

THE HADLEIGH MESSENGER

July & August 2022



The Magazine of the
United Reformed Church, Hadleigh, Essex

SUNDAY SERVICES

Morning service starts at 10.30am

For more information about services,
please phone 01702 557678

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH



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

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

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

The URC is governed by God acting through its members who are guided by the Holy Spirit in their councils – the Elders' Meeting, the Church Meeting, the provincial Synod and the General Assembly. At Hadleigh URC, the Elders' Meeting is held monthly and the Church Meeting every other month. The church is part of the Eastern Synod, which meets twice a year. It also belongs to the South Essex Area Partnership (SEAP), a group of local URC churches that meets twice a year to share news etc. The General Assembly, the URC's main decision-making body, meets once a year.

<p>HADLEIGH URC OFFICERS</p> <p>Interim Moderators: Rev. Dr. Jim Tarrant MA MTh Rev. Celia Whitman</p> <p>Hon. Secretary: Mr Royston Brackin (01702 558862)</p> <p>Acting Hon. Treasurer: Mr Royston Brackin</p> <p>Elders: (* denotes Serving Elder) Mr Royston Brackin* Mrs Heather Brown* (01702 557678) Mr Malcolm Brown* (01702 557678) Miss Jean Reeve* (01702 554907) Mrs Mary Milne</p> <p>Elder `emeritus': Rev. Peter Brewer</p> <p>Each Serving Elder has a list of Church members and adherents for whom they have a pastoral responsibility. Please speak to your Elder if you have any problems, news etc.</p>	<p>USEFUL INFORMATION</p> <p>Address: 1 Church Road, Hadleigh, Benfleet, SS7 2DQ Website: www.hadleighessexurc.org.uk URC website: www.urc.org.uk</p> <hr/> <p>URC Eastern Synod Office contact info:</p> <p>Address: Synod Office, The United Reformed Church, Whittlesford, Cambridge, CB2 4ND Tel no: 01223 830770 E-mail: eastern.admin@urc.org.uk Website: www.urc-eastern.org.uk</p> <hr/> <p>An invitation...</p> <p>If you are not connected with a place of worship, wish to try somewhere different or are just visiting the area then you would be most welcome at any of our services. Alternatively, drop in at the weekly Thursday coffee morning which is open to all. COVID-19 measures should be followed.</p> <p>If you are in need of help that the ministry of the church can supply then you can be assured of our interest and concern. If you are suffering from ill health, loneliness or bereavement and feel that we could help, or if you have a prayer request then please let any church officer know. All requests for help are treated in strict confidence.</p>
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PREACHING ARRANGEMENTS FOR JULY 2022

Sun 3 rd Jul	10.30am	Morning Service	Mrs Heather Brown
Sun 10 th Jul	10.30am	Morning Service	Mr Robert Dart
Sun 17 th Jul	10.30am	Morning Service with Holy Communion	Mrs Heather Brown
Sun 24 th Jul	10.30am	Morning Service	Mr Adrian Tinning
Sun 31 st Jul	10.30am	Morning Service	Rev. Andrew Birch

FLOWER ROTA FOR JULY 2022

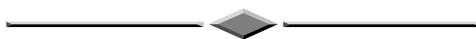
Sun 3 rd Jul	Irene Webb - in memory of Jim
Sun 10 th Jul	If you would like to support the provision of flowers in the church then please speak to Jean Reeve.
Sun 17 th Jul	
Sun 24 th Jul	
Sun 31 st Jul	

ELDERS' MEETING

Fri 8 th Jul 3.30pm

CHURCH MEETING

No meeting in July



Rev. Andrew Birch to preach with a view – Sun 31st July

On Wednesday 29th June, the Elders and Interim Moderator held a meeting with Rev. Andrew Birch and his wife Hilary, the main purpose of which was to discuss the possibility of Andrew becoming our minister. During the meeting, Andrew and Hilary were given a guided tour of the church premises. Andrew was inducted as the minister of Kings Road URC, Westcliff, in September 2020, having previously been minister of three churches in Hastings. He has an 80% scoping at Kings Road and a 20% scoping on Synod-related work. It is the latter portion of his time that would be available to Hadleigh URC, which means that Andrew would be able to preach once a month and spend time at the church on one day a week.

Andrew expressed a keen interest in taking on ministerial responsibility at our church and, after consideration by the Elders and consultation with church members, Andrew was invited to preach 'with a view'. This will take place on Sunday 31st July. Church members and other members of the congregation will be able to chat to Andrew and his wife Hilary after the service and to ask them questions.

Some members of the congregation will have heard recordings of Andrew preaching that were circulated whilst our church was closed because of Coronavirus pandemic. For those with Internet access, services from Kings Road URC led by Andrew may be viewed on YouTube (search for 'Kings Road URC TV'.)

After Andrew has preached with a view, a Special Church Meeting will be held on Thursday 11th August at which church members will vote on whether to issue a call to Andrew to become our minister.

Malcolm Brown

PREACHING ARRANGEMENTS FOR AUGUST 2022

Sun 7 th Aug	10.30am	Morning Service	Mrs Heather Brown
Sun 14 th Aug	10.30am	Morning Service	Mr Adrian Tinning
Sun 21 st Aug	10.30am	Morning Service with Holy Communion	Rev. Dr Jim Tarrant MA MTh
Sun 28 th Aug	10.30am	Morning Service	Mr Adrian Tinning

FLOWER ROTA FOR AUGUST 2022

Sun 7 th Aug	Jean Reeve - in memory of her parents' anniversary
Sun 14 th Aug	
Sun 21 st Aug	Vera Knapton - in memory of her mother, Eleanor Jones
Sun 28 th Aug	

ELDERS' MEETING

No meeting in August

CHURCH MEETING

No meeting in August*

*Special Church Meeting – Thu 11th Aug 2022

Rev. Andrew Birch of Kings Road URC, Westcliff, has been invited to preach with a view on Sunday 31st July. A Special Church Meeting is required to be held to allow church members to vote on whether or not to call Andrew as the next minister of the church. This will be the only item of business on the agenda.

A Special Church Meeting has therefore been arranged for Thursday 11th August at 12.45pm. It is important that as many members as possible attend the meeting.

If a call is subsequently made to Andrew to become our minister, he will then make a decision as to whether or not to accept the call.

Malcolm Brown



All my hope on God is founded

All my hope on God is founded;
he doth still my trust renew,
me through change and chance he guideth,
only good and only true.
God unknown, he alone
calls my heart to be his own.

Pride of man and earthly glory,
sword and crown betray his trust;
what with care and toil he buildeth,
tower and temple fall to dust.
But God's power, hour by hour,
is my temple and my tower.

Worship – A Living Sacrifice to God

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship. – Romans 12:1

What does worship make us think of? What things do we worship: our self, our car, our husband or wife, our children. For when we fail to worship the Good Lord we always find a substitute, even if it ends up being our self. It's the way we are. Interestingly you won't find a definition of worship in the Bible, but it does describe it in many ways, Psalm 103 and many others for example. From this psalm, and from our hymns, we see that God is worthy to receive our worship. But our thoughts mustn't be on other things and our hearts far away. We don't worship to please ourselves.

Our service starts at 10:30 and varies week from week as to when it finishes. That isn't a problem otherwise we've missed the point! Our highest motive should be to exalt the Lord in whatever we do, it isn't just about music and being in church. As Martin Luther said, "A dairymaid can milk cows to the glory of God." Or Charles Spurgeon, "Wash your face every morning in a bath of praise!" The Bible points out we should magnify the Lord and rejoice in Him forever.

Romans 12:1 is basically saying: "Take your everyday, ordinary life – your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking around – and place it before God as an offering." That's what it means to worship! Whether we're on the mountaintop or in the darkest valley - when we're not sure what our next step should be, God is with us, Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father... morning by morning new mercies I see. He is there to guide us each step of the way. And one thing He does not want is ignorant worship. We must remind ourselves, over and over, that the focus of worship must be upon the living God among us.

If the Lord Jesus were to come into the church during our morning service, I don't know about you, but I would kneel without asking. If He stretched out His hands and we saw the wounds, our hearts should break and we would weep and confess over our shortcomings. If we could hear His voice singing the hymns, we too would sing heartily without petulance. The Bible readings would come alive and pierce our souls and we'd all try and sit on the chairs at the front. Our offering plates would be more full with our generous giving and we would volunteer for Christian service & church duties. Yet, Christ is

present. His Spirit is here. So if worship is an active response to God, whereby we declare His worth, with hands on hearts, can we truthfully say that's what we're doing? Or are we just going through liturgical routine? Are we just here out of a sense of duty?

Have you ever tried to move a rowing boat when it's stuck in the sand? It's hard to move. But when the tide comes in, it's easy. The church is like that. When genuine worship is absent – a congregation struggles to do its work, but when worship is like a tide of full, truthful and dedicated praise – everything gets better: "O magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt His name forever!"

Several times in Scripture, we are given exhortations to worship God. For example, in 1 Chronicles 16:29 we read this: "Give unto the LORD the glory due unto His name: bring an offering, and come before Him: worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness." But Jesus also speaks directly about worship when He answers the temptation put to Him by Satan in the wilderness. "Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: `Worship the Lord your God, and serve only Him.'" (Mat.4:10).

How many times have we left after a service only to complain, "Why can't we sing more songs that I like?" and "I can't believe so-and-so didn't talk to me today", "I don't think the minister should preach like that!", "We've never done the prayers that way before!" This must be music to Satan's ears! Worship isn't about any of us judging what's going on - it's adoration toward a holy God. Our focus should be on nothing else.

For some of us it will be the singing that brings us to that place – into God's presence. Whereas others will find it in the prayers, or at communion. Some will find it in the sermon and may even shout out "Alleluia" from time to time. But even if we're sincere, God will not accept our worship unless we are worshipping in spirit and in truth. Most of us are familiar with this saying (it comes from John 4:24). What does it mean though to worship that way? Well the Bible gives us answers. Mark 12:30: "And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength."

According to Jesus this is the first and greatest commandment. So worshipping God in spirit means worship from the heart. The Lord knows exactly what's going on in our hearts and He can't be fooled by outward appearances.

Worshipping in truth simply means to worship God according to His Word in the Bible and often verses speak about being in "fear" and "reverence" as the acceptable way to worship God – particularly when we partake in Holy Communion.

However, waiting for the service to be over, coming to church out of a sense of duty isn't worshipping in spirit and truth. The Bible speaks of vain and ignorant worship – that is placing

others things, such as possessions, above God in value. Insincere worship that is not from the heart in full reverent devotion to God is vain, useless and unacceptable.

So worship is not just about liturgy. There's nothing wrong with having an order of service, but it must never become more important to us than worship. Furthermore, worship is not only to do with being in church. It's our response to God's love and grace in everything we do. It is about exemplifying God in our daily walk with Him.

Rev. Tim Mullings

Minister of Tettenhall Wood & St Columba's URC.

Posted on 15th May 2022.



Prayer Reflection – People of Praise

Count your blessings. List them as they occur to you and then rearrange them, if necessary, putting those for which you are most grateful at the top. Recognise that all these things come from a God who loves you, even those you've worked really hard for. God gives us all abilities and blesses us when we use them, especially when they are used for the good of all not just ourselves. Give thanks and praise God for his generous provision and resolve to share all he has provided.

Calculate the value of those things so easily available that we take them for granted. Appreciate the changing seasons and the fruitfulness of the natural world. Observe the beauty that surrounds us and the joy that children's laughter demonstrates. Thank God for the sharing we enjoy with family and friends and praise him for the way he has taught us how to forgive one another's foibles and idiosyncracies.

Celebrate that, through Jesus, we are accepted into God's family. We are forgiven and restored to a new and more creative life of love, joy and peace. Praise God that we are considered worthy to be ambassadors for him as members of his royal family. Pray for the grace and guidance to serve him well and not let the family down. Rejoice in our privileged status and the loving, forgiving nature of God who picks us up when we fall. Praise his holy name.

Prayer

Praise be to you, O Lord, for all the love you have shown to us and all the countless blessings you continue to shower upon us. Grant us the grace to acknowledge your goodness and give you the glory, not keep it for ourselves. Thank you Lord. Thank you for being you. Alleluia! Amen

Beryl Hunt



Christian Aid Week Week 2022

A house-to-house collection for Christian Aid Week is no longer held in Hadleigh but several of the churches do have envelope collections. The total amount donated in envelopes was £312.50 (£45.00 from the Methodist Church, £100.20 from our church, £52.50 from St Barnabas Church and £115.00 from St James the Less Church.) In addition, £71.25 was donated from bric-a-brac sales at our coffee morning and £132.46 from the closing cash balance of the Tuesday Fellowship. In total, £516.41 was donated.

Malcolm Brown

From the Editor

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

The magazine is much delayed but that has allowed me to include the news that Rev. Andrew Birch, minister of Kings Road URC in Westcliff, will be preaching with a view on the last Sunday in July. We look forward to this important occasion and pray that God will guide us in our decision-making.

I am pleased to report that we have another new contributor – Dilys Chisholm has kindly supplied

an item about a pilgrimage to Iona that she undertook in 2019. Dilys attends St James the Less Church but began reading the *Hadleigh Messenger* during the pandemic lockdown.

I am also grateful to Vera Knapton's sister, Ruth, for suggesting a particular Rudyard Kipling poem, which I've included with a few appropriate photos that I took on a recent visit to Hyde Hall gardens.

We are experiencing some extremely hot weather at present so please take care.

Malcolm Brown

Church 118th Anniversary

It was good to be able to celebrate the anniversary of the founding of the church on Sunday 19th June. Owing to the Coronavirus pandemic, we have not been able to do this since 2019. The former custom was to have an Anniversary Tea before an evening service but, with no evening services at present, it was suggested that we have a lunch after the morning service instead.

The morning service was led by our Interim Moderator, Rev. Dr Jim Tarrant and in his sermon he encouraged us to 'keep on, keeping on'. There were a few guests from other churches at the service and a few more joined us for the lunch that began at 12.30pm. Whilst the food for the lunch was being prepared, tea and coffee were served at the back of the church.

A few photos from the Anniversary celebration



The congregation at the anniversary service



Jean Reeve, catering supreme



Geoff Ashdown, Wilf Tyler, Doreen Churchill, Marion Fidell, Jim Clubb



Ann Purkiss, Kay Watson, Fred Lawrence, Paul Reed, Eddie & Sue Horton



Heather Brown, Mark, Ian Tarrant, Jim & Sue Tarrant, June Gargrave

It was especially nice to have Vera Knapton worshipping with us again and to welcome Jim Clubb back to the church for the first time since his move to Rosedale Court in Rayleigh.

Malcolm Brown

Articles for the magazine can be e-mailed to the Editor, Malcolm Brown, at mgbrownmail@yahoo.co.uk. Opinions expressed in any published articles do not necessarily reflect the view of the Editor or the policy of the United Reformed Church, either locally or nationally.

Family News

Please remember those associated with our fellowship in need of prayer...

Pilgrimage to Iona

My chance to visit Iona came about in July 2019 through my cousin, who picked up a flyer at her church in Surrey. There was an organised trip which we booked immediately.

Well, what a journey it turned out to be! First of all, my husband Dale gave me a lift to Leigh station where he waved me off on the train. It was the hottest day of the year and there was no air-conditioning on the train.

At West Ham, I eventually got myself and my cases onto the Jubilee Line and it was hotter than ever. At Waterloo, the train took me to Leatherhead where my cousin picked me up and we went to her house in Little Bookham.

By this time, I was feeling the effects of the heat. However, the next morning we were up very early for a 3.00am taxi to Gatwick where we caught the plane to Glasgow airport. From there, we had transport to the centre of Glasgow where our group had breakfast.

The next stage of journey was by train to Oban, passing through some glorious country – hills, lochs, glens and rivers. I was pleased to arrive at our destination for the night but first I had to see a doctor.

By morning, I had improved and I was able to climb up to McCaig's Tower.



McCaig's Tower

The tower was built in 1897 by local banker, John Stuart McCaig, to provide work for local stonemasons and a lasting monument to the McCaig family.

At lunchtime, together with our prawn sandwiches, we boarded the ferry for the hour long trip to the island of Mull. There we got on a double-decker bus to ride for about another hour through more spectacular scenery to the west of the island to catch the 10-minute ferry to Iona.

We walked to our accommodation at Bishop's House. Arriving in Iona was a most spiritual experience with Scotland's most sacred place, Iona Abbey, dominating the view.



Iona Abbey

The abbey was founded as a monastery by St Columba in 563. The monastery survived until the end of the 12th century, despite repeated Viking raids. Around 1200, a Benedictine abbey was founded. Pilgrimage to St Columba's Shrine continued to thrive, though monastic life on Iona ended with the Protestant Reformation of 1560.

I am so grateful to the Rev. Handon Wilcox for making this possible. He gave several lectures on Celtic Spirituality during our 10-day stay. I loved our rambles around the island with singing and prayers. Church services every day added to a wonderful experience.



We visited Staffa and sat next to the puffins before they flew away for the winter. We also went on a bird-watching trip to Mull where we saw a golden eagle. Swims in the cold sea, wild flowers and beautiful scenery made the long journey worthwhile.

Dilys Ann Chisholm

Iona of my heart, Iona of my love,
Instead of monks voices shall be lowing of cattle,
But ere the world come to an end
Iona shall be as it was.

St Columba

URC News

URC General Assembly makes history with Moderator-Elect

The United Reformed Church General Assembly has made history by electing its first woman BAME Moderator-Elect. Rev. Dr Tessa Henry-Robinson, Minister of Wanstead URC, Trinity Walthamstow URC, Grange Park URC, and Gants Hill URC in the Thames North Synod, was elected URC General Assembly Moderator-Elect 2022-2023 at its annual meeting, which took place from 8-11 July at The Hayes Conference Centre in Swanwick.

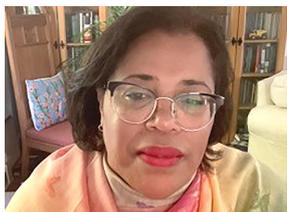
Tessa, a womanist practical theologian and published author, will become the Moderator of the General Assembly from 2023-2024, following Rev. Fiona Bennett who takes on the role from Monday. Tessa will serve as Moderator-Elect at the same time as Philippa Osei, who made history when the URC Youth Assembly elected her as its first BAME Moderator-Elect in January.

“I am the first Black or ethnically-minoritised woman to be nominated to the role of Moderator of General Assembly,” said Dr Henry-Robinson. “This is a huge step for the URC.”

Since November 1983, Tessa has been married to Rev. Mark Robinson who serves the URC as a Minister of Word and Sacrament, is Convener of the URC Business Committee and as one of the Chaplains to recently ordained ministers. Tessa and Mark have four adult children, Jusqu’a-Sonji; Brent; Pearce; and Greer-Aylece; and three grandchildren, Emily, Iman-Simone and Josephine.

Born in March 1963, Tessa’s career spans 30 years which began in the 1990s in Trinidad and Tobago and continued in the UK working with students in primary, secondary and tertiary education, including those for whom English is not their first language.

Tessa began training to be a Minister of the Word and Sacraments in 2014 and was ordained in 2018. She is currently responsible for four URC congregations within east London. She is a founding member of Cascades of Grace, formed within the URC through Global and Intercultural Ministries to network and empower Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) women in the churches.



Maidenhead URC maintain tireless support for Ukraine

A group of volunteers, operating out of Maidenhead United Reformed Church, are continuing to send boxes upon boxes of donations to Ukrainian refugees in Poland. Since March, four trucks full of donations have made the trip from the church, which has served as a base for people to drop off essential items, to Poland. Plans for a fifth journey are underway.

Rev. David Downing said: “People are still connecting to us and still thinking that by doing this they’re doing what they can to bring a bit of peace, hope and love into a world that is so in need.”

Jolanta Pietrusinska, whose hometown is near the Polish-Ukrainian border, has played a key role in helping co-ordinate the delivery of goods to those in need. With links to families in Ukraine and towns on the border with Poland, Jolanta has provided first-hand knowledge of exactly what is needed which has fuelled donations.

Four ‘shining lights’ gain Lundie Memorial Award

Warm, caring, enthusiastic, and talented are just some of the words used to describe the latest recipients of the United Reformed Church (URC) Lundie Memorial Award.

Four-year-old **Cleo Ward**, from the URC Southern Synod, is June’s winner.



Cleo is described as “a shining light in the fellowship of the Church” by Pam Tolhurst, a local church leader at Gillingham URC, who nominated the youngster for the award.

“Cleo is often a busy bee,” says Pam. “You will usually find her either offering the biscuit basket round the congregation, encouraging her best friend to attend the puppet ministry or helping to count the Kingdom Club and youth fellowship money held in the ‘pink pig’ money box.”

Cleo plans to spend her £100 award helping children who do not have toys and will be dividing the money between the charity Starfish Malawi and the Rainbows group she has recently joined within her church.

Amelia Platt, aged 11 from the URC Yorkshire Synod, is May's winner. Rev. Andrew Webb, Minister of St Andrews URC in Skipton, nominated Amelia and describes her as "playing a full part in the life of the church".



Amelia has utilised her variety of skills and talents in her local church, including participating in dramas, readings, prayers and playing the flute most weeks within worship.

With respect to the £100 award, Amelia added: "I haven't quite decided what to spend it on yet but I am looking at lots of things including messy church."

Eight-year-old **Poppy Dawson-Crabb** of Malmesbury URC, in South Western Synod, is April's winner.



Poppy was nominated by her minister, Rev. Sarah Simpson, who has witnessed Poppy's

enthusiastic involvement in worship and mission and describes her as making "a hugely positive difference to our church family".

Sarah said: "Poppy organises craft activities or offers to read during intergenerational services and was a regular on the filmed services produced by her church during lockdown, makes things to distribute to the elderly. She eagerly takes part in anything involving Christian Aid and wrote a poem for "Hope Springs Eternal". Her beautiful 'Easter pebbles', decorated and shared with others, was also well received. She was recognised as the top under-16 fundraiser in Wiltshire's Ride and Stride and has, together with her mum, instigated Muddy Church in Malmesbury, recruiting her friends to go along.

Lydia Bearne, 18, attends Banstead URC in Southern Synod and she was nominated by Linda Richards, her local church leader, for the March Lundie Memorial Award.



From the start of the pandemic, Lydia recognised the need to support those who were unable to get out and about. Finding that the people connected with the church already had friends and family who would collect prescriptions

or do shopping, she volunteered for another invaluable service.

She discovered that those without email were unable to access the regular messages of encouragement from the local church leader, and so agreed to deliver printed versions to the houses of all those who lived within walking distance, printing them out and walking from house to house in all weathers which continued through lockdown and beyond.

URC Minister appointed as World Council of Churches Director

Rev. Dr Peter Cruchley has been appointed the new Director of the World Council of Churches (WCC's) Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME).



Based in the United Reformed Church West Midlands Synod, Dr Cruchley is currently the

Mission Secretary for the Council for World Mission. He has served in this role since 2016.

Speaking about his new post, Dr Cruchley said: "I am delighted to take up this role with the WCC. Mission is at the heart of the hope and purpose of the ecumenical movement. CWME brings together the fullest range of Christian expression, from Pentecostal to Orthodox, Protestant to Roman Catholic, these traditions are all seeking to honour the call to love and serve the Lord visibly and tangibly.

As the new Director of the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, which is composed of 35 members nominated by the WCC central committee, Dr Cruchley will foster conferences, consultations and visits, correspondence or other forms of contacts, for the sake of mission and unity of all Christians.

Rev. Dr John Bradbury, URC General Secretary, added: "The ecumenical vision that lays behind the formation of the United Reformed Church is still strong within us. It is often said that as a small denomination we punch above our weight ecumenically, and we do. Within the WCC, Rev. Dr Susan Durber serves as Moderator of the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC; Rev. Sarah Moore serves on the Central Committee of the WCC, and now Peter joins the staff of the WCC in this vital role.

Black death: how we solved the centuries-old mystery of its origins

It is not an exaggeration to say that the question of where and when the Black Death, the deadliest pandemic ever, originated is one of the biggest mysteries in human history. After all, the Black Death was the first wave of the second plague pandemic of the 14th to early 19th centuries. It killed some 50-60% of the population in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa and an unaccountable number of people in Central Asia.

Different proposals, based on competing theories, have been put forward. But in 2017, I came across some records describing an intriguing medieval cemetery in Kara-Djigach, Chüy Valley, northern Kyrgyzstan, which I suspected may hold the key. As part of a multidisciplinary team co-led by Maria Spyrou at University of Tübingen, we have now investigated several specimens from individuals buried at that site – and come up with an answer.

The idea that the Black Death originated in the east – territories overlapping, roughly speaking, Central Asia, Mongolia and China – dates back to the contemporaries of the pandemic in Europe and the Islamic world. The modern, academic Chinese origin theory dates back to at least to in 1756-8 and a publication about the history of Central Asia by French scholar Joseph de Guignes.

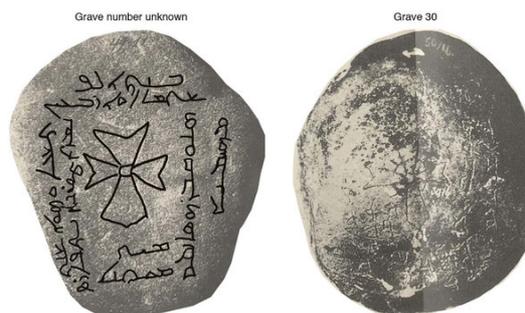
Other plague historians see Central Asia in general, and the Tian-Shan region, a mountain area on the border between China and Kyrgyzstan, as the Black Death's cradle. But some scholars have argued for alternative regions as diverse as northern Iraq, the Caucasus, Russia's Volga, western Urals or western Siberia, the Gobi desert and India. One historian even suggested that the Black Death beginnings was associated with some unknown cosmic event.

Similarly, the chronological origins of the pandemic have been disputed too. In a 2013 study, a team of microbiologists identified a major evolutionary event in which the main plague lineage (Branch 0) mutated and split into four new plague lineages: Branches 1-4. Dubbed the "Great Polyotomy" or "Big Bang", the researchers found that this event created the strain (on Branch 1), associated with the Black Death. The research, which was based on probability computations, dated this event to a period between 1142 and 1339. They also inferred that *Y. pestis* – plague bacterium – may have originated in the Tibetan-Qinghai Plateau in Asia.

Drawing on this work, it has been suggested that that the pandemic may have spread widely in the 13th century, thanks to the expansion of the emerging Mongol Empire.

Genetics to the rescue

Without securely dated ancient DNA from Central Asia, however, the question would ultimately remain unsolved. This changed when I came across records of the Kara-Djigach cemetery – excavated by the Russian archaeologist Nikolai Pantusov in 1885 and 1886 and analysed by the Russian scholar Daniel Chwolson (1819-1911). Of the total 467 stones, covering the period 1248-1345, 118 are dated to 1338 – a suspiciously large proportion of deaths. Most of the stones have little detail about the person they commemorate, just bearing the names and death dates, but there are ten longer inscriptions from those years, stating "pestilence" (mawtānā in Syriac, the language of ancient Syria) as a cause of death.



Tombstones from the Kara-Djigach cemetery

It was intriguing. Not only that "pestilence" was mentioned, but that the associated tombstones were all dated to 1338-9 - just seven to eight years before the arrival of the Black Death in Crimea, and its subsequent spread all over west Eurasia and north Africa. I had a strong gut feeling about the likely connection.

We therefore decided to genetically sequence the remains from several specimens from these plague year burials, and managed to get results from the teeth of seven different individuals. Our analysis detected the presence of *Y. pestis* in three specimens, thus confirming that pestilence was indeed caused by this bacterium. We also noted that the strain (on Branch 0) seemed to have just preceded the Great Polyotomy, out of which the Black Death strain emerged shortly after. The study therefore indicates that the Black Death commenced shortly after (or possibly even during) this 1338-9 outbreak.

Of course, there is nothing to suggest that that Kara-Djigach was the specific source of the pandemic. Rather, we believe that the disaster started somewhere in the wider Tian Shan area, perhaps not too far from that site.



Tian Shan region. Lyazzat Musralina

It is important to bear in mind that *Y. pestis* is a bacterium that lives among wild rodent populations. We often associate plague with rats. But in Tian Shan, the prevalent rodent carriers of plague are marmots. It is therefore likely that it was their colonies that were the ultimate source of the 1338-9 outbreak.

Importantly, ancient plague strains found today in marmot colonies in Tian Shan plague reservoirs are evolutionarily even older than the Kara-Djigach strain. Therefore, we conclude that the Kara-Djigach strain must have evolved locally in marmot colonies within the extended Tian Shan region, rather than being introduced into the

Kara-Djigach community from some faraway origin. At some point, the bacteria simply crossed over to human inhabitants of the region.

The publication in question has ended the centuries-old debate regarding the spatio-temporal origins of the Black Death. But what else do we take from it?

To understand the phenomenon of emerging epidemic diseases, it is essential to have a big evolutionary picture. It is important to see how these diseases develop evolutionary and historically, and avoid treating different strains as isolated phenomena. To understand how the diseases develop and get transmitted, it is also crucial to consider the environmental and socioeconomic contexts.

We also hope that our study will set an example to other historians and scientists that hope to answer such big questions – showing that a collaborative approach involving colleagues from different fields and bringing together different skills, methods, experiences and talents, is the future of historical and paleogenetic research.

Philip Slavin

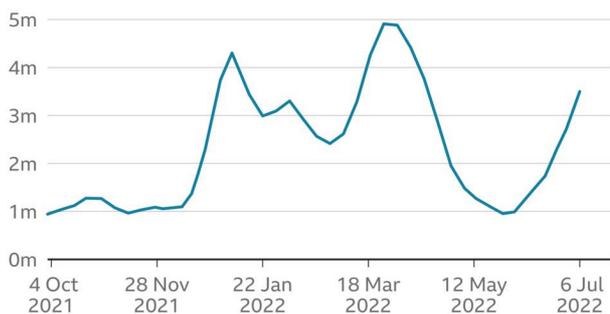
Associate Professor of History, University of Stirling.

Published on The Conversation website at www.theconversation.com on 20th June 2022.

Coronavirus infections (from the BBC website)

According to figures from the Office for National Statistics published on 15th July, nearly 3.5 million people, or one in 18, has the virus – up from 2.7m, or one in 25, the week before. The data is collated by testing thousands of people from UK households – whether they have symptoms or not – to estimate how much virus is around. The rise is being driven by fast-spreading sub-variants of Omicron, called BA.4 and BA.5. People are still able to catch the infection even if they have had Covid before.

UK infections up nearly 30% week-on-week
Estimated people testing positive for coronavirus



Source: Office for National Statistics, 15 Jul

BBC

In the latest report, the ONS estimates Coronavirus rates were:

- One in 19 in England - up from one in 25 the week before.
- One in 17 in Wales - up from one in 20.
- One in 17 in Northern Ireland - up from one in 19
- One in 16 in Scotland - up from one in 17.

Infections are showing no signs of decreasing, with rates approaching levels last seen in March this year at the peak of the Omicron BA.2 wave. Hospital

admissions of people in England with Covid are also rising, but that increase is showing signs of slowing down. Vaccines are still doing a good job of helping protect people from getting very sick with the virus.

How churches are contributing billions to the social good of our nation

Can you measure the value of mental health, wellbeing and food for the family on a spreadsheet? The National Churches Trust has done just that, and the figures are staggering.

How do you put a price on wellbeing? In a world obsessed with balance sheets and metrics, the social goods that charities produce are easily overlooked. But as the Government struggles to provide social care amid a surging cost of living crisis, one of the oldest institutions in our country is (almost unnoticed) contributing billions to the national balance sheet.

Most of us may not worship on a regular basis, if ever, but the National Churches Trust gives grants to help keep church buildings open and in use, recognising that these often surprising buildings retain an important role in a thriving local community. The Trust works across the UK and with all Christian denominations helping ensure church buildings remain at the centre of community life; in the wake of the pandemic Historic England tasked them with distributing £3.5m of Heritage Stimulus Fund cash to 32 communities.

To which many of us may ask simply... why? The answer is in the social capital and benefits these hubs provide. And the figures are staggering.

Alongside grant giving, the Trust has a campaigning remit, and in 2020 conducted pioneering research with economic consultants State of Life to quantify the economic and social value of church buildings to local communities and to the nation. This was published in October 2020 in the House of Good report. Applying HM Treasury's Green Book methodology, the research looked at two types of value – first, market value and replacement cost; second, non-market (wellbeing) value.

The market value of church buildings was estimated in 2020 to be worth upwards of £2.4bn, but this isn't about their value as real estate, rather what they provide.

Direct economic value came in at £1.4 billion per year – this includes the day-to-day work carried out in the buildings, clergy and staff employment costs, maintenance and utilities costs, and income from hiring, tourism and giving.

Next came the cost of replacement for their provision of social good: over £200 million per year. This is the cost to Government of replacing the social and community services provided in church buildings, such as counselling and mental health services, food banks, youth groups, and

drug and alcohol support. These four key areas are important because of the number and scale of these activities in church buildings.

Third we have the economic value of volunteers in and around churches: £850 million per year. This huge amount is the sum of many individual volunteer hours from the congregation and wider community in providing social and community good in church buildings. The average number of volunteer hours provided per church has doubled in the last decade, and now exceeds 2,500 per year.

It doesn't end there. Next we have non-market or social value, which was estimated to be £10 billion per year.

The first in the gains here is the wellbeing value to the volunteers in church buildings: £165 million per year. This measures the health and wellbeing benefit of volunteering to those who do so. So a marvellous win-win, with volunteering benefiting both those giving and those receiving.

Next we have the wellbeing value to those who benefit from the social and community good made possible through church buildings: £8.3 billion per year. Food banks are the single most important church-related social and community good in terms of their contribution to the welfare of beneficiaries. Contrary to Ashfield MP Lee Anderson's suggestion that there is 'no massive use' for food banks in the UK, the report conservatively estimated their value at over £7 billion annually. The total of £8.3 billion equates to half the size of the UK care home sector.

Then we have the wellbeing value to people from attending services in church buildings: at least £1.4 billion per year. Regardless of religious affiliation, evidence from large national datasets shows that people who attend religious services feel happier and healthier than those who do not.

To put a price on the non-market value of the activities taking place in church buildings, The House of Good used a standard unit of measurement called a WELLBY – defined as a one-point change in life satisfaction on a 0-10 scale, per person, per year. The 2020 report used a very conservative rate to reach the headline figure of £12.4 billion of social value a year. Even so, that's roughly equal to the total spent by the NHS on mental health in 2018.

In July 2021, HM Treasury adopted the WELLBY as its primary measure for wellbeing in its guidance, giving a mid-range monetary value of a WELLBY at £13,000. This official value is more than five times higher than the conservative figure used in the 2020 report. The research team therefore reran the calculations and issued a Report Update in late 2021, which puts the annual social value of church buildings in the UK at a staggering £55 billion.

Unsurprisingly, the significant changes relate to the non-market (social) values, with the wellbeing value of volunteering now £2.3 billion, the value of weekly church attendance now £7.3 billion, and the wellbeing value to individuals benefiting from community good now £43 billion (with £36.3 billion from food banks).

These are colossal numbers. £55 billion is twice the annual spend by all local authorities on adult social care. Average that figure across the estimated 39,800 churches in the UK and each church is contributing £1.4m. This research is a game changer for the specific sector in which the National Churches Trust operates, demonstrating the scale of the financial contribution that church buildings make to society as a whole. For all concerned with positive social change, this offers a compelling means of representing the value of social goods, in turn providing a powerful argument for direct financial investment.

Nigel Walter

Dr Nigel Walter FRIBA FRSA is an architect and a trustee of the National Churches Trust



2021 Census – some early findings

- In Castle Point, the population size has increased by 1.8%, from around 88,000 in 2011 to 89,600 in 2021. This is lower than the overall increase for England (6.6%), where the population grew by nearly 3.5 million to 56,489,800.
- The population of Thurrock increased by 11.6% to 176,000 from 2011 to 2021 and that of Basildon by 7.5% to 187,600. Southend-on-Sea saw an increase of 4.1% to 180,700 and Rochford saw smaller growth of 2.8% to 85,600.
- The English region with the largest population increase was the East of England, which grew by around 8.3% or 488,000 more residents. The English region with the smallest increase was the North East, growing by 1.9% or around 50,000 people. In Wales, the population grew by 1.4% or 44,000 people.
- As of 2021, Castle Point is the ninth most densely populated of the East of England's 45 local authority areas, with around 14 people living on each football pitch-sized area of land.
- Overall, in England, there has been an increase of 20.1% in people aged 65 years and over, an increase of 3.6% in people aged 15 to 64 years, and an increase of 5.0% in children aged under 15 years.
- In Castle Point, there has been an increase of 18.9% in people aged 65 years and over, a decrease of 4.6% in people aged 15 to 64 years, and an increase of 3.2% in children aged under 15 years.



Ladies Recreation Group

On Monday 20th June, the Ladies Recreation Group restarted at the church after a long break due to COVID-19. I was invited to go along to join the others playing table tennis in the Small Hall as the group needed a few new members. I must say that I received a very warm welcome from Kay Watson, Pamela George and Christine Brackin. Another new lady named Margaret also came along and, even if I say so myself, we two novices played well!

It was a most enjoyable evening, starting at 8.00pm and ending at 10.00pm. Half-way through the evening we stopped for tea and biscuits and for what ladies are good at doing – chatting!

So, if there are any ladies out there who would like to make new friends, why not try table tennis on a Monday evening. I am sure that you will be made most welcome, as was I.

Doreen Churchill

The Glory of the Garden by Rudyard Kipling

Our England is a garden that is full of stately views,
Of borders, beds and shrubberies and lawns and avenues,
With statues on the terraces and peacocks strutting by;
But the Glory of the Garden lies in more than meets the eye.

For where the old thick laurels grow, along the thin red wall,
You'll find the tool- and potting-sheds which are the heart of all,
The cold-frames and the hot-houses, the dungpits and the tanks,
The rollers, carts and drain-pipes, with the barrows and the planks.

And there you'll see the gardeners, the men and 'Prentice boys
Told off to do as they are bid and do it without noise;
For, except when seeds are planted and we shout to scare the birds,
The Glory of the Garden it abideth not in words.

And some can pot begonias and some can bud a rose,
And some are hardly fit to trust with anything that grows;
But they can roll and trim the lawns and sift the sand and loam,
For the Glory of the Garden occupieth all who come.

Our England is a garden, and such gardens are not made
By singing: "Oh, how beautiful!" and sitting in the shade,
While better men than we go out and start their working lives
At grubbing weeds from gravel-paths with broken dinner-knives.

There's not a pair of legs so thin, there's not a head so thick,
There's not a hand so weak and white, nor yet a heart so sick,
But it can find some needful job that's crying to be done,
For the Glory of the Garden glorifieth every one.

Then seek your job with thankfulness and work till further orders,
If it's only netting strawberries or killing slugs on borders;
And when your back stops aching and your hands begin to harden,
You will find yourself a partner in the Glory of the Garden.

Oh, Adam was a gardener, and God who made him sees
That half a proper gardener's work is done upon his knees,
So when your work is finished, you can wash your hands and pray
For the Glory of the Garden that it may not pass away!
And the Glory of the Garden it shall never pass away!



RHS Garden Hyde Hall



Photos taken on a visit with Heather on 24th June – *Malcolm Brown*

Computer Corner

James Webb Space Telescope Full-Colour Images Explained

Interesting video

A video explaining some of the first images obtained from the James Webb Space telescope, released by NASA recently. Learn about Deep Field images, Exoplanets, Stellar Death, Stephan's Quintet Galaxy and Stellar Birth.

URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0VNQ6_hSA8o

XnView MP

Useful free software

XnView MP (Multi-Platform) is an image organizer and general-purpose file manager used for viewing, converting, organizing and editing raster images, as well as general purpose file management. Versions are available for Windows, macOS and Linux.

The program comes with built-in batch renaming and screen capture tools. The program is also useful for tagging images with keywords and performing searches searching based on those keywords. It is licensed as freeware for private, educational and non-profit uses.

URL: <https://www.xnview.com/en/xnviewmp/>

England Coast Path in Essex

Interesting website

Parts of the England Coast Path from Tilbury to Southend and Southend to Wallasea Island were officially opened on 7th July. This website gives details of the Essex part of the England Coast Path with links to downloadable and interactive maps.

URL: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-coast-path-in-essex>

Word Search – Astronomical terms

Inspired by the James Webb Space Telescope

I	B	A	G	J	X	Z	X	G	N	X	W	F	Q	Q	Q	G	N	P	K
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T	S	O	W	O	L	S	U	L	N	W	V	A	Z	W	N	B	M	B	M
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CLUSTER
COMET
CORONA
ECLIPSE
EQUINOX
GALAXY
LUNAR
METEOR
NEBULA
ORBIT
PARALLAX
PERIGEE
PLANET
QUASAR
STAR
SUNSPOT
SUPERNOVA
WANING
ZENITH

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

WHAT'S ON

A round-up of future events in the area

-
- Mon 18 Jul 2022 - Smart Minds - A friendly club for people with dementia and their carers/families. Art activities and socialising with tea and biscuits. At Hadleigh United Reformed Church from 1.00pm to 3.00pm every Monday. If interested, phone Sue Lesser on 07889 762172.
-
- Tue 19 Jul 2022 - Kettle's On Coffee Morning at St Barnabas Church, Church Road, Hadleigh from 10.30am to 12.00 noon. Held every Tue.
-
- ditto - Happy Feet Walking Group - 90-minute circular walk around the Hadleigh Farm estate. Meet at The Hub café, Chapel Lane, Hadleigh. Starts at 1.00pm. Held every Tue. All welcome. No need to book.
-
- Wed 20 Jul 2022 - Coffee Morning at St Michael's Church, Daws Heath, from 10.30am to 11.45am. Held every Wed.
-
- Thu 21 Jul 2022 - Poetry Reading Group at Hadleigh Library from 2.30pm to 3.30pm - the poems of Stevie Smith. Every 3rd Thu of month. All welcome.
-
- Fri 22 Jul 2022 - Benfleet Art & Craft Club at Hadleigh Methodist Church from 1.00pm to 3.30pm every Friday. Established 1945. New members welcome.
-
- ditto - Craft & Knitting Club at Hadleigh Library, 12.30pm to 2.30pm every Friday. Meet others who are passionate about craft and enjoy a chat.
-
- Sat 23 Jul 2022 - Music In The Park with the Essex Yeomanry Band at the Bandstand, Priory Park, Southend-on-Sea from 3.00pm to 4.30pm. A free, open-air concert. BYO seat/blanket.
-
- Sun 24 Jul 2022 - Music In The Park with the Avey & Newham Brass Band at the Bandstand, Priory Park, Southend-on-Sea from 3.00pm to 4.30pm. A free, open-air concert. BYO seat/blanket.
-
- Fri 29 Jul 2022 - Fish & Chip Lunch at St Michael's Church at St Michael's Church, Daws Heath. Cost £4. To book, phone Sue Croucher on 07902 463829.
-
- Sat 30 Jul 2022 - Hadleigh & Thundersley Community Archive Drop-In at Hadleigh Library. Bring along old photos and documents for scanning, chat about your memories of the area. Books for sale. From 10.30am to 12 noon.
-
- Sun 31 Jul 2022 - Music In The Park with Rayleigh Brass at the Bandstand, Priory Park, Southend-on-Sea from 3.00pm to 4.30pm. A free, open-air concert.
-
- Sat 13 Aug 2022 - Coffee Morning at Hadleigh Methodist Church from 10.00am to 12 noon with drinks, cakes and bric-a-brac stall. Every 2nd Sat.
-
- ditto - Beat & Beans All Day Café at St James the Less Church from 10.30am to 3.00pm. Live music with coffee, tea and snacks. Free admission.
-
- ditto - Coffee Morning & Book Sale at St Peter's Church Thundersley from 10.30am to 12.30pm. Every 2nd Sat.
-
- Sat 20 Aug 2022 - Rayleigh Weir Fire Station Open Day at Rayleigh Weir Fire Station, 500 Rayleigh Road, Thundersley, Essex, SS7 3TR. From 10.00am to 4.00pm.
-
- Sun 4 Sep 2022 - Hadleigh Community Fayre at John H Burrows Recreation Ground from 10.00am to 4.00pm.
-
- Sun 10 Sep 2022 - Hadleigh Gardening Association Harvest Show at Hadleigh Methodist Church Hall from 2.00pm to 4.00pm. Raffle & refreshments.
-

More events listed on the HELIX website at <http://www.hadleighessex.info>