

Silent Visitor

United Reformed Church
Grays



The presentation of Jesus in the temple

February 2018



That's Easter to me ...

What are the memories, the tastes and the smells of special times?

At Christmas, for me, it's the smell of the tree in the lounge room. We always have a fresh one rather than an artificial tree. The pervading scent of pine (or fir) means that Christmas has truly arrived, no matter how many weeks the seasonal music has been playing in the shops.

Summer has never truly arrived for me, till I've been able to get the BBQ out of the garage and I've cooked the sausages and chops and unhurriedly we've eaten them around the patio table, the smell of the BBQ, the sound of the meat sizzling, the relaxing company and the sound of the birds. It is something relatively simple, but brings back and makes new memories, special memories.

Every two or three years we hire a holiday apartment near the shore of Lake Constance. Once we've arrived and settled in, we wander down to the Italian ice cream shop and buy two or three scoops. Then we head down to the beach and stare across the lake to the other side, hearing the water gently lapping, licking our ice cream and I am truly on holiday.

And what is Easter to me? I guess it's the taste of a hot cross bun. It's the early morning communion at Leigh Beach accompanied by the sound of the seagulls. And finally, the sight of the Flowering Cross in church on Easter Sunday.

The tradition is that during Lent, the cross on display is taken from the previous year's dead Christmas Tree. After watching the symbols of the crucifixion, the nails, the crown of thorns, etc. added each Sunday, week by week, we arrive on Easter Sunday and miraculously the same tree is adorned with flowers, new life instead of dead wood and symbols of torture. Every year I am transfixed and transformed and forcefully reminded that Jesus brings new life even in the most lifeless of places.

Now I know we cheat a bit. The Church (i.e. the wonderful people who do the work) doesn't take the Christmas tree and make it into a Lent cross – we have artificial Christmas trees and re-use the Lent Cross each year. And I know the Lent Cross isn't miraculously made into the Flowering Cross, there is a special cross stored around the back that is constructed to hold the Easter Flowers and many hours spent to place the flowers. But each year I am overwhelmed by the sheer audacity of what is proclaimed.

He is risen! Death is defeated! New life abounds!
And that really is Easter to me.

David Rees

(April 2017 - from the Raleigh URC Minister's letters archive)

Church Meeting

The next Church Meeting will be on Sunday 11th February (the second Sunday in February) after morning service and refreshments in the hall.

Annual Church Meeting

Please note that the Annual Church Meeting will be on **Sunday 4th March** (this is the first Sunday in March) following morning service and refreshments. This meeting will be chaired by our Interim Moderator, Rev'd David Rees.





Reason to Celebrate!

Sunday January 14th was a momentous day for Grays United Reformed Church. Having welcomed Rev'd Dave Coaker to lead morning worship and communion, to 'preach with a view' for our 50% ministerial position, and subjected him after that to an interesting question and answer session, we decided unanimously at the evening's church meeting to invite him. We were delighted that he accepted the post.

Dave leaves his current position in Lancashire at the end of February, and hopes to begin his ministry in Grays on March 4th, 2018. We were pleased to meet his wife Rita, who has a new job in London, and young son Mark, who has a change of school to anticipate.

Members and friends of the church were please to receive a detailed letter from Dave before Christmas, outlining his journey into ministry and telling us about himself. Maybe Dave himself would have been surprised to find how nervous some members of the congregation were feeling on January 7th, but that letter meant he was not a complete stranger.

Some of his family still live in Lincolnshire, where he was born, and his studies led him into engineering until his late twenties, when the call of the church led him to theological studies. His involvement in the Church is wide and varied, and we look forward to collaborating with his leadership and vision.

The current tenants of the Manse will be moving on, but until the house is spruced up, the Coaker family will 'camp' in our bungalow.

Let us not forget the formal Induction Service, when we greet our Synod Moderator Paul Whittle, and have a chance to thank our wonderful Interim Moderator David Rees for his prolonged engagement with and commitment to our church family.

Elaine Barcz



The United Reformed Church

Eastern Synod

You are warmly invited to share in the service of

Induction of **Rev'd David Coaker**

to **Grays United Reformed Church**

at **2pm on Saturday 14th April 2018.**

Service conducted by: Rev'd Paul Whittle, Moderator,
Eastern Synod

RSVP: by Friday 6th April (please include any dietary requirements)

Mrs Elaine Barcz elainebarcz@gmail.com (01375 400903)

Grays United Reformed Church, Bradleigh Avenue, Grays,
RM17 5XD Essex





Women's World Day of Prayer

We will be celebrating Women's World Day of Prayer
on Friday 2nd March:-

2 pm at the Salvation Army, Clarence Road, Grays, RM17 6RA

7.30 pm at Grays Methodist Church, 201 Lodge Lane,
Grays, RM17 5PU.

This is a service for **everybody** so do not feel excluded because of the word "women". Please come and join us in the services.

There will be refreshments after each service.

This year the service is prepared by women from **Suriname**. Suriname?
Ever heard of it? Can you place it on the map?



Suriname was formerly Dutch Guiana. It is situated in Northern South America in between Guyana and French Guiana, north of Brazil.

The theme of the service is: "All God's Creation is Very Good"

As well as learning about Suriname we will in the service be urged to commit ourselves to caring for God's world responsibly, so that we may pass it on unspoiled, to future generations.

We will be part of a great wave of prayer encircling the globe. The service has been translated into over 60 languages and 1000 dialects and will be celebrated in 170 countries and islands.

Women's World Day of Prayer is:-

A global ecumenical movement of informed prayer and prayerful action.

Inger Collier

Adventures in New York

I was off to a wedding in New York, sharing an apartment with six Welsh cousins, not far from the home of my cousin Ros, the mother of the bride. That was exciting in itself. One cousin, a massive musical theatre fan, had plans in hand for specific cabarets, the bride had made the wedding rings and lapel pins for the groom and ushers, with minute Welsh love spoons for the guests, and the wedding was to be in the Coney Island fairground museum.

The wedding was delightful and amazing, the day culminating in the museum theatre with a magic show and a sword-and-fire swallower. We walked along the Boardwalk, met more friends in the evening, and spent most of the next day recovering . . . but it was the location of our apartment which led to very different experiences.

Our landlord explained that during the Jewish *Sukkot* celebrations he could not answer the phone to us, but he would be able to answer his front door just over the road. We found that we would be meeting people who asked if we were Jewish, and were to reply “No, happy holidays”. So this was the feast of the tabernacles, with shelters, *sukkah*, erected in gardens and back yards, covered with branches, for prayer and to be slept in too. Even the nearest café was screened roofed



for the duration, and every tabernacle was different wherever we went. If you look on line, you can find vast numbers of pictures, adverts for *sukkah* kits, and even little Lego versions.

We were at the heart of the celebrations of the orthodox Leibowitz community, which is considered more open than the Hassidic Jewish group, and had, we discovered, hundreds, maybe thousands of visitors in schools, hostels and academies in the immediate vicinity of the largest Leibowitz Temple (our landlord’s word) in America. Young men wandered around with towels round their necks as they sought somewhere to shower, and the subway stop was thronged with families and individual men of all ages, in their uniform hats, coats, cords round the waist, as they poured out for prayer.



Nearby, but also a few subway stops away and outside the Brooklyn Museum (fabulous) we encountered pairs of very nervous young lads offering (if we were Jewish) bundles of greenery. We later found that this is a season of bringing those who have left the sect back to the fold. The bundles represented 'the four species', important symbols of *sukkot* representing the blessings of nature. I completely failed to discover their significance in speaking to those who held them. An elderly man outside a large and elegant activity-centre sukkah outside the city library told me it was in the Bible, and dismissed me. Call me stubborn; I persisted with some of the youngsters. The first pair looked terrified, I think as they seemed stranded in the large windswept plaza at Atlantic City, rather than being approached by the strange lady who spoke not in an accent they found troublesome but in a language they did not speak. That was all they could say. So I tried again elsewhere. This time the poor boys managed to say they spoke little English, which fascinated me. I had heard Spanish and Russian around the city, so asked if they spoke Hebrew. "Yes, we are from Israel" was an unexpected reply. So rather than the Roman Catholic World Youth Day, this was an international, two week Leibowitz event.

I resorted to the internet, to discover that Leviticus is the source of the four species. A closed date palm frond, twigs and leaves from a myrtle tree, and from a willow, along with a citrus fruit.



It was the *Jewish Chronicle* which enlightened me further. The solemn first seven days of *Sukkot*, recalling 40 years' wandering in the desert, were followed by a celebration of the grape harvest. The *Torah* must be read by the men during the two following days, with the rabbis reciting prayers at regular intervals. It was party time, with noisome dancing, eating and drinking. According to the *Chronicle*, it is expected that the rabbis will, besides reciting prayers throughout the final celebrations, participate actively in the consumption of wine and whisky, so prayer may well be silent by the end of the final, *Simchat Torah*, day.

We crossed paths with many families on our daily walks to and from the subway, exchanging greetings with some of the women who recognised us after a while. Of course, we enjoyed a great wedding, watching a Wales football match in a Welsh pub, crossing the Brooklyn Bridge, shopping, visiting museums and being tourists, but gained an unexpected and interesting experience in downtown Brooklyn.

Elaine Barcz



Nativity by Margaret Waddingham (Submitted by Margaret Datlen)

Sarah is Mary and Joseph is Dean
and Craig's the innkeeper who's ever so mean,
the three kings are the triplets,
the shepherd boy 's Daz
and the shepherds are most of the rest of the class,
'Cept me. I'm important – Miss Watt's says I am –
'cos I am the shepherd boy's little white lamb.

Sarah's in blue with a veil on her hair
and Craig's in a dress but his feet are quite bare.
All the shepherds wear tea towels
tied on with long strings
and most of us helped to make
crowns for the kings
'Cept me. I'm important – Miss Watts says I am –
and I'm wearing some wool like a little white lamb.

Mary (who's Sarah) and Joseph (who's Dean)
have knocked on Craig's door
and he's trying to look mean,
and he says there's a barn at the back of his house
they can share with his donkey and chickens and cows.
But as I'm important – Miss Watts says I am –
I wait with the shepherds, 'cos I am a lamb.

Then Megan, an angel with tinselly wings,
appears to the shepherds who sit in a ring
and Megan, she says in a very big voice,
"Hail to you shepherds, stand up and rejoice.
Follow that star that is shining so bright
and find Baby Jesus who's been born tonight."
And as I'm important – Miss Watts says I am –
I follow them off just as meek as a lamb.

And there, round the manger with Sarah and Dean,
there's more angels and Craig,
some cows and three kings,
and Daz leads me forward and kneels on one knee
and he says "here's my present"
And I bleat – 'cos that's me!

You see? I'm important –
Miss Watts said I am –
For I am Lord Jesus's
little white lamb.






SERVICES

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|----------|--|
| 10.30 am | SUNDAY FAMILY SERVICE |
| 10.30 am | 1 st SUNDAY EACH MONTH HOLY COMMUNION |
| 6.30 pm | 3 rd SUNDAY EACH MONTH HOLY COMMUNION |
| 10.30 am | 3 rd SUNDAY EACH MONTH PARADE SERVICE |

Bradleigh Avenue, Grays, RM17 5XD

Website: graysurc.org.uk

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