

THE HADLEIGH MESSENGER

July & August 2021



The Magazine of the
United Reformed Church, Hadleigh, Essex

SUNDAY SERVICES

Currently one service is held at 10.30am

Please phone 01702 557678
if you would like to attend

Changes to COVID-19 lockdown rules from 19th July

Summary information published on the BBC website

Social distancing

- No limits on how many people can meet.
- 1m-plus guidance removed (except in some places like hospitals and passport control when entering).
- Face coverings no longer required by law, although the government still “expects and recommends” them in crowded and enclosed spaces.
- Some shops and transport operators will still require masks.

Events and gatherings

- Nightclubs can reopen.
- Pubs and restaurants no longer table-service only.
- No limits on guests at weddings and funerals.
- No limits on people attending concerts, theatres or sports events.
- No restrictions on communal worship.

Travel

- Guidance recommending against travel to amber list countries removed.
- Under-18s and fully vaccinated adults no longer have to self-isolate after visiting amber list countries.

Other changes

- Limits on visitors to care homes will be removed.
- From 16 August, most Covid restrictions in schools - including “bubbles” - will end.
- From 16 August, fully vaccinated adults will not need to self-isolate after contact with a positive case.

What guidance remains in place in England?

- People should continue to meet others outside where possible.
- Businesses such as nightclubs - and large events - will be encouraged to use the NHS Covid Pass to check people are fully vaccinated. However, they won't legally have to do so.
- People working from home will be encouraged to return to the workplace.

HADLEIGH URC OFFICERS

Interim Moderators:

Rev. Dr. Jim Tarrant MA MTh

Rev. Celia Whitman

Hon. Secretary/Acting Hon. Treasurer:

Mr Royston Brackin (01702 558862)

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

Tel no: See Hon.Secretary

Website: www.hadleighessexurc.org.uk

URC website: www.unc.org.uk

URC Eastern Synod Office contact info:

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

Tel no: 01223 830770

E-mail: eastern.admin@unc.org.uk

Website: www.unc-eastern.org.uk

Pastoral Letter from Heather, one of the Elders

'How long, O Lord'– Psalm 13, A psalm of David

The fight against Coronavirus by all the countries in the world has felt very much like a global war against an insidious enemy, because it is unseen, stealthy and treacherous. We cannot see the virus, but we know when symptoms appear that we have caught it. Just when we begin to think it may be under control, a new variant emerges so we end up feeling that we are continually playing 'catch-up'.

After sixteen months many of us wonder how long it will be before we can lead a 'normal' life. The answer may well be that we will have to live our lives slightly differently. The Government is hoping to free us from most restrictions on the 19th July. They hope that we will be considerate to all the people around us especially those who have very serious medical conditions such as immune problems. Many in our society are looking forward to this release but others are feeling unhappy about this sudden freedom and think that this action is irresponsible. It seems the virus is not going away and we will have to learn to live with it.

For those of you who have prayed to God for help during this time, you may wonder where he is and just like the psalmist, 'How long' do we have to wait! In Biblical terms, sixteen months is no time at all; the Israelites waited for forty years before they reached their promised land. The Exiled Jews in Babylon had an even longer wait to return to Jerusalem; although some believe that it wasn't quite as long as the seventy years that Jeremiah had prophesied. Jesus had thirty years of preparation before he began preaching about the Kingdom of God. The disciples waited patiently for the Holy Spirit after Jesus had ascended into heaven. One thing we can learn

from these examples is that God's time is definitely different to ours and at a slower pace. Perhaps some of us have benefited from the slower pace of life that has been inflicted on us by the lockdowns and with no timetables, or meetings, or groups to go to, some have found time for hobbies (old or new), reading etc.

I have had lots of conversations with many of you over this time and I know many of you have really missed seeing your family or friends, so this really feeds the desire to return to life as we knew it. There's an old hymn which was a favourite of my parents called 'Count your Blessings', where the writer encourages us to count our blessings one by one, and then 'It will remind you what the Lord has done.'

Indeed, if we think about the achievements that have been made during this pandemic we must be impressed by the work of the scientists making vaccines in record time to help protect communities, and various other medical aids. The work of mathematicians to produce statistics to help us judge how safe communities are at all times from the virus, which also help us to judge when to be vigilant. The medical staff and care staff in care homes have made huge sacrifices and continue to work hard. The list is too long for me to write here, but take a little time to think about the help others have given to all the communities and pray a thanksgiving prayer to God for all these benefits. When you have done this, then maybe, like David in Psalm 13, you will be able to say, 'I will sing to the Lord, for he has been good to me!'

Every blessing to you all,

Heather Brown



Covid-19 measures at services after 19th July

After consulting members of the congregation who have been attending Sunday services, the Elders have decided to continue with existing measures to reduce the risk of Coronavirus spread at services held after 19th July. This decision was driven by the high prevalence of the Delta variant.

We will therefore continue to wear face coverings, sanitise hands and surfaces, and remain socially distanced whilst on the church premises until further notice. If you'd like to attend a service and have not been to the church since services recommenced then please let Heather Brown know you are coming.

Malcolm Brown

From the Editor

Welcome to the summer edition of the *Hadleigh Messenger* covering July and August 2021.

For a variety of reasons, I have struggled to get the magazine completed but I hope readers will find something of interest. I am still heavily reliant on the Internet for material. However, I am grateful to Jim Tarrant for writing about his recent stay in hospital (and for providing updates

on his progress since returning home). I would also like to thank Peter Brewer for photos and a brief report on his 100th birthday celebrations.

If you visit somewhere interesting this summer then please consider writing something for the magazine about your visit. This invitation is extended to all readers of the magazine, not just members of the congregation!

Malcolm Brown



Forthcoming preachers

As many of you will be aware, it has been difficult for Royston, our Church Secretary, to find preachers for our services since we re-opened at Pentecost on 23rd May. (We are not alone in this difficulty.) Heather Brown offered to step into the breach temporarily and has very kindly led all our services so far apart from 27th June, when Major Geoff Ashdown preached. Below, I have listed the dates when outside preachers will be leading our worship over coming weeks. On other Sundays, Heather will again be in the pulpit.

Date	Preacher
July 25 th	Mrs Macrina Ejaz
August 1 st	Major Geoff Ashdown
August 15 th	Mr Roger Brett
September 19 th	Mrs Macrina Ejaz
September 26 th	Mr John Amos



Another day

Another day beginning Lord,
who knows what it will bring.
Please keep me strong and cheerful Lord
and let my spirit sing.
So many are in need of love,
in need of comfort too;
Please let me show them hope and joy,
a little kindness too.
Another day ahead of me
with battles I must win;
Lord stay beside me all the way
and give me strength within.

Submitted by Jean Reeve

Jean writes: I thought that these words might help someone who is alone at this time and let them know that we are never really alone but that someone special is always with us and will guide us along the way.

Synod Moderators' Report to the URC General Assembly 2021

Introduction by Rev. Ruth Whitehead, on behalf of the Synod Moderators

As the group of Moderators welcomes new members and all the gifts they bring, as well as thanking those who have ceased to travel with us, we ask ourselves the question – where are we?

We are in decline as a denomination in the UK – and we know we are not alone – in the sense that our numbers are falling and our structures are creaking. We are still in the midst of a Global pandemic which has brought even more rapid change to so many aspects of life and has brought havoc and tragedy to many people. We know that our churches and our ministers are tired and they're hurting. So, as the traditional funeral service words say, 'in the midst of life we are in death'.

These are liminal times, between times. Richard Rohr's description of liminal space is "...a unique position where human beings hate to be but where the biblical God is always leading them ... It is when you are between your old comfort zone and any possible new answer. If you are not trained in how to entrust and wait, you will run...anything to flee this terrible cloud of unknowing."

Liminal times are like a threshold – as we move from one state to another, we recognise the change and pause in the space. Or we can describe liminal times as like being in the fog – we can't see clearly where to go. The fog seems thick, and like a driver in thick fog we need to slow right down and peer hard into the space around us. This is not the time to panic, or put the headlights on full beam, or slam our foot to the floor and hope for the best. But nor is it a time to give up, put on the hazard-warning lights, curl under the blanket and hope for the best.

Liminal times are like pupation. Like a caterpillar becoming a butterfly, we know we are changing, and that change is inevitable, but right now it's hard to see the way forward. It's time to breathe, pray, and recognise the liminal times for what they are.

In liminal times we need to:

- Be prepared to wait
- Deepen our communal discernment
- Shape our institutional memory
- Clarify our purpose
- See the way forward emerge

How do we do each of these things?

We need to be prepared to wait – don't panic and rush to a 'solution'.

We need to Deepen our communal discernment – listen for God together in the Bible, in prayer and in one another.

We need to Shape our institutional memory – tell our story and remember who we were, who we are, and what our deepest guiding values are as the people of the triune God

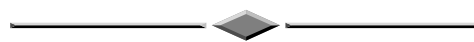
We need to Clarify our purpose – to ask God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who He wants us to be now and next, as an expression of God's love for the world.

We hope to See the way forward emerging – look for signs of green shoots of new life and new ways in God, emerging from the chaos.

In the General Assembly Book of Reports there are examples of people engaging in each of these phases. The Synod Moderators hope local churches and other gatherings of God's people will explore your own response to liminal times together, perhaps using the questions to help you.

Our greatest need in these liminal times is to trust God for wisdom. We may feel that we are on our backs. We may long to get to our feet. But right now, we need to be on our knees, in prayer and in trust.

To return us to the funeral service and words from Deuteronomy, "The eternal God is your dwelling place and underneath are the everlasting arms".



For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him.
He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken.

Psalm 62:5-6 (ESV)

How to predict the summer weather – magic, miracle and meteorology

On July 15th 971, the bones of St Swithin were removed from their resting place on the order of Aethelwold, Bishop of Winchester, and placed in a shrine inside the cathedral. The saint, it seemed, did not approve. A violent storm followed, and rain fell for 40 days. And from that story came the belief that the weather on July 15th predicted a summer of sun or rain.

*St Swithin's day if thou dost rain'
For forty days it will remain;
St Swithin's day if thou be fair,
For forty days will rain na mair.*

The weather in the UK this summer has been unpredictable – but largely overcast and wet and there was even a freak tornado in east London in late June. Technology might give us access to minute-by-minute forecasts, but how humans read the skies has long been shaped by a heady mix of meteorology, magic, and miracles.

The origins of the legend of St Swithin are questionable. Early sources suggest that St Swithin himself requested the removal of his bones to the cathedral. Why then would the saint stir up a storm? The first written record tying St Swithin to weather forecasting is linked to a torrential downpour in 1315, some 500 years after his bones were moved, and the rhyme above dates from some three centuries after that.

Has it ever rained for 40 consecutive days after July 15th? Not according to weather records. The closest it might have got was in 1924 when (according to the Guinness Book of World Records) 30 of the 40 days after St Swithin's day were wet, but 13.5 hours of sunshine were recorded on July 15th.

There might, however, be a glimmer of truth in the legend. Summer weather in the UK is shaped by the position of the jet stream. A northerly position in early July will make a drier, sunnier summer more likely, but a southerly position will often usher in a period of unsettled weather. St Swithin's day could well be a useful barometer.

If St Swithin is responsible, he's not alone. Other saints whose feast days fall in June and July are also associated with weather forecasting. Rain on St Gervase's day on June 19 predicts 40 days of wet weather, while a damp feast of the Seven Sleepers (in Germany, *Siebenschläfertag*) on June 27 will usher in seven weeks of rain.

St Swithin's legend is just one part of a complex picture of human interaction with the weather. Snow and sun, hot and cold, are written into our society, culture and language. And the skies are as a blank canvas on which humans paint their own beliefs and fears.

Punishing sin

Current concerns about climate change differ from those of our ancestors. Smaller local changes in weather were often of more immediate importance because of the threat that they posed, but also because of the message that they carried.

That message was often from God, an interventionist deity who used nature – storms, floods, drought – to communicate with humanity. The Bible contains ample precedents: when his people would not repent, God warned Noah that he would “bring a flood of waters upon the earth”.



Woodcut of Noah's Ark from Anton Koberger's German Bible (Wikimedia)

Churches responded to both successful harvests and natural calamities with prayer and fasting. The English Book of Common Prayer (1549) attributed a “plague of rain and waters” to human sin. And in 1598, a preacher from Sussex, in the south of England, declared that famine, floods and unseasonable weather were “a sermon of repentance”.

Weather was where the natural and the supernatural met. But it was not just God and his saints who could manipulate the weather.

Raising tempests

A “mini ice age” in Europe (c.1300-1850) led to severe winters and cold, wet summers in which harvests failed. In these conditions, plague, famine and fear combined to fuel the belief that unnatural weather was the work of witches.



Witches influencing the weather (Author provided)

Theologians and demonologists described how witches stir up storms, raise tempests, “solidify springs of water and melt mountains”. The link between witchcraft and weather was cemented in the famous book, the Hammer of Witches (*Malleus Maleficarum*).

The idea was repeated in printed pamphlets and news, in sermons, and in the accusations that neighbour made against neighbour. In 1562,

storms swept across Europe leaving panic in their wake. In the German town of Wiesensteig more than 60 witches were burned at the stake.

In a well-documented and high profile case of weather magic in 1589, the Scottish king James VI was caught in a storm in the North Sea, and more than 100 suspected witches were arrested in the area surrounding North Berwick. Many were tortured, found guilty and executed for witchcraft and for treason.

So blame witches, your sins or even saints for the weather July 15 brings and the summer that predicts. But, for the record, meteorologists tracking the position of the jet stream predict a spell of warm, dry weather beginning in mid-July. Unless it rains on July 15th but fingers crossed it doesn't.

Helen Parish

Professor in History, University of Reading

Published on The Conversation website (www.theconversation.com) on 14th July 2021.

Prayer Reflection - Patience and Trust

Picture eagerly awaiting your birthday because you were hoping, indeed expecting, to receive a longed-for item as a gift. Consider your feelings if the present did not arrive – disappointment, anger, loss of trust among others. These could occur even if the gift had not been definitely promised but only a possibility. Recognise that many people feel this way following the delay in the easing of lockdown. Pray for patience for all of us and wisdom for the government and their advisors so that the safety and welfare of all is carefully balanced. Thank God for his guidance and support for us all.

Ponder the fact that we often feel angry with God for not answering our prayers in the manner we expect. We may have prayed for the healing of a loved one or for help with work or life in general. Sometimes God provides a sense of peace rather than physical healing and sometimes he just says, 'No' to our request just as we would refuse our children when they ask for something which would not be good for them. Thank God for his care and concern and pray for the patience and trust we need to fully appreciate his love for us.

Praise God for all he has done in and through his people during the pandemic. Thank him for inspiring those working on producing the vaccines and encouraging all doing what they can to support the most vulnerable. Pray for continued energy and strength for NHS workers as they catch up on delayed treatments postponed because of the pandemic. May they continue to be appreciated by all. Ask, too, that we know and do God's will for us in these circumstances. Pray we have the patience and trust we need to move forward with hope.

Prayer

Thank you Lord, that, through all the problems of the pandemic you have kept your promise to be with us. May we be so filled with your Spirit and your love that it spills out to those around us bringing them hope. Thank you for the opportunity to serve in this way. Thank you Lord. Amen

Beryl Hunt

Family News

Rev. Peter Brewer's 100th birthday

Our former minister, Rev. Peter Brewer, reached the age of 100 on 29th June. Peter writes:



Peter enjoying being 100

“As my birthday was on a Tuesday, we decided that the previous Saturday (26th) would be the best day to celebrate. End of lockdown was meant to be 21st June but as time went on we realised that it might not happen so we were not able to make any definite plans. In the event, we decided on a close family ‘Afternoon Tea’ in the garden. This would bring the number up to the permitted 30 people meeting outdoors.

God was good to us and it turned out to be a lovely sunny day. I think every one who came enjoyed the tea and the opportunity to chat together. It was really nice to have the company of my grandchildren who made the journeys from Manchester and Nottingham to spend the weekend with us.



Peter with family at the Afternoon Tea

I appreciated the kind thoughts that were expressed and thank all those who produced sandwiches and cakes, especially my granddaughter Victoria who made a lovely birthday cake and my dear wife Mary who did all the planning.

On the 29th June, my actual birthday, we had a quiet day and a lovely evening dinner with Angela and Tony, and Steve and Glynis. We were sad not to be joined by my daughter Judith, from Brisbane, Australia, but her husband Laurie is seriously ill in hospital and Judy is not really well enough to travel. Our prayerful thoughts go out to them and their family.

I would like to say "Thank you" to all the friends from Hadleigh URC who so kindly sent birthday cards. They revived many happy memories!

I have reason to be very thankful to God for his many blessings over a long life and continued good health.

Thank you Peter for the report and photos of your special birthday.

Peggy Hughes

Malcolm Brown and Kay Watson visited Peggy on her 98th birthday on the afternoon of 6th July. Peggy was her usual, cheerful self and she was particularly pleased to see Kay again.



Peggy at 98

Peggy's son had taken her out earlier in the day to old Leigh, where Peggy enjoyed her favourite crab roll at the Peter Boat pub. Peggy walks with a Zimmer frame and is not as agile as she once was so as it was good that she was able to get in and out of the car to make the journey to old Leigh.

We send our love to Peggy.

Rosemary & Tony Harrison-Smith

Rosemary and Tony have recently moved from Benfleet to Rochford. Tony has now retired from clock repairing, sold his tools and closed down the 'Pattens' business.

We send our best wishes to Rosemary and Tony and hope that they will be very happy in their new home.

Family News continued

Vertical line separator

Why do cauliflowers look so odd?

Have you ever stared at a cauliflower before preparing it and got lost in its stunningly beautiful pattern? Probably not, if you are in your right mind, but I reassure you it's worth a try. What you'll find is that what at first sight looks like an amorphous blob has a striking regularity.

If you take a good look, you will see that the many florets look alike and are composed of miniature versions of themselves. In maths, we call this property self-similarity, which is a defining feature of abstract geometrical objects called fractals. But why do cauliflowers have this property? Our new study, published in *Science*, has come up with an answer.

There are many examples of fractals in nature, such as ice crystals or branches on trees. In maths, the number of copies of an initial pattern goes on infinitely. Cauliflowers present a high level of such self-similarity, involving seven or more copies of the "same" bud.



Romanesco cauliflower (Kert/Shutterstock)

This is most conspicuous on the Romanesco cauliflower (sometimes called Romanesco broccoli, because of its colour), one of the first images that will appear if you search "plant fractals" online. What is striking about the Romanesco is the very well defined, pyramidal buds which accumulate along endless spirals. Though less immediately obvious, a similar arrangement is present in other cauliflowers too.

Spirals are found in many plants, it is the main pattern of plant organisation – a topic which has been studied for well over 2,000 years. But although cauliflowers share spirals with most other plants, their self-similarity is unique. Where does this special feature come from? And are the cauliflower spirals originating from the same mechanisms as those in other plants?

Scientific mystery

About 12 years ago, two of my colleagues in France, François Parcy and Christophe Godin, were starting to ask exactly these questions and invited me to join the effort. We spent many hours frantically dismantling florets, counting them, measuring angles between them, studying the literature on the molecular mechanisms underlying the growth of cauliflowers, and trying to create a realistic computational model of these mysterious cabbages.

Most available data was on *Arabidopsis thaliana*, also known as the "thale cress" flowering plant.



Arabidopsis thaliana (Iehic/Shutterstock)

Though this is a weed, it is of paramount importance in modern plant biology because its genetics have been extensively studied for many years, including many variants. And it turns out to be related to all cabbages, belonging to the family known as brassicaceae. *Arabidopsis* in fact has its own version of the cauliflower, arising from a simple mutation involving only one pair of similar genes (see image on the left). So the genetics of this mutant plant are very similar to the genetics of cauliflower.



Arabidopsis cauliflower mutant (BlueRidgeKitties)

If you spend some time observing the branches along the stem of, say, some weeds in your garden (which likely include close relatives of *Arabidopsis*), you will see how they are quite closely following each other, with the same angle between each successive pair. And if there are enough organs along this spiral, you will start seeing other spirals, going both clockwise and anticlockwise (see image on the right).

If you manage to count the spirals, they will typically be numbers somewhere along the Fibonacci sequence, where the next number in the sequence is found by adding up the two numbers before it. This gives 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, etc. On a typical cauliflower, expect to see five spirals going clockwise and eight anticlockwise, or vice-versa (see images below). But why? To understand how the geometry of plants develops over their lifetime, we need mathematics – but also microscopes.



Five clockwise spirals of similar florets on a cauliflower (Etienne Farcot)



Eight anticlockwise spirals on the same cauliflower as above (Etienne Farcot)

We know now that for every plant, the main spiral is already formed at microscopic scales. This happens very early in its development. At

this stage, it comprises spots, in which very specific genes are expressed (turned on). The genes expressed in a spot determine whether this spot will grow into a branch, a leaf or a flower.

But the genes are actually interacting with each other, in complex “gene networks” – leading to specific genes being expressed in specific domains and at specific times. This is beyond simple intuition, and mathematical biologists therefore rely on differential equations to write models of these gene networks to predict their behaviour.

To work out how cauliflowers grow into their peculiar shape after the first few leaves have formed, we built a model which included two main components. These were a description of the spiral formation that we see in large cauliflowers, and a model of the underlying gene network that we see in *Arabidopsis*. We then tried to match the two so we could work out which genetics led to cauliflower structure.

We found that four main genes are the crucial players: their initials are S, A, L and T, which we obviously joked about. The “A” is missing in *Arabidopsis* flowering plants that have mutated to become cauliflower-like, and is also a gene that drives spots to become flowers.

What makes cauliflower so special is that these spots at the growing tip try to turn into flowers for some time (up to several hours), but keep failing at it for lack of “A”. Instead, they develop into stems, which turn into stems etc – multiplying almost infinitely without growing leaves, which gives rise to near-identical cauliflower buds.

The time they spend trying is fundamental – getting this right in our model allowed us to reproduce cauliflowers and romanescos exactly on the computer. We confirmed this was right by altering the growth in a real-life *Arabidopsis* cauliflower mutant plant, effectively turning it into a shape much alike a miniature romanesco.

It is amazing how complex nature is. The next time you have cauliflower for dinner, take a moment to admire it before you eat it.

Etienne Farcot

Assistant Professor of Mathematics, University of Nottingham

Posted on The Conversation website (www.theconversation.com) on 8th July 2021.

Reflections on my stay in the Royal Brompton Hospital

Our joint Interim Moderator, Rev. Dr Jim Tarrant, looks back on his recent hospital stay for a heart valve replacement operation

Covid-19 added a cruel twist to my hospital stay by precluding any visiting by family or friends. A few days before I was due to enter hospital, Sue and I were told that I had to spend two extra days in hospital prior to the operation for the purposes of quarantine. A serious heart operation in prospect, no visiting, and quarantine time apart to boot. It was a difficult and sad parting at the hospital entrance.

The day of the operation dawned and I was first on the list. I had been requested to be up at 6.00am for necessary preparations. At 7.50am, two most distinguished porters arrived: the surgeon and the anaesthetist. This illustrious pair rolled me down to the theatre where I had the opportunity to chat to the anaesthetist as he began his work. We talked a little about medical ethics; it was not my area of specialisation but I had contributed to a course on this matter. The anaesthetist claimed some familiarity with the authorities I mentioned but said he worked by an 80:20 rule - 'if I get it right 80% of the time that's good enough'. I asked him what about the other 20%, at which point he sent me into oblivion and I never received an answer.

I am told by my family that I spoke a few words to them on a phone that night but I have no recollection of so doing and I gather I was not coherent. I can hardly remember anything of my time in intensive care. I vaguely remember the young French nurse looking after me saying she would try to get me off the ventilator. At one point, I know I asked about something that must have been worrying me as I recall her saying: 'What is it, darling', and the answer came, 'We look after all that here.' After that came oblivion again until some time in the morning when the same voice announced that I was to be transferred to high dependency.

In this new unit I was looked after by two Hindu nurses and we had an interesting discussion on meditation and its importance in modern India. The test to leave high dependency was a very short walk and I felt ready to do that. Accompanied by one of the nurses, I made my way out of the unit and round the corner to a room where a smiling nurse presented me with a star to show I had passed the walking test. The senior nurse present then said I could be transferred back to the ward.

I arrived back at the ward whereupon enter Nurse 'Fuss'. If you sneezed, Nurse Fuss would report this; if you didn't sneeze, Nurse Fuss would report that. Nurse Fuss was never far away but my general nursing needs were catered for by a very pleasant Muslim nurse and young nurse Stephanie.

An interesting succession of events occurred after the physio called. 'You can go for a walk,' she said. 'Just take your trolley with you holding all your tubes and apparatus and move about'. I did not need any further encouragement; I set off with all my apparatus. Eventually, I realised I was lost. I had taken a wrong turning at some point that had led me out of the department. A nurse, who did not seem too pleased to see me, offered directions back to the department. Mercifully, I found the way back and slipped thankfully into bed. What I did not appreciate at the time was that my disappearance had been noted.

The next morning enter the surgical team led by the consultant and the German registrar with Nurse Fuss as the scribe for the team. The German registrar addressed me: 'There are to be no more unsupervised walks; we cannot have any more complaints from other departments. All future walks must be supervised,' she said. I glanced at Nurse Fuss during this declaration and noted her nodding her head almost as vigorously as she was writing.

Well it so happened that I had to go to x-ray that afternoon and was escorted there by one of the student nurses, who waited for me and brought me back. On our return journey we passed the nurses' station. There were grins from the nurses and the young doctors but not from the German registrar who eyed me from behind her heavy glasses and followed my progress.

So far so good it seemed but the next day I had to go to the echo department. I was taken there by a porter but by the time the echo had finished the porter had gone off duty. The echo department was a long way from the ward so one of the nurses agreed to walk me back. There was a problem when I got to the ward. I had to confess to the nurse that I could not remember the bed number I was in. The nurse found a colleague who happened to be Nurse Fuss. 'Ah, he is confused,' she declared.

The next morning the surgical team arrived with Nurse Fuss as scribe. The opening remarks came from a doctor who had not spoken before and whom I shall call, Ernest. The questions began: 'Are you confused about where you are? Are you confused about your identity? When you went on your walk the other afternoon were you trying to escape?' At this point Nurse Fuss could no longer hold back: 'He is reading a book about an escape,' she declared, triumphantly. Clearly Nurse Fuss's detective work went further than I realised. Ernest struck an interested pose at this new information but the consultant had clearly had enough and he whisked the team away.

A day later the registrar swept in and declared: 'Some people get better faster at home and I think you are one of those. We will try to get you home tomorrow.' Preparations were made: nurse Stephanie appeared with two helpers all wearing some special aprons. Stephanie was not her usual smiling self: 'We've come to torture you, but we'll stop half way to give you a break.' She was not joking. During this process some wires were taken out of my heart and I was invited to look at the length that had been in the heart. Amazing!

The next day dawned and I arranged for Sue to arrive at 2.00pm. During the morning, Nurse Fuss

appeared: 'So, you are a freed man,' and with that note of disapproval she moved on. At 2.00pm the porter arrived to carry my bags but just as I was leaving Nurse Fuss appeared again: 'Can you climb stairs,' she demanded. 'Oh yes, I climbed them on my escape adventure,' I declared. This was too much for Nurse Fuss who then fled and I went to join Sue.

During my time in the hospital, I observed staff of different religions working together harmoniously, including Hindus, Muslims and Catholics. I asked one of the Muslim nurses to explain the secret of this wonderful sense of community. It is mutual respect, she told me; respect for one's religion, skills and knowledge.

However, outside the hospital the situation is very different. Some nurses spoke of their fear when travelling home, of verbal and even physical abuse. This applied even to nurses from European countries. Yet these nurses were doing all they could to help others, some of whom might even have been their abusers. My admiration for them knew no bounds.

Jim Tarrant

Editor's note: Thank you, Jim, for taking the time to provide that insight into your hospital stay.



Doctor, Doctor jokes

Doctor, Doctor - will this ointment clear up my spots? I'm sorry, *I never make rash promises.*

Doctor, Doctor - I can't help thinking I'm a goat. *How long have you felt like this? Since I was a kid.*

Doctor, Doctor - you've got to help me - I just can't stop my hands shaking! *Do you drink a lot?*
Not really - I spill most of it!

Doctor, Doctor - I think I need glasses. *You certainly do - this is a fish and chip shop!*

Doctor, Doctor - I've been dropped from the cricket team; they call me butterfingers. *Don't worry; what you have is not catching.*

Doctor, Doctor - every time I stand up quickly, I see Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck and Goofy. *How long have you been getting these Disney spells?*

Doctor, Doctor - I've broken my arm in two places. *Well, I'd advise you not to go back to either of those places then.*

Doctor, Doctor - I keep thinking I'm a dog. *Sit on the couch and we'll talk about it.* But I'm not allowed up on the couch!

Doctor, Doctor - I keep thinking I'm a shepherd. *I wouldn't lose any sheep over it.*

Doctor, Doctor - I can't stop singing 'Green, Green Grass of Home'. *It sounds to me that you have Tom Jones syndrome. Is that rare? It's not unusual... (Ed: The old ones are the best!)*

Commitment-Phobe – Church without tea

From Reform July/August 2021

Moving on from atheism, Commitment-Phobe toured churches and tried God. Now, as a Christian, her journey continues...

I met up with a young missionary who is now a friend of the family. We support her during her stay in the UK, and she helps out with a few school pick-ups. We met up in a cafe to talk through extra help with childcare, and ended up talking about our church experience.

I talked about my ambivalence towards the Sunday service, but my love of serving; how much I love gathering for prayer and worship, but not socialising. I admitted that often I just did not 'get' Sunday anymore.

My friend, who is from Chile, talked about her first experience of church in the UK. She was shocked at the formality of church here. I asked her to explain. She said: 'There is a set time to pray, a time to sing, a time to be quiet. Back home, the service can last for hours, it's true, but you can pray whenever you need to. And yes, we sing, but this is not the main type of worship.' She said she was one of the few young people, but very much family. She knew everyone by name, and they knew her. To balance this idyllic picture, she said her sisters hated it, and would much rather go to a church with lots of young people and cool music.

I looked at my friend, who is decades younger than me but much older when it comes to Christianity. I could see how her experience of church as a young person had shaped her calling to live in community with others as a young missionary.

I thought about how relieved I felt not being able to do the tea and coffee after church anymore. It was like some sort of awkward networking event, where I rarely felt connected. I had only ever got to know people from the community of my church by doing something with them, not by struggling through small talk. I also reflected on how the formality of the service of worship rarely allowed others to reveal their hearts and souls to each other and, therefore, I could see how it would be hard to find a point of connection with each other.

I spoke to my husband about the formal structure of the Sunday service, and how surface-level it felt. He explained that most churchgoers needed

the comfort of the structure — not just so they could plan their lunch, but because it meant they felt safe, and that safety allowed them to engage more deeply.

I kept on thinking about my missionary friend's comment that the church is a people and a lifestyle. In her context, how we walk in our life and what we do is our church. So what are our holy Sundays for? Are these gatherings an opportunity to learn, connect and celebrate God? If so, why don't we celebrate a bit more? Connect a bit more? Learn a bit more?

I watched a video of some Christians in a church in Benin dancing in their Sunday best — it looked like a great party. My husband, who is reading some medieval church history at the moment, talked about common folk arriving with their livestock and catching up with each other. I fantasised about a Sunday gathering with a buffet at the back and people popping in and out, leaving when they wanted, staying as long as they needed. Or a Sunday where we made plans and did good works. My husband asked me to be honest: 'OK, so next Sunday, you turn up to church and the vicar says: "Church service is 30 minutes long, the hour after that is to serve in some way Would you like that?" 'Yes,' I said, 'I'd love it!'

A few days later, my missionary friend invited me to join her at the home base she shares with 40 other missionaries, to receive a 45-minute breakfast devotional on a Saturday. I think I'll go. I want to know what this other kind of church is.

As I look forward to this, I remember sometimes we don't want to pray or worship. As my friend admitted, even in a household of Christian missionaries, there are times when people just aren't feeling it. Maybe it is not about how we do our Sundays or our devotions, but about what we bring in with us: today it's ambivalence, tomorrow it's exuberance; today it's service, tomorrow it's desire for encounter; today it's fear, tomorrow it's openness. What human ritual and structure can fit all this changeability? The one constant: God with us.

Commitment-Phobe is a Christian.

Computer Corner

Let's Walk & Walk With Me Tim

**Interesting
YouTube
channels**

If you can't get away for a break this summer then the videos on these two YouTube channels may provide an enjoyable alternative. The videos feature walks around UK towns although the Walk With Me Tim channel concentrates on seaside resorts. The Let's Walk videos don't have an audio commentary but display relevant information.

Let's Walk channel URL: <https://www.youtube.com/c/LetsWalkUK/videos>

Walk With Me Tim channel URL: <https://www.youtube.com/c/WalkWithMeTim/videos>

CrystalDiskInfo

**Useful
free
software**

CrystalDiskInfo provides information about the health of hard disk drives. The program accesses 'SMART' information maintained by every drive and displays a list of attributes with various numeric values. The most important attributes are 'Reallocated sector count', 'Current pending sector count' and 'Uncorrectable sector count', which, ideally, should all have a zero figure in the Raw Values column. I recommend downloading the portable version (Windows installation not required) from the PortableApps website.

URL: https://portableapps.com/apps/utilities/crystaldiskinfo_portable

How to Wirelessly Transfer Files between Windows and Android

**Useful
article**

Moving files between devices is a pretty common thing to do. There are plenty of ways to do it, some being better than others. If you use a Windows PC and Android device, this article will show you some methods to try.

URL: <https://www.howtogeek.com/707171/how-to-wirelessly-transfer-files-from-windows-to-android>

Word Search – Countries on the 'red list' (with an 'A' in their name)

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

ANGOLA
BAHRAIN
BOTSWANA
CUBA
ERITREA
ESWATINI
GUYANA
HAITI
KENYA
MALWAI
MALDIVES
NEPAL
OMAN
PANAMA
QATAR
RWANDA
SOMALIA
SURINAME
TANZANIA
ZAMBIA

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

Postcard from the Past

In 2016, I discovered the 'PostcardFromThePast' Twitter account where each tweet is an amusing or intriguing fragment from a real message on an old postcard. I have featured some of the tweets in previous magazines. Here are a few more...

- She was wearing wellies but it didn't save her leg.
- Can you send me a Weetabix?
- I hope everythink is alright, you just to lazy with me few months.
- Last night I went on the dodgems with Gillian. I'm lucky I'm still alive.
- If Jane mentions baked beans again I'll throttle her.
- SORRY ABOUT LAST NIGHT BUT IT WAS OUT OF MY HANDS.
- We can't grumble.
- I'm bored (as usual) & am sitting in the dining room in front of the T.V. wondering whether to turn it on or not.
- Be happy - life is too short and pleasures brief.
- It's not much of a holiday standing in M & S under the air conditioning unit.
- I wet my jeans and then we had our dinner.
- I am almost tempted to do a large woollen wash but not before the weekend.
- John is playing with a paper-bag in his cage.
- We have a ROLLS ROYCE parked next to our LADA.
- We are having fun - to a certain extent.
- I should have been born rich instead of beautiful.
- Mum didn't even put her shorts on.
- Chlorine is eating Sarah's hands.
- GAVIN ENJOYS DIGGING UP THE LUGWORMS BEST.
- Steve has made the most of his birthday - he made me carry the rucksack all day.
- Food is excellent of course - Heinz do a wonderful variety.
- I've been invited to an O.A.P. party at the church - that puts me in my place.
- I had quite a good journey here. Police kept me till 11.45am taking a full statement.
- I did get the e-mails you sent me. However, I don't know an e-mail address for you so can't e-mail you back.
- It's wrong to be the cause of other folk being killed.
- Wall to wall Bingo, prawns the size of kippers.
- Lots of boobs about. Wife has hidden contact lenses.
- Everything I am doing here is either illegal, immoral or fattening.
- Have seen many things of great historical value but have not seen you for some time.
- Thanks for your letter really grateful even the loo paper arrived. I am enjoying it.
- St Ives was rather dreadful, full of people just living for this world.
- Saw the Loch Ness Monster by the way.
- We were looking for Florence but couldn't find it, but we have found a beautiful town called Firenze.
- Greetings to you from the land of exotic architecture, flamenco and intestinal disorders.
- On the way here we passed a string factory in Notts. They are trying to put a motor-way through the cemetery but they can't get permission from the bodies concerned.

Malcolm Brown