

# THE HADLEIGH MESSENGER

June 2021



The Magazine of the  
United Reformed Church, Hadleigh, Essex

## SUNDAY SERVICES

Currently one service at 10.30am

Please phone 01702 557678  
if wishing to attend

# Coronavirus variants have new names

The World Health Organization (WHO) has announced a new naming system for the coronavirus that uses Greek letters to refer to the different variants. For the variants of concern, B117 (the UK or Kent variant) will now be known as alpha, B1351 (South Africa) will be beta, P1 (Brazil) is gamma and B16172 (India) delta.

For the variants of interest, B1427/B1429 (US) is epsilon, P2 (Brazil) is zeta, B1525 is eta, P3 (Philippines) is theta, B1526 (US) is iota and B16171 (India) is kappa. The hope is that this new system will end the stigmatising practice of naming variants after where they were identified, with phrases such as the “Indian variant” being dropped in favour of the “delta variant”.

This is an important step. Using geographical names can stoke up racism and xenophobia. It also potentially disincentivises countries from hunting for new variants, as finding them may hurt their national image, as India has found with the B1617 variants. There’s also no guarantee these geographical names are accurate either, as variants can easily spread before being discovered.

## Old habits die hard

Naming a disease after the place it is supposed to have originated from has a long tradition. In previous centuries, Italians, Germans and Britons called syphilis “the French disease”. The French called it “the Neapolitan disease”. To Russians, it was the “Polish disease”, while the Polish called it “the German disease”. And the Danish and Portuguese called it “the Spanish disease”.

Official names of diseases have often included the countries or regions they were first identified in, too: German measles, West Nile virus, Middle East respiratory syndrome (Mers), Ebola (named after a river in the Democratic Republic of the Congo), Japanese encephalitis, Zika (a forest in Uganda) and Lyme disease (named after a town in Connecticut).

Of course, nobody wants the stigma of their country, town, river or forest to be associated with an infectious disease. In the case of the 1918 pandemic “Spanish flu”, the moniker was particularly galling as the outbreak almost certainly originated elsewhere, with Spain getting the rap simply because it was more open about its reporting.

Consequently, there is now a firm trend in medicine towards moving away from naming diseases after where they were first identified. When the WHO came up with a name for the disease caused by SARS-CoV-2, it called it COVID-19, a contraction of “coronavirus disease 2019”.

However, this didn’t stop former US president Donald Trump from referring to SARS-CoV-2 as the “Chinese virus”. Acts of racism against Asian-Americans then spiked across the US, becoming such a problem that the Biden administration passed a specific law this spring to try to curb the problem. Similar waves of anti-Asian racism have been seen in other western countries too.

## It’s all Greek to me

Despite this, up until now coronavirus variants have still been commonly referred to by the place they were first identified – at least by journalists and the public. We talk about the South Africa variant, the Brazilian variant, the Indian variant, stoking the fires of racism against people from these countries.

The world also knows about the highly transmissible UK variant, which in the UK is called the Kent variant. And in Kent, it’s probably known as the Isle of Sheppey variant – there’s always someone else to blame.

Of course, there are scientific names for these variants, but even they are “a bloody mess”, according to the journal *Nature*. For example, the UK variant goes by two official monikers – depending on which system you’re using. It’s called B117 under the Pango system, but 20I/501Y.V1 under the Nexstrain system. With scientific names as unpronounceable as this, it’s easy to see why the media has opted for the UK variant and suchlike.

But these are stigmatising names, and while journalists often attempt to go with the slightly less stigmatising “the variant first identified in the UK/Brazil/South Africa”, it’s such a mouthful this politeness rarely lasts an entire news segment. Thankfully, the WHO’s naming system, as it notes, is “easy to pronounce and recall” and doesn’t point fingers. Let’s hope it catches on, and we can finally put the country-blame-game system to rest.

## Ed Feil

Professor of Microbial Evolution at The Milner Centre for Evolution, University of Bath

Published on The Conversation website (<https://theconversation.com>) on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2021.

## How high is our doorstep?

Editor's note: To celebrate Rev. Peter Brewer's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday on 29<sup>th</sup> June, I'm re-publishing his pastoral letter from the April 1984 edition of the magazine. It was written during Peter's first period as Minister from September 1983 to September 1988. (He had previously served as Lay Pastor from Jan 1969 to July 1964 and also served as part-time minister from November 1991 to August 1993.). The message is still very relevant today although the Coronavirus pandemic means that it is not currently possible to welcome people in the way that we would wish.

Dear Friends,

When as a lad of twelve, I moved with my family to Lowestoft into the heart of the Suffolk countryside, I was exposed for the first time to the culture shock of the Suffolk dialect. On almost the first day my sister and I were joyfully picking cowslips in a nearby meadow when a local lad informed us that we would "wholly get wrong". It did not need much imagination to interpret this to mean that we were trespassing and were running the risk of a sound telling off!

Another phrase that remains in my memory is associated with calling on neighbours. "Don't stand there on the throshle; come right in together", they would say.

The throshle (threshold) seems to be quite an important feature of a Suffolk home. It marks the boundary between the outside world of strangers and the intimate life of the home. The East Anglian, and I think, particularly, the Suffolk man or woman, is suspicious of strangers. He is slow to admit you into the intimacies of home or even village life and when he lets you cross his threshold you are really one of the family – rather like being "far ben" in a Scottish home.

It is easy to cross the threshold when the welcome is open and friendly and it is good to feel that once people have entered our church they really do feel that we are glad to see them and want to come again to experience the warmth of the fellowship. We seem to have developed a way of making folk feel that we are glad to see them for their own sakes and not just as 'pew fodder'!

One thing that we do not realise is how difficult it is for someone who is not in the habit of going to church to cross the threshold and enter. They may not have much idea of what goes on inside or they may harbour misconceptions about what sort of

people we really are, or about what sort of people we would be likely to welcome.

Sometimes it is the building that puts them off. Well, we are planning to do something that might make it more inviting\*. Sometimes it is shyness that keeps them away, not knowing what might be expected of them once they are inside. Maybe all they need is the invitation. Some just have the gift of 'making friends and influencing people', and we have been so glad that there are those who have persuaded their friends to come with them, making the doorstep so low that they have been able to cross it together. This is something that we must all learn to do.

One of the biggest obstacles for many people is the fact that the Christians they have met may have not been particularly attractive people. Perhaps they were 'holier than thou', or condemning, or hypocritical, or guilty of some selfish thoughtlessness or lack of manners. Of course, none of us is perfect. I am reminded of the Church that is said to have put up a poster reading, "There are people who say this church is full of hypocrites. That's not true – there's room for plenty more!" Yet what a high threshold such experience can create. One almost impossible to step over.

Of course Jesus makes a difference to us when we let him into our lives. But it must be a difference that shows itself, not by setting us apart from our fellows but by drawing us closer in fellowship and understanding and love. This is the difference which will make it easy for folk to cross our "throshle". "Vive la difference!" as you might say.

God bless you all.

*Peter Brewer*

\*In 1985, major alterations were carried out at the church including the addition of the foyer, which became the main entrance.



**"I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go into the house of the LORD."**

Psalm 122:1 (NKJV)

## From the Editor

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

I am pleased to report that the re-opening of the church for worship, which took place on 17<sup>th</sup> May (Pentecost), went well. Heather has written a short item about it. It was good that some of us were able to meet together again but it will be even better when we are allowed to sing and to have tea and coffee after the service!

I haven't mentioned donations for the magazine so far this year but I am very grateful to all those who have made a donation nevertheless. This has usually happened on my travels when I've been delivering copies. If you would like to make a donation to cover the cost of receiving paper copies during 2021 then the suggested donation is £5.00 plus any postage costs.

It has again been a struggle to find material for the magazine so it's only fourteen pages this month. However, for once, there is a lot of Family News, though not all of it is good news. However, one special event is mentioned – the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of Rev. Peter Brewer on 29<sup>th</sup> June.

Heather and I first made contact with Hadleigh URC when we wanted to have our second son, Andrew, christened, in 1985. (Our first son, Michael was christened at the Flavel Memorial Church in Dartmouth, where we were married.) Peter's ministry was such that I became a more faithful Christian and it led to Heather and I becoming regular worshippers and later members of the church in 1993. We are grateful to Peter for what he did for us and for the church and wish him a very happy 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.

*Malcolm Brown*

---



---

## A grave affair

An elderly man of 102 was told by his doctors that he didn't have long to live. So he summoned the three most important people in his life - his Doctor, his Priest and his Lawyer and said:

"Today I found out that I don't have long to live. I asked you three here because you're the most important people in my life and I need to ask a favour. I'm going to give each of you an envelope with £50,000 in it. When I die, I would ask that all three of you throw the money in my grave in case I should need some later."

A few days later the man passed on and was duly laid to rest. On leaving the graveside, the doctor said, "I have to admit, I kept £10,000 of his money. He owed me lots of private medical bills. But I threw the other £40,000 in."

The Priest said, "I have to admit also that I kept £25,000 for the church. It's going to a very good cause. But I threw the other £25,000 in."

The Lawyer just couldn't believe what he was hearing, "I am surprised at both of you. I wrote a cheque for the whole amount and threw it in."

---

### HADLEIGH URC OFFICERS

#### Interim Moderators:

Rev. Jim Tarrant/Rev. Celia Whitman

#### Hon. Secretary:

Mr Royston Brackin (01702 558862)

#### Acting Hon. Treasurer:

Mr Royston Brackin

#### Serving Elders:

Mr Royston Brackin

Mrs Heather Brown (01702 557678)

Mr Malcolm Brown (01702 557678)

Miss Jean Reeve (01702 554907)

### Useful information

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

Website: [www.hadleighsexurc.org.uk](http://www.hadleighsexurc.org.uk)

### 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.

## Church re-opening for worship

I'm glad to report that the church re-opening at



Pentecost on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May went without a hitch. Owing to difficulties in finding other preachers who are

available, it looks as if I will be leading the worship for the next few weeks, which will keep me on my toes.

Malcolm and I have had to spend quite a lot of time looking for suitable videos featuring the hymns that I wanted to include in our worship. Quite often, the sound quality turns out not to be as good as first thought, particularly when played through the church PA system so I have occasionally had to go back to the drawing board and choose a different hymn.

We've had an average of seven people at the three services held so far (to 6<sup>th</sup> June) with ten different people attending at various times. It has been heart-warming to see people who have possibly not seen each other for many months enjoying each other's company engaged in worship.

It is definitely not the same without singing but hopefully it won't be too long before we are allowed to do so. It would also be nice to be able to serve refreshments. Let us pray that the situation in the country allows further lockdown restrictions to be safely removed at the earliest opportunity.

For the time being, the monthly evening service is not restarting. If you are planning to attend a Sunday morning service, please let me know that you are coming by phoning 01702 557678.

*Heather Brown*

---

## Castle Point Bible Society Action Group

The Annual Committee Meeting of Castle Point Bible Society Action Group took place on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021. Mrs Janice Phillips reported that, due to restrictions imposed last year in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, all fundraising activities planned for 2020 were cancelled.

However, in spite of this (and, no doubt, in answer to many prayers) the sum of £400 was received in donations. Janice also reported that the Bible Society had informed her that the donations from the entire area covered by the SS7 postcode had resulted in a total of £12,158.37 being received at Bible Society HQ. 'Thank you' to all who contributed to these funds.

As far as 2021 is concerned, please do your best to support the following fundraising event: Coffee Morning at Benfleet Methodist Church on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> August from 10.30am to 12 noon. There will be a sales table involving plants, fancy goods etc.

*Vera Knapton*

---

## Rev. Adrian Bulley

In the URC News section of last month's magazine, I mentioned that Rev. Adrian Bulley is to become the URC's Deputy General Secretary for Discipleship. After the magazine was distributed, I was delighted to receive an e-mail from Rev. Peter Elliott about Adrian. Peter was minister of Christ Church Rayleigh URC and for a couple of years also had ministerial responsibility for our church. Peter writes:

"Adrian came right through the Junior Church at Christ Church Rayleigh, was an officer in our Boys' Brigade and a leader in our Young Peoples' Fellowship. It was Adrian's decision to train for the Ministry, which nudged me in that direction. I'm sure he will be a great asset and influence as Deputy General Secretary and it has been a great privilege to have played a small part in his Christian journey as a young man."

Thank you, Peter, for that insight into Adrian's journey's to the upper echelons of the URC.

*Malcolm Brown*

# Commitment-Phobe – How am I doing?

From Reform June 2021

Editor's note: This is a column from Reform magazine that I've not featured before. It is written by an anonymous woman – using the pseudonym Commitment-Phobe – who has documented her journey from being an atheist through to becoming a Christian. Now, as a Christian, her journey continues...

How have you been doing in the pandemic? This is a question I have heard quite a bit over the year, but more so now that I am seeing more of people. And the honest truth is: I don't have a clue. Do any of us?

I have been surviving, getting by, counting my blessings and praying for those with much greater hardships. But what about thriving?

I am choosing songs for next Sunday. Kids' church is open again. I have attended church in person a couple of times since restrictions started to lift. I have not attended church with my whole family since last year. When I ask my husband about it, he says: 'Not yet.'

I am looking at the scripture for the Sunday service, waiting for the Holy Spirit to do its work in me and let it soak into my soul, and for song choices to come forth in response. I think about how I feel, trying to find the perfect summation. I realise I am overthinking, and I remember a brilliant meme. It has an image of a man sat on a church pew, labelled 'Me overthinking'; a woman behind him points a gun at his head, labelled 'Me realising I'm overthinking'; woman behind her points a gun at her head, labelled 'Me thinking about overthinking'; then a sniper in the balcony points his gun at the trio, labelled 'Me overthinking overthinking.' I am clearly thinking too much to be inspired, so I have chosen no songs.

This Sunday, I didn't book a place in church, and the weirdness of being at home watching a live streamed service, showing people I know intimately, really got to me, especially when considering that the building itself is about five minutes' walk from where we live.

Last Sunday, I prioritised a slot with my hairdresser over attending Church. I think I want to go back to attending church in person regularly, but my actions do not indicate that this is the case. Getting my daughter out of her pyjamas on a Sunday morning now seems like the most mammoth task. The comfort felt by being able to go to church from our sofa will be hard to let go of. Some of my reluctance comes from having enough time away to question my unhealthy behaviour at church. Some of it comes from

having experienced too much change, so now even good change causes anxiety.

I want to go to church, but I don't know how to rebuild the habit for my family. I am not great at forming habits or being consistent, but I feel like the driving force to get us back in the building on a regular basis will be me, because that is my role in our home. I tend to lead the change. Thinking about it now feels like an uphill struggle.

And here I am preparing a worship set for next Sunday. I haven't chosen songs for leading sung worship in more than a year. And there is all this stuff going on in my head which has nothing to do with it.

A few weeks, back a friend invited four people to come around to his garden and sing worship with him and his wife that Friday evening. I agreed straight away. We asked about each other's week, sang worship as he played guitar, and spontaneously prayed for each other and situations in the world that were on our hearts. It lasted an hour and it was marvellous! I had no hesitation in booking that in, and would happily do it every week. Why does the church service seem like a much bigger commitment?

Whatever is going on I can see that there is some digging to do around honesty with myself and my relationship with my church. And I need help with this. In my own strength, I will cave in and seek the comfort of the familiar. In my own strength, I will continue to feel anxious but not seek out a solution. In my own strength, I will just stay stuck.

Perhaps I am being called to a different way of doing church. Perhaps my antipathy is not just a symptom of a year and a half of this experience we have all been living through. Or perhaps I need to take the hand of the Holy Spirit and enter into the chaos of my thoughts and feelings and find out.

When I next get asked 'How have you been doing?' I might say: 'I'm working it out.' With a little help from my friend Jesus.

*Commitment-Phobe*

## 'No Mow May'

Anyone who has walked past the church in the last couple of weeks will have noticed that the grass on the church lawn has grown quite long during May. This is because, at the request of John Rice, we joined in the 'No Mow May' scheme, organised by the charity Plantlife. John very kindly mows our lawn on a regular basis and was prepared to face the extra effort needed to cut the grass in due course.



Not mowing the grass has allowed more flowers, particularly daisies and buttercups, to flourish. This in turn boosts nectar production that allows more bees to feed at a time when nectar is in shorter supply than later in the year.

At the end of May, Plantlife also asked gardeners to take part in their 'Every Flower Counts' study. Results from a previous study showed that simple changes in mowing habits can result in enough nectar for ten times more bees and other pollinators. In fact, the study found that 80 percent of lawns support around 400 bees a day from the nectar sugar produced by common flowers such as dandelions, but 20 percent of lawns supported 10 times as many. These "super lawns" were only cut once every four weeks.

*Malcolm Brown*

---

## Tea and Cakes for Christian Aid

Pamela George kindly organised a tea and cakes afternoon on 27<sup>th</sup> May at her home to support fundraising for Christian Aid Week at Kings Road URC. Although Pamela lives in Hadleigh and occasionally worships at our church, she has been a member at Kings Road (formerly Crowstone St George's URC) for many years.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, there were only half a dozen guests, of which I was one. It was a gorgeous, warm and sunny day and I enjoyed relaxing outside in the sun and fresh air, drinking tea and eating a lovely variety of cakes. Who wouldn't? I very rarely sit outside doing not very much so this made a very pleasant change!

It was nice to catch up with some other members of our congregation (Jean Reeve, Kay Watson and Doreen Churchill) and to see Angela Lingard (Kay's next-door neighbour) who is recovering from cancer surgery. It was also nice to meet Lynn, a friend and former near neighbour of both Pamela and Doreen.



**Angela, Doreen, Kay and Pamela**



**Lynn, Heather and Jean**

Around £100 was raised for Christian Aid, which included a donation from Pamela in memory of a friend who had passed away. Thank you, Pamela, for all your efforts.

*Malcolm Brown*

---

## Family News

---

### Rev. Peter Brewer's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday

Our former minister, Rev. Peter Brewer, reaches the landmark age of 100 on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> June. Peter has had a long association with our church, providing pastoral and ministerial leadership over three separate periods in the 1960s, 1980s and 1990s. If anyone would like to send a Peter a card and doesn't have Peter's address, then contact the Editor. I hope to be able to publish one or two photos from the birthday celebrations in next month's magazine.

*We send Peter our love and very best wishes for a happy 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, hopefully surrounded by family and friends. We also give thanks to God for Peter's long life and his lifetime of service to our Lord.*

### Peggy Hughes

Peggy received a visit from Heather and Malcolm Brown on 6<sup>th</sup> June and was given some of the flowers from church. Peggy is not as mobile as she once was but she was her usual, cheerful self and was pleased to see us. She sends her love to all those who remember her at the church. (Peggy will be 98 on 6<sup>th</sup> July.)

### Ann & Nichola Purkiss

Ann and Nichola are both well. Ann still helps her son Adam at his karate club based in St Michael's Church Hall. In normal times, Nichola attends Hesten Lodge in Thundersley every weekday but since the pandemic started this has not been possible.



**A smiling Nichola**

However, Nichola will start attending one day a week from the middle of June so will have to get used to being woken up early again, something that Ann says may come as a bit of a shock to her!

---



---

## Family News continued

---

### **Heather Brown**

Last but not least, a big thank you to Heather for leading our services since the church re-opened and in coming weeks.

*May God continue to be a guiding light to Heather as she leads us in worship.*

---

## URC News

### Thanksgiving service held for retiring Thames North Moderator

The United Reformed Church marked the retirement of Rev. Dr Andrew Prasad, Moderator



of the Thames North Synod, on 22 May with a service of celebration and thanksgiving by Zoom, attended by more than 140 people from around the world.

Andrew, who has served as Moderator since 2008, started his ministry in 1981 with the Church of North India, before moving to the Council for World Mission in 1989. After three years with the Streatham Asian Christian Fellowship from 1999, he became minister of Dulwich Grove and Camberwell Green URCs in 2002.

The service was introduced by Rev. John Campbell. Some of Andrew's favourite hymns were sung along with others written by Rev. Heather Whyte, Chair of the URC Publications Board.

The reflection and thanks from the URC was given by Rev. Nigel Uden, the immediate past Moderator of the General Assembly. Nigel thanked Andrew for his work, personality and ministry, and asked him, together with his family, who made many sacrifices throughout his service, to look forward to his retirement remembering Philippians 3, 16: 'Only let us hold fast to what we have attained.' 'May you all know yourselves beloved by God, and kept safe by Jesus Christ.'

Two pens engraved with Andrew's name and favourite Bible verse from Isaiah 55 were given to him along with other gifts and cards from the Synod. One of the cards said 'Goodbye tension, hello pension'!

### URC joins coalition to show it stands together

The United Reformed Church has become a founding member of new campaign coalition Together With Refugees. The coalition, made up of more than 100 national, local, refugee-led and grassroots groups, calls for a better approach to supporting refugees that is kinder, fairer and more effective, and believes in showing compassion to people fleeing war, persecution or violence.

Together With Refugees aims to inspire hope and win deep change in the UK's approach to refugees.

In a statement the coalition said: "This means standing up for people's ability to seek safety in the UK no matter how they came here. It means ensuring people can live in dignity while they wait to hear if they will be granted protection. It means empowering refugees to rebuild their lives and make valuable contributions to their communities. And it means the UK working with other countries to do our bit to help people who are forced to flee their homes."

Inspired by the refugee nation flag, and the colours of a lifebelt, the coalition's orange heart logo symbolises hope and compassion.

With the campaign slogan #WhoWeAre, the heart is intended to be adopted widely to show support for refugees while underpinning a sense of unity. They represent that together, as a movement, we are larger than the sum of our parts.

Simeon Mitchell, URC Secretary for Church and Society, added: "At a time when there is such hostility being expressed towards immigrants, and the government is proposing unfair and unworkable reforms to the asylum system, it is important to set out a positive alternative vision of a better approach. How we treat people seeking refugee protection is about who we are. The Bible exhorts us to show hospitality to strangers. By being part of this campaign, we are saying that we stand alongside those seeking safety and sanctuary in the UK, and want to them to experience respect, fairness and kindness."

For more information, visit <https://togetherwithrefugees.org.uk>.

### URC Eastern Synod divests from fossil fuels ahead of G7 and COP26

The URC Eastern Synod has joined 35 faith institutions from 11 countries in announcing its divestment from fossil fuels. The announcement, made on 17 May, comes from institutions in Brazil, Argentina, India, the Philippines, Uganda, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, Ireland, the UK and the US, along with the URC, Anglican, Catholic, Methodist, and Baptist churches, among others.

These commitments highlight the urgent need to divest from fossil fuels and invest in clean

alternatives in response to the growing climate crisis. Eleven out of 13 URC Synods have now joined the URC in announcing their divestment from fossil fuels, as recommended by Mission Council in May 2019.

The global divestment announcement takes place as the UK prepares to host the G7 Summit in June and the UN climate summit (COP26) in Glasgow in November.

As governments around the world continue to invest significant sums in economic recovery packages, it is vital that these investments support a just and green recovery from Covid-19. Yet, as the UN has stated, only 18% of the Covid-19 recovery spending announced by the world's 50 biggest economies in 2020 can be considered green.

### **Time capsule from 1876 discovered at URC school**

A 145-year-old time capsule, containing ten coins



and a rolled-up newspaper, has been discovered in the foundations of a United Reformed Church (URC) primary school.

As reported on BBC News, the glass jar was found “by complete accident”

while workers renovated the chapel at Barrow URC Primary School in Clitheroe, Lancashire, built in 1876. The artefact had been placed inside one of the chapel's foundation stones.

Speaking to the BBC, Head teacher Sue Taylor said the “incredible find” had brought “history of the school alive for the children.” The time capsule is now in the hands of Lancashire County Council's conservation team which will involve the children as much as possible in the process of conserving it. When the capsule is returned to the school it will be placed in the new main entrance which is roughly where it was planted many years ago.

Building work was carried out at the school in April. The demolition team lifted up the foundation stones in the chapel and found the glass jar. During the first coronavirus lockdown some of the school children buried a time capsule from 2020. Ms Taylor said finding this capsule meant “history has come full circle”.

### **Knitters knit more than 100 blankets for Malawi charity**

Kind-hearted members of Gillingham URC, in the Southern Synod, have knitted and crocheted 120 blankets for friends in Malawi.



The church has been supporting Starfish Malawi – a Christian organisation whose mission is to reduce extreme poverty and build the Kingdom of God in lives of children, through collaborative work within communities, schools and churches in the UK and Malawi.

The charity fills a container with anything that is considered to be of value in Malawi, such as educational materials, sewing machines, bicycles, blankets, shoes, clothes, and much more.

Blankets knitted by the church members will help keep people warm at night during the country's cooler season from mid-May to mid-August.

Pam Tolhurst, a Local Church Leader at Gillingham URC, said: “We usually send 25-30 blankets each year. This year the growth in our supportive knitters and crocheters, beyond the fellowship of Gillingham and friends in Medway, has reaped an increased harvest of blankets.

“We thank Girlguiding Sussex East County Associates and Girlguiding Sussex East Trefoil Guilds for their significant contribution. We also know that friends at Dartford URC have made their own contribution independent of our 120 blankets. The gift of a blanket might seem a small thing to us but to those from villages in Malawi and patients at the health care clinic run by Starfish Malawi it is an enormous blessing.

“I believe that knitters and crocheters would agree with me that they too have been blessed through the opportunity to make a difference especially at a time when life here has raised many challenges.”

For more information about the work of Starfish Malawi visit the charity's website at <https://starfishmalawi.com>.

## God created thinking beings

It has been said that the best proof of existence is “I think therefore I am.” (Rene Descartes). The corollary, however, “I am therefore I think” is not so clearly a universal truth. By and large the human race doesn’t like to think, it takes too much effort. If someone else is prepared to do the thinking for us then normally we are quite happy to follow the leader.

Unfortunately, God did not create just a few people with this gift, he gave it to each one of us and if we are to really be children of God then we have to use the gift He has given to us. God wants us to think and to come to our own conclusions which will reflect His will.

One of the current popular views of Jesus is that He was the chief rebel. He observed and thought and then presented the results of this process to His disciples and it was so revolutionary that He was completely unacceptable to the nation as a whole, so he had to die.

The concept of a rebel however depends upon a challenge to a legal authority. Since the supreme authority in our world is God, and, clearly, Jesus is bringing the words of that authority to the nations of the world, it is the antithesis of the truth to call Him a rebel.

To think, in itself, however, is not the epitome of good; some of our most evil men could be seen and described as great thinkers. Hitler and Stalin could both be so described but their thoughts were positively evil. In these men we see real rebels against the authority of God.

So God created us to be thinking beings and as such to evaluate each situation we come across and to decide on how we are to react to it. It is

not enough to like the sound of what you are hearing and so to go along with it. We are to analyse and evaluate and hold all the consequences up against the truth of the gospel and on that basis as thinking people we are to make our decisions.

What do I mean? Well, take the recent conflict in Israel and Gaza. How did we react to what we heard was happening between the Israelis and the Palestinians? I was listening to one news programme and became conscious of the biased view that was being broadcast blaming the Israelis for all the problems in the conflict. Rockets are fired into Israeli cities and Israel responds to the attack. The news programme largely ignored the provocation and concentrated on the response of the Israelis as if they were the aggressors.

How do we respond?

We are to think about it and to talk to God and to open our minds to His guidance and His inspiration. In effect, to listen to the truth as God sees it and so, to be able to input into any conversation a positively Christian position.

We are called to be ambassadors for Christ, and this is just one more situation that needs a word from Him. We pray. We allow God to open His heart to us and we allow Him to help us to understand how to respond to each opportunity we are given.

Blessings,

*Adrian*

Adrian Tinning is a lay preacher from Westcliff Free Church, who in recent times has been supporting our church.

---



---

### Age-related one-liners

- The older you get, the better you realize you were.
- I don't know how I got over the hill as I never reached the top.
- One good thing about being old - the things you buy won't wear out.
- The more you complain, the longer God lets you live.
- I'm getting old but I think I'm having a good time - aren't I?
- I heard that the world's oldest man died earlier today. Not again!



## It's a fair COP

As you may have heard, the UN's Conference of the Parties, also known as COP26, will be held in Glasgow from 1-12 November where world leaders will gather to seek and strengthen international agreements around collective action to reduce global carbon emissions.

There is real hope that a new and more ambitious agreement will be reached during the conference; that a 'Glasgow agreement' may succeed the 2015 'Paris agreement' and be more effective as more nations seem ready to recognise and to address their own carbon emissions.

The General Secretary and I were recently invited to join a consultation of about 35 faith leaders by Alok Shama MP, President of COP26. It was very encouraging to hear from speakers from a wide range of faiths and of Christian denominations, all taking the issue seriously. There was a clear recognition that climate change is a real threat and that action is urgent.

Climate change will affect all generations and we need to develop a passion for action. I sensed a real desire of faith communities to work together and a genuine government wish to work with us. There were comments about the need for action not just words or promises, and a recognition that it is time to treat the issue seriously and urgently.

Deep concern was also expressed for the injustice to those who suffer the consequences of climate change to be recognised, along with a need to redress the damage and loss experienced and to find ways to compensate victims.

The URC has already led the way on disinvestment from fossil fuel companies and around 250 (20%) of our churches have

become Eco churches or 'eco congregations'. It was also encouraging to hear that the Church of Scotland, Methodist Church and Church of England have committed themselves to achieve net zero carbon by 2030. I pray that the URC will be equally ambitious in this respect.

The government was challenged by speakers to build credibility, particularly by mirroring their stated aspirations especially where policy inconsistencies were evident (e.g. around permitting new coal mines and road building). We heard assurances from the government about their determination to achieve goals. We were also reminded of progress being made by the new US administration.

However, I reflect that the use of the word 'cop' can be unfortunate. We are painfully aware of how nations can 'cop out' of such agreements, when inconvenient, or find loopholes to exploit. Companies, especially within the carbon industry, can too easily can abuse their political influence to gain protection for their profits, or do 'greenwashing' to try to appear more positive. I wonder how many of them really would admit 'it is a fair cop'.

We will all seek to reassure ourselves that any agreement is indeed a fair outcome which brings justice to victims and indeed moves positively towards urgently reducing carbon emissions. That it will indeed be a 'fair cop'.

As Christians, we are also challenged to recognise our own carbon footprint and seek to minimise it as we seek to cherish God's creation. Let us hold all those participating in COP26 in our prayers.

*Peter Pay*

Posted 11<sup>th</sup> May 2021

---

“There is hope – I've seen it – but it does not come from the governments or corporations, it comes from the people. The people who have been unaware are now starting to wake up, and once we become aware we change. We can change and people are ready for change.”

*Greta Thunberg*

Dec 2019, COP25, Madrid

## Computer Corner

### Frank Skinner's Poetry Podcast

**Interesting podcast**

This is a new podcast from well-known TV and radio show host and comedian, Frank Skinner. To quote the website blurb: "Frank Skinner loves poetry. And he thinks you might like it too. Join Frank each week as he takes you through some of his choice picks of poems. There may be laughter. There may be tears. There will certainly be poetry." Contains adverts.

URL: <https://planetradio.co.uk/podcasts/frank-skinner-poetry-podcast/listen/2045920/>

### Canvey to Hadleigh Castle with Mavic pro Drone

**Interesting video**

There are thousands, possibly millions, of drone videos on YouTube. Hadleigh Castle is a favourite location for local drone enthusiasts but this video is a bit different as it starts with a flight over from Canvey Island. The video has been sped up but it is possible to slow it down by clicking on the settings (cog) icon and altering the playback speed. Doing so will, however, affect the music in the video.

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

### What's happening with your NHS data?

**Interesting article**

From July 2021, NHS Digital will start collecting patient data from GP medical records in England about any living patient, including children, and any data about patients who died after the collection started. This article explains how patient data will be shared and how you can opt-out of the process. Full Fact is a charity that fact checks claims made by politicians, public institutions and journalists, as well as viral content online.

URL: <https://fullfact.org/health/nhs-data/>

## Word Search – Places with piers

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

BOURNEMOUTH  
 BRIGHTON  
 CLACTON  
 CLEETHORPES  
 CROMER  
 DEAL  
 EASTBOURNE  
 FELIXSTOWE  
 HASTINGS  
 HYTHE  
 PAIGNTON  
 RYDE  
 SKEGNESS  
 SOUTHPORT  
 SOUTHEND  
 SOUTHWOLD  
 SWANAGE  
 WEYMOUTH  
 WORTHING  
 YARMOUTH

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