With my work in the National


church, and here in the York diocese, I hope that we can begin to look very closely at these texts and how they shape our lives and deepen our commitment to Christ, enabling us to joyfully inhabit this troubled world and, by our example, offer the world the help and indeed the stability which is in Christ.

At this, my first Synod, I pledge myself to working with you to build Christian communities that are committed to Christ and therefore able to maintain their life and fulfil their vocation whatever the constraints, whatever the challenges and whatever the further suffering and privation we may have to face.

This is the message we need to bear to the world: echoing the words of the prophet Habakkuk who declared his delight in the Lord even though the olive crop fails and the sheep are lost (see Habakkuk 3.17-18): so, even though we cannot meet as we would like to; even though there is severe economic hardship; even though there is suffering and death; and even though we feel that we are being stretched to the limit of our resources; there is hope, hope that even in the midst of this pandemic, Christ is with us, bearing as ever the marks of his passion, which are the signs of his committed love to us and to the world.

We too will have to bear the scars of love as we commit ourselves afresh to Christ and to each other, and allow his Spirit to purge and refine us, so that, even with the tiny mustard seeds of faith, we may land and be planted and grow and prosper in love.

Sisters and brothers, let us love one another, that deep committed, self-forgetful love that we see in Christ. May it be ours. And through it and because of it, may we bring healing to the world.



Is there some desert – by Edward Everett Hale

Is there some desert or some pathless sea
Where thou, good God of angels, wilt send me?
Some oak to rend; some sod,
Some rock to break;
Some handful of his corn to take
And scatter far afield,
Till it, in turn, shall yield
Its hundred fold
Of grains of gold
To feed the waiting children of my God.
Show me the desert, Father, or the sea.
Is it thine enterprise? Great God send me.

Forbidden Church – from *Reform*, September 2020

Stephen Tomkins, Editor of *Reform*, explores the illegal church of the Mayflower Pilgrims

Four hundred years ago this month, members of an illegal English church sailed on the Mayflower to North America, believing they were called by God to build the foundational settlement of Plymouth, New England. These believers had founded Congregational churches in England, outside the Church of England, and for that crime they faced prison and exile in the Netherlands. The movement they were part of has had a profound influence on our history and our world, and the United Reformed Church is just one of the heirs of their tradition today.

What was it like being a member of this religious underground in the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I of England? Worshippers met in fields and woods, in ships, in lofts and cellars, in pubs and in their own houses. Services could last whole days, starting at 5am. They abandoned all pre-prepared liturgy – ‘babbling in the Lord’s sight’ – and instead members led each other in prayers in their own words. ‘Every man’ could preach – a phrase they used in a generic sense but it is unlikely it included women.

Services were not necessarily the dour occasions we might associate with puritans. ‘In their prayer,’ reported one witness, ‘one speaketh and the rest do groan or sob or sigh, as if they would wring out tears.’ Another description says: ‘The chief gentleman of the place beginneth with a groaning, but yet with a loud voice crieth most religiously, “Amen”. And then the whole company of that sect follow, “Amen, amen”.’ When they worshipped upstairs in the Barrow Inn Mildenhall, Suffolk, the inn received complaints because their prayers disturbed people across the street. They also sang psalms to their own tunes.

Services were often raided and worshippers arrested. They were rarely tried, just held for indefinite periods, then often released. The separatist leader Thomas Wolsey was kept in prison for 30 years in Norfolk, but in latter years was allowed a key to let himself in and out of jail. More often though, people died after much shorter stretches in prisons, which were notoriously unhealthy. Such casualties included their minister, Richard Fitz.

In the later years of Queen Elizabeth’s reign, the government stepped up persecution of the underground Congregational churches. Now, the houses of members were raided as well as

churches, people were hauled from their beds, their rooms searched by night for Bibles and other religious propaganda. At least one, John Purdye, was beaten and tortured.

The leaders, Henry Barrow and John Greenwood, wrote a constant stream of books while in prison, despite being banned from having pens and paper. At least one of their books was written in the margin of someone else’s. Church members smuggled their writings to the Netherlands to be printed, and then smuggled the books back to England.

The English authorities discovered one consignment of nearly 3,000 copies of Barrow’s books, on its way home from the Netherlands, and burned the lot. The man in charge of the burning, Francis Johnson, kept one copy for himself, read it, was converted, joined the underground church and became a minister.



Henry Barrow & John Greenwood
(from Emmanuel URC, Cambridge)

In 1593, membership of a separatist church was made a felony, and Barrow and Greenwood were hanged at Tyburn (in present-day London). After a failed attempt to colonise Newfoundland, in what is now Canada, the bulk of their underground Church settled in Amsterdam, following the path of earlier generations into foreign exile.

Numbers grew over the coming decades, especially after King James’ Church of England stepped up attacks on puritans, who quit their Church and their country to join the churches in exile. Many lived in poverty, having left their families and livings behind, and had to learn new skills in order to work. Several hundred of them worshipped in different churches in Holland, including the first Baptists, who had split away from Congregational

churches. Others sprang up in England, including milder Congregational churches who did not deliberately separate from the Church of England, though they were still illegal.

It was a more radical, separatist Congregational church that organised the Mayflower journey and founded the American Plymouth plantation in 1620. Their pastor, John Robinson, who had to stay in the Netherlands, reportedly waved them off with an admonition not to idolise what he had taught them, 'for he was very confident the Lord had more truth and light yet to break forth out of his holy word'. Larger numbers of non-separating Congregationalists followed them to New England, and, within 20 years, there were 10,000 Congregationalists in North America.

By this time, the Bishop of Norwich reckoned there were 80 Separatist churches in the London area, led by 'cobblers, tailors, feltmakers and suchlike trash'. More shocking still, a pamphlet that year named six female preachers. The radicalism of earlier separatists had been overtaken; further light had broken.

What was it about this movement that made the authorities hound, imprison, execute and exile its members? The Elizabethan Church of England was a network of power that allowed the monarch a measure of control over every town and village in England and Wales. By opting out of it to found independent congregations, the underground Church undermined the state's power over its people. Giving the movement free reign would have meant a radical redistribution of power, from the Queen and her lord bishops, to 'trash'.

The most groundbreaking thinker of the underground churches, Robert Browne, insisted the state had no right to tell the Church how to worship God, and the Church had no right to make laws for unbelievers: 'The Lord's people is of the willing sort.' There should be no coercion in religion, he said, because only those who come willingly are worth having. 'The Lord's kingdom

is not by force.' For this, Browne was outlawed and men who distributed his books were executed.



John Browne, "Father of Congregationalism"

Many Protestants hated the idea of religious persecution, but had been forced to exercise it because they were trying to run a state church, which made coercion necessary. The underground Church rediscovered the New Testament idea of the Church being a voluntary community for committed believers. This meant they were able not just to dislike religious violence but to abandon it totally – which in turn meant they were bound to face violence from the threatened religious powers of their day.

Jesus taught that greatness in God's kingdom is seen in exercising not power but love, not in domination but in service. Those who rediscover that upside-down vision and its challenge for their own day, tend to face trouble, because they are trouble, even, perhaps, for the Church.

Stephen Tomkins

Stephen Tomkins' book, *The journey to the Mayflower: God's outlaws and the invention of freedom* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2020) is available from urcshop.co.uk for a special price of £14.00.

Editor's note: I had originally intended to include this article in the September magazine but instead went with the article about the Pilgrim Fathers' travels to America, to coincide with the 400th anniversary.

Smoke alarms

If you have a smoke alarm in your house, please test it regularly. If you don't have a working smoke alarm then Essex Fire & Rescue Service will supply and fit a free, ten-year smoke alarm as part of a home safety visit during which they will identify and make you aware of the potential fire risks in your home and help you put together an escape plan in case a fire breaks out in the future. To arrange a home safety visit, phone 0300 303 0088.

Bawley No. 416 and the Cotgrove brothers

Some readers will be aware of the Cotgrove family, fishermen from Leigh-on-Sea. The nature of fishing leads to deadly incidents at sea but this story is mainly about one member of the Cotgrove family who survived such an incident. It is taken from 'Bawley No. 416 - The Story of a Miraculous Escape', which appeared in an edition of The Wide World magazine in 1899.

On the evening of the 4th October 1889, George and Alfred Cotgrove were engaged in trawling for soles some three miles before the Nore lightship and four miles from the shores of Sheppey.



Daylight was fading rapidly and the black clouds overhead, moving swiftly before a strong south-westerly wind, indicated to

the practised eyes of the fishermen the prospect of a dark night and 'dirty weather'. But their craft – one of the famous Leigh bawleys – had weathered many a gale before, and her navigators, as all Leigh fishermen are – were conscious of no presentiment of danger as darkness fell; and No. 416, catching the foam-crested waves on her weather bow, drove the spray aft in blinding showers.



Sailing close to the wind, with topsail stowed and two reefs in her mainsail, the sturdy little craft made light of the gathering storm; and having taken precautions which are the second nature to every born sailor, the brothers had no foreboding of the appalling disaster which came so suddenly upon them.

It was at 7 p.m. that the wind, veering suddenly round from south-west to north-east, struck the boat and heeled her over to such an extent that the water rushed into the open hatchways. The squall was so unexpected, and the change of wind so sudden and complete, that the boat was flung on her beam-ends before a single step could be taken to avoid calamity. At the fatal moment George was steering, while Alfred was engaged with some tackle on the weather-deck.

George Cotgrove only had time to cry out, "Oh dear, Alf!" before a wave, breaking aboard the swamping craft, swept him into the dark waters astern. With that last despairing cry still ringing in his ears, Alfred made a frantic effort to lower the mainsail, calling loudly to his brother at the same time. But George Cotgrove had now passed beyond human aid, and the weather-beaten bawley was sinking rapidly. The tiny boat which hung astern had gone down, and just before the larger craft made her final plunge beneath the seething waves, Alfred Cotgrove realised that his only hope lay in the direction of the topmast.

Acting on the inspiration of the moment, he made a superhuman effort to reach the summit of the mast before the bawley sank. Not a second too soon his fingers clutched the few inches of iron forming a tiny "staff" for the flag which decorates the mast-head on "regatta day" and festive occasions. No. 416 sank at the same moment. The tide had just commenced to flow, and some 15 ft. of the topmast remained above water.

Cotgrove was now safe for a while, but his position was terrible to contemplate. A rising tide and a raging sea lay beneath his feet; a stormy and starless sky overhead. The night was pitch black and bitterly cold. Claspings the iron staff with both hands, and clinging to the slender topmast with crossed knees, the unhappy man realised that he would probably be swept into eternity at high water, and that, even if the tide should turn without reaching him, eleven or twelve hours would elapse before the first streak of day might reveal his desperate position to some passing craft.

Ever and anon the lights of some outward or homeward bound vessel would gleam mockingly through the darkness for awhile, only to disappear eventually into the shadows beyond with a hoarse groan which seemed but an exaggerated echo of his own passionate cries for help.

The human voice was entirely lost amid the din of shrieking wind and raging water; nothing but a cry of warning produced by lungs of steel could make itself audible on such a night. Yet, despite the futility of attempting to attract attention in this way, Cotgrove continued to shout until his

voice failed him entirely and he was unable to hear his own cries.

So the hours dragged by, each an eternity of suspense and suffering. And the remorseless tide rose, inch by inch, until the higher waves actually broke over the feet of the man who was so nearly within their reach, and the icy spray stung his face like sleet.

“When my voice was completely gone,” said Cotgrove, “one of the boats belonging to our fleet came so close to me that I could have thrown a biscuit aboard. I saw the fishermen lower their sails, and I stopped shouting, foolishly believing that, although my voice was quite inaudible to my own ears, they had heard me.



But the sail had only been lowered for the purpose of hauling in the trawl; and in another moment the boat disappeared slowly into the darkness, leaving me well-nigh frantic with despair.”

The tide had now reached Cotgrove’s knees, and the agony he endured as wave after wave swept over his body can neither be fully imagined nor described. The most hideous nightmare that a distorted imagination can conceive loses all its horrors before the kindly light of day, and can only be described by the sufferer, in all its gruesome detail, within a few moments of its occurrence. It is impossible for a man adequately to describe the sufferings of another, and it is an equally hopeless task for the sufferer himself to convey to another mind the multitude of sensations which have crowded themselves into the one supreme moment of a lifetime.

We can only imagine a frail human form clinging desperately to a few feet of mast, amidst a wilderness of white-crested billows. We can understand the hopefulness of such a situation, intensified by the horrors of darkness and uncertainty. But the most emotional or imaginative reader would fail to comprehend a

title of the mental torture endured by this man during a single minute of that protracted struggle for life. *Cotgrove was clinging to the summit of the mast of Bawley No. 416 for thirteen hours!*

For the first five hours the tide rose steadily, but it was at the expiration of the fifth hour that the strangest and most thrilling scene of this drama of darkness was enacted. With the icy cold waves actually lapping his waist, Cotgrove believed that the final moment had at length arrived, and he resolved too struggle no longer. Yet even while the fisherman, resigning himself to the fate which he now considered to be inevitable, was endeavouring to unclasp his numbed fingers, a strange gleam, similar to the flash of a search-light, illumined the broken waters, revealing the shadowy outline of a man standing in a boat hard by.



“For a moment,” said the narrator, “I thought it was one of my mates come to take me off, although the attitude of the figure, standing in an open boat with arms outstretched, caused me to tighten my grasp instinctively, instead of letting go. And when the craft and its queer navigator had disappeared with the momentary gleam, I felt convinced the vision had been sent as a warning. This conviction had no sooner entered my mind that I felt the sunken bawley move slightly beneath me, and in another moment she changed sides, swinging the mast suddenly over in the same direction. The sensation of flying through space in that way was terrible, and I was immersed in steel deeper water. The change of position, however, was a certain sign that the tide had turned, and I realised that the water would now begin to fall. *This change occurred within a minute of the appearance of the vision.*”

The knowledge that the maximum depth of water had been reached inspired Cotgrove with new hope, and he resolved to retain his hold of the mast until daybreak. It was midnight when the tide turned, and the fact that some seven hours must yet elapse before the welcome light of dawn could appear was almost too terrible for

contemplation. Although the water fell gradually away from the body of the lonely watcher, the cold of those early morning hours was intense.

“I kept holding on with one hand only while I put the fingers of my other hand in my mouth to warm them,” he said. “I felt no strain on my hands and knees at that time; the muscles seemed to be fixed in position, and my limbs were completely numb with the cold. My thoughts were naturally of home and what my wife would say if I ever got there again. I had only been married a twelvemonth. My brother George left a wife and four children.”

Daylight broke at length, but was nearly eight o'clock before the fisherman, more dead than alive by this time, descried a bawley boat scarcely mile and a half away. He tried to wave his cap to attract the attention of those aboard, but his numbed fingers refused to close on the brim. Scarcely daring to hope that deliverance was now at hand, Cotgrove could only gaze despairingly at the distant brown sail, and pray that he would not once again be doomed to endure the bitter agony of hope deferred.

The bawley altered her course and approached rapidly. The weather-beaten form had been descried through a pair of marine glasses, and a couple of willing hands were already preparing to put off in a small boat. Then the sails of the smack disappeared suddenly from sight, and a few minutes later a little craft, manned by two sturdy figures in oilskins, bounded swiftly over the waves towards the partly-submerged mast which, for thirteen hours, had been holding George Cotgrove above the jaws of death.

When asked what had become of his brother, the sufferer could only point dumbly into the broken waters. And it was not before he was carried below, and revived somewhat with such simple restoratives as were at hand, that he was able to whisper hoarsely of the disaster and its miraculous sequel. Strange to relate, the first bawley that came within speaking distance of that which had effected the rescue was manned by Cotgrove's father.

“Get under deck, mate – don't let your father see you!” cried one of the rescuers, addressing Cotgrove, who had crept on deck.

Alfred hid himself as advised, and his father called out: “An awful night, mates! I've had a barge run into me, broke my skiff adrift, and nearly sunk the old bawley herself.”

“We've worse news than that for you,” was the reply. “Poor George's boat was capsized in that squall. George has been drowned, and we've got Alf aboard here.”

Such was the fisherman's notion of breaking bad news as gently and as expeditiously as possible, and it is far from probable that a man of greater culture could have seized a more opportune moment or employed better words for the purpose.

Alfred Cotgrove was dangerously ill for many weeks after his terrible experience. His heart was seriously affected by its prolonged contact with the mast. At St. George's Hospital, to which institution the sufferer was ordered by the local doctors, he was informed that the vital organ was actually bruised by the continued pressure brought to bear upon it. He also suffered greatly from acute melancholia and headache.

Night after night the grim tragedy was repeated in imagination; and no sooner did sleep close the weary eyes of the invalid than the bed appeared to turn completely over, and Cotgrove would awake with the last cry of his brother ringing yet again in his ears.

He has never recovered his lost nerve sufficiently to face the stormy waters of the Estuary again by night; and his mates, realising this fact, have shown their sympathy in a practical way by purchasing for him the two handsome pleasure boats shown in the accompanying illustration. On account of the far-receding tide, however, these unfortunately afford him but a scanty means of livelihood.



The body of George Cotgrove was recovered, close to the Nore Lightship, a month and three days after the disaster. A knife belonging to Alfred, which had been borrowed by the deceased a few moments before the boat capsized, proved the only means of identification.

Computer Corner

Victorian Voices – The Strand Magazine

**Interesting
download**

The Victorian Voices website has a large collection of scanned Victorian publications including The Strand Magazine. Volume 20 from July-December 1900 has a good article about Hadleigh's famous resident and white wizard, Cunning Murrell. Be warned, the site is one on which you could waste spend a lot of time.

URL: <https://www.victorianvoices.net/magazines/Strand/S1900B.shtml>

New tab, Close tab, Re-open closed tab

The following keyboard shortcuts will work in most browsers.

To open a new tab press Ctrl+T (together).

**Useful
keyboard
shortcuts**

To close the current tab, press Ctrl+W.

To re-open the last closed tab, press Ctrl+Shift+T. Continue pressing the same key combination to re-open more tabs in reverse order of which they were closed.

I use the second and third shortcuts frequently. To open a new tab, I prefer to right click on the tab bar and select 'New tab' from the menu that is displayed. It's difficult to break old habits!

Minesweeper

**Interesting
free
software**

For all those who remember it, the Minesweeper game that came with early versions of Windows (and is still available on Windows 10 but now with ads) is 30 years old this month. An article on the How-To Geek website gives the history and recommends a more sophisticated free clone that doesn't have ads should you wish to play it again.

URL: <https://www.howtogeek.com/693898/30-years-of-minesweeper-sudoku-with-explosions/>

Word Search – Words from names of butterflies

Inspired by the fact that it's been a good year for butterflies...

K	R	G	I	K	E	C	W	H	Q	P	M	N	F	I	H	R	G	D	U	ADMIRAL
Y	X	H	K	Q	M	X	Q	R	Y	O	R	P	C	N	J	J	C	P	A	ARGUS
L	N	L	Y	J	H	G	Y	X	E	D	P	D	E	L	K	C	E	P	S	BLUE
E	O	P	W	A	L	L	U	E	L	H	E	A	L	A	R	I	M	D	A	BRIMSTONE
C	Q	C	K	C	E	I	Z	C	L	D	X	L	I	D	X	N	J	N	G	COMMA
O	Q	Y	P	J	Z	X	T	Y	R	A	E	T	I	N	B	K	U	S	X	COPPER
P	E	R	D	C	G	M	A	W	I	N	N	Q	F	A	T	J	H	Q	T	EMPEROR
P	W	A	P	W	V	A	Q	H	O	E	M	Z	H	S	F	E	V	J	O	FRITILLARY
E	Q	L	O	A	J	E	T	T	A	F	M	O	P	U	S	D	D	S	R	GATEKEEPER
R	K	L	J	I	V	T	S	E	A	I	J	P	N	Y	D	A	J	V	T	HAIRSTREAK
X	X	I	C	A	N	M	E	C	K	X	R	D	E	A	X	J	S	C	O	HEATH
E	A	T	H	X	I	P	I	L	X	E	R	S	T	R	R	T	Z	Q	I	MONARCH
Q	E	I	J	R	Q	G	P	E	G	E	E	E	T	H	O	C	B	B	S	PAINTED
E	T	R	B	R	Q	E	P	L	P	N	Z	P	P	R	U	R	H	H	E	PEACOCK
A	I	F	H	J	A	Q	V	P	E	A	I	V	E	A	E	X	T	E	S	RINGLET
M	H	H	S	C	Q	P	I	D	R	Y	U	R	D	R	J	A	N	M	H	SKIPPER
M	W	E	O	H	A	K	F	G	O	O	M	J	E	U	E	C	K	H	E	SPECKLED
O	G	C	U	F	S	X	U	N	L	G	V	I	F	H	S	E	N	C	L	TORTOISESHELL
C	K	E	V	L	G	S	F	A	Y	N	B	L	W	O	W	B	G	X	L	WALL
O	E	L	D	X	B	K	M	A	V	I	G	C	F	E	Y	M	Y	F	T	WHITE

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

The Autumn

Go, sit upon the lofty hill,
And turn your eyes around,
Where waving woods and waters wild
Do hymn an autumn sound.
The summer sun is faint on them --
The summer flowers depart --
Sit still -- as all transform'd to stone,
Except your musing heart.

How there you sat in summer-time,
May yet be in your mind;
And how you heard the green woods sing
Beneath the freshening wind.
Though the same wind now blows around,
You would its blast recall;
For every breath that stirs the trees,
Doth cause a leaf to fall.

Oh! like that wind, is all the mirth
That flesh and dust impart:
We cannot bear its visitings,
When change is on the heart.
Gay words and jests may make us smile,
When Sorrow is asleep;
But other things must make us smile,
When Sorrow bids us weep!

The dearest hands that clasp our hands, --
Their presence may be o'er;
The dearest voice that meets our ear,
That tone may come no more!
Youth fades; and then, the joys of youth,
Which once refresh'd our mind,
Shall come -- as, on those sighing woods,
The chilling autumn wind.

Hear not the wind -- view not the woods;
Look out o'er vale and hill.
In spring, the sky encircled them --
The sky is round them still.
Come autumn's scathe -- come winter's cold --
Come change -- and human fate!
Whatever prospect Heaven doth bound,
Can ne'er be desolate.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Elizabeth Barrett Browning (née Moulton-Barrett) was born on 6th March 1806 in County Durham, the eldest of twelve children. Elizabeth married poet Robert Browning in September 1846 and they moved to Italy shortly afterwards. By the time of her marriage, Elizabeth was recognised internationally for her often innovative and challenging verse. She was heralded by many to be one of the most accomplished poets of the period and was seriously considered for the post of Poet Laureate when William Wordsworth died in 1850. The post would eventually be awarded to Alfred Tennyson. The first woman to become Poet Laureate would be Carol Ann Duffy in 2009. Elizabeth died in Florence on 29th June 1861. Robert died in Venice on 12th December 1889.

