

Silent Visitor



(Shrove Tuesday 25th Feb.)

February 2020

Who's Who at Bradleigh Avenue

Minister: Rev'd David Coaker
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Secretary: Mr Ben Marshall Mobile No: 07841 06604
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Treasurer: Mr Alan Beckley

Serving Elders: Mr Alf Pryer, Mrs Denise Beckley &
Mr Ben Marshall, Mr George Semain &
Mrs Janet Semain

Organist: Mr Richard Wade

Facilities Manager: On Maternity Leave
&
Hire of Halls: graysurc@gmail.com

Silent Visitor: Mrs Janet Semain 01375 373532
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Leaders of the Uniformed Organisations:

Group Scout Leader: Mr Tim Webb
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Guide Leader: Miss Gill Davison
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We are the message!

No sooner have Advent and Christmas passed than we are on the brink of Lent and Easter. It does seem incredibly bad planning by the early Church to have both of these main festivals so near to each other. It must seem confusing for occasional visitors to churches that with 3-4 months we have marked Jesus' birth and death and potentially only have Harvest and Remembrance to draw them in for the rest of the year. But with the obvious parallels with the symbolism of the existing mid-winter festival and the non-negotiable events of Passover, their decision does make sense. The challenge for us is to keep the message of Christmas and Easter alive throughout the year!

The messages of light overcoming darkness, renewal in the face of despair, joy in the most unexpected places, peace in the midst of fear, inclusion overcoming prejudice, the Spirit of God overwhelming human limitations, and more, are ours to share throughout the year and not just to be kept for special occasions.

We share them in worship, in our activities throughout the week, and through the lives of each and every one of us. The message is not limited to words said, it is declared in actions, choices, attitudes and in how we spend our time and our money. We are the message.

Just as how Jesus lived is as important as what He said and did, the same is true of us. Jesus lived the kingdom of God. He challenged people with it and created the space for people to respond to it. We are called to act likewise. For Jesus this direct challenge to the way of the world led to conflict with the religious and political leaders of His day. We are called to act likewise. His response to this conflict was non-violent and He kept trying to come alongside those who rejected His vision. We are called to act likewise. The conflict escalated to the point where those who feared the consequences of His vision had Him executed. We are called to take the same risks.

Jesus' vision of the kingdom of God is all-consuming. We are called to collaborate in, declare, and embrace it when we discover it. This is our task throughout the year as we gather and live in His name.

With every blessing, Rev'd David R Coaker



A Biblical Nativity?

In our traditional nativity scenes, the birth stories of Jesus from the gospels of Matthew and Luke are woven together. We must remember that the gospels of Mathew and Luke were written decades after Jesus' death. They were written because of the impact the grown up Jesus had through His teaching and actions, His willingness to challenge the brutality of Roman rule, His death upon a cross (a most pitiless and profane way to die), the Resurrection experience of His first followers, the movement that was born in His name, and their desire to preserve the story for future generations.

All four of the gospels were written because of the life Jesus lived and for the communities that grew up in His name. They each tell us how important Jesus was, but each tell the story in their own way. Jesus as an adult changed the world, so Matthew and Luke prepare us for that truth within the rest of their gospels, by telling us of the story of an incredible birth.

Mark and John follow different paths, Mark jumps straight in with a fully grown Jesus standing on the bank of the river Jordan to be baptised by John the Baptist. The gospel of John opens with a poem weaving Jesus into the birth of Creation, before then telling us about Jesus' baptism.

Luke's telling is of a family drama. It begins with an elderly couple, Zechariah and Elizabeth, and the birth of their son – John the Baptist. Zechariah was a priest and is told by an angel, while he is serving in the Temple, that his wife will become pregnant. Zechariah doesn't believe the angel and is unable to speak until the child is born and he writes down that his name is to be John.

We then meet Mary, Elizabeth's cousin, a young girl living in Nazareth betrothed to Joseph. Mary is visited by an angel and told that she will become pregnant. Mary is doubtful but when she is told that Elizabeth is pregnant she is convinced and leaves to visit her.

When Mary arrives Elizabeth feels her baby leap within her. She declares Mary blessed by God, and Mary replies with the Magnificat, declaring the faithfulness of God throughout the ages. Mary stays with them for a while, departs and then John the Baptist is born and the newly talkative Zechariah declares the Benedictus which parallels Mary's Magnificat.

Luke then describes an incredibly pointless bureaucratic exercise, the Roman emperor wielding absolute power for the sake of it, a census that requires a return to birthplaces, just to get Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem. Jesus is born and placed in a manger. There is 'no place in the inn', but no further detail.

We then have startled shepherds, outcasts of the society, being the first to hear the news of Jesus' birth by an angel who is then rapidly joined by a 'multitude of the heavenly host' singing God's praises on a lonely hillside. The shepherds then rush into the town to visit Jesus.

The family then follow all the traditional birth rituals, return to Nazareth, we have the story of their visit to the Temple when Jesus is twelve, and then we are told of the grown up John the Baptist preaching by the Jordan.

In Luke we have a close knit family, devoted to God, and the heavens declaring to the outcasts of that society: do not be afraid, celebrate, God's chosen is with you.

Matthew tells the story from a Jewish and male perspective. We have quotes from the Hebrew Bible and instead of Mary, it is Joseph who had a visit from an angel. In Luke Joseph appears to have no problem with Mary being pregnant, but in Matthew he contemplates a quiet divorce and an angel is required to change his mind.

It is here we have the quote from Isaiah 7:14 "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God with us". The word virgin comes from the Greek translation of the original Hebrew. Hebrew has no such word, and as written by the prophet it says, 'young woman'. We also have them all living in Bethlehem from the start.

We then hear about 'wise men from the east' following a star and causing a stir in Jerusalem, the capital city. We then hear about Bethlehem being the place where the 'King of the Jews' is to be born. The wise men travel on to Bethlehem, find the family, and like the ancient visitors who came to Solomon – the wisest of Jewish kings – they bring gold, frankincense and myrrh. The wise men were going to return to Herod, but a dream tells them this is a bad idea.

Joseph has a dream as well, and the family flee to Egypt to escape the anger of King Herod – a Jewish king – mirroring the actions of the Egyptian Pharaoh who tried to keep the Jewish people in slavery. Years later the family return from Egypt, echoing the Exodus story, and deciding to settle in Nazareth. Then we are told of the grown up John the Baptist preaching by the Jordan.

In Matthew we have an observant family, a birth rooted in Jewish tradition and the cause of cosmic signs and international incidents.

Jesus was born and lived a world-changing life – that is what we celebrate each Christmas and every day. That is the truth at the heart of the Nativity, the rest of the New Testament and the history of the Church.

With every blessing, Rev'd David R Coaker

Bible Society Quiz

Church Hall

7pm on 8th February 2020

Teams of 6 – 10 people

**Please see the notice in the vestibule notice board
and add your name to the list on the notice board in
the Church Hall if you will be taking part.**



Thurrock Food Bank



As we know, the food bank is a valuable facility for many people who would otherwise be struggling to put a meal on the table. This is a reminder that there is a need for volunteer helpers to assist in marking up the packages and tins of food so they are distributed in date order.

If you would like to volunteer, please contact Helen at the Food Bank on Mondays or Wednesdays on 07928 879068.

Donations of food etc are received at the Centre at 2 – 4 Chase Road, Corringham on Mondays and Wednesdays. It may have been noticed that the Food Bank box in the vestibule can get full from time to time and it would be very helpful if, when this happens, someone might like to volunteer to take it along to Corringham.

If anyone would be interested in doing this on a regularly basis please let one of the Elders know.

Annual Church Charity

At our Church Meeting on Sunday 16 February there will be a need to select a worthy charity to support during 2020. Please give some thought to this and bring your suggestions to the meeting.



Our charity for 2019 was Friends of Essex & London Homeless, who provide food and support every Friday evening at the Baptist Church in Orsett Road, for the local homeless.

For the information of anyone who is unaware, the second collection taken at our morning service following Holy Communion on the 1st Sunday and the collection taken at the evening service of Holy Communion on the 3rd Sunday, is donated to the Church's Annual Charity.

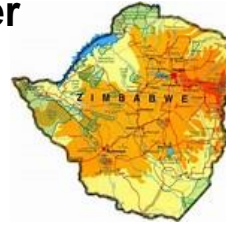




Women's World Day of Prayer

Praying with Zimbabwe

Friday 8th March



2 pm at St Thomas of Canterbury Church,
16 East Thurrock Road, Grays RM17 6SR

&

7.30 pm at Grays Methodist Church,
159 Lodge Lane, Grays, RM17 5PS

Everybody is welcome
Refreshments after each service.

This service is prepared by Christian women of Zimbabwe.

The theme is: Rise! Take your mat and walk.

Mini-Market/Fellowship Event

Saturday 14 March in the Church Hall

10 – 12.30 pm

The Church will be holding an event to raise some funds towards the cost of a new kitchen. It is intended there will be a few stalls which may include :- Tombola, Bric a Brac, and cakes sales and more. If you have any items for the bric-a-brac or fancy making some cakes, they will be most welcome.

Refreshments will be available.

In the main we would like the time to be spent in the act of fellowship with one another - whilst making every attempt to increase the funds towards the "Kitchen Fund"

Please put the date on your calendars and come and support it.

Mite Scheme – Unicef UK



For the past year we have been putting 5p's and other loose change in the pot in the Church to support the Mite Scheme.

The total raised in our church during this period is about £300.

Taken from the UNICEF Report:-

"In Yemen the people are being treated for severe acute malnutrition. The fallout from the ongoing civil war, which began in 2015, has led to the largest humanitarian crisis in the world with more than 24 million people (80% of the population) in need of humanitarian assistance, including more than 12 million children.

Around 360,000 children 5 years old are suffering from severe acute malnutrition and require treatment, with cases of acute watery diarrhoea and suspected cholera soaring in early 2019. Our teams in Yemen are working day and night with a wide network of local partners to respond and stop the further spread and transmission of the diseases. A total of 413 Diarrhoea Treatment Centres and Oral Rehydration Centres are operational in all 147 priority districts. Partners are repairing water and sanitation systems. We've scaled up chlorination activities to disinfect water in 95 priority districts and provided fuel and spare parts to keep water supply and sanitation networks going. A round of Oral Cholera Vaccine campaigns reached over 400,000 people in several districts.

Unicef are pleased to announce that the Mite Scheme has raised an incredible amount of money in 2019 for Unicef UK –
£14,840.74p

Thanks to your generosity and dedication to children, this supports those in desperate need of oral rehydration in areas which are severely affected by poor sanitation such as Yemen.

Happy new year to all members of the Mite Scheme, have a fantastic 2020. We are grateful for your invaluable support."

Moving Stories

Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories

'Inspiration'

by Emma Clare Nutbrown Hughes, URC pilgrims to IOPT in 2019



The 2019 URC educational trip to Israel and The Occupied Palestinian Territories was an intense, thought-provoking and moving time. We travelled not just as socio-political observers but as Christians, exploring how our faith might guide our response to what we saw. We saw and learnt about conflict, inequality and injustice. The trip was also a response to the Palestinian Church leaders' invitation - issued to Christians across the world - to visit and experience their everyday lives.

Nidal abu Zuluf is the manager of a joint advocacy initiative between the YMCA and YWCA in Bethlehem. The initiative aims to give hope to young people. Many don't feel safe, have no jobs. They want to live in dignity.

Nidal's programmes help young people develop leadership skills. About 200 students are invited each year from Europe for placements. This enables young locals to share with and learn from each other and others.

Nidal said that one million Palestinians have been in prison. He was himself in prison for two years. He was also tortured.

'As Christians we should stand by the poor, marginalised and displaced. Don't support us because we are Palestinians, but because we are a people in misery, because of the conditions imposed by others.'

Nidal insisted that Palestinians wanted liberation for the Israelis too, for them to stop violating international law.

'We love them,' he told us. "It's hard for me but we must love them. We are all born in the image of God and are equal in dignity. This is what Christianity means.'

It was called an educational trip and it certainly was. It was inspiring. I am delighted to belong to a church willing to learn, to explore and engage with justice.

Please contact your Synod Office, or Kevin, if you want to learn more about the URC's education trip to IOPT. Thank you for brilliant support for *Commitment for Life*.



"Woodbine Willie"

Woodbine Willie is a nickname given to the Rev'd Geoffrey Anketell Studdert Kennedy M.C. He was an Anglican Priest, a World War One Chaplain and, for the last eight years of his life, a speaker for the Industrial Christian Fellowship.



He gained his nickname by the way he offered cigarettes to the men who were about to go over the top in the trenches. He had a genuine concern for the soldiers he served, sharing their experiences of trench warfare and often communicating with them in the sort of language they understood. He was also a poet and often used such language in his poetry. The most important aspect of his life was to follow Christ.

He maintained that just as a mother suffers when a son or daughter experiences suffering, so does God in Christ suffer when one of His creatures is in agony. It is just because Christ understands and feels pain that He is able to be alongside His followers through their terrible experiences. The suffering of Christ becomes the ever present Christ.

He had an interesting view of the cross on which Christ declared, in triumph, "It is finished." (see *John 19:30*) For him, the cross does not hold Christ hanging in despair but in expectancy. This was shown when he was asked to give an address at the unveiling of a war memorial crucifix outside St. Paul's Church in Worcester in 1921. He said,

"The Christ [on this cross] has His head held erect. He was not beaten, broken or defeated. They took His body and broke it, and hung it between earth and sky, but His Spirit was unbroken and so was the spirit of your brothers and fathers who died unbroken and unbeaten. Tell your children that the crucifix means the victory of good over evil. I could not bring myself to have a Calvary made where Christ looked broken and dead."

The following extract is an example of his use of poetic language to communicate with his men:

The Sorrow of God

A sermon in a billet

Yes, I used to believe i' Jesus Christ
And I used to go to church,
But sin' I left 'ome and came to France,
I've been clean knocked off my perch.
For it seemed orlright at 'ome, it did,
To believe in a God above
And in Jesus Christ 'Is only Son
What died on the cross through love.
When I went for a walk of a Sunday morn
On a nice fine day in the spring,
I could see the proof o' the living God
In every living thing.
For 'ow could the grass and the trees grow up,
All along o' their blooming selves?
Ye might as well believe i' the fairy tales
And think they was made by elves.
So I thought as that long 'aired atheist
Were nubbat a silly sod,
For 'ow did 'e count for my brussels sprouts
If 'e didn't believe i' God.

(The poem finally ends with)

And ye've taught me more of what God is
Than I ever thought to know,
For I never thought 'E could come so close
Or that I could love 'Im so.
For the voice of the Lord, as I 'ears it now,
Is the voice of my pals what bled,
And the call of my country's God to me
Is the call of my country's dead.

(Rev'd G. Kennedy MC)

That's my sort of poetry! George Semain.

Broken

**We will watch the BBC series
and explore the issues raised together.**

Wednesdays 1.00-2.30pm

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

Poverty and Morality	Suicide and Gambling	What is Truth?	Theft or lying?	Reconciliation	Justice and Forgiveness
22nd Jan	29 Jan	12 Feb	4 Mar	11 Mar	1 Apr

The TV series, Broken, written by Jimmy McGovern and starring Sean Bean is set in an estate parish somewhere in north of the UK.

The series focuses on the life and ministry Father Michael Kerrigan, a Roman Catholic, priest who, despite past trauma and anxiety about his own inadequacies, attempts to bring the light of Christ into the lives of the people amongst whom he ministers.

The series portrays real life at its most gritty and unvarnished, and in doing so raises many questions along the way about how to live faithfully when life is very hard.

The course aims to provide the space to pick up the questions raised in the series and to explore how they might want to answer them.

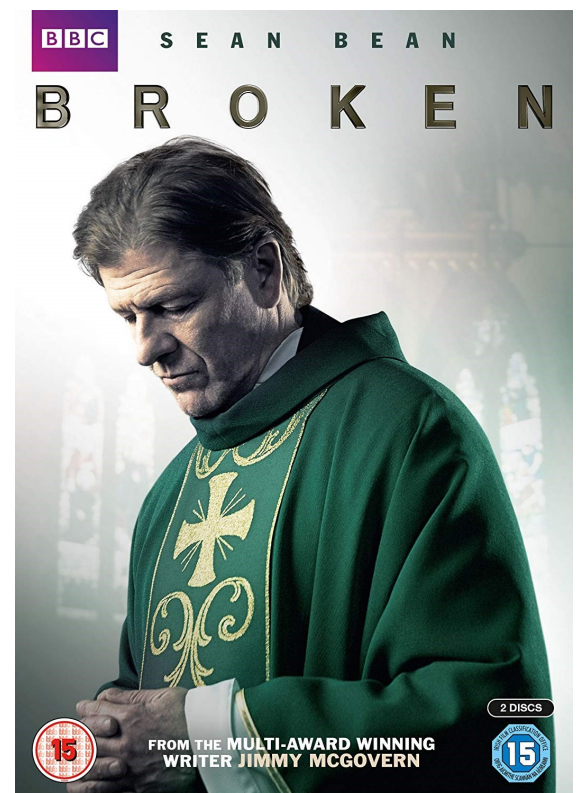
Outline of time together:

Welcome & refreshments

Watch dvd (60mins)

Open Discussion

Closing prayer



"Egg-less Everyday Cake"

12 oz Plain flour
½ level tsp salt
1 level tsp mixed spice (or more to taste)
6oz margarine
6oz sugar
12 oz sultanas
½ pint milk and water mixed
2tbsp vinegar
2 level tsp bicarbonate of soda

Topping of brown sugar and cinnamon (or chopped nuts, etc)

7 ½" round cake tin, greased and base lined.

Gas Mark 3 Electric 170c

Sift flour salt and mixed spice into bowl and rub in the margarine to breadcrumbs.

Stir in sugar and sultanas.

Mix together the milk and water, vinegar and bicarb. (Watch out!! It fizzes and swells!) and stir into the flour and mix thoroughly with a wooden spoon.

Transfer mixture to tin, hollow out the centre to a depth of about one inch, then sprinkle over topping.

Bake in the centre of oven for about 1 ¾ hours or until cooked.

Leave to cool in tin for 10 minutes before turning out onto cooling rack.



Recipe courtesy of Lynne De'ath

February 2020 - ROTAS

FLOWER ROTA	Please see notice board regarding the Flower Rota. This rota is no longer defined. Please add your name to the flower rota list if you would like to arrange church flowers for a particular Sunday.		
PREACHERS		Time	
Young family service	2	9.30 am	Rev'd David Coaker
Morning Service with Communion	2	10.30 am	Rev'd Dave Coaker
Morning Worship	9	10.30 am	George Semain
Morning Worship	16	10.30 am	Rev'd Dave Coaker
Evening Communion	16	6.30 pm	Rev'd Dave Coaker
Morning Worship	23	10.30 am	Alf Pryer
March			
Young family service	1	9.30 am	Revd Dave/Denise
Morning Service with Communion	1	10.30 am	Revd Dave Coaker
READERS			
February	2	10.30 am	Gina & Richard
	9	10.30 am	Elaine & Thembisa
	16	10.30 am	Frances & David
	23	10.30 am	Ruth & Anne
March	1	10.30 am	Edna & Inger

Duty Steward: Alf Pryer

Communion Steward: Alf Pryer

Hymn Book Steward: Margaret Pryer

NB: New Charity not yet known

CHURCH CALENDAR

SUNDAY SERVICES

Children's Service	9.30 am	1 st Sunday each month
Morning Worship	10.30 am	Each Sunday
Holy Communion	10.30 am 6.30 pm	1 st Sunday each month 3 rd Sunday each month
Parade Service	10.30 am	To be advised

ACTIVITIES

Coffee Morning	10.30 am	Every Wednesday
Carpet Bowls	2.00 pm & 7.30 pm	Every Monday (except Bank Holidays)
Prayer Meetings	10.00 am	2 nd Wednesday each month (before coffee)
	6.45 pm	Every Friday
Messy Church	3.30 pm	See Notices

- For information about Messy Church – Worship together for families – please contact Denise Beckley on 07806 739959
- All meetings take place in the Church or the Church hall unless otherwise indicated.

You can find us at: **Bradleigh Avenue, Grays, RM17 5XD**

On our website at: **Graysurc.org.uk**



Find us on
Facebook

URC Grays