

Silent Visitor

United Reformed Church
Grays



April 2018

In the light of the Resurrection

The events following that first Easter Day are at the same time both amazing and confusing. They are amazing because the resurrection experiences of those first believers brought the Church to life, and they are confusing because, well, because *they are* confusing.

In Mark's telling of the Jesus story the three women find the empty tomb, hear a message from a young man, but are so afraid they don't tell anyone. (This led to later scribes offering two additional alternate endings.)

Matthew has two women, guards present, an angel descending from heaven, an earthquake, Jesus appearing, and the disciples gather in Galilee for their final commission.

Luke tells of a crowd of women, a message from two men in dazzling clothes, Peter running to the tomb, the Emmaus story (where Jesus is a stranger until he breaks the bread), Jesus appears in the upper room in Jerusalem, eats some fish, and then ascends from Bethany.

John speaks of just Mary Magdalene who on seeing the stone rolled away (with no message from a man or angel) goes back to tell the disciples. Peter and the beloved disciple run to the tomb, Mary follows and meets Jesus (but doesn't recognise him at first), Jesus appearing twice in a locked room (the doubting Thomas story), the disciples go fishing in Galilee, Jesus instructs them to get a bumper catch, they share breakfast, Peter is reinstated, and the rumour that the beloved disciple would live forever is born.

So, we have a variety of resurrection experiences there, and we have more when we turn to Paul's letters – which were written before the gospels. In 1 Corinthians 15: 1-11 Paul lists Cephas (Peter), the disciples, to more than five hundred brothers and sisters, to James (Jesus' brother), all the apostles, and to Paul. So, Paul counts his encounter on the Damascus Road as equal to the appearances that would be included by the Gospel writers. Note Paul's resurrection experience was of a blinding light and a voice – not a human figure.

Later in the same chapter Paul speaks of the resurrection that awaits us all, he says in verse 44: 'It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body.' The original Greek is not totally clear here but one is a 'physical body': the Greek *psychikon sōma* probably means a body animated by a soul (*psychē*), which is mortal and

temporary. The other is a 'spiritual body': the Greek *pneumatikon sōma* which indicates a body inhabited by spirit (*pneuma*), perhaps the Spirit of God. Paul is clearly arguing that after the resurrection things are completely different. Our physical bodies become spiritual bodies, and so it was for Jesus.

The power of the resurrection can be seen in its effect. The disciples' encounters with the spiritual body of Christ totally transformed them. They went from being scared, tongue-tied, hide-a-ways, to become the apostles who would declare the good news of God in Christ throughout the Roman Empire and face persecution, animosity and even death because of it. The spirit that took Peter from denying Jesus in the outer court of the High Priest's house to the apostle and bishop who was crucified in Rome at the hand of Nero, is a power that goes well beyond accepting a belief that a tomb was found empty.

Believing or accepting a statement about Christ and having faith or trust in Christ are two of many ways to express the Christian faith, and they are not mutually exclusive. For some Christians the empty tomb is crucial and a foundation of their faith, for others it is harder to believe in. Personally, I try to hold in tension the confusion of the various accounts of the Resurrection and speak of the Resurrection experiences of the disciples. I know the disciples were transformed that first Easter Day but the details remain a mystery to me. I am content to live with that tension, aware that I may discover new insights, and always trusting that the same Resurrection spirit that transformed the disciples is present within my life, the life of our congregation, the Church, and within all of God's Creation.

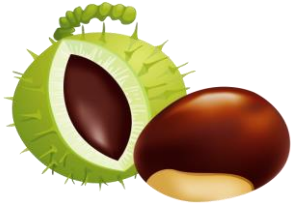
So, I leave you with a question. How can the resurrection spirit of God in Christ become a fuller reality within your life and the life of our congregation?



With every blessing, *Rev'd David R. Coaker*

Chestnut Craft Guild (Conker Club)

Well, here we are in April, so Happy 24th Birthday to us! Yes, that's how long the club has been meeting, so we must be doing something right. We thought you might like to know a bit about us, and hopefully some people (men too – we're not exclusive you know) would care to join in too.



The Conker Club as we affectionately call ourselves as we're all a bit nuts, was originally started by a small group of lacemakers who were frustrated by the long Adult Education holidays, during which they had nobody to turn to when they ran into difficulties with their work. Jo Seymour, who was then an Elder of this church, negotiated the use of the Church Hall so they could meet up and help each other. Naturally, the ladies also had other craft interests too, and invited others with similar interest to join with them, so within a short time the variety of crafts grew to include:-

Knitting, crochet, surface embroidery, cross-stitch, tatting, Hardangersom, Schwalm, jewellery making, parchment craft, card making, patchwork, water colours, and more you name it, someone can do it.

What is even better is that if there is something anybody wants to learn to do, or improve on, between us we will have an experienced member to teach them. The whole idea is to preserve all these skills – skills which we as young girls automatically learned from mothers and grandmothers – and pass them on so they don't become lost for good, and of course have a happy social gathering while we do so. Of course, one can't have a meeting without the obligatory cuppa and biscuits, or cakes when it's somebody's birthday, all for the princely sum of £2 per week and no membership fee! Then there is the annual Christmas buffet party complete with Secret Santa and lots of goodies to eat, and any other excuse (though who really needs an excuse?) to celebrate, such as Royal Weddings

We especially enjoy getting together making things for the Christmas Bazaar every year – the discussions week-by-week would cross your eyes sometimes – but the end result is fun and hopefully we can continue to support the Church as well as we can.

Sadly, in the past few years we have lost a lot of members to serious illness, house moves and the passing of our dear friend, Peter Harrison, so we are really keen to increase our numbers and will warmly welcome anyone who would like to come along and join us. You don't have to be a Church member, be good at anything, just willing to make friends and have a good evening. If you have something you are already working on, bring it along, if not we will get you started.

Don't be shy – COME AND JOIN US!!!

**THURSDAY EVENINGS 7.45 – 9.45 PM
CHURCH HALL**

For more information call :-

Carol Collinson on 01375 378124 or

Lynne De'ath on 01375 385215 or

e-mail: lynne.death@gmail.com



Induction Service

The Service of Induction for our new Minister, Rev'd David R. Coaker will be held on Saturday 14th April at 2pm.

Please do not forget to let the Secretary, Elaine Barcz, know by the **6th April or as soon as possible** if you will be attending the Service and afterwards for refreshments.

Church Meeting

Please note that Church Meetings will continue to be on the second Sunday of each month. This will be reviewed later in the year. The next Church Meeting will be on Sunday 8th April after morning service.

News of the Family

We continue to think about and pray for those in our congregation who are feeling unwell or frail and for those who are awaiting hospital appointments.

We remember our members who are unable to worship with us and think especially of Joyce Fraser, Doreen Thomas and Eileen Henry.

Letter to Jesus:

Dear Jesus,
Thank you Jesus for your loving touch
Thank you Jesus you love me so much
Thank you Jesus from within my heart
Thank you Jesus that we'll never part
Thank you Jesus that you care for me
Thank you Jesus that you've set me free
Thank you Jesus my sins you did bear
Thank you Jesus I've nothing to fear
Thank you Jesus you are Lord of all
Thank you Jesus I've received your call

Thank you Jesus,
Yours eternally

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Denise and Alan's 2018 trip to New Zealand

It started back in 2004 when Derek, our son, returned from a 'gap year' trip which included a visit to New Zealand. His comment was 'if you ever get a chance to visit New Zealand you must – you will love it'.

So fast forward 14 years and Denise and I, along with over 500 other passengers are leaving Heathrow Airport in an Airbus 380 bound for New Zealand via Singapore.

Although Denise and I had done some long haul flights before, this was the furthest yet, a total of about 22 hours in the air.

However, the flight was uneventful and consisted of reading, catching up with the latest films, sleeping and eating, together with the odd glass of red wine. The stop at Singapore was not much more than an hour, just time to 'freshen up'.

So, we arrived in Auckland, and as luck would have it, so did our luggage. We had arranged to spend a couple of days in Auckland, not just to see the city but to allow the effects of any jet lag to wear off. Auckland is 'cool', not quite as 'cool' as Sydney, but 'cool'. The weather was lovely, and the city has a wonderful waterfront from where you can catch a ferry to some of the beautiful islands nearby, which we did. We booked a coach tour around the island of Waiheke, did lunch and spent the afternoon relaxing on the beach and swimming in the sea. Wonderful.

Just to say here that when we were planning this trip, the advice from almost everyone was that you need to book everything in advance, because February is one of New Zealand's most popular holiday months. However, circumstances dictated that this did not happen. So, the only things we booked in advance were the flights, campervan and the ferry from North to South island. The rest we left to chance, and were blessed, with one small exception, with being able to do all the things we wanted, when we wanted.

So, on our third day, we collected our campervan, home for the next three weeks. We had booked a 'smaller' 2 berth model for ease of driving. It was 7.2 metres long and had everything you could ask for – large comfy bed, cooker, microwave, fridge, slide out external BBQ, shower, loo, hot water, heating (yes, we used that), TV (no we



didn't use that) and everything you could possibly want – including a cork screw – essential!

Off we set to explore the North Island. First stop was Rotoura, home of hot thermal springs, pools, geysers and very, very smelly. Eventually you get used to the sulphur smell and to the fact that on our 'holiday park' (NZ speak for campsite) we had unlimited access to naturally heated pools with temperatures ranging from 40c to 60c. That is hot! We also visited a living working Maori village and experienced a demonstration of the traditional 'Haka' – scary. By now the weather had turned 'English'. We knew this could happen so Denise had packed some waterproof clothing and we just carried on. A word about the weather. On the North Island the weather was 30c+ on occasions; at the bottom of the South Island down to 7c. It is worth remembering when you pack, Denise did – clever girl – that the South Island is not that far away from Antarctica.

So, onto Hawke's Bay. Hawke's Bay is beautiful. We camped overlooking the ocean, had breakfast by the deserted beach after our morning swim and visited the art deco capital Napier.

Napier was largely destroyed by an earthquake back in the 1930's and rebuilt in the wonderful 'art deco' style. Napier also houses New Zealand's National Aquarium, in which you can walk through a Perspex tunnel with sharks and other fish in close attendance.



Eventually we had to leave Napier and Hawke's Bay behind and head south once more, staying just outside the capital city of Wellington on another holiday park close to yet another deserted beach. Next day we visited a huge nature reserve with many of New Zealand's flowers, trees and birds, together with an education and conservation centre all set out on a hillside location. Then onto Wellington itself and the ferry to Picton on the South Island – a bit like getting the ferry to France but without passport control!

It was dark when we arrived so we stayed the night in Picton, looking forward to exploring the South Island. People had told us of the stunning scenery of the South Island, but nothing can prepare you for the breathtaking beauty to be found around almost every Corner. But that will have to wait until the next issue of Silent Visitor

Alan Beckley

Forming patterns ...

Our lives form patterns. Some of these patterns can last a lifetime and others come and go in a season. Some form without us really noticing and others are given birth through powerful events. Some we consciously think about and others we don't notice until they have changed. At times we can cling too hard to these patterns, or too loosely. We can place overwhelming importance on them or little. For good or ill these patterns are how we arrange our lives, make sense of them, and we draw comfort from them.

These patterns can be helpful. They can form the shorthand that organises our everyday. The pre-existing choices that save us thinking about which newspaper to buy, where to shop, go on holiday, and all the other things are 'normal' for us. Sometimes they can be detrimental. The patterns can influence how we interpret events in unhelpful directions. They can lead us to jump to conclusions that aren't obviously there.

We need to acknowledge these patterns and explore whether they are helpful, detrimental, past their usefulness, or keeping us from discovering a more creative and effective pattern. This is as true for our church life as it is for our own lives. What patterns have we adopted? Are they serving us well? Are they helpful to other people?

On a personal note the pattern of my life changed with our arrival here in Grays. As a family we will be exploring how the pattern of our life together needs to adapt to best accommodate this change.

Events like this happen to us all; and to us as Church. Sometimes we are forced to move out of our comfort zones and adapt to new situations. A more productive and effective way is to live with half an eye to the uncomfortable. To occasionally evaluate where we are, what is around us, and whether we are in the right place. Gradual changes are always easier to deal with, and give us time to prepare, plan, and come up with a preferred way forward. If circumstances force us to change then we can be rushed, reactive, and potentially choose a rash option. We need to ensure that with any change we do so prayerfully, openly, and relying on God's Spirit.

With every blessing, *Rev'd David R. Coaker*

"GOOD TIMBER"

by Douglas Malloch



The tree that never had to fight
For sun and sky and air and light,
But stood out in the open plain
And always got its share of rain,
Never became a forest king
But lived and died a scrubby thing.

The man who never had to toil
To gain and farm his patch of soil,
Who never had to win his share
Of sun and sky and light and air,
Never became a manly man
But lived and died as he began.

Good timber does not grow with ease:
The stronger wind, the stronger trees;
The further sky, the greater length;
The more the storm, the more the strength.
By sun and cold, by rain and snow,
In trees and men good timbers grow.

Where thickest lies the forest growth,
We find the patriarchs of both.
And they hold counsel with the stars
Whose broken branches show the scars
Of many winds and much of strife.
This is the common law of life.



Walking the Way



Some 340 United Reformed Church ministers and Church Related Community Workers are expected to attend a national Ministers Gathering in Staffordshire from 30 April to 3 May. They will take part in an extensive programme of workshops, spend time networking, and listen to talks from keynote speakers including; the Revd Dr Rowan Williams, currently Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, and the Revd Dr Peggy Kabonde, General Secretary of the United Church of Zambia. The event is being held to consult ministers on the Walking the Way process, introduce new resources, and foster an atmosphere where ministerial colleagues can contribute creatively to planning for change. For those not attending, recordings of some of the main talks will be made available.

Walking the Way explores what it means to actively follow and learn from – and to be eventually transformed by – Christ. It's for everyone at any stage of the Christian journey – whoever you are, whatever your existing relationship with Jesus Christ and the Church is, whatever your personal circumstances. While there's nothing new about being a disciple of Christ, we're confident that there is something new about Walking the Way – in its accessible approach and in the wide range of supporting resources produced and planned.

Springtime

Having just experienced one big and one mini "Beast from the East" it certainly hasn't felt very much like Spring. Hopefully the daffodils will now be allowed to continue their efforts to bloom rather than wilt in sub-zero temperatures. A ray or two of sunshine does wonders to lighten the spirit and give some warmth to the air and maybe adds a smile to our faces.

One of the things that I used to enjoy each springtime was the sight of the flowering cherry tree we had in our front garden. Unfortunately the roots were damaging our driveway and we had to have it cut down. It was a real picture especially when viewed from our landing window – it was just like an oil painting that is admired in a gallery!

I would add that it had its downside, as the petals that came floating down in the breeze used to lay a thick carpet of pink over the whole driveway and cars parked nearby. I think the neighbours were pleased to see it go!

Here are some words that A E Housman has to say about the cherry tree:-

From "A Shropshire Lad" by A E Housman

Loveliest of trees the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of my three score years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score,
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.



Ed.



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 |

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