

Silent Visitor



May 2020

Connected Questions

In a whole variety of ways, we are finding a path through the current predicament. Based on our circumstances and temperaments we are getting there. Some will be desperate to get back out to socialising, and others are quite enjoying the peace, but I guess it is fair to say that the novelty is beginning to wear thin?

I am finding it hard to remember what day it is and how long we've been doing this. Each day has fallen into a pattern of sorts with the occasional attempt to prepare for projects that are manageable.

It has cast a light on the essentials of my ministry. I've rolled my eyes as I've seen colleagues' valiant attempts at online worship, but as I'm fairly confident most of you aren't that way inclined, and that I don't have any great need to broadcast, my time has been spent ringing round, posting and dropping off material and writing.

I do enjoy writing, but I only get absorbed by it when I have a clear foundation. I know that I have my own hobby horses, and to prevent myself from always jumping on them my 'go to' starting point is the Bible. You've had two different approaches to readings from Matthew for Holy week, and as a supplement to SV are the lectionary readings for May, and a couple of reflections for each week. Starting from the Bible gives me what I hope is a valid constraint that grounds my reflections in our tradition but also the opportunity for inspiration to express them anew in light of my faith, experience and understanding. I hope you will find what is shared interesting, helpful and devotional.

Another good starting point is somebody's question. In a sermon you reflect on scripture, faith and life and hope that it strikes a chord, but answering a specific question means you know at least one person is tuned in! So, any questions? Anything you'd like me to answer, and my starting point may well be, 'I don't know, but ...' but I do promise to try. There are no wrong questions. There are many wrong assumptions and answers, but questions are always valid. They may elicit simple, multiple or complicated answers, but that should never be an obstacle to asking them.

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

Grays United Reformed Church Elders' Report – Annual Church Meeting 2020

We were delighted that Ben Marshall, and then Janet and George Semain were elected to serve as elders this past year. It was good for our numbers to increase, but for a whole variety of reasons we have struggled to engage with anything more than what was immediate and pressing. With Alf stepping down as a serving Elder, and Denise starting a sabbatical year, we again have at least two vacancies before ACM.

Even if the vacancies are filled we will need to give serious consideration to how we organise ourselves, prioritise, determine what is essential and what has the potential for development within our capabilities. If they are not filled, then we will need to take more drastic steps to minimise the load being borne by our serving elders.

Charlotte, our property manager, has been on maternity leave for much of the year and we are thankful for her time spent keeping in touch and look forward to her return.

The wall along the right-hand side of our drive fell down last Easter and much effort was expending dealing with the practical and other issues that ensued. We are also expecting major works on the annex toilets and refurbishing the kitchen in coming months.

The Mission Plan has remained as an item on the Elders' Agenda but has not progressed significantly further.

- We partook of a Retreat Day at Mulberry House, a walk at Rainham Marshes, but have not progressed any further with this area of activity.
- The Contact for the Elderly tea party went well, but we have had no further communication from them. We welcomed a talk from Christians against Poverty, named them as our annual charity and offered to host one of their Money courses – but their engagement with us has been sporadic.
- On Sunday 29 September following the Harvest Service there was a BBQ/Paella Harvest lunch to which we invited everyone associated with the Church.

- On Wednesday evenings in September we opened up the worship space for prayer stations and reflective activities.
- We were to be hosting a Dementia Friends training course on the 1st April and are considering establishing a Memory Cafe.

The Lunch Club has developed into a bi-monthly event with varying attendance from Play Den, Mature Movers and the wider congregation, We also have the pattern of sharing a ploughman's lunch before church meetings following Sunday morning worship.

The 9.30am, monthly your families service continues to be well received. We trialled a cafe-style service and will be are doing so again. Shifting to six Parade Services a year seems to have, on the whole, improved attendance and engagement.

We made our website easier to maintain and have been more active on Face-book.

Alf Pryer and Stuart Berry joined Bob Datlen as our Authorised Persons for weddings.

The flower rota was adapted to an opt-in with plants and artificial flowers covering the gaps. The duty steward rota was altered to give priority to communion preparation with the hope that other tasks would be covered on the day.

We have sought to establish Fellowship through Cleaning as a regular activity.

We completed the CTBI Lent course "the Mystery of God", a study of Isaiah in the autumn and have been reflecting on the TV series "Broken", running up to Easter.

Rev'd David R Coaker

Financial Report

As at the end of March we were okay financially, helped largely by the six months' rent paid in advance from the bungalow let. The temporary 50% reduction in the M & M contribution and no cleaning bills also help, in the short term at least.

Regarding the 50% reduction in the M & M contributions please be aware that we as a Church will need to make up for these payments later in the year, when (hopefully) money starts coming in from our annexe hirers again.

On the down side I am waiting for the bill to arrive for the essential toilet works completed in the annexe. This, based on the original estimate, will be a hefty one.

Some folk have started paying their regular weekly contributions by standing order, which helps enormously, Thank you, I will happily provide bank details to anyone else who wants to pay their contribution in this way. The Church accounts are currently being computerised by a local accountancy firm, and when this work is completed it is hoped that in the future the majority of weekly giving can be made by standing order.

I think that selling some of our investments to 'tide us over' will be almost inevitable, this being at a time when the markets are at their lowest point for a very long time. At least we have some reserves behind us.

If anyone has any queries about standing order payment, or indeed anything else to do with the Church finances please feel free to ask by telephone or e-mail.

Regards, *Alan Beckley*



Strange times, some alarms and excursions, but a happy holiday

It seemed such a good idea in early October. We booked a trip to Japan, planning to be there slightly before the true cherry blossom time, as it would be less hectic, and we had experienced the full glory about six years ago. Little did we know how significant our dates would become. At my cousin's funeral in Wales, two of her children and their families were cautious with their hugs, as they had returned from skiing in Italy ten days before: we remember only too well the subsequent locking down of three Italian villages. We left home on March 5, with Berne determined that all would be well, and me uncomfortable that we could be returning to a relatively healthy UK from our holiday in a potentially dangerous area. Our planned return? March 23.

Masks are a normal aspect of daily life in Japan, showing courtesy to others when people may have a cold or hay fever, so we set off well prepared, with hand gel and gloves too. There had been 46 deaths in the country when we arrived, and the number had risen by just three by the time we left, but measures were well and truly in place. It is worth remembering that there is not a culture of hand-shakes and hugs. You bow. Larger transport systems like the bullet trains had specially adapted ventilation, the national sumo championships were televised from Osaka but fought out in front of empty benches, masks were worn at all times by hotel, restaurant and shop staff, and oh! the hand sanitiser. Available and used at the entrance to every shop, café and hotel, along with misting machines.

Where to begin? Maybe with the last of our alarms. The kokeshi figure (basically a solid, painted wooden doll) we had bought before flying home looked risky to the security staff in Frankfurt, our transit airport. It was duly unpacked, swabbed, and found to be suspicious. Things were quiet, and maybe they were bored. Once Berne showed them the receipt in his passport and assured them it wasn't from China, all was fine. Transit? Yes indeed. Germany was just shutting down, so the immigration officials were insisting we should leave at once. Chance would have been a fine thing. As circumstances had changed, our boarding passes were for early the next morning, and I envisaged sleeping on an airport bench, a small hardship in these times of crisis. Someone kindly pointed us towards the 'transit hotel', new and shiny and welcoming, at area Z of the terminal, so it took a while to get there

from our arrival point at area A. No complaints there; we had cleared security already, and were next door to the departure gate.

As for the holiday itself, alarm number one was the discovery at Kansai airport that only one case had completed the journey. The staff could not have been more helpful, but it was Berne who had to wait a little longer for a change of clothes. Those of you who know about Japanese toilets will appreciate how grateful he was for the heated seat, so he could wash and dry his socks in the hotel room overnight!

After that it was mostly excursions. We began in earnest the following day, travelling through the clouds to a Buddhist monastery, one of a large group of temples at the oldest and largest necropolis in Japan, ending the journey to Mount Koya on a cable car, then a local bus. We explored the occasionally extraordinary monuments in the cemetery, where a huge model space rocket and massive corporate marble memorials rub shoulders with simpler Buddhist graves. We roamed the town in glorious sunshine, slept on futons in a tatami mat room and enjoyed fabulous vegetarian food and of course the onsen. At the communal bath space (men and women separately), you strip off completely, scrub yourself clean with a little towel (provided) as you sit on a small stool, with a shower if you are lucky, or else using a bucket of water. Only then do you immerse yourself in the clean, steamy hot water, and soak. Then it's time to don your in-the-room gear. Some hotels provide pyjamas, while more traditionally you have a kimono sleeved dressing gown for sleeping, a yukata.

Berne had waited impatiently for the next destination, Himeji. It has what is supposedly the most beautiful castle in Japan, but when we visited in 2003 we were between trains and I had to drag him away. Then I went on my own in 2011, so that I could take more pictures for Berne, and it was being restored, behind an enormous painted screen. This time, the innermost corridors, which we had seen before, were closed for Covid19 reasons, but there was still plenty to see, the roof edgings with samurai lords' signature symbols, the ramparts, the surrounding grounds. We did Himeji Castle by day, Himeji Castle by night, admired Himeji Castle manhole covers, and wandered through long straight streets of tiny shops, in roofed-over spaces, a great idea in such a rainy country. As we had arrived too early to access our room, Berne asked if there was a good coffee shop nearby, rejecting Starbucks out of hand. The receptionist disappeared, looked something up and marked Hamamoto coffee shop on a map for us. I cannot begin to

describe the variety of coffees and the method of preparation in small glass flasks. As for Berne's croque-monsieur breakfast, it was a sight to behold.

We used a business hotel in Himeji, part of a chain which we have used before. It has its onsen, besides the normal room facilities, but supplies noodles in soup at about 9.30 pm. The idea is that Japanese men travelling on business may well be expected to spend time socially at the end of the working day with a superior or two, arriving back rather the worse for wear. The noodles are supposed to prevent the next day's hangover, but even without the drinking, it makes a wonderful end to the day . . . and it's perfectly fine to turn up in your pyjamas!

Quite reluctant to leave Himeji, we set off for Takefu, famous for its traditional knifemaking craft. The owner of the ryokan (a traditional Japanese inn with futon and tatami mats) had few visitors, as Japanese people were travelling less, so she was not providing an evening meal. She sent us up to the town bypass, a busy main road, where, rather downcast as we braved the busy traffic, we saw a MacDonald's, a pizza place, and then a small restaurant where half an hour later we might not have found a seat. Imagine Yo Sushi! on steroids, with the chap in charge bellowing orders from a central point, bellowing too at the clients in the friendliest of fashions, and producing seafood dishes small and large as the belt travelled round. They made us very welcome, and we ate well, but the tiny baby squid we tried will not appear again on a plate for me.

When we managed to get lost that evening, I remembered that addresses in Japan are a law unto themselves. They name an area of the town and maybe a street, but house numbers follow no logic. In larger towns you may see a small building labelled Koban, where policemen who have retired early through injury are posted, to help direct local people, and you also see small neighbourhood maps posted at regular intervals.

We were to visit and take part in knifemaking, another moment of great excitement for Berne. The company of course produces its very high-quality knives in modern facilities, but still has a considerable production line using older methods.



Some Photographs from Japan!

Did you know that there are specially shaped blades for cutting soba noodle dough? Really. And later in our trip we used them. Being in close contact, we were asked to wear masks, and I took the pictures while Berne finished off a blade and the handle was fitted. He was in his element, and we didn't leave till he had added to his collection of Japanese knives. That area is a popular tourist destination, where we found another traditional craft, washi paper making. We were fascinated by the soaking, beating, multiple pressing and straining which ended in fine hand-made paper. Then it was our turn. We were able to add dried leaves and flowers, and the final drying process swiftly produced our very own souvenirs.

There were more examples of that paper art in the Noh theatre museum shop in Kanazawa, quite frankly the only thing we could afford there. The museum itself was closed, but we did gaze through the window at a few magnificent heavy costumes and masks used in Noh, the six-centuries old classical dance-drama, still performed in Japan. All I can tell you about it is that performances may take many hours, with the costumes and masks carrying particular significances for the initiated.

A cold spell in Kanazawa meant the expected cherry blossom was late, but at the weekend people had travelled in to town to celebrate, quite a number of women and some men in full Japanese dress, so it was a colourful time. It is a city where maiko, trainee geisha, study, though there are no geisha working in the city. Apart from its amazing old fish market, Kanazawa's claim to fame is gold leaf, still used in decorating traditional black lacquered dishes and boxes . . . and also wrapped around ice cream. Once in a life-time . . .yes, we indulged. Having visited the bustling fish market during the day, we ate twice in a small restaurant where the tuna, crab and prawns were fabulously fresh and delicious. Our hotel was celebrating its first anniversary and staff were apologetic that the breakfast and afternoon tea buffet were supplanted by simpler offerings because of Covid19, but still managed tea and biscuits in the afternoon, wine later on and the noodles too at 9.30. Loved it.

One of the wonderful things in Japan is that luggage can be sent ahead, even straight to the airport, so you don't necessarily carry or wheel your case through the streets or along underground tunnels. Of course you pay for the privilege but can be guaranteed to find your case where it should be. (More of that later). We packed off one case to our final hotel and arrived high, high in the mountains, not far from Nagano of

winter Olympics fame, where the other case awaited us. After ours, the European summer visits to this little village inn had already been cancelled; we were all too aware that the situation in Europe had changed so much in the fortnight we had been travelling. Such a problem for that lady, and for so many businesses around the world. We loved the snowy landscape, her hospitality, the fabulous local food, and her hot-spring onsen.

Almost at the end of the trip, we reached Matsumoto, where I was sad to see the banner already on display to celebrate the location of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Marathon. It seemed impossible that it would take place this summer, although the mayor of Tokyo was still insisting a few days later that there was no reason for postponement. Maybe they'll withdraw the merchandise from the shops now, ready for happier, healthier times.

One of the local shuttle buses there was covered in large red dots, and I was thrilled that we would see something of the work of a famous surrealist Japanese artist, Yayoi Kusama, especially as I had once been in the same room as her during an art lecture at Birkbeck! Those spots, and her creation of other large installations, led her to wrap the trees on London's South Bank in polka dots when she exhibited at the Hayward Gallery in 2009, while her next London exhibition was to open at Tate Modern in May this year. Berne wondered why I was so keen to visit a closed art gallery, but a large part of the exhibition in the town of her birth was featured outside, so the little excursion was worth it.

We had two more excursions in Matsumoto, and a certain amount of alarm. There was a delicious bowl of soba noodles and dashi soup to eat, but we made the noodles first, and had a great time. We used the correct knives, and even better for me, my dough was 100% buckwheat, so gluten free. We were pleased to know that the national wood-block museum was open, and travelled on a local train to reach it. Think of the methods used to create the famous Japanese wave picture, and that's the traditional style. If you have visited Monet's garden and house at Giverny you will have seen his massive collection. The pictures on display are altered at regular intervals, and shown in low light, to avoid fading, and they have an area in the foyer where you can use a series of printing blocks to build up your own small picture. I'm sure that's intended for children, but we loved it.

In the midst of our travels, the crown fell off Berne's front tooth, twice, so we had some interesting conversations in pharmacies and, with the help of the internet, found a temporary solution. More worryingly, we had a

message that our return flights were cancelled, but Lufthansa were working on a solution. They did just that, flying a jumbo jet from Haneda airport to Frankfurt, then dispersing those passengers to various destinations including London. There was just one problem; we were now booked in a hotel at Haneda, but that is a Tokyo airport. Our original flight was from Kansai, near Kyoto, and there was now an errant suitcase in the Kyoto hotel. 'Fear not', we were assured. The case would be redirected, and it was, but it somehow made its way to Kyushu, 760 miles away. The Haneda hotel staff, who had to break the news, were more amazed than we were. This is the well-disciplined country where public spaces are refuse free, hand rails on escalators and staircases are regularly clean and fresh, people wait for the green symbol to cross the road even if there is no traffic, public transport runs like clockwork, and you can rely on the baggage people to get things right. They did. We had a couple of tense conversations, and the case had an adventure of its own, being flown overnight to be collected from the airport delivery desk in plenty of time.

I could continue to hold forth, for example about Japanese toilets, just wonderful, but not exactly eco-friendly, but I shall end here, happy and fortunate to be home, with some wonderful memories.

Elaine Barcz



May Silent Visitor!

I am so pleased at the response I have had of contributions to this edition of Silent Visitor.

It is not easy being in the current situation we are in and feel sure that we are all missing each other one way or another. I know we will all be missing Church – it is very strange not having that direction to get up and ready to go 'off' to church – instead we read daily devotions and hear or watch Sunday services on the TV or mobile devices.

Well I hope everyone enjoys reading what some of our friends have to say and maybe it helps for you to know we are all thinking of each other and look forward to meeting up again (within touching distance) in the not too distant future.

So, to start us off we have a message from **Jean & Tony Olly**:-

"We had a lovely surprise on Easter morning, when our son, Tim, and family visited on their bikes for a chat in the front garden, and to collect the Easter cake I had made for them.

Later, we checked the camera pictures on TV from our bird box, which is at the end of the back garden, and found that the blue tits had produced an Easter egg for us!"

I had a conversation with **Beryl Clarke** earlier in the week :-

"Beryl told me she was keeping busy doing some spring cleaning; shopping, for not only herself, but neighbours and friends; she had been tidying the garage and painting the garage window and side door until she ran out of paint! "

Well, I think we have all had a problem like that lately when we just can't pop out and buy what we need to finish the task we've started. That's when good old on-line shopping can come in handy, that's if you are lucky enough to find someone to deliver what you want!

Hope you enjoy this edition. Don't forget I will need more items for the June SV please!!

Janet

Some Reminiscences from the 1940's

How are we all managing in this time of uncertainty and difficulty?

Some of us are of an age to remember the second world war. With this in mind there are some similarities like food rationing and empty shelves in the shops and isolation at home. I can remember rushing home from school which did not close or from work, to arrive there before the air raid sirens sounded. Then going into air raid shelters, which were either in your back garden or built in the streets. Some people took refuge in the Underground Stations and slept on the platforms.

There are similarities as well as differences:

Then, as now we are all in the same boat, so to speak. The difference now is that Covid 19 is a silent, unannounced killer. The slogans we see are not the war ones like – "Keep mum and don't let the enemy know". The watchwords now are: "Stay Home, Let the NHS do its Job and do not travel unless it is essential".

There are many aids to help us. We can telephone people rather than visit them. The internet for many is another way to keep in touch. We are fortunate in having two daughters, one in Basildon and one in Wickford, helping us by getting shopping. Our son lives in Kent and is at work.

As we both have vulnerable conditions, we have our medication prescriptions electronically sent to a local pharmacy. We have also arranged for a volunteer from Social Services to collect and deliver them to us at home. This may be of help to others who may need this service.

Being in lockdown gives us a chance to do other things like reading, jigsaws, word puzzles, studying a subject or even decorating.

Let us all be positive. We hope this is helpful and look forward to seeing you all again soon.

Alf and Margaret Pryer

Social Distancing and Self Isolation

We are learning so many new words these days and some that do not really describe what it means.

Social Distance – should that not be Physical Distance? We can still be in touch socially by telephone, internet, shouting across the road, etc. However, we must keep physical distance – no handshaking, hugs or kisses unless you live in the same household. How that affects us as individuals will certainly depend on our living circumstances and our personalities.

In a strange sort of way Alan and I have enjoyed the isolation,. We have no times to keep, no appointments or meetings to go to. We are also lucky as we are not on our own, we have each other. The most irritating thing for me is that I am not supposed to go food shopping in person. I like going to have a look at what is on offer, but our children and Alan plead with me not to go and we have managed to get shopping in other ways. I have not yet needed to venture out. Anna managed to book a couple of grocery delivery slots for us and now I have managed to book a "Click and Collect" slot in my own name, but these slots are like gold dust it seems.

Our neighbours are also very helpful, in particular Sarah who lives next door. She sends me a text when she goes shopping asking if we need anything. You suddenly realise how caring people are.

The 8pm clapping for key workers on Thursday nights have also brought a feeling of togetherness to the people in the street.

The weather has helped, we have had some nice walks where we have not walked for some time and even on paths we had not tried before.

I have not had time to be bored yet, the usual household tasks take their time and I have still a lot of "sorting out" I need to do, being a terrible hoarder. Unfortunately the charity shops are closed and so is the tip, so maybe I have an excuse not to get on with the un-cluttering now after all.

It is difficult to feel unable to visit or offer shopping for people who you know are on their own, and you just hope they are ok.

I also very much miss our Sunday morning services, it is not the same trying to follow a Service on line at home.

If we all follow the rules, maybe it will not be too long until we can worship together again even if we will have to sit 2 metres apart.

May God Bless us all, Inger

Living with Lockdown

We'd like to share our thoughts and how we have been feeling over the time of lockdown.

At first we didn't feel much different to our normal days, as we don't go out many days a week. Then we started to miss seeing our friends at church and other friends in Grays and family. We have been very lucky seeing our granddaughter, our son Paul has face-timed us before she goes to bed. She talks to us for a bit with maybe a song and dance. She keeps us entertained and laughing. Our son James and his wife are expecting their first baby in May, so we feel very concerned about them and miss seeing them terribly.

We have spent time gardening during the good weather and sown some seeds. I've written to quite a few people and I've done some sewing – my main therapy is making cards, well recycling old cards, cutting and sticking on blank cards from a craft shop. Robert likes to read.

We are very blessed with good friends and neighbours offering to shop for us and collect prescriptions. Grocery deliveries have been few and far between but we have been fortunate to get two delivery slots so far. We both feel a very great sadness for those struggling at this time and for all those who have died from this awful virus. We are looking after each other and we have our garden if we want to go outside for some fresh air. We can't imagine what it must be like living alone in a flat with no outside space or families who need help to get sufficient food. I do cry a lot as I feel helpless. But to finish on a more positive note, we are beginning to see more signs of spring in the garden.

We saw two Blue Tits in the garden the other morning and had a visit from a Robin. We also enjoy the NHS clap, when we join our neighbours outside where there is more sense of community both locally and nationally then there has been for a long time.

We send our love and best wishes to you all.

Take care, keep safe and God Bless you all -



Margaret & Bob Datlen

Find what works for you! - Denise Beckley

We are where we are: Wherever we are, we need to use it or we will lose it.

As people who come along to mature mover's class on a Tuesday afternoon know, we go through a range of movements aiming to move each joint. Sometimes I play classical music, sometimes 50's, 60's or 70's. I like the steady beat provided by a brass band or a favourite is Moonlight Serenade by Jeff Love. There is no mystery to our routine and movement.

I usually begin by moving the neck from side to side slowly and then gradually a movement for each joint, down to the toes. Each participant, and we are many shapes and ages, doing just what they feel comfortable with, It is good also to do something which makes your heart work a while – that brings your heart rate up and uses your lungs.

We are where we are and we need to find something which works for us. I do think it is for our well being that the government are keen we do some form of exercise each day. I believe those with strong hearts and lungs will have more chance of fighting the virus and therefore less work for the NHS.

During my trip to New Zealand, I was fortunate to walk and cycle in some wonderful scenery. It soon became evident that my fitness levels needed improvement. This fact became also evident when my first 'Lockdown' cycle ride was a breathless trial. I am happy that this now, having done the same cycle ride ten times or so, has become a lot easier. Fitness levels rise quickly, it is always worth doing it again and perseverance gives gains.

Finding the exercise you enjoy is the key. Today we may need to find something we can do within the confines of our living room or garden. I am not suggesting everybody needs to do 100 laps of their garden. You could put on some music and move, movement on the chair is surprisingly effective. If you have access to You Tube there are many work-outs to follow – just follow what suits you. You know your body and what not to do, miss out bits which do not suit you. I have been following Joe Wicks at 9 am in the mornings on You Tube because I like the idea the whole world seems to be taking part. However, there are many bits, like going down on the floor, I adapt. Lately I have done the Joe for seniors. Joe stands, but if your balance is not so good, sit or put a chair in front of you to hold on to.

It is important to start a session slowly and warm up your muscles. When warmed up – some laps round the garden or a boogie in the kitchen, do what you find enjoyable and gets you a little bit out of breath. Be sure also to slow down gradually not just stop. Coming quickly to a stop means your muscles do not have a chance to clear 'stuff' pumping through. 'Stuff' pumping through brings all sorts of good things to your joints and muscles not to mention happy hormones to your brain. Sitting or standing with an upright chair, lengthened posture gives all the organs in your body room to work properly, so just taking time to sit up is revitalising.

Our bodies are a wonderful design. Happy moving.

Psalm 139: 13 - 14

For you created my inmost being:
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful.



Also from Denise:

I found much to my delight, and sometimes distress, being able to access many books on my kindle has broadened my reading a great deal. Taking up Amazon's recommendations I discovered an author called Lynne Austin. I discovered today I have read 20 of her books. Whilst on holiday in October I re-read "Wings of Refuge" and recommend it highly. "Wings of Refuge" covers three intertwined stories - present day; the struggle of the early Christian church and the history of the Israeli seven days war. As the Jewish Christian daughter of one of the main characters explains the Christian faith during a Passover meal we are treated to a wonderful historic description of faith and our communion meal today.

I have no doubt Lynne Austin does much research in the contents of her books, especially having read her autobiography 'Pilgrimage: My Journey to a deeper faith in the land where Jesus Walked'.

Reading both Chronicles of the Kings a five book series and The Restoration Chronicles three book series, I learnt a great deal from the Old Testament. I have also enjoyed her books set in more modern times. Others are set during the American Civil War. I am at present using her daily devotion book, 'Sightings Discovering God's Presence in our Everyday Moments'.

Go and download and enjoy.

Denise Beckley

Local Charities Appeal:-

During these difficult times a lot of charities will be in more need than usual and here are two of them, local ones, that our church supports ordinarily, who are currently suffering.

Women's Aid



Most of you are familiar with this charity through our giving of gifts at various services throughout the year. In the current situation they find themselves in a desperate situation. They are in need of food and toiletries and are asking for financial donations to help them survive.

If you feel you would like to make a donation please make a cheque payable to "Changing Pathways" and send it to Changing Pathways, P O Box 32, Thurrock, RM17 6HN.

Thurrock Food-Bank



Thurrock Food-bank has reminded us that their warehouse is still open Mondays and Wednesdays 10 am – 3 pm. A week or so ago, they were falling short of the following items:-

Long life semi-skimmed milk, cereal, mashed potato, rice pudding, sponge puddings, tinned carrots, tea bags, tinned fruit, custard and tinned potatoes. All the donation points in food shops are still open.

They say that if you would like to donate money they would welcome a cheque made payable to "Thurrock Food-bank", 2 – 4 Chase Road, Corringham SS17 7QH.

Emergency Bread Recipe

This is an old recipe from a newspaper cutting from the 1970s when there was apparently a bread shortage! I tried it today and found it came out surprisingly well.

Lynne De'ath

Ingredients:

½ lb plain flour
4 level tsp baking powder
1 level tsp salt
¼ pt + 2tbsp milk
Extra milk for brushing over

Set Oven Gas7/450F/200C
Well grease and flour a flat baking sheet

Method:

Sift flour, baking powder and salt in a bowl
Using a fork mix in milk, then quickly knead until smooth
Shape into a round and slightly flatten the top
Place on the baking sheet and brush with milk

Bake in centre of the oven for 25 – 30 minutes
Cool on a wire tray

If you make a batch of these they will keep fresh in the freezer for months.

If you don't freeze them they will stay edible for five days if wrapped in waxed paper.



"A Day in the Life of...."

(Or how to spend a day during 'lockdown')

It's now seven o'clock; seem to have been awake for ages. Might as well get up and make a cup of tea, considering I had one made for me yesterday. Lay the table for breakfast while the tea brews. Tea was nice; think I'm awake now.

Next comes one of the three highlights of the day – breakfast, even though it's only porridge. This time it's different, though. We have to use semi-skimmed milk instead of the usual skimmed, there seems to have been a run on the latter in the shops. That means the porridge will be extra creamy; delicious! Whilst breakfast continues we'll do a crossword. It's not from the daily paper, which has been put in abeyance, it's from a book given us as a Christmas present. Get to near the end quite successfully but stumped on the last couple of clues. Then it dawns; this is an American book and as we all know, they can't spell properly and they use funny words like 'trunk' instead of 'boot' for their cars. Look up the answers. Ridiculous, that's not how 'favour' is spelt.

Let's turn to the URC's Daily Devotion. That will help to set the tone of the day, perhaps, and give us the will to be better persons. It's not the same as worshiping in church but it does help to keep the Lord in the forefront.

So, what's to be done for the rest of the day? Lots of jobs waiting in the garden. The patio needs refurbishing. That means digging out the old pointing and replacing it, this time with a fine concrete. It's a hands and knees job. A couple of hours is enough, after which it's hard to stand up. And I don't want housemaid's knee. The bag of concrete disappeared very quickly, so go online to order some more. B & Q won't deliver; neither will Travis Perkins; and neither will Homebase. In desperation try Wickes of Rayleigh. Yes, they can deliver some – in three and a half week's time! The grass will start growing in the gaps by then but no matter, be thankful for small mercies.

Have to turn to something else. The side gate needs painting. Two more hours and the back is now as painful as the knees. Still, I was provided with a break for another cup of tea, this time supplemented with half of a hot cross bun. (Another **small** mercy) We certainly know how to live it up. At least the gate is finished

and I can now look forward to a well earned sit down and relax. Or can I? On entering the house I am greeted with the words, "Come on, it's time for our exercise walk." That means half an hour or more stepping it out. "But I'm exhausted." "Get your shoes on or we'll never get out before lunch." "Can't we go after lunch?" "No." (End of discussion)

Forty minutes later and it's time for the second highlight – lunch. Today it's a ham sandwich with pickle. Very nice but very similar to yesterday's, which was a ham sandwich with pickle. Wonder what tomorrow's will be, perhaps a ham sandwich with pickle *and* some cheese! Told you we know how to live it up. And there in that freezer languishes a delicious pizza. "That's for Saturday." Wish it was Saturday.

Lunch is over and it's time for a well earned rest. Any good films on telly? Brilliant, it's the old Ealing comedy, 'The Titfield Thunderbolt.' And look what's on tomorrow, another Ealing comedy, 'Whisky Galore'. Things are looking up a bit. I wonder if I can stay awake until the end. The film was good, it raised the spirits, or am I thinking of tomorrow? Managed to stay awake for all of it, then lapsed into unconsciousness for another hour or so.

What's to look forward to this evening? Ah, yes, the third highlight, dinner. I'm ravenous, but it won't be ready for another hour. Might as well go on line and get the emails. No chance! Can't get on line as the connection has failed. But they sent us a new hub only a couple of days ago. So the old one was actually O.K. It's the line that's at fault. Sky can't fix it. Now we have to wait for a B.T. engineer who will be forbidden to enter the house. Keep an eye on the telegraph pole for the next few days and see if anyone climbs it.

Time for dinner and then enjoy a favourite pastime – washing the dishes.

Nothing inspiring on telly this evening. Wonder what we'll do tomorrow!

A Verse from Gina Nottage:-

I've a 100 jobs in my head,
But I'd much rather stay in bed,
I'm confined to my home,
No longer to roam.



I've stayed indoors,
And I've mopped the floors,
The rugs are shook,
I could read a book.



The washing's done,
That was no fun,
There are meals to cook,
In the freezer I look.

If I eat more chicken I'll cluck like a hen,
And I really can't face mince again.
Ah, fish and chips that appeals to me.
Oh, how I long to go down to the sea.



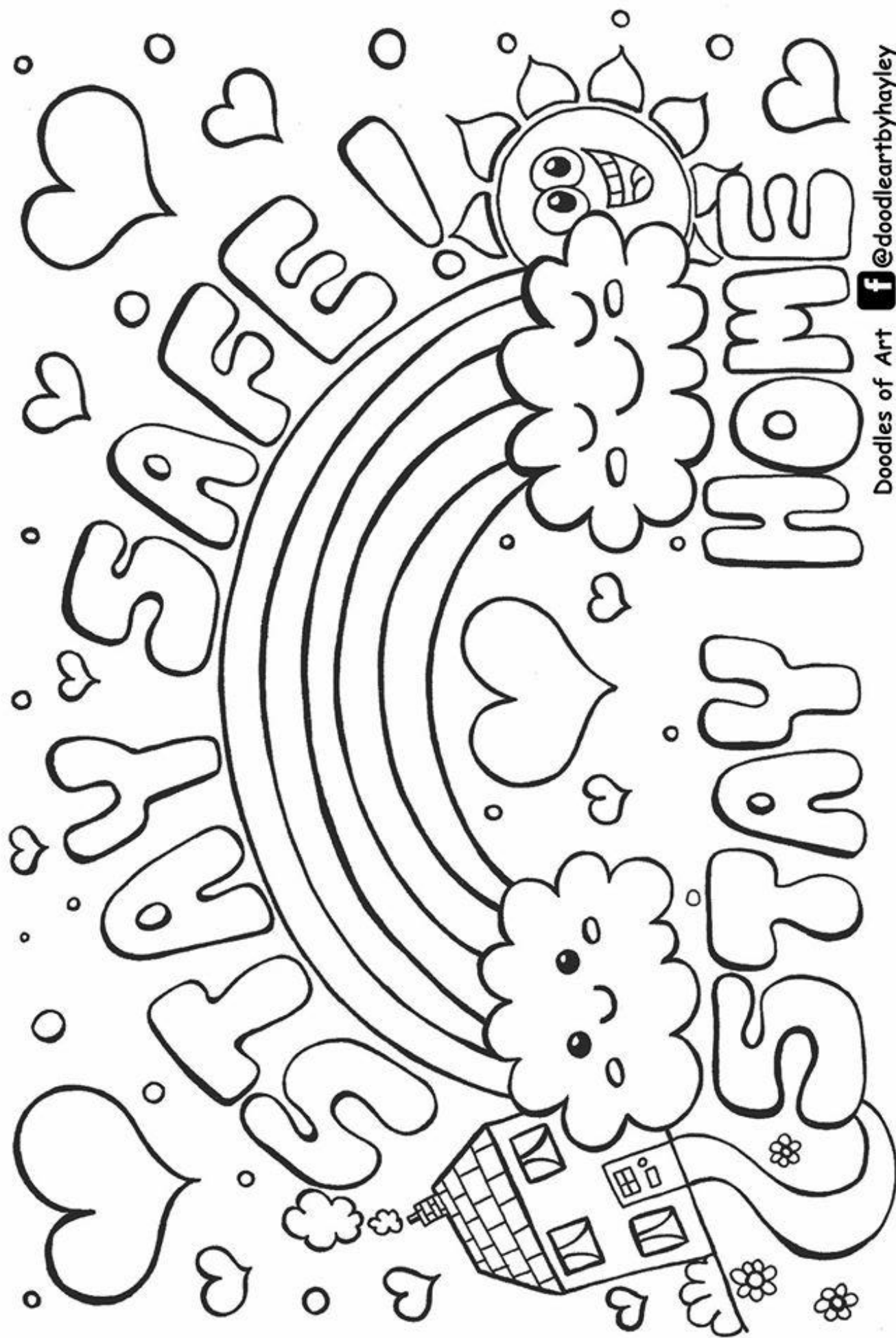
The sun is shining and the sky is blue,
The garden is nearly as good as Kew.
Well perhaps that is not quite true,
But the time spent out there just flew.

A couch potato I didn't want to become,
I knew that would be no good for my derriere!
I've worked so hard,
Not to turn to lard.



How much longer at home must I stay?
Oh! I wish this virus would go away.
Occupy yourself "they" say
But I'd much rather stay in bed!





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