

# Silent Visitor



# Easter 2020

## **Remaining Connected**

Since our last edition, it does feel as if the world has changed. Reports of an illness in a far off land has moved from part way through the news to being the whole edition.

People have responded with fear, caution, acceptance, or a combination thereof. We all seem to be searching out the latest advice to protect ourselves and our nearest and dearest. We are faced with something that we cannot directly control and we want to be able to do something, anything, to minimise the effect upon us.

Unfortunately any guidance can only be general. It is impossible for each of us to be given individual, specific advice to save us from its effects. In such a complicated situation over-reacting is probably as detrimental as under-reacting. The law of unintended consequences still applies and jumping in one direction could leave us confronted with a problem we hadn't considered.

We are told to wash our hands, keep our hands away from our faces, keep our distance from others, not shake hands and remain at home if we are ill – but no-one can confidently point out which shopping trip we should forgo, who we can visit, or what other activity is completely without risk. This was already true, but any sense of helplessness is heightened in the light of Covid 19.

We do need to be cautious, we must follow the advice given to us, but we must also find ways to remain connected with each other. Until we are told differently, our activities as Church will continue in possibly adapted ways. If the guidance changes, we will seek other ways to remain connected while striving to keep each other as safe as we are able. We can still telephone each other, there are ways for us to help each other out, we can pray for each other, our community and the world, and we can seek inspiration and solace in the words of Scripture. There may be some things we need to give up for a while, but there is much more we can keep doing or start doing – it is Lent after all!

Be aware and cautious but also be compassionate and considered. Acknowledge the difficulties, but also hold tight to what is good.

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

## A Response to Ephesians 5: 8 – 14



It's okay for me to accept I was 'darkness'. For me to reflect on a change in my life and acknowledge the difference, but if you'd told me I was 'darkness' back then? Well, if you were lucky I'd turn away or laugh in your face. Or if you did strike a nerve, you'd probably inspire anger or despair, but how are you causing any of those reactions anyway 'light'?

If I accept your rhetorical argument and limit every possible decision, outcome, thought, feeling or behaviour as either 'dark' or 'light'; if I put on one side the history of dividing people in this way to control, to justify racism, xenophobia and every other prejudice; if I did all this, then I might listen and engage. But why should I bother? You want to jump straight to a point of trust, of relationship, but I don't know you, and you certainly don't know me.

You really need to listen to the rest of your message. You have to live what it says, not just say the words. You must shine so brightly that I can't ignore it. If it is blatantly obvious that your life and the life of the group you're part of is 'good and right and true' then why on earth would I pay no attention to you? Do that and your might get me talking to you in the street or walking through your door.

You also need to take to heart the detail. Why are you so sure of what 'is pleasing to the Lord'? The sentence starts with 'Try to find out'. What I hear you say 'is pleasing the to the Lord', sounds a lot like what you find pleasing. You should work through that before we even start to explore what 'Lord' could mean and how such a being might find something 'pleasing'.

I agree that if 'the fruit of light' is 'good and right and true' then things that are 'unfruitful' (i.e. bad, wrong and false) should be exposed. But I do struggle when it seems these actions are far from 'unfruitful'? I'm sure there are some very nice and generous members of the 1%, but it does seem easier to become wealthy following just the letter, and not the spirit, of the law? It's also hard to hear you speak of taking 'no part' when the examples of 'darkness' by your associates are legion. Bad apples and all that, but covering things up 'secretly' makes matters even worse.

We could just stick with the basic economic facts or open up a whole sack of conspiracy theories but I've got the nagging feeling that when you get on to 'what such people do secretly' you're going to get hung up on what goes on in people's bedrooms. The world is heaving an unbearable burden of historic and current injustice, prejudice and inequity – cast light on some of that!

Help nurture the light that's within, around and beyond me. Blind me with your light. Shake me from my slumber. Inspire me with new life. Then maybe I'll be able to see Christ and we can start talking about what that might mean for us.

*Rev'd David R Coaker*

### **The Divine Image**

To Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love  
All pray in their distress;  
And to these virtues of delight  
Return their thankfulness.

For Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love  
In God, our father dear,  
And Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love  
Is Man, his child and care.

For Mercy has a human heart,  
Pity a human face,  
And Love, the human form divine,  
And Peace, the human dress.

Then every man, of every clime,  
That prays in his distress,  
Prays to the human form divine,  
Love, Mercy, Pity, Peace.

And all must love the human form,  
In heathen, Turk or Jew;  
Where Mercy, Love & Pity dwell  
There God is dwelling too.

*William Blake (November 28<sup>th</sup> 1757 – August 12<sup>th</sup> 1827)*

## Reflecting on Psalm 23

God is my pathfinder, protector and provider.

When I open my heart to the divine, the universe and humanity, I feel I have all I need.

When it is time to rest, God urges me to stop. Time to move, I'm urged to follow. Worn down by life, my spirits are lifted. I am shown the safe places to pause, pointed towards the safe paths to follow, and embraced by overwhelming love and compassion at every turn.

As I am faithful. As I discern. As I crawl, stumble and leap towards God's ways, glimmers and glimpses of heaven can appear, reflect and imbue my life and the life of the world.

When the sun sets or the storm rolls in, the memory, promise and hope of God warms my heart. When anxiety shakes my being, when confusion overwhelms, when illness limits my options, God's presence stills the storm. A presence I can wait upon, be overcome by, and glimpse in a loving face. A presence to nudge me, redirect me, calm me and reassure me.

The blessings of life are all around me, are they mine to hoard or to share? Are those around me my sisters and brothers, or competitors? The answer is always love. Love pouring over me, warming my heart and pouring out through my life.

As I crawl, stumble and leap towards God's ways, love, truth and compassion follow in my wake. Heaven breaks into my life and can be glimpsed in the world.

God is my pathfinder, protector and provider.

Amen





## Church Closures

As you are all aware, our church, together with other denominations, will not be open whilst our country and the rest of the world are suffering the effects of the Corona Virus.

It will feel very strange on Sunday mornings when we will not be meeting together – but we can still tune in to services on the radio, television and other media to keep spiritually refreshed.

Importantly we must keep in touch with each other by telephoning, sending texts or even on face-time. It may help us not to feel quite so isolated.

The Silent Visitor for April has been put together without some of its usual pages – the rota, church calendar – but it is another way of keeping in touch.

As the editor of the SV it is sometimes difficult to find items that might be of interest and once again I am suggesting that, maybe, someone reading this might feel the urge to put an article together – maybe they would like to share how they are feeling about being at home all the time – how they are occupying themselves – whether they have been able to buy the food (if they have, do tell us where!) or other things they might need.

Mainly, let us all keep well and safe by following the appropriate advice and look forward to when we can get together again.

*Janet Semain*



## Mini Market 14 March

Considering the odds were not in our favour to run the Mini Market, due to the corona virus, it did reasonably well.

All the intending stalls were manned and ready for action at 10 am and our first visitor decided to come along a bit earlier than that, so he got it underway.

It was mentioned that some of the people that visited us thought the Scouts Jumble Sale was being resurrected. Despite their disappointment they put their hands in their purses and wallets and supported us.

The cakes went down a treat – homemade cakes being a bit of a rarity these days perhaps! The leftovers were enjoyed after Parade Service the next day.

The atmosphere was happy and there was good fellowship throughout the morning.

The morning raised nearly £300 towards the Kitchen Project Fund

A big thank you to everyone who gave their time and energy in making it possible to happen.

It was a busy weekend what with the mini-market, Parade Service, Elders' Meeting and Holy Communion in the evening. It was the last weekend before the Church and all the activities had to close down and it was quite a memorable one. Perhaps one we should remember for a while. It was a good team effort.

*Janet Semain*



## CRIBBAGE

In these unpleasant times of self-isolation, we have been told we must not sit at home moping but must remain active (assuming we have been active in the first place). We've had advice from Joan Bakewell (formerly the Voice for Older People) and from Diana Moran (formerly the Green Goddess), now both older persons themselves, on how we can get through the next few months or so whilst avoiding extreme boredom. Going for walks and gardening are two ways which have much appeal. I was quite taken with Joan Bakewell's advice to do a spot of bird watching in the garden.

One of the ways of doing this and keeping the mind active, is to revert, for many, to the long established card games, of which there are a great number, simple or complex. For those who are alone there are a good number of games of 'Solitaire'.

One game, suitable, mainly, for two players, is the game of cribbage, a card game unlike any other (apart from the game of Noddy, from which it was derived but which we are commonly told is now extinct). If the world wide web is to be believed the game of Noddy is still around and can easily be purchased. Cribbage, on the other hand is now said to have become quite trendy and has led to the setting up of a number of cribbage clubs.

As in some other card games, the basic rules are relatively simple but for experienced players, the nuances can make all the difference between winning and losing. That is a little like a card game I was invited to play in Northern Ireland during a couple of Christmases. "It's simple", they told me, whilst I spent a bewildering hour or two trying to make head or tail of it and finishing none the wiser.

According to certain historians the game of cribbage, often shortened to just 'crib', was invented by Sir John Suckling (1609 – 1642), a man of many skills who was a poet; was interested in politics; was a Cavalier soldier supporting Charles the first, and was considered one of the leading card players of his day. He developed it from the game of Noddy as mentioned above. Noddy is thought to be one of the oldest recorded card games.

Cribbage is said to be big in the USA where they hold a National Cribbage Day on the 10<sup>th</sup> February, the birthday of Sir John Suckling. There is a story that one American submarine during WW2, was



required to patrol some dangerous waters, during which the crew, from the commander downwards, passed much of their time playing cribbage. The submarine survived, since when the actual cribbage board used has been passed on to the oldest submarine at any time in the Pacific fleet, where it is held as an exhibit in the wardroom. But the English had it first!

It has been mentioned in Charles Dickens's 'Oliver Twist' and 'The Old Curiosity Shop'. Janet just informs me that it is also mentioned in the 'Cranford' novels by Elizabeth Gaskell.

Whilst the English might have had it first, a game which used a board was found in an ancient Egyptian tomb. The board contains holes for pegs, similar to cribbage. That board is now an exhibit in the Museum of Modern Art in the City of New York.

Although the basic rules are simple they are too extensive to set out here. They may be found easily by typing 'cribbage card game' in your search engine. Cribbage sets are bountiful on Ebay and Amazon, needing only a pack of 52 playing cards and a peg board. Those who love the game often go a step further and purchase an upmarket board, nicely made and often coloured at prices up to £30 or more.

If you enjoy card games but have never played cribbage, now might be a good opportunity to venture into it. Although the rules are simple I might just add that I was introduced to the game by my Dad and Uncle, regular players, who allegedly taught me how to play it. I have to admit with some shame that I cannot remember ever having beaten either of them. Good pegging!

*George Semain*





## Desert Island Discs

I am so pleased that someone else has put together their choice of records they would take to a desert island. Here is the choice of Lynne De'ath - whilst the radio programme limits the choice to eight discs, on this occasion we have allowed nine:-

**Theme Tune to the film "Out of Africa" – John Williams:** A fantastic descriptive piece – makes me think of the animal shots one sees from a plane, like those in TV wildlife programmes, with miles of plains and herds of animals.

**Meditation: Thais - Massenet:** Back when I could play the violin, this was my piece de resistance – will always love it.

**Albatross – Fleetwood Mac:** Although it seems to have the sense of waves on the shore and seagulls crying, it really reminds me of when I belonged to the Wrekin Gliding Club, floating in the air with nothing but the sound of the wind rushing past the canopy, and a tremendous peace and freedom. Takes me back to Shropshire every time.

**Quanta Qualia – Hawes:** No one sings this quite like Hayley Westenra – such purity of sound and the harmonies from the choir are wonderful.

**Shake, Rattle and Roll – Bill Haley and the Comets:** Yes, really! Fond memories of my (now late) brother, Barry, teaching me to jive to this one – lifts and all. I was thrilled until I discovered that he only wanted a partner so he could show off his dancing skills to his friends! Brothers!

**Something in the Air – Thunderclap Newman:** Back again to Shropshire and RAF Cosford – I always seemed to hear this playing whilst pounding the indoor running track with the PTI yelling "Faster Chawner! Faster!"

**You Got a Friend – James Taylor:** ..... Just because.

**(This is the year for) Making Your Decisions – The Three Degrees:** Happy memories of our honeymoon week when it was constantly on the radio.

**Piano Concerto No.2 – Rachmaninov :** One of the best ever (in my humble opinion!)

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**RAF March -** Well, you can take the girl out of the RAF but you can never take the RAF out of the girl.



Also Lynne has given us another recipe to try out and it sounds really tasty!

**Bacon and Onion Roll**  
(Naughty but nice, cheap and cheerful)



8oz SR Flour  
½ tsp salt  
4oz shredded suet (veggie suet works well too)  
Cold water to mix  
½ lb bacon (streaky or back)  
1 small onion  
tsp of chopped parsley

Method:

Chop bacon and onion and fry in as little oil as possible

Set aside and add parsley

Make pastry, adding just enough water to make a soft dough,

roll into an oblong and spread the bacon mixture to within

½" of the sides

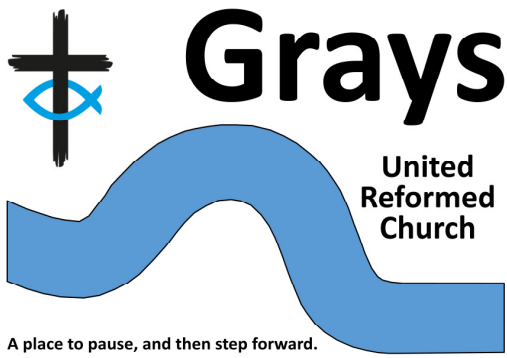
Damp edges with water and roll up tightly.

Place on a greased backing sheet and brush top with beaten egg or milk

Bake in a moderately hot oven (325–360F/180-190C/Gas 4 – 5) for around 45 – 50 minutes

The roll will be quite crisp on top – if you prefer a soft roll, place in a "parcel" of foil first.

Serve with a good brown gravy and your favourite vegetables.



# All church building activities suspended until further notice

Following government advice, and that of our wider denomination, we will be suspending all acts of worship, physical meetings, and other church activities here until that advice changes.

Please be assured that you remain in our thoughts and prayers. We will endeavour to do all that we can to remain connected and support each other (both physically and spiritually), in the coming weeks.

Communication will mainly be via telephone, email, and please keep an eye on our Facebook page, or the feed from it on the website.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch.



URCGrays

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- This notice is placed in our noticeboard and entrance, will be emailed and communicated to the church family, and shared with those that use our premises.
- In the short-term, someone will be on the grounds at the times of regular activities to ensure the message gets to everyone.
- We will check that everyone has made arrangements for dealing with self-isolation, and arrange support as needed.
- We will share details of on-line resources for worship and devotions, and safely deliver physical copies for those that would like them.
- Please keep in contact with each other, as guided, and please get in touch if you have any questions, requests, or offers of help.

*May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore. Amen.*