

THE HADLEIGH MESSENGER

February 2021



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

Here & Now – Reform, February 2021

‘New year, new me.’ What did 2020 teach us? How have we grown as people, as a community and as the Church? And what can we take from that year? We know that 2021 is still different to previous years, but different doesn’t mean worse and we can move forward in new ways.

‘Those who sow in tears will reap in joy,’ says Psalm 126. For the first time in my life, I have truly looked back on a year and felt hopeless. For the majority of the year I have felt helplessly imprisoned for my own safety. Shielding from the world due to being classed as high risk does no favours for your mental wellbeing. Having to move in with my 86-year-old nan, who was also shielding for her health, forced me away from my home comforts and was a massive culture shock. Then, during the ‘eat out to help out’ scheme, I readjusted from being locked away to working in the hospitality industry, which was overwhelming to say the least. These changes and uncertainties made last year almost unfathomable for me. During times like this, you can but question your faith in humanity and in the Lord.

‘Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom,’ said Aristotle. This year has forced me, like many others, I’m sure, to spend a lot more time with my thoughts. My busy life of work, appointments and socialising was halted and instead I was surrounded by the same four walls, constantly. To keep myself sane, I spent most of the time I was shielding in the garden. This ever changing and developing space was where I felt free and safe. I had various visitors: the hedgehog taking residence under a fern; the multitude of bird species coming to feed, including one of our more vulnerable native creatures; the slow worm living in a pot filled with flowers. I was able to take time to sit still and ponder in thought. Sometimes, two of the hardest questions you’ll ever ask yourself are who you are and who you want to be. Exploring these questions opens up a pool of thought big enough to flood the earth.

‘Normal is an illusion. What’s normal for the spider is chaos for a fly,’ said Morticia in *The Addams Family*. For myself, shielding has been a huge change and a terrifying experience. The freedoms that I took for granted all my life were being challenged. Yet, for my nan, these changes had a different impact: she, for the first time in around 15 years, wasn’t living alone. I felt isolated from the world; she actually had a person there. Many of us in society live alone and don’t have the opportunity to see others. During this pandemic, people have been more open to helping each other and more aware of those who are vulnerable and lonely. Now that we have started to recognise these people, we need to make sure we stay proactive in supporting and helping those who are lonely, not just close the door and hope the thoughts of them go away.

‘Times change and so must I,’ to quote Doctor Who. The year 2020 was a challenge, a change and, for some people, a living hell. We can learn from it though. So what do we need to take forward? Things happen that we can’t control but that’s OK. We don’t need to control everything, as we can control how we respond to it. To start to understand anything in this world we must start to ask who we are and understand ourselves. This takes time and can be terrifying but the rewards are everlasting.

We must look at life through different people’s eyes. Normality for one person is alien to another. If another’s normality is horrible to us when we live it, how must they feel when there is no end in sight for them, no opportunity to go back to a stage in life where everything was easier and nicer? The Lord’s plan for each of us is ineffable and sometimes to understand joy we have to live through pain. So, stay strong in faith and in life. We are living through what will be history for those who write it. Let us make the story beautiful.

David Turner

Youth representative for the URC’s National Synod of Wales



Lockdown humour

- Never in a million years did I think I would go to the bank wearing a mask and ask for money.
- Who’s idea was it to sing “Happy Birthday” while washing your hands? Now every time I go to the bathroom, my kids expect me to walk out with a cake!
- My husband bought a world map and then gave me a dart and said, “Throw this and wherever it lands – that’s where I’m taking you when this pandemic ends.” Turns out, we’re spending 2 weeks behind the fridge!

Letter from Adrian

Dear friends,

As I was thinking about this contribution and what I could say into our current situation, I was reminded of the passage in Matthew about the flight into Egypt. At first, I missed the application but was brought back to the passage. What does God want to say? What is the common thread?

It came to me in a single word: DANGER. For the baby Jesus it was a time of life-threatening, real danger and so with us, in the middle of this pandemic, there is life-threatening danger. Did the threat to Jesus catch God unawares? No, the prophets had spoken hundreds of years before: "... out of Egypt I called my son." (Hosea 11:1b) So, we can trust today that God was not caught out by Covid-19.

Let's try to imagine what it would have been like 50 years ago. No internet, much more difficult to prepare paper services and no music. We would have been completely isolated. But God prepared the internet, he prepared a method of duplication, he prepared YouTube and most recently Zoom. Although we are physically separate, we can still enjoy community; we still are the body of Christ.

But possibly there is even a positive aspect to the lockdown in the amount of Christian content on the Internet, which has almost exploded, with churches putting out services, children's work, bible studies and prayer meetings. We can feed

not only on our own work but share with others, the whole experience encouraging inter-denominational cooperation.

I am sure that life for Jesus' family as refugees was not a pleasant experience, away from family and friends and all they knew. This we can parallel with our experience of being shut away from all our social contacts, but at least we can encourage one another. Eventually Herod died and God called them out of isolation. In England today, a time will come when Covid will be defeated and God will call us back into face-to-face fellowship when it is safe.

In many ways God has prepared for us a place of safety and like Jesus we will be called out of Egypt. It is interesting to note however that the place of safety to which the Holy Family returned was not the one that they left. There is a sense in which when we come to the end of the pandemic like the Holy Family, we may not return to the old normal but must look for our Nazareth where we can grow and develop to reflect more closely the body of Christ.

Let's be prepared for God's future plans using what we have learnt in this period of exile to propel us into God's future.

Blessings,

Adrian



From the Bible – Matthew 2:13-23 (NIV)

When they [the Magi] had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him." So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."

When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: "A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."

After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead." So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.

From the Editor

Welcome to the February 2021 edition of the *Hadleigh Messenger*.

With a lockdown in operation to subdue the second wave of the Coronavirus pandemic, the winter has become rather gruelling particularly with the recent very cold weather. I'm sure we're all looking forward to a time when we can get out more, meet up with friends and, hopefully, worship together again.

I am grateful to Adrian for supplying his letter but, in the absence of other home-grown material, I have once again resorted to items from random sources on the Internet. I've included an article on Amy Johnson, the famous aviator, partly

because she hails from my home town of Hull and partly because it was the 80th anniversary of her record-breaking solo flight to Australia in January. There is a local connection in that, sadly, she lost her life after crash-landing in the River Thames.

I have tried to include some uplifting items. I thought the sermon from Radio 4's Sunday Service on 31st January was particularly good and the poem by Longfellow on the back page certainly has a positive message. I agree with Longfellow's thought that, whatever our situation, we can all 'leave behind us footprints on the sands of time'.

Malcolm Brown

Snowmen

For those who are unable to get out and make a snowman, here are a couple of recent examples...



Daisy Tharby-Brown (Malcolm and Heather's granddaughter) with a snowman in her back garden in Scarning, Norfolk



Snowman made by young-at-heart Pam and Chris Rowlands in the grounds of Aragon Court, Hadleigh

HADLEIGH URC OFFICERS

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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

Martin Williams

Martin, the son of Rev. Trevor Williams and a former Elder at our church, has started training for the ministry at Spurgeon's College. He's also a part-time pastor at Baldwyn's Park Baptist Church in Bexley and he and his wife Maggie have moved into the manse there. (If anyone would like their new address or phone number, please contact the Editor.)

We pray that God will guide Martin on his journey to becoming a minister.

Peter Brewer

It is good to be able to report that Peter is now fully recovered from shingles and is feeling fine.

We thank God for Peter's recovery.

Olive Kemp

Olive, the widow of Rev. Norman Kemp, former minister of our church, has moved from Northampton to a Christian care home in Plymouth. (If anyone would like Olive's new address, please contact the Editor.)

We send our love to Olive and hope that she will feel settled in her new home. We also send our very best wishes for her birthday on 18th February when she will be 98 years young!

Curtis Churchill

Doreen Churchill is pleased to report that her grandson Curtis has been accepted for enrolment in the Army. He has been offered the choice of joining the Royal Artillery, the Military Police or one other branch that Doreen can't recall but he is not sure which one to choose.

We send our congratulations to Curtis and wish him a long and successful career in whichever part of the Army that he chooses to join.

URC News

Chorley URC grows through lockdown

Chorley United Reformed Church (URC) received three new church members via Zoom at their Covenant Service on 3 January. Apart from a brief respite in the autumn, the church has been offering an online act of worship on YouTube since last March. The reception of three new members was called a “great joy” to the church.

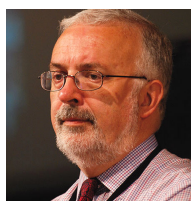
Rev. Martin Whiffen, the church’s Minister, said: “It felt odd receiving members remotely. I know all three as friends and faithful members of our online fellowship, but a couple of them I have only met occasionally face to face having joined us during lockdown.”

Further good news is that the church’s £500,000 refurbishment has been completed. Martin added: “It has been disappointing not to be able to fully use our state-of-the-art refurbished church, but we have been really excited by the take up of our digital worship. Our Sunday congregation is roughly twice the pre-lockdown number and has on a couple of occasions, exceeded 300.”

URC challenges call to reopen places of worship in Scotland

The URC National Synod of Scotland is sad to learn that some church leaders are threatening legal action if the Scottish government does not reverse its decision to close places of worship during the current phase of the Covid-19 pandemic. It profoundly disagrees with this action, believing not only that the Scottish government is acting legally, but that it also is the duty of all Christians to act in ways which limit the spread of the virus.

This view is shared by all of the Moderators of the URC’s 13 Synods. The closure of places of worship is also a longer term commitment to the wellbeing of the communities which our churches serve.



Rev. Paul Whittle, Moderator of the URC National Synod of Scotland (and former Moderator of Eastern Synod), said:

“Public worship is not being threatened by the government’s action; and while being physically separated is a hard thing to experience, worship and fellowship are being maintained online, often involving more people than were attending worship prior to the pandemic.”

Throughout this pandemic, the Scottish government has sought to involve faith communities in its decision-making processes, listening to their concerns and responding to them. Although Christians (and people of all faiths) deeply miss the opportunity to meet together for worship and fellowship, our first priority in this moment is to bear witness to the Gospel by “seeking the welfare of the city ...” (Jeremiah 29:7) and by “rendering to Caesar” the respect and honour due (Matthew 22:21 and Romans 13:7).

Ruth Clarke, 1935-2021



Ruth Clarke, a trailblazer for all sorts of issues, especially the representation of women and young people in the Church and for the ecumenical movement, died on 11

January aged 85.

A former Moderator of the URC General Assembly, Ruth was heavily involved with the creation of the Windermere Centre and served as its Assistant Director. It was during her time there that one of her daughters, Hannah, died as a result of a bicycle accident. This led to the creation of the Hannah Fund, which supported people wanting to visit the centre and the Hannah Wing, a suite for disabled people on the ground floor of the centre.

Rev. Lis Mullen, Ruth’s Minister at Carver Uniting Church in Windermere along with Rev. Martyn Coe, spoke fondly of Ruth:

“Initially, Ruth seemed a formidable woman – a headmistress – but she was also very caring, supportive, a good preacher and endlessly interested in theological discussion. She belonged to the Progressive Christian Network and, I believe, was responsible for starting a discussion group in Kendal. Her love of debate and good theological input continued as she grew older, more vulnerable and in a lot of pain. She never lost her interest in and love for the national URC. Ruth was greatly loved in Carver and we will miss her.”

Ruth went to Oxford High School and studied English literature at Westfield College, University of London, and education at Cambridge University. She began her career as an English teacher before becoming a head teacher of a multiracial secondary school in inner London.

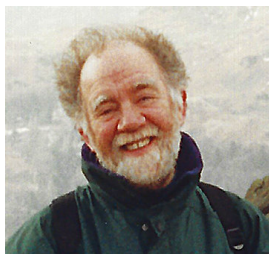
A member of the URC since its inception, Ruth served as Moderator of the URC General Assembly from 1992-1993 and was the second woman to hold the position and the third lay person in that office. Within the denomination, Ruth wore a variety of hats as a member of the Faith and Life Committee, Convenor of the Youth Committee, a member of the board choosing candidates for ministry, a member of the committee deciding the status of ministers and accepting overseas ministers, and Chair of the first group to produce a report on sexuality.

Passionate about working with others, Ruth once said: "I work quite a lot with ecumenical bodies - this is how the church makes some sense to me." As such, Ruth was active in the Free Church Women's Council and the FCFC Executive in the 1990s, served as President of the Women's Council from March 2000, and was energetic in promoting the Ecumenical Federation of European Christian Women.

She also served as Co-Chair of Church Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI's) church leaders meeting, President of Churches Together in Cumbria, represented the URC on an ecumenical group which produced the report 'Unemployment and the Future of Work' and chaired the final year, represented CTBI at the Church of Scotland's General Assembly, and was Membership Secretary and Treasurer for England in the ecumenical Forum of European Women for 30 years.

Ruth, whose husband Raymond died in 2010, is survived by her daughter Charlotte, son-in-law Andrew, and grandchildren Charlie and Mollie.

Rev. Peter McIntosh, 1938-2021



It is with deep sadness that the URC announces the death of Rev. Peter McIntosh, a former Moderator of its General Assembly and Director of The Windermere Centre.

Mr McIntosh began his ministerial career at Byker Presbyterian Church/Priory Green URC in Newcastle in 1968. He also ministered at St Andrew's Dartford in 1976, Crossway Church in Elephant and Castle in 1979 and Christchurch in East Dulwich in 1985 before serving as Southern Synod Training Officer from 1985-1990. He became Minister of Hove and Portslade in 1990 and Director of the Windermere Centre in 1992.

After serving as Moderator of the URC General Assembly in 1999-2000, he became Director of Southern Synod's Lomas House in 2001. After retirement in 2003, he served as Director of Crowhurst Christian Healing Centre East Sussex from 2005-2009. Both Mr McIntosh and his wife Kay, an ordained Deaconess, who were married in 1986, survived major cancer treatments six years ago.

Mr McIntosh wrote *Refreshing the Elders' Meeting* and *Refreshing the Church Meeting* for the URC and *Listening is Healing*. He was a keen model maker, collector of Biggles books, a volunteer for the National Trust and captain of Haywards Heath Golf Society.

Two teenagers become latest Lundie Memorial Award recipients



Two teenagers have been named the latest recipients of the Lundie Memorial Award, which celebrates youngsters using their God-given skills, time and talents to good effect.

Thirteen-year-old James Gough, pictured left, from the URC South Western Synod, received the award in December for sharing his technical skills during the Covid-19 pandemic when he joined the all-age worship team. He proved a real asset, contributing ideas and suggestions but also creating YouTube videos for the services. This award is testimony not only to James' willingness to use his gifts, skills and talents to play his part in the mission of God, but also to his church leadership for recognising those gifts and enabling him to serve, learning from his growing expertise and enthusiasm.

Joseph Hartley, 16, pictured right, from the URC Yorkshire Synod, received the award in January. Joseph has willingly taken on a lead role in his church ensuring that the Audio Visual presentation and sound is available for all Sunday Services and other events such as church meetings and Messy Church. Preparation to do this involves a lot of time which Joseph gives unstintingly – all the more admirable as he is in Year 11 and now studying for his GCSEs.

Amy Johnson

'Believe nothing to be impossible' – Amy Johnson, in a speech she gave in 1936

Amy Johnson was a pioneering aviator – the first woman to fly solo from England to Australia (5th – 24th May 1930). This 11,000 mile journey across three continents, fraught with danger and drama, was the first of her several record-breaking world flights. Johnson became a living legend; her achievements feted nationally and internationally. But her life was cut short in 1941 when, aged just 37, her plane plunged into the Thames Estuary under contentious circumstances.



A passion for flying

Amy Johnson was born in Hull on 1st July 1903. Her father John was a partner in the family fish-processing business. Johnson was smart, rebellious and, after university, moved to London and took on a series of jobs, becoming a legal secretary.

For an unknown reason, in spring 1928, she visited Stag Lane Aerodrome in London's Edgware, home of the London Aeroplane Club. She quickly became a member with her expensive fees paid for by her supportive father. She took her first flying lesson in September 1928 and, after 19 hours flying, was awarded her pilot's licence, July 1929.

This was a radical move at that time but, perhaps even more unusual, was her learning how to maintain an aircraft – taught by the club's Chief Mechanic, Jack Humphreys – gaining her Ground Engineer's licence 5 months later. Humphreys said she was a 'born engineer.'

Amy was a very inexperienced pilot – the longest flight she had attempted was the 180 miles from Stag Lane Aerodrome to Hedon Aerodrome, Hull. Yet she had an iron resolve to fly 11,000 miles and break Australian Bert Hinkler's speed record. He flew solo from England to Australia in 1928, taking 15½ days.

Amy pursued a long campaign to raise funds for her epic flight, finally getting the financial backing and support of the Castrol oil magnate, Lord Charles Wakefield. Her father also gave her money. She bought Jason, her second-hand Gipsy

Moth bi-plane (now housed in London's Science Museum), for £600 and secured petrol and oil supplies along her route.



Amy Johnson pictured in 'Jason', her DH60 Gipsy Moth bi-plane named after her family's business trademark, at Croydon Aerodrome, 5th May 1930, just before take-off on her solo 11,000 mile flight to Darwin, Australia.

Amy navigated using only a compass, plus basic maps with a ruler to plot the most direct routes. She had no radio link to the ground and no reliable information about weather conditions.

During the epic flight she narrowly missed flying into a mountain range, endured a forced landing in a desert sandstorm, another in a jungle among what she initially thought was a hostile tribe, flew through tropical storms and was caught up in shock waves from a volcanic eruption.

Amy battled engine problems, heavy landings, fear of flying over open water, fierce head winds, exhaustion, loneliness, extreme cold in the open cockpit where she flew for up to 12 hours a day, as well as realising halfway through the flight that she would not be able to beat Bert Hinkler's record. But, wherever she landed, there were enthusiastic local crowds to greet her, growing enormously in number as word of her journey spread. Throughout Amy's 20 day flight, her father and family sent her encouraging cables, always stressing safety over speed.

Hero's welcome, publicity tours and a crash

Amy landed at Darwin, Australia, on 24th May 1930, to a hero's welcome. She had become a world-wide celebrity. Two days after her arrival in Darwin, Amy began a six-week publicity tour across Australia. She was showered with gifts and fan mail. Songs were written about her. She was later awarded a CBE. The British press dubbed her 'Queen of the Air.'

Amy's publicity tour was a gruelling round of speeches, receptions and parades. With no time to rest, she was exhausted and crashed at Brisbane's aerodrome in front of hundreds of spectators. Jason was virtually destroyed. She suffered only bumps and bruises. The plan had been for her to fly round Australia in her plane. Now she had to be ferried as a passenger for the rest of her tour, including being piloted by the Scot, Jim Mollison, a rising aviation pioneer who was later to become her husband.

Amy returned to England on 4th August 1930. Huge crowds greeted her arrival. In London – more than one million people lined the parade route as she was driven through the streets in an open-topped car. Over 300,000 people welcomed her back to Hull, her home city.

The Daily Mail had bought her story and paid her £10,000. This sponsorship deal was on the understanding that she would undertake a 3 month publicity tour of Britain. However, after a month of exhausting public appearances, she collapsed. The tour was abandoned and she temporarily retired from public view.

Fame, marriage and more records

Amy soon returned to flying, cementing her fame with more records. In July/August 1931, she and her old engineering instructor, Jack Humphreys, made a record-breaking 10-day flight from London to Japan in a Puss Moth named 'Jason II'. Amy broke flight records again, flying solo to Cape Town, South Africa, in 1932 and regaining this record in 1936.

She married Jim Mollison in 1932. He had set flight records himself, including the first solo crossing of the Atlantic. They were a world-famous glamorous celebrity couple – the 'flying sweethearts' – often flying together on highly publicised trips, including attempting a long distance record by flying from Pendine Sands, Wales, across the Atlantic to New York. However, their plane crashed in Bridgeport, Connecticut, short of their target. Amy and Jim were both injured. He was hospitalised. Despite this, they achieved the record and were given a huge ticker-tape welcome in New York, where they were entertained by President Franklyn Roosevelt, and met and became friendly with Amelia Earhart.

Amy and Jim's tempestuous marriage, conducted in the full glare of publicity, faltered over the years. They divorced in 1938.

Life changes

Amy became aviation editor for the Daily Mail in 1934. She was a commercial pilot for a short time in 1934 and 1939. She appeared in Vogue magazine in 1936, modelling a collection of flight wear designed for her solo flight from London to Cape Town by the leading Italian fashion designer, Elsa Schiaparelli. She took up motor rallying and gliding. She drove fast cars.

But the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 made Amy reconsider her very public life. The civilian ATA took over all the ferrying of military aircraft from factories to RAF airfields during the war, as well as the ferrying between airfields. 188 of the 1,245 pilots were women. Pilots flew a range of aircraft, from bi-planes to Spitfires and heavy Lancaster bombers. They flew the unarmed aircraft within sight of land below; they were not taught how to fly with instruments. They had no navigational aids or radios, just maps and a compass. They flew blind in all weathers. Amy Johnson was perfectly qualified, and joined up in May 1940.

Death in the Thames Estuary

On 5th January 1941 – snowy, freezing cold and foggy – Amy took off in a twin-engine Airspeed Oxford plane on a routine 90 minute flight from Blackpool Aerodrome to RAF Kidlington near Oxford. Four hours later she parachuted into the Thames Estuary, many miles off course. A ships' convoy in the area made an unsuccessful attempt at rescue. Her body was never recovered. Parts of the plane, her travelling bag, logbook and chequebook washed up later.

Speculation about her death has continued over the decades. There was a rumour of two bodies in the water, giving rise to the theory that she was on a secret mission. There was talk that she had been shot down by friendly fire, i.e. the British, after not acknowledging call signals. Maybe she just got lost in the extreme weather conditions, ran out of fuel and had to ditch her plane.

Amy V. Johnson's name is carved within the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Air Forces Memorial at Runnymede, Surrey – a memorial for those in the Air Force who were lost during the Second World War and who have no known grave.

Based on a blog post for Historic England written by Nicky Hughes and published on 4th January 2021.

Sermon from the Sunday Worship broadcast on Sunday 31st January from the Cathedral Church of St Anne in Belfast

The readings were taken from Psalm 107. 23-30, Jonah 1:3-13 and Mark 4: 35-41.

On this day, 68 years ago, the Shipping Forecast issued at 0655 hours for Saturday 31st January, 1953 was: “Sea areas Malin, Faroes, Hebrides. Severe North to North West Gales becoming generally northerly later. Showers with sleet or snow”.

By the end of that day, and the Great Storm of 1953, over 300 people had lost their lives across the United Kingdom. 21,000 people had been made homeless, and over 200,000 acres of land in the East of England had been inundated by the North Sea. And among the losses, on that day, was the Stranraer to Larne ferry, the Princess Victoria. As the ferry left the shelter of Loch Ryan in South West Scotland, mountainous seas breached the stern doors of the exposed car deck. Unable to steer the ship back to Stranraer, the captain ran ahead of the storm for the shelter of Belfast Lough. But the ship foundered near the mouth of the lough. Of 179 passengers and crew who had boarded the Princess Victoria that morning, 135 were lost, including 33 residents of this city.

For a “city shaped by the sea” and the seafarers of her port, the power of nature and the force of the sea is never to be underestimated. It’s why we frequently use storm words to describe our greatest challenges. In communities struggling most with Covid, people will speak of a Tsunami of infections. In relation to the multiple challenges of Brexit in the midst of a pandemic others will talk about a “perfect storm”.

This morning, what can we learn from the scriptures we have heard? Let me offer you three words, three ideas, which lie at the heart of today’s readings, because each reading demonstrates an intimate knowledge of the power of a storm.

The first word is “Respect”. In each passage we encounter a respect for power of the sea, and the forces of nature. Psalm 107 declares “Those who go down to the sea in ships, they have seen the works of the Lord, his wonders in the deep”.

Jonah thought he could hide from God and God’s call for him to rescue the people of the city of Ninevah. He thought if he ran away to sea, God would not be there to catch up with him. Only

when trapped by the force of the storm did Jonah admit “I am a Hebrew and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who created the sea and the dry land”

And the disciples of Jesus, although each was an experienced sailor, even these men feared for their lives. How could Jesus be asleep on a cushion, when they were in danger of drowning as the waves crashed over the sides of their boat?

In face of the power of nature, whether that is climate change, a world pandemic or setting sail in the teeth of a storm, we are called to a place of respect, of awe. We are to know that God is not absent from the storm, but present at the very heart of it, not absent but present in Intensive Care Units, and vaccination centres across this country and across the world.

The second word we are given in the face of these storms is “Co-operation”. In the Psalm, the crew cry out together to God for their rescue. In the story of Jonah, the other sailors are appalled that Jonah is asleep. The very least he could do is call on his god for rescue, as they are calling on theirs. And the most he can do is to return to the God he has been avoiding, and seek God’s partnership to overcome the peril.

And for Jesus, standing in the stern and commanding the storm to be silenced, Jesus wants to know why his disciples did not believe that because they were together they would survive?

Faced with whatever storm in life we confront, we are called to co-operation and shared responsibility. Whether that is wearing face coverings for the sake of all, or ensuring a fair distribution of precious vaccines, to the poorest countries as much as to those which can pay most. The writer John Donne famously reminds us that “no man is an island” unconnected to others. Whether our storm is personal, racial or national, God calls us to know the importance of co-operation, of fellowship, because our rescue is always a shared rescue.

And finally, “Trust”, faith. The Psalmist declares “He brought them to the haven they desired”. When Jonah finally placed his utter trust in God and God’s purposes, Jonah allowed the other crew members to throw him overboard, not to drown but to be rescued by the God he worshipped.

And Jesus' challenge to his closest disciples was this: "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith in me?"

Throughout the current pandemic, many people have said "Our faith is in science and in the miracle of the vaccine" And of course it is.

But behind the science, which unlocks our knowledge of truth which already exists, and behind the miracle of a vaccine, developed out of unprecedented co-operation, there stands a

greater faith and a greater hope. God's love and care and belief in our humanity.

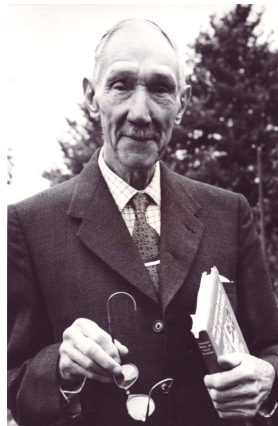
We strive because in the storm God is more present than anywhere else. We hope because we are made to co-operate, because in fellowship we are always more. And we believe, because God believes in us, because in every storm Jesus does not sleep, he is in command. And in every storm he calls us to greater trust and greater faith in him.

The Very Reverend Stephen Forde

More photos from the Echo Archive



The late Joy Hardwick in her St John Ambulance uniform with Citizen of the Month Award in 1987



Harold Tutt, well known to many older residents as Mr Tutt, headmaster of Hadleigh School (year unknown)



Mary Jefferies on the right (wife of Rev. Peter Brewer) in her job-sharing, health visitor role at Thundersley Clinic in 1987



Vivienne and Bob Leonard, owners of The Little Shop on London Road (opposite the War memorial) in 1981



Colin Riley (currently Mayor of Castle Point), doing building work at his home in Daws Heath in 1984



Southend Pipe band at Hadleigh Castle for the Benfleet Unicef Fayre in 1985



Sir Bernard Braine MP at the official opening of Abbeyfield House in Chapel Lane in 1983

COVID-19 vaccines

COVID-19 vaccines train your immune system using a harmless form of the virus, SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19. Vaccines stimulate an immune response without causing illness. Each type of vaccine for COVID-19 works differently to introduce antigens, which are unique features of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, to your body. The antigen triggers a specific immune response and this response builds immune memory, so your body can fight off SARS-CoV-2 in future.

Viral vector vaccines – Contain an unrelated harmless virus (the viral vector) to deliver SARS-CoV-2 genetic material. When administered, our cells use the genetic material to produce a specific viral protein, which is recognised by our immune system and triggers a response.

Considerations: Generate strong immune response. May need to be stored at specific low temperatures.

Examples in human use: University of Oxford/AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine.

In clinical trials for COVID-19: Janssen, Cansino, Sputnik V.

Genetic vaccines – Contain a segment of SARS-CoV-2 virus genetic material that codes for a specific protein. Can be DNA or RNA. Our cells use the genetic material to make the SARS-CoV-2 protein, which is recognised by the immune system to trigger a response.

Considerations: Low cost and fast to develop. May need to be stored at specific low temperatures.

Examples in human use: Pfizer/BioNTech (RNA) & Moderna (RNA) COVID-19 vaccines.

In clinical trials for COVID-19: Imperial College.

Inactivated vaccines – Contain killed SARS-CoV-2 virus. The killed virus is recognised by the immune system to trigger a response without causing illness.

Considerations: May need to be administered with an adjuvant to boost immune response.

Examples in human use: Influenza vaccine.

In clinical trials for COVID-19: Sinovac, Sinopharm.

Attenuated vaccines – Contain weakened SARS-CoV-2 virus. The weakened virus is recognised by the immune system to trigger a response without causing illness.

Considerations: A well-known approach which requires time and extensive testing. The immune response resembles the natural infection.

Examples in human use: Oral Polio vaccine.

In clinical trials for COVID-19: Codagenix.

Protein vaccines – Contain proteins from the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which are recognised by the immune system to trigger a response. Can be whole proteins, protein fragments, or many protein molecules packed into nanoparticles.

Considerations: Have good previous safety records. Usually administered with an adjuvant to boost immune response.

Examples in human use: Hepatitis B vaccine

In clinical trials for COVID-19: Novavax, Sanofi/GSK

Information from the British Society for Immunology website (www.immunology.org) as at January 2021.

For more information about the development of different vaccines, see the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine's tracker at: https://vac-lshtm.shinyapps.io/ncov_vaccine_landscape

For information about numbers of vaccinations carried out in the United Kingdom, see the vaccinations page on the Government's Coronavirus website at <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/details/vaccinations>

Lent, Covid and lockdown

As we enter the second season of Lent in lockdown, Fr. Jim Fleming of the Missionary Society of St Columban invites us to stop and to reflect on what it is all about and what effect it's having on us personally and collectively.

The international rollout of the Covid vaccination is currently in full swing, especially in wealthier countries. Others are not as fortunate as they await an uncertain future wondering if their people will ever be protected. Ideally the entire world would be vaccinated before too long and those on the margins of society would all be included.

Covid is a cloud hanging over us, hovering ominously and ever present. It tests us to the core of our being. It is relentless, widespread and ever mutating. It affects every aspect of our lives, challenging us to be resilient, to be patient, to be hopeful, to be kind and generous to others. So-called 'normal life' is elusive as nothing can be planned, nothing taken for granted and there is – seemingly – nothing to look forward to.

Meanwhile we keep our distance and refrain from physical gestures of holding, hugging, kissing or touching. We cannot even reveal our facial responses to outside stimuli whether it is a smile, frown or just a growl.

And so, as we enter the second season of Lent in our never-ending lockdown, we are invited to stop and to reflect on what it is all about – and what effect it's having on us personally and collectively.

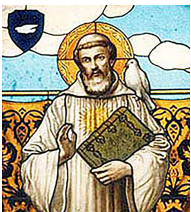
Like Jesus, we too have been led into the desert experience of Covid and lockdown where we have the opportunity to reflect on what it means to be stripped of our securities and comforts and where also we are brought face to face with both God and ourselves. This is where God can really speak to our hearts and reveal God's will for us and for our world.

And so, Lent as well as Covid, in every country and in every situation, is a stretching time and a powerful reminder of the intrinsically challenging nature of our lives during these difficult times. Ultimately, we are people of faith – and what a wonderful gift this is, a gift that can make sense of a lot of what seems senseless in life. We are also people of hope, people who believe that throughout any crisis in life, any period of darkness or abandonment, we can rise above it all and know that better times lie ahead when we will once again experience warmth and light, freedom and happiness.

And so we can say in the words of King David repeated in Acts 2: 25-28 'The Lord is near me, I will not be troubled. I am filled with gladness and full of joy. I will rest assured in hope'.

Fr. Jim Fleming

St Columban



The Missionary Society of St Columban was founded in 1918 and takes its name and inspiration from Ireland's pioneering 6th century missionary to Europe. Saint Columban was born in the province of Leinster, Ireland, about the year 540 AD. Little is known about his family and early life, but we do know that his education was with a teacher near his home. At that time, education simply meant training the child in the knowledge and love of God. All study was directed towards this end.

Columban was about 17 or 18 years old when he decided to dedicate his life to God so he left home to continue his studies in a monastery on the island of Cleenish in Lough Erne. Columban remained there for about five years before moving on to a larger monastery at Bangor where he stayed for many years. But there grew in him a desire to travel outside Ireland to spread the message of the Gospel among the peoples of Europe who had been overrun by barbarians. His abbot, St Comgall, reluctantly gave permission for Columban and some companions to leave and begin their journey. He was then aged about 40. They had no fixed plans, but wherever they wandered, Columban preached eloquently and the example of the lives of his group made a deep impression on people. Finally, the local King pressed Columban and his friends to settle in eastern France and establish a community. Over time, this monastery flourished as a centre of worship, learning and service to the local people and as more young men came to join him, Columban established two more houses in the area.

Columban then continued to journey through France, Germany, Switzerland and finally across the Alps into Italy, preaching the good news of Jesus wherever he went and establishing another community at Bregenz in Austria, when he was nearly 70 years old. Eventually, Columban settled down and built his final monastery at Bobbio, near Genoa, Italy, where he died on 23rd November 615.



Remaining grateful together though apart

From 29-31 January, Rev. Clare Downing, Moderator of URC General Assembly, attended URC Youth (dis)ASSEMBLED. The digital event was for URC Youth to remain connected after it was forced to cancel its Assembly because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Clare reflects on the event:

It was an interesting weekend. Originally, I'd planned to be in Staffordshire at URC Youth Assembly. While Reuben, URC Youth Moderator had set himself up with a virtual background of Whitemoor Lakes (where Youth Assembly is usually held) we were, of course online. The positive side of this was that it made it a bit easier for me to be 'in' Southern Synod, for the induction of the Southern Synod's new Moderator, Bridget Banks as well.

We have learnt a great deal about worshipping virtually. The induction went smoothly and was accessible to many people who might have baulked at travelling to a central venue. Worship at Youth Assembly was inspiring. The music was brilliantly produced, and the reflection on 'heroes and villains' in the stories of David and Esther was challenging.

But I, for one, still struggle to feel part of a community worshipping with others yet apart.

The event was not just about worship. On Saturday evening, URC Youth (dis) Assembled was a combination of comedy and music.

Both comedian Paul Kerensa and the band Folk On performed great sets and really engaged with the audience, but it's a whole different experience from being at a gig. I was particularly struck by how much less we tend to laugh out loud when we are alone, than when we are alongside others. Occasionally I will read something funny and burst into giggles, but it's not a frequent

experience. While the laughter tracks on TV comedy can feel forced, they serve a purpose. Laughter, like worship, is often best as a community experience.

Of course, we are all different and some of us will have more of that sense of togetherness online than I do. I'm trying hard to concentrate on the positives – the people who are more likely to be included by our current ways of meeting, the reduced carbon footprint of living in the virtual world, the ability to connect with those who are physically distant – but I really do miss the interaction with three dimensional people.

Trying to remember that, just because the medium is different, God doesn't stop working or speaking to and through us. God, who speaks through the experience of God's people through the centuries, through stories and prophecy, poetry and miracles, hasn't stopped communicating with us simply because we are stuck at home.

It was a privilege to spend time with two very different groups over the weekend. God was not silent – God was speaking to me, and I'm sure to many others, as we met. If I start to feel sorry for myself as I prepare to lead worship remotely, I will remind myself that these times are even more of a challenge for a stand-up comedian than for a worship leader. So, let's spare a thought and a prayer for those who make a living by communication and try to ensure that we find things that bring laughter into our lives.

God bless,

Clare

Posted 5th February 2021

Love

Brief is life but love is long. – *Alfred Lord Tennyson*

Love: a temporary insanity, curable by marriage. – *Ambrose Bierce*

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. – *Corinthians 13:7-8*

Computer Corner

Coronavirus stopped us doing life-changing surgery, so we invented a new form of PPE

Interesting read

A good news Coronavirus story from The Conversation describing how one ENT surgeon and his team invented new PPE equipment to enable them to carry on performing cochlear transplants in a COVID-safe environment.

URL: <https://theconversation.com/coronavirus-stopped-us-doing-life-changing-surgery-so-we-invented-a-new-form-of-ppe-144752>

Talk of the Thames

Interesting podcast

Talk of the Thames is a podcast series dedicated to London's iconic river – think all things Thames! Hosted by Estuary Edges Officer, Eve Sanders, this monthly podcast is aimed at a general audience and features relaxed, insightful interviews with people working around the Thames Estuary. The podcasts tackle a range of topics, including Thames history, riverside development, environmental issues and wildlife.

URL: <https://www.thamesestuarypartnership.org/talk-of-the-thames-podcast>

Word Search Creator

Interesting free software

The word search below now includes lines between the letters in the grid because I've switched to a different means of producing it. I'm now using a free program, Word Search Creator, which is available for Windows and Linux. It's fairly easy to use and has a facility to create grids of different shapes, although that's a bit fiddly. Once complete, a grid can be copied as an image (without or without the answers highlighted) or exported as a pdf file (with or without the answers highlighted).

URL: <http://wordsearchcreator.org>

Word Search – Words associated with wintery weather

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

ARCTIC
BITING
BLIZZARD
BRACING
CHILLY
DRIFT
FREEZING
FROST
GLOVES
ICICLE
ICY
NIPPY
RAW
SCARF
SLIPPERY
SNOW
SNOWBALL
SNOWMAN
TOBOGGAN
WINTERY

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

A Psalm of Life

Tell me not, in mournful numbers,
Life is but an empty dream!
For the soul is dead that slumbers,
And things are not what they seem.

Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.

Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
Is our destined end or way;
But to act, that each tomorrow
Find us farther than today.

Art is long, and Time is fleeting,
And our hearts, though stout and brave,
Still, like muffled drums, are beating
Funeral marches to the grave.

In the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of Life,
Be not like dumb, driven cattle!
Be a hero in the strife!

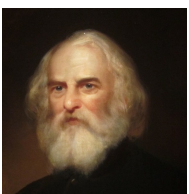
Trust no Future, howe'er pleasant!
Let the dead Past bury its dead!
Act,—act in the living Present!
Heart within, and God o'erhead!

Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time;—

Footprints, that perhaps another,
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, shall take heart again.

Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labour and to wait.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882)



Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was an American poet of the Romantic period. He served as a professor at Harvard University and was an adept linguist, travelling throughout Europe and immersing himself in European culture and poetry, which he emulated in his poetry. In 1884 he was honoured by the placing of a memorial bust in Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey, the first American to be so recognized. Other famous poems by Longfellow include *The Song of Hiawatha* (1855) and *Paul Revere's Ride* (1863).