

THE HADLEIGH MESSENGER

June 2023



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

PREACHING ARRANGEMENTS FOR JUNE 2023

Sun 4 th Jun	10.30am	Morning Service	Mr Adrian Tinning
Sun 11 th Jun	10.30am	Morning Service	Mrs Heather Brown
Sun 18 th Jun	10.30am	Morning Service with Holy Communion	Rev. Jim Tarrant MA MTh
Sun 25 th Jun	10.30am	Morning Service	Mr Adrian Tinning

FLOWERS

Sun 18 th Jun	In memory of Marjorie & Geoff Chase - Jeanne Spackman
Sun 25 th Jun	In memory of Phil's birthday (28 th) - Vera Knapton

ELDERS' MEETING

Thu 22 nd Jun 12.45pm

CHURCH MEETING

Thu 27 th Jul 12.45pm

Prayer Reflection ~ Being the God Squad – in God's Team

Thank God that he wants us to grow in unity with one another as we expand our relationship with him. Praise him for the people he has put alongside us to encourage and support us. May we, in our turn encourage and support those around us. Ask for wisdom, humility and grace to work together in harmony for the good of all. Thank God for his enabling Spirit.

Explore your response to difficulties be they awkward people who disagree with you or circumstances you have little control over. Realise we don't need to face anything alone. Our God, come close to us in Jesus, remains with us no matter what. He can be relied upon but we need to accept his help. Pray for grace to turn to him first rather than as a last resort. May this be the team strategy so that we know his will for us. Wonder at the privilege of being God's child and worship.

Accept that little of note is achieved without God's input. Without God we cannot succeed; with God all things are possible with the minimum of resources. Pray that we use the gifts and skills he has given us, to God's glory. May others know we belong to him as we show his love to all we encounter.

Make peace with those who have upset or offended you and also with those whom you have offended. Forgive as we have been forgiven, We have no right to bear grudges or to keep reminding ourselves of the wrongs done to us. God, in his mercy, promised that he would remember our sins 'no more'. It would be as if they had never happened. Pray for grace to do the same.

Prayer – Thank you Lord, for inviting us to be on your team. May we be as faithful to you as you are to us. Thank you Lord. *Amen.*

Beryl Hunt

HADLEIGH URC OFFICERS

Minister:

Rev. Andrew Birch (01702 338674)

Secretary:

Mrs Heather Brown (01702 557678)

Treasurer:

Mr Malcolm Brown (01702 557678)

Serving Elder:

Miss Jean Reeve (01702 554907)

Useful information

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

Website: www.hadleighsexurc.org.uk

An invitation

We invite you to join us for worship and fellowship at any of our services where a warm welcome awaits. If you are in need of help that the ministry of the church can supply then be assured of our interest and concern. If you are suffering from ill health, loneliness or bereavement and feel that we could help, or if you would like to ask for a prayer or personal visit then please let one of our church officers know. All such requests are treated in the strictest confidence.

From the Editor

Welcome to the June 2023 edition of the Hadleigh Messenger. It barely qualifies as a June magazine given the publication date but time is still in short supply so I'm afraid that the magazine is suffering as a result. It would really help if I had more home-grown material to publish. I am grateful to Vera Knapton for her contribution this month.

I'll include a report about Christian Aid Week fundraising in next month's magazine but I'd just like to thank those who supported the bric-a-brac sale at the coffee morning on 18th May and

those who provided bric-a-brac, particularly Major Marian from the Salvation Army Hadleigh Temple.

For those who are unaware, Marian and her husband, Steve, will be leaving Hadleigh very soon. Marian will actually be retiring but Steve will take up a new post as a Mission Officer in north west England. We ask for God's blessing on this next stage of their walk with Jesus. I'd also like to thank Marian for her support of Churches Together in Hadleigh.

Malcolm Brown

Church 119th Anniversary

Our church was founded in 1904 as Hadleigh Congregational Church. On Sunday 21st May, we celebrated the 119th anniversary of the founding with an Anniversary Lunch. The former custom was to have an Anniversary Tea before an evening service but, with no evening services now, we held an Anniversary Lunch last year and decided to do the same this year.

Our Minister, Rev. Andrew Birch, was only inducted last November, so this was his first anniversary service. We hope to celebrate several more anniversaries with Andrew before his eventual retirement. Like last year, at the end of the service tea and coffee were served at the back of the church whilst the food for the lunch was being prepared.

Last year's anniversary service was led by our then Interim Moderator, Rev. Dr Jim Tarrant. It was a pleasure to be able to welcome Jim and his wife Sue to this year's celebrations. Jim continues to support the church by leading worship occasionally. There were a few other guests but the timing of the lunch does make it harder for guests to attend from other churches.

A few photos from the Anniversary celebration



Clockwise from left:
Fred Lawrence, Paul Reed, Hilary &
Andrew Birch, Doreen Churchill, Emily
Simpson, Jean Reeve



The lovely, melt-in-your-mouth, chocolate
buns made by Ann Purkiss



Clockwise from left:
Sue & Jim Tarrant, Sue Horton, Heather
Brown, June Gargrave Pamela George,
Eddie Horton.

Thanks are owed to Jean Reeve and all the other ladies who assisted with the preparation of the food. Special thanks go to Ann Purkiss, who was not able to stay for the lunch but who nevertheless made some delicious buns for the occasion. The icing on the buns indicated the reason for the celebration.

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.

A Sermon preached by Rev. Dr David Cornick

Readings: Gen 18:20-32; Col 2:6-15; Luke 11:1-13

George Herbert came up to Trinity in 1609, and stayed for 15 years. In some senses, although born in Wales in an upper class if not quite aristocratic, but very artistic family, he was a Cambridge poet. He was an ambitious young man, filling the role of Public Orator in the university and serving in Parliament in the 1620s during the reign of James I. The gilded prizes seemed his for the taking, but disillusionment and anxiety set in, and he eventually sought ordination in the Church of England, becoming at the age of 36 Vicar of the two Wiltshire villages of Fugglestone and Bemerton, just outside Salisbury. Three years later he died of consumption. Just before he died, he sent a MS of his poems to his friend Nicholas Ferrar, telling him to publish them if he thought they might ‘...turn to the advantage of any dejected poor soul.’ Mercifully, Ferrar immediately realised their value, for they make up one of the most perceptive and beautiful accounts of the human relationship with God ever penned.

In one of his poems Herbert sets out to explore the nature of prayer. He uses the form of the sonnet – 14 lines – and what is remarkable is that it is one sentence which contains no main verb. As he seeks to understand what prayer is, he unleashes a dazzling cascade of images and pictures. It is ‘...the Churches banquet’, and in the seventeenth century a banquet was, according to the OED, ‘...a slight repast between meals, a course of sweetmeats, fruit and wine’, so it is grounded in the sacrificial reality of the passion and our remembrance of it in Holy Communion. But if it is grounded in history and the weekly liturgical round it soars beyond such temporal limitations, for it also the ‘angels age’. Prayer is ‘...God’s breath in man returning to its birth’. It is worth staying with that picture a while. In the Biblical languages – Hebrew and Greek – one word means both ‘breath’ and ‘spirit’, so we call to mind God breathing life into humanity in one of the Genesis creation stories, a moment of extraordinary almost maternal tenderness, and here we see that circle completed. We remember too that John tells us that after Jesus had been raised he breathed on his disciples and they received the Holy Spirit. Prayer is the language of the tenth leper, the one who in Jesus’ story, returned to give thanks whilst the other nine went about their business. It is completing creation’s circle.

The disciples wanted to learn to pray as Jesus prayed. So often they had seen him absorbed in devotion, and they wanted to share in that absorption. ‘When you pray’, Jesus taught them, say, ‘Father, hallowed be your name...’ The first word, ‘abba’, takes us back into that circle of tenderness which Herbert relished, for it is the Aramaic word for ‘Daddy’. For those who find masculine language about God distracting, concentrate on the intimacy. As a doting grandparent I’ve had many moments in the past year to watch the growth of intimacy between Mum, Dad and baby – gentleness, play, humour, fun, the gestures copied, the sounds forming as the being of the child is slowly, beautifully, naturally shaped, becoming a person. Hold that because that is the world that Jesus is teaching us to enter as he utters that little Aramaic word. We sometimes think that prayer is either a shopping list or pressure group. It isn’t. At its heart its relationship, living open to God, letting Godness shape who we are, just as parents help shape their children.

‘When you pray, say ‘Father, hallowed be your name’. That language is strange to us. ‘Hallow’ isn’t a verb we use much. We might speak of cathedral walls being ‘hallowed’ by age, but it would be a rare usage. Reverence the name of God, hold it as of greatest respect. God’s name and nature is love, and wherever we encounter love in the universe, we see the signature of God. The Anglican spiritual writer Evelyn Underhill mused on the ability of the saints to read the name of God – ‘...Francis read them on the face of the Crucified, in the marred features of the leper, and written in the air by the moving of the free birds. These hear the utterance of the Name in the voices of creation, gruff and gentle, the mating call of the lions and the call of the plover to her straying children; for the saints are realists, centred on God, and understand life at every level in terms of worship.’ (Abba p 19). Hallowing God’s name is about sharing in God’s purpose and plan – theologically this is huge stuff, written on the grandest of scales. That purpose has been revealed in Jesus’ death and resurrection. It is none other than the reconciliation – of all things to God in the redeeming work of Christ. That is why Paul warns the Colossians not to be deflected from the fact that they have come to ‘...fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority’ by

the allure of philosophy, tradition and what he calls ‘...the elemental spirits of the universe...’ for which read astrology and spiritual and philosophical faddishness.

Being a prayerful person is about consciously living in God’s plan and purpose, and as we live and pray we enter more and more fully into that reality. For the few amongst us who are mystics there will be soaring mountain tops, but for most of us this is an activity of rejoicing in life, in the gift of consciousness, and the sheer astonishment that there is something rather than nothing. That thanksgiving is the fuel of prayer, and it’s as ordinary as counting your blessings.

As we have hallowed God’s name, we have glimpsed something of the wonder, the glory, the infinite and ultimately unknowable beauty of God which is holiness. The rest of the prayer is a way of asking that the hallowing of God’s name might rub off on us, that we might grow and change and mature into the life of discipleship. ‘Your kingdom come’, Jesus instructs us to continue. When we turn from the beauty of God, our eyes fall on the world – war, hunger, deprivation, a scorching earth, grievous inequality, crippled lives – the whole creation groaning as Paul wrote. And so we pray, ‘Your kingdom come’. It is not that we believe that the kingdom has not come – we know that it has in Christ, that God’s governance of love is readily available as faith unfolds like a flower. We are, after all, Easter people.

Loving parents do not force their children, even if sometimes that means standing by in pain whilst they make mistakes. God is not in the business of coercion but of invitation. He invites us to live the kingdom, and we pray that it may come, in the world, and in us. God rarely does fireworks. The quiet sacrifice, the unnoticed act of love, the secret prayers, are more often the doors that let the kingdom in. There is always a danger in church life of confusing the kingdom with worthy programmes of social and political action. The kingdom is not that, although God’s governance undoubtedly overlaps it. The kingdom is given from beyond – it is the transformation brought by the risen Christ, Emmanuel, God with us, the transformation of the natural with the wonder of the holy as death became life at Easter. Evelyn Underhill again – ‘...the kingdom is the Holy and not the moral; the Beautiful not the correct; the Perfect not the adequate; Charity not law.’ (Abba p.30)

So we pray not just for programmes of peace and justice, important though they are, when we pray ‘Your kingdom come’. We pray too for the total transformation of the world’s experience with the wonder and majesty and limitlessness of God’s love which we glimpse in all that is true, just, pure, commendable and excellent (Phil 4:8)

Hallowing God’s name, living consciously to let the kingdom come, means both trusting God for our daily bread, and also letting his energy of love work itself out in our living. We are forgiven, set free from the bondage of sin by the love of God in Christ. So we must be forgiving people, sharing that liberation. Praying, Jesus was teaching his disciples, is a relationship. It’s not a shopping list of demands and needs, nor an attempt to remind God what he might have read in The Times or The Guardian earlier in the day. A relationship is two-way. In a relationship both parties are changed. That is why, to return to Herbert’s sonnet, prayer can be siege engine against th’ Almighty – think of Abraham pleading for Sodom. There are times when we want to unleash a barrage of anger and pain at God, and there are times when our pain is so great that it becomes a spear that pierces Christ’s side just as the centurion’s did at the crucifixion. We are, after all, human, and our humanity changed God in Christ Jesus.

Yet it is prayer that makes us who we truly are, children of a God who loves each of us for who and what we are, and who loved the world enough to die for it. As we pray – hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, – we are caught up into that reality –

‘heaven in ordinarie’

‘Church-bels beyond the starres heard, the soul’s blood,

The land of spices; something understood.’

Thanks be to God.

Amen.

Rev. Dr David Cornick

Preached on 24th July 2022 at Downing Place United Reformed Church, Cambridge.

David is a former General Secretary of both the United Reformed Church and Churches Together England. In 2019, he received the Lambeth Cross for Ecumenism for 'outstanding sustained contribution to the development of ecumenical life and witness in England'. (The Lambeth Awards were launched by the Most Revd Justin Welby in 2016 in recognition of outstanding service in different fields.)

URC News

URC General Assembly

The 2023 United Reformed Church (URC) General Assembly takes place from 30 June to 3 July at The Hayes Conference Centre in Swanwick. Items on the agenda include Legacies of Slavery and proposals for repairing justice such as mandatory anti-racism training; ways to support the Transcarpathian Reformed Church in Ukraine; opposition to the Illegal Migration Bill; the nature of the relationship between the URC and the United Reformed Church Trust; the appointments of Synod Moderators; proposals for a formal ministry of URC Children's, Youth and/or Family Minister; North Western and Mersey Synod changes, and the Church Life Review.

General Assembly papers can be viewed and downloaded from the URC website and the proceedings will also be livestreamed on the URC website.

A round-up of all the business discussed and decisions made will be available on the URC website, and in the July/August edition of our monthly email News Update, and the September edition of 'Digest' in Reform magazine.

URC at Greenbelt: Send us your Kintsugi hearts

This year, Greenbelt Festival turns 50! The URC will be there to join the celebration from 24–27 August 2023 at Boughton House, near Kettering.



The United Reformed Church (URC) at Greenbelt is continuing with the theme of 'Revolting Christians' – people who take a stand to challenge or break the political, social and economic systems of our world in order to bring about justice. The Craft Team would like churches around the denomination to contribute to the URC's tent decorations by creating Kintsugi hearts.

Brokenness and restoration

The Japanese art of Kintsugi takes broken objects, often ceramics, and repairs them with gold resin. The resulting 'flaw' becomes part of the object's story and is seen as a unique piece in its history, adding to its beauty.

Stephanie Twilley, the craft team's coordinator, said: "This made me think that as humans, we are all broken and flawed in some way. It is part of our faith that God can heal us and make us whole again and can transform and repair situations which at first seem impossible to us. Many revolting Christians have campaigned to create change in the world where there is conflict, injustice or seemingly impossible brokenness. We invite you and your church to try the following meditation activity, and then send us your Kintsugi hearts so we can display them at Greenbelt and encourage more revolting Christians!"

Activity

Each person will need a coloured paper heart approx. 10cm across, a piece of dark coloured card, glue and a gold or silver pen

Choose a paper heart. Think of a situation in the world that you know of where there is brokenness, conflict or injustice that seems impossible to change or heal. *As you do this, rip up your heart and hold the pieces in your hand.*

We can feel broken and inadequate in our response. Less than perfect. Everything around us can feel dark and hopeless. *Take a piece of dark coloured card.*

Know that we can all be part of God's plan for putting things right. *Put your heart together again onto a dark piece of card.*

Don't try and hide the cracks. Leave an intentional gap that tells of the struggles that have to be gone through in order to put things right and make things complete again.

Stick your hearts down. Carefully colour the cracks in with a gold or silver pen until the heart is complete again. Imagine the love poured into us by God and by us as we work for the justice, peace and freedom of the Kingdom of God.

Please send your Kintsugi hearts, by 14 August to: Stephanie Twilley, 116 Mount Road, Penn, Wolverhampton, WV4 5RZ.

Church House celebrates service of Jane Baird

Colleagues and friends gathered at Church House on 21 June to wish Jane Baird well for her retirement.



Jane has served as Deputy General Secretary (Administration & Resources) for the past nine years. Her last working day will be 30 June.

“It has been a huge privilege to serve the URC over the past nine years,” Jane said. “I have made many new friends and caught up with people I hadn’t seen for a while. The United Reformed Church is very special as are its people.”

“Church House is a really good place to work, with an amazing team of dedicated and gifted staff. My thanks go to them all for their support; I could not have done my job without them. I am also grateful to those I have served with on the various councils of the URC, for their friendship and encouragement. It is rare to work somewhere where your personal values are so closely aligned with those of the organisation – I have been blessed.”

Much to Jane’s surprise and delight, colleagues had also arranged for Ryan Early, an actor from The Archers to record a personal greeting to Jane, also wishing her well for her retirement. At the event, thanks were expressed for her service by the former General Secretariat: the Revds John Proctor and Richard Church and Francis Brien, amongst many others.

Jane was brought up in the Congregational Church and then URC. She is a member of Foleshill Road URC in Coventry and has strong connections with Holyhead Road URC Coventry where she leads the choir.

As agreed at the 2022 General Assembly, the post of the Deputy General Secretary (Administration and Resources) is replaced by the Chief Operating Officer role, held by Victoria James.

CWM shares solidarity with Taiwan

The Council for World Mission (CWM) has held its Annual Members’ Meeting in Changhua, Taiwan, as an act of support and solidarity with the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan (PCT), and the wider Taiwanese society.



People in traditional Taiwanese dress praying

CWM comprises 32 member churches – including the URC – from 6 global regions. Karen Campbell, URC Secretary for Global & Intercultural Ministries, was part of a small group that drafted a statement on behalf of CWM that was read out to the gathering. The statement read:

Meeting under the theme “Break Down the Walls of Division”, CWM has actively listened to the voices of the Taiwanese people. Caught in the escalating geopolitics between competing Empires, Taiwan is living under the constant threat of war. Empire-policies have created deep divisions not only within Taiwanese society, but also in the entire Asia-Pacific region. The situation has been intensified in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war, with Empires taking more aggressive actions than in the recent past. Taiwan has experienced increased military exercises (simulations and provocations), and the Taiwanese people feel increasingly vulnerable.

Taiwan has been one of the most isolated nations in the world during the Covid-19 pandemic, primarily because of its exclusion from the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the International Health Regulations (IHR). Taiwan was not allowed to participate in the global response to the pandemic, including accessing information and resources, sharing data and best practices, and participating in international discussions and decision-making. CWM has been working closely with the PCT and other ecumenical partners through the Taiwan Ecumenical Forum (TEF), advocating for the rights of the Taiwanese people to “self-determination”, including religious, political, and economic freedom, and in pursuing peace in the region.

Memories Old and New

On the weekend of the Church Anniversary, my sister Ruth, her family and I travelled to Wiltshire to attend our cousin John's funeral on Monday 22nd May.

Inevitably, we spent a day in Lacock, the ancient village once owned by Miss Matilda Talbot and home to the pioneering photographer, William Fox Talbot (1800-1877). More recently, the main hall and medieval cloisters of Lacock Abbey have featured in several Harry Potter films. The Abbey and the village are now owned by the National Trust.



Lacock Abbey cloisters

At one end of the High Street, there is a wooden bench bearing a brass plaque in memory of Leo Stevens, who died a couple of years ago and, with whom, Ruth and I went to school. Leo spent his childhood in Lacock. His father was the groundsman for the Abbey and when the National Trust took custody of Lacock, the family moved to the lodge house. Ruth's daughters, Claire and Jane, went to the Abbey to take advantage of their National Trust membership, while Ruth and I rested on Leo's bench!

Shortly after doing so, we were joined by a young man who looked up at the blue sky and said, "I had no idea that England ever had an Aussie blue sky." I said, "Make the most of it – two sunny days and a thunderstorm could well be our English summer!"

The Australian told us that he was a history teacher, working in London on a three-year exchange contract, hence his fascination with the ancient buildings and their history. He was equally fascinated to have met two old ladies who spent their childhood in the village and had actually witnessed Miss Matilda Talbot's official handing over of the Abbey and village in 1944.

He then said, "Would you mind if I took a photograph of you two old ladies to send to my mother in Oz?"

"Not so much of the old," Ruth told him, "We might be knocking on 90 but we're not hitting 100 yet!"

We duly grinned into his camera lens. He thanked us for our company before wandering off in the direction of the Abbey. Claire and Jane rejoined us and we made our way to the brook where Ruth and I like to watch children playing in the water and the occasional car drive across the ford to access a very steep hill leading to Ray Bridge, a hamlet where Queen Camilla has a home.

On this occasion, I failed to reach the brook as short of breath, overcome by the heat and with a very painful back, I decided to seek shade and a wall to lean against at the entrance to the village church until Ruth, Claire and Jane returned. The 15th century St Cyriac's Church in Lacock is the only church in England dedicated to that saint.



St Cyriac's Church, Lacock

Whilst leaning against the wall in the shade I was approached by three people who asked me if I needed help. The two ladies and a gentleman were from Australia and had flown to England specifically to watch the Coronation pageantry. On arrival, they had camped for two days in The Mall. On the day before the royal event, Prince Charles did a walkabout and he stopped right in front of them, inquired where they had come from and shook their hands. Needless to say, they were ecstatic to have actually spoken to King Charles and just hoped that the folks back home would believe their exciting tale and would be willing to share their happy memories.

Cousin John's funeral took place in a crematorium set amidst tall chestnut trees laden with candle-like flowers. The Wiltshire countryside looked its best, so, in spite of the sadness of the day, there were many aspects to praise and to be thankful for.

A civil celebrant led the funeral service, which consisted of beautiful music, poems and

reminders of John's ever-cheerful positivity. There were no hymns or Bible readings but the Lord's Prayer was said, the words for which were printed in the order of service for mourners unfamiliar with them.

I thank God for our memories happy or sad, old or new, all of which enrich our lives from day to day.

Vera Knapton

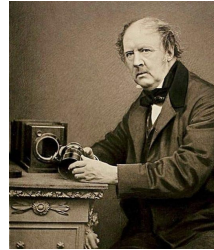
Notes from the official guidebook to St Cyriac's:

St Cyriac is an unusual dedication for a church in England, particularly on his own as he is usually paired with his mother St Julitta. As the patron saint for family happiness and children's health, he is revered in Eastern churches and also has a strong tradition in France. The dedication in Lacock most likely follows from the church's Norman heritage, and probably through local French landowner William of Eu, not longer after 1066.

The Talbots – The family with the longest lineage at Lacock is that of the Talbots. From 1574, when John Talbot married into the Sharington family (Olive Sharington was Sir William's niece), the

Lacock Abbey estate passed through 10 generations of Talbots before being gifted to the National Trust by the 11th, Matilda Theresa Talbot. At St Cyriac's, the Talbots have been longstanding patrons of the church, closely involved in the community welfare for which the church was the traditionally appointed authority. As well as being MPs and servicemen, Talbots were churchwardens, landlords, and charity benefactors (especially, latterly, the ladies of the house).

In 1902-3, the chancel was rebuilt and dedicated to William Henry Fox Talbot (1800-1877) by his son Charles, to designs by Sir Harold Brakspear. The verse from Proverbs 3:13-14 which is carved under the cornice of the ceiling is a fitting commendation of learning for a man whose areas of expertise included mathematics, botany, electricity, assyriology, and above all photography.



Fox Talbot's experiments at Lacock Abbey in the 1830s led him to invent the negative-positive photographic process, a revolution in image reproduction which would change the world.

Proverbs 3:13-14

Blessed are those who find wisdom,
those who gain understanding,
for she is more profitable than silver
and yields better returns than gold.

All in June

A week ago I had a fire
To warm my feet, my hands and face;
Cold winds, that never make a friend,
Crept in and out of every place.

Today the fields are rich in grass,
And buttercups in thousands grow;
I'll show the world where I have been –
With gold-dust seen on either shoe.

Till to my garden back I come,
Where bumble-bees for hours and hours
Sit on their soft, fat, velvet bums,
To wriggle out of hollow flowers.

William Henry Davies

Stories of kindness may counteract the negative effects of looking at bad news – new research

“If it bleeds, it leads” has long been a saying used in the media to describe how news stories featuring violence, death and destruction grab readers’ attention – and so dominate the news agenda. And, while many of us are aware of the negative effect that these kinds of story can have on us, it can still be hard to look away. We’re hardwired to sit up and take notice of them.

This “surveillance mode” is thought to be an evolutionary hangover from a time where survival odds were increased when we attended to the threats in our environment.

Research consistently shows bad news can have a negative effect on us. During the pandemic, multiple studies linked news consumption to poorer mental health, documenting symptoms of depression, anxiety, hopelessness and worry. In our research, we found that spending as little as 2-4 minutes on Twitter or YouTube reading about the pandemic affected people’s moods adversely.

However, our latest study has found that looking at positive news stories – specifically, videos and articles featuring acts of kindness – can actually counteract the ill-effects of seeing negative news stories.

Fight back against disinformation. Get your news here, direct from experts

Less decline in mood

To conduct our study, we showed 1,800 participants news stories. Some only saw negative news stories – including footage of the Manchester bombing, animal cruelty, or brutal acts of violence.

Others were shown a negative news story, followed immediately by a positive news story. The positive story featured kind acts such as acts of heroism, people providing free veterinary care for stray animals, or philanthropy towards unemployed and homeless people.

We then asked participants to report how they felt before and after viewing the news content. We also asked them how inclined they were to believe in the goodness of others.

The group that was shown negative news stories followed by positive ones fared far better than people who were only shown a negative news

story. They reported less decline in mood – instead feeling uplifted. They also held more positive views of humanity generally.

Curious to know whether there was something special about kindness specifically, we also tested how people exposed to a negative news story followed by an amusing one (such as swearing parrots, award-winning jokes or hapless American tourists) fared.

Amusing news stories certainly helped buffer the effects of bad news and reduce the mood disturbances they caused. But in comparison, participants who’d been shown acts of kindness reported a more positive mood on average, and a greater belief in the goodness of humanity.



Videos and stories of acts of kindness had the most positive effect on participants. (22Images Studio/ Shutterstock)

This shows us there’s something unique about kindness which may buffer the effects of negative news on our mental health. However, further research is needed to establish whether these are long-term benefits, as we only measured how people felt immediately afterwards.

The power of kindness

There are many reasons why kindness may have this protective effect on our mood.

First off, it is valued universally. Seeing acts of kindness may remind us of our connection with others through shared values. It may also help us maintain the belief that the world and people in it are good, which is important for our wellbeing.

Third, seeing others being helped is the resolution to seeing them hurt. So-called “catastrophe compassion”, whereby positive behaviour prevails despite negative circumstances, provides relief to the pain we experience when we see others suffering. Or, as one of our participants explained:

“Knowing that there are a lot of people that are genuinely willing to help those affected by this attack somehow gives me a relief.”

Similarly, other research has found that even when children had not caused or were not connected to the suffering of another person, they experienced a reduction in physiological stress simply by seeing the hurt person being helped.

Fourth, countless research has shown that witnessing others’ acts of moral beauty, such as kindness or heroism, triggers “elevation” – a positive and uplifting feeling which experts theorise acts as an emotional reset button, replacing feelings of cynicism with hope, love and optimism.

It will be important for future research to investigate which specific reasons explain why kindness has the protective effect that our research has demonstrated.

A powerful tool for boosting wellbeing

It’s clear that kindness is a powerful tool for boosting wellbeing. In my research, I found that doing an act of kindness a day can increase life satisfaction. And more recently, researchers found that selflessness trumps selfishness when it comes to improving your happiness.

Less is known about whether making a conscious effort to notice kindness has the same wellbeing benefits, although one study found that observing

others’ kindness is as effective in boosting happiness as performing an act of kindness.

Our latest study shows that kindness-focused news stories can take the sting out of difficult, depressing coverage by replacing feelings of despair with hope. As another participant put it: *“I still feel that we’re fundamentally decent ... And that’s worth clinging to.”*

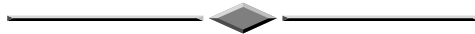
Perhaps including more kindness-based content in news coverage could prevent “mean world syndrome” – where people believe the world is more dangerous than it actually is, leading to heightened fear, anxiety and pessimism.

Other research has also found that positive news – such as bumble bees making a comeback or peace talks going well – make people feel better and want to do good things, such as voting or donating. This suggests there may be both personal and social benefits to showing positive news.

While it will be up to the media to make the change, our research makes the case for adding more balance to news coverage. Including more stories of kindness may help people feel better able to engage with these stories without perpetuating feelings of doom and hopelessness.

Kathryn Buchanan

Lecturer, Psychology Department, University of Essex
Published on The Conversation website at www.theconversation.com on 17 May 2023.



If I can stop one heart from breaking

If I can stop one heart from breaking,
I shall not live in vain;
If I can ease one life the aching,
Or cool one pain,
Or help one fainting robin
Unto his nest again,
I shall not live in vain.

Emily Dickinson

Family News

News from Florrie Large:

Florrie writes:

"I had a lovely birthday on May. Sue, Andrew and David took me out for lunch to Old Leigh and then we went down Southend Pier. We took the train to the end of the pier and Andrew pushed me back. At the end of the pier was a replica Spanish Galleon, which was great to see but not wheelchair friendly so we stayed on the pier.



The week after my birthday, Sue and her husband Kevin took me in the Cliff Lift at Westcliff. It's many years since I'd been in that. I remember it from when I was a child playing along the seafront with my cousin Brian. One of our favourite games was swinging on the bars under the pier. Luckily, my mum didn't find out what we were doing!

Thank you for the magazine and for remembering me.

Love from Florrie."

Thank you for your news, Florrie. You are blessed to have caring family to take you out and about. We send you our love and best wishes.

Peter Brewer

We send our very best wishes to Peter Brewer on the occasion of his 102nd birthday on June. Hopefully, a photo from the day might appear in next month's magazine. We also send birthday wishes to Peter's wife, Mary, who celebrates her own birthday a couple of days later.

We send our love to Peter and Mary and hope they have a lovely time on their birthdays.

Beatrix Tharby-Brown

Since her birth on May, Beatrix, the daughter of Graham and Claire and granddaughter of Malcolm and Heather Brown, has thrived and is putting on weight. Her sister, Daisy, is enjoying having a new friend. It will be interesting to see how their relationship develops.

Beatrix is to be christened at Scarning Church (near Dereham in Norfolk) on Sunday 6th August.



Beatrix with big sister Daisy. In case you were wondering, Beatrix is enthralled by seeing her face in a mirror!

We give thanks for Beatrix's safe arrival and send our love to all the Tharby-Brown family.

Your family news could be here!

Birthdays in June & early July



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



Computer Corner

HotUKDeals

Interesting website

The concept of this website is quite simple – people who spot a bargain whilst shopping (in-store or on the Internet) submit details to the site with a link to where the bargain may be purchased. Others may comment on the product or whether they consider it to be a “hot deal”. There are some good bargains and advice to be had.

Website address: <http://www.hotukdeals.com>

SyncBack Freeware

Useful free software

Anyone who knows me well will be aware on how keen I am to do regular backups of my computer files. I use a very well-crafted program known as SyncBack to carry out backups. The company that markets SyncBack commercially also produces a freeware version that has most of the features of the commercial version.

(Ignore the commercial versions, named SyncBackPro and Sync Back SE.)

<https://www.2brightsparks.com/download-syncbackfree.html>

Hadleigh Community Fridge

Interesting Facebook page

Did you know that Hadleigh now has a community fridge, located in Hadleigh Library? It will be open two days a week. Volunteers are needed to co-ordinate food donations, check health and safety regulations (training provided), stocking the fridge at the start of a session, managing the fridge during library open hours, emptying the fridge at the end of a session and disposal of any excess stock.

URL: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100092060294235>

Word Search – Hadleigh street names

Closes, Drives, Gardens, Lanes, Roads et al...

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

ASHDOWN
 ARCADIAN
 BILTON
 CASTLE
 CHURCH
 CONIFERS
 DOUGLAS
 ELM
 FALBRO
 FLORENCE
 GREENACRES
 HAINAULT
 HOMESTEAD
 MEADOW
 NEW
 ORCHILL
 POORS
 RECTORY
 SCRUB
 SOFTWATER

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

Thu 29 Jun 2023	- Coffee morning at our church from 10.30am to 12 noon.
ditto	- Castle Point Plan Community Workshop at St Barnabas Church, Church Road, Hadleigh, from 7.30pm to 8.30pm. The Council is holding workshops to gather people's views on the local area, how it should develop, what they wish to change, and what they want to keep.
Fri 30 Jun 2023	- 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 1 Jul 2023	- Music In The Park - Essex Police Band, a free, live performance at the Bandstand, Priory Park, Southend-on-Sea. From 3.00pm to 4.30pm.
Sun 2 Jul 2023	- CP Community Allotment on London Road, Hadleigh, open from 2.00pm to 4.00pm. Led by volunteers, with the aim of providing a safe, sociable, inclusive growing space to promote gardening as a physical activity for residents of Castle Point. More info, e-mail tracy_bliss@hotmail.com .
ditto	- Music In The Park - Cantare Ladies Choir, a free, live performance at the Bandstand, Priory Park, Southend-on-Sea. From 3.00pm to 4.30pm.
Mon 3 Jul 2023	- Smart Minds - A friendly club for people with dementia & their carers/families. Art activities and socialising with tea and biscuits. At Hadleigh URC from 1.00pm to 3.00pm. Phone Sue on 07889 762172.
ditto	- Afternoon Chat & Tea at Hadleigh Library from 2.30pm to 4.30pm.
Tue 4 Jul 2023	- Kettle's On Coffee Morning at St Barnabas Church, Hadleigh, from 10.30am to 12.00 noon. Held every Tue.
Wed 5 Jul 2023	- Coffee Morning at St Michael's Church, St Michael's Road, Daws Heath, from 10.00am to 11.45am. Held every Wed.
Thu 6 Jul 2023	- Castle Point Plan Community Workshop at Hadleigh Methodist Church from 7.30pm to 8.30pm.
Sat 8 Jul 2023	- Coffee Morning at Hadleigh Methodist Church from 10.00am to 12 noon with drinks, cakes and bric-a-brac stall. Held 2 nd Sat of month.
ditto	- Beat and Beans Café at St James the Less Church from 10.30am to 12.30pm. Live music from Hadleigh U3A Ukulele Group with coffee, tea and snacks. Free admission. Held 2 nd Sat of every month.
ditto	- Coffee Morning & Book Sale at St Peter's Church Thundersley from 10.30am to 12.30pm. Held 2 nd Sat of every month.
ditto	- Daws Heath Village Fayre at St Michael's Church Field, St Michael's Road, Daws Heath from 12.30pm to 4.00pm.
Sun 9 Jul 2023	- Music In The Park - Sid Bolan Big Band, a free, live performance at the Bandstand, Priory Park, Southend-on-Sea. From 3.00pm to 4.30pm.
Thu 20 Jul 2023	- Poetry Reading Group reading Philip Larkin at Hadleigh Library from 2.30pm to 3.30pm. Held 3 rd Thu of every month. All welcome.
Sat 29 Jul 2023	- Hadleigh & Thundersley Community Archive Drop-in at Hadleigh Library from 10.30am to 12 noon.

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