

Minister: Rev'd David Coaker
drcoaker@gmail.com
07378 348191

Silent Visitor



(Topiary Characters from Alice in Wonderland
Beaulieu Motor Museum Summer 2019)

July 2020

Rationalised or Justified Rebellion?

Our response to the guidance given to us will be as unique as we are. Depending on a series of factors the category of guidance each of us falls into will vary. But whatever the guidance, our response could be to try to go further, follow the letter, or go slower. We can rebel or conform. Rebel in a way that we feel benefits us but might harm others, or simply do as we are told.

Given our church heritage we might like to ponder the question, if 'there are no atheists in a foxhole' are there any non-conformists in an easing of lockdown? And is our tendency to not conform for its own sake or grounded in any rational argument?

To a greater or lesser extent, all of us have massaged the lockdown rules on occasion due to circumstances, mistakes or forgetfulness. And, unlike some, I hope we would have the humility and grace to admit it. We are all responsible for our own decisions, and accountable for any consequences. Being accountable could just be a pang of guilt, through to the embarrassment or shame if our neighbours or the authorities considered us at fault.

As with all of our decisions, when we are challenged on them we face the fork that leads to rationalising or justifying. Do we rationalise and pile on every 'good' reason we can think of, or do we justify and really challenge our own motivations?

Rationalising only works in the short-term. It is never a truly honest or helpful approach. It builds a barricade around you and risks becoming a barrier to your relationship with others. It also doesn't stop that small voice in your head from knowing the actual truth.

Justifying is the beginning of a conversation within yourself and with others, which could lead to new insights and better decisions in the future, both for you and for others.

So I pray that in the coming weeks you will be able to justify, and not just rationalise, any minor rebellions and that together and individually we will grow and deepen in our relationships with each other, our community and within God.

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

Beyond the Sound bites!

You will have heard on the news that churches will be allowed to open for private prayer from 15th June and possibly for other things after 4th July. But something being allowed is just the tip of the iceberg, and beneath the waves is a pile of paperwork, judgement calls, practical demands and pastoral concerns. (If you want to delve into the paperwork it's clearly signposted on the URC website.)

As for private prayer, that is more of a Roman Catholic and Anglican tradition, where buildings are left accessible for people to drift in and out of during the day. In our tradition, where buildings are seen more as a place to carry out sacred activities rather than being sacred themselves, we gather together in a building or pray wherever we happen to be. We make use of the building for communal prayer.

The guidance we have on private prayer asks us first to consult the Synod Trust and through them our insurers – which doesn't inspire lack of caution. Also for that, and a more general opening, we have risk assessments to work through and seek to mitigate.

On a practical basis we would need to clean the building, keep it clean after each opening, and also rearrange the space, add signage and monitor to ensure social distancing. At this time, it does feel as though the demands of keeping on top of the cleaning and monitoring social distancing are probably beyond the people we have who are able and would feel safe doing so.

The elders would need to work through all of this and be confident that we would not be placing anyone at risk – bearing in mind that it is they who would be held liable.

There is also the pastoral concern that many of our 10.30 am Sunday congregation are officially or effectively 'shielding'. Should we allow our desire to enter the building and see familiar faces outweigh our concern for each other's health?

So on balance the elders are not minded to rush into any preparation for reopening. As things move on we sincerely hope that the situation and guidance will change to the point when, with confidence, we can implement a safe, secure and sensible restart.

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

Eldership

Our need to expand our eldership hasn't left us and is even more critical at this time, and also with Alf stepping down and Denise due a sabbatical year. Every member is urged to give this careful and prayerful consideration.

If you would be willing to share in supporting and enabling the life of Grays URC by serving on the elders' meeting, please get in touch with Ben or David. (Currently elders' meetings take place on Zoom.)

Names would then go to the elders on the basis of a six month co-option to the meeting. When Church Meetings resume those co-opted can then decide whether to seek nomination and election. (So you are only agreeing to 6 months – not 3 or 6 years!)

Kitchen Project

Following an elders' meeting discussion and the member consultation, the elders have agreed to proceed with the refurbishment. By the time you read this the work will be well underway!

DC

Coffee Mornings

Every Wednesday at 10.30 there is an opportunity to get together on-line for a Zoom Coffee Morning.



See the email from Rev'd Dave with the link to log in to it. It is good to see each other rather than just have a talk down the phone line.

So if you have a computer with a camera why not join in on Wednesdays at 10.30 for a chat. Don't forget to make yourself a drink to bring to the computer with you.

Hope to see you soon!



News of the Family

Doreen Thomas celebrated her birthday on the 29th June and we wish her slightly belated birthday wishes and hope she had a lovely day.

We offer our thoughts and prayers to the Marshall family on the death of Ben's grandmother. We send our love to Sallie, Peter, Ben, Amy, Sam and family at this sad time.

We also remember Anne French in our prayers as she spends some time in hospital.

Lord Jesus, we thank you for being with us throughout our lives,
when the days are happy and the days are sad.
Many are feeling the stress and anxiety of the lockdown and need
the comfort of your closeness to get them through.
Help us to help each other and give us strength until we can meet
again in close company once more.

Amen

Solution to Last Month's Crossword

Across:

1. Edomite
5. Dream
8. Ennui
9. Raiment
10. Zodiacal
11. It is
13. Rachel
15. Hard up
18. Blew
19. Put to sea
22. Baptist
23. Sheba
24. Loser
25. Mishnah

Down:

1. Eleazar
2. Owned
3. Imitated
4. Earwax
5. Drip
6. Elected
7. Mites
12. Baptims
14. Cleopas
16. Pharaoh
17. Custom
18. Babel
20. Stern
21. Liar

Beauty in Lockdown!

Many descriptions of the past few months have been used by the media:-

"these strange times"

"these difficult times"

Each of us has lived his or her own experience of despair and isolation, our emotions riding a roller coaster. As we draw near to God, or feel far from God, we trust we have found solace and a God given joy.

It is my hope we may, when able to meet together, share God-given gifts in scripture, poetry and photo's in the form of an exhibition within the church worship space.

Ben has some stunning photographs of church and grounds which could be displayed on canvas.

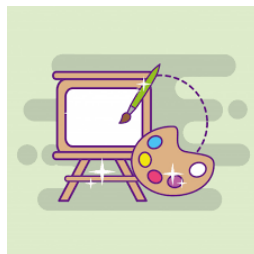
Please share any images you have found helpful, powerful or comforting. Poems you have found helpful that may have spoken to your heart. Prayer and verses of scripture you have found useful or even vital to your well being – "Beauty present in lockdown".

Have you any work we could display? Perhaps a painting or sketch created during lockdown.

Let us share together and open our wider community gifts of solace, joy, comfort and beauty.

Contact Denise by either: e-mail: Denbeckley@hotmail.com or post or telephone.

Denise Beckley



Thurrock Food Bank



Please remember the food bank both practically, and in your prayers.

It's indicative of how busy they are that Elaine still hadn't received their weekly Wednesday update for June 17 by the end of the week.

It's important for us all to remember that Helen Watts and her colleagues are volunteers, who are fulfilling massively more requests in these lockdown days when furlough and sudden lack of work are thrusting families into dire straits.

Their facebook page gives details for bank transfer donations, though cheques too would be welcome, at 2 – 4 Chase Road, Corringham SS17 7QH.

The latest information is:

Shortages:- we have been blessed with many great food donations. Our food shortages are – condiments (ketchup, brown sauce, gravy, stuffing, etc). Sponge puddings and jelly cubes (the sort that dissolve in water).

We are also asking for donations of non-food items. We are particularly in need of shampoo, shower gel, deodorants, toothpaste and soap/hand wash.

Prayer Corner:- we are again thanking God for the many blessings we have received with food donations and money. We ask your prayers for protection from illness for our volunteers. At a time when the people who issue vouchers are starting to work through how they can open again we ask that you are with them in their planning, both for us and for our clients.

Facebook page:- please encourage as many of your friends as possible to 'like' our Facebook page so everyone gets to see posts as soon as they happen.

Elaine Barcz

"We Will Meet When the Danger is Over"

Those of us who receive, on-line, the daily devotions mailed by Andy Braunston, will already have seen and maybe listened to this hymn.



This is a new hymn written by John Bell and was used at a recent event at the Iona Community. Andy says in his email "John has written some very moving words which are sung by Alison Adam and accompanied by Ian McLarty. The song has been made freely available provided it is credited properly. The lyrics are powerful and express very powerfully what I have been feeling but not able to articulate."

We Will Meet When the Danger is Over

John L Bell (c) Wild Goose Resource Group, The Iona Community

We will meet; when the danger is over,
we will meet when the sad days are done;
we will meet sitting closely together
and be glad our tomorrow has come.

We will join to give thanks and sing gladly,
we will join to break bread and share wine;
and the peace that we pass to each other
will be more than a casual sign.

So let's make with each other a promise
that when all we've come through is behind,
we will share what we missed and find meaning
in the things that once troubled our mind.

Until then may we always discover
faith and love to determine our way.
That's our hope and God's will and our calling
for our lives and for every new day.

Did you Clap for the NHS?

For ten weeks we were encouraged to clap for the NHS and all front line workers who put themselves at risk to keep us safe during the "spike" of Covid 19 in April and May and are still doing so!

We know we are not out of the woods yet but things are easing off - with various easing of restrictions as to what is accessible and what is not. We still need to remember the basic safe-guarding measures that were originally put in place about self distancing, hand washing and sanitising.

Like many others we joined in the Thursday applause for the frontline workers, especially the doctors and nurses. Many of us will feel it brought our neighbourhoods closer together for a few moments each week. Also, if the wind was in the right direction, the sound of foghorns from the ships docked at Tilbury could be heard adding to the atmosphere.

On the 5th July the NHS will be 72 years old (nearly as old as me!) and it seems to be that the feeling is that we should honour it with another "applause". No doubt we will need to "watch this space" to find out for sure and if so, what time we should be on our doorsteps once again remembering the work of our healthcare staff and the wonderful service we receive from our unique NHS.

However much we complain about it from time to time we all know how very lucky we are to have our health service and how much it is admired by other countries. So let's remember its 72nd birthday on Sunday 5th July by clapping once again!. Ed.



Pitfalls of Publishing a Church Magazine



It is a fact that, with an educated readership, (flattery will get us everywhere) mistakes in a local church magazine are soon spotted. It is also a fact that lurking amongst its readership are those (not many we hope) who cherish the thought of spotting those mistakes and who derive great satisfaction from having done so. So what must the publishers keep an eye open for? (we'll get to prepositions in a moment) The question is, does it matter?

Lynn Truss, the author of 'Eats Shoots and Leaves' has this to say, "Our punctuation system, which has served the written word with grace and ingenuity for centuries, mustn't be allowed to disappear without a fight". But poor punctuation is not the only prospective pitfall. There are plenty of dos and don'ts to watch out for.

As an instance we need to have regard to our English language heritage and beware the adoption of Americanisms (and a few more isms as well). For example, the proliferation of crime stories in the media has given rise to the now often used 'autopsy' for post mortem examination. At least one of our quality newspapers has a style guide which bans the use of the word in its publications. And for those Americans who accuse us of using long words or phrases compared to their shortened versions, ask them why they call a lift an elevator!

Of course we don't want to take this too far. The above remark about prepositions is relevant here. It is a generally stated convention that we should not end sentences with prepositions but the word 'generally' qualifies that convention. The third sentence of this article is a case in point. The style guide mentioned above advises that generally to do so is considered inelegant (rather than wrong) but that we must not avoid it at all costs or we go from the sublime to the ridiculous. As Winston Churchill once said, "this is the sort of English up with which I will not put".

There is a growing tendency, particularly among the younger generation, towards overstatements. Things which used to be simply very good have now become 'amazing'. Things well executed have now become 'incredible'. People are hardly ever 'devastated' or 'outraged' or 'stunned' or 'horrified', but to see or hear some of the media it would seem that these things happen many times a day and, as a result, descriptions lose their effect.

Our communication can get sloppy. Another growing sort of statement is that which says, "I love that you did that" or "I love that you made it that way" (just listen to the lady judge on the sewing programme on TV). Where is the object in these sentences, or is the writer missing something? Can anyone explain that grammar? If you can, please contact SV.

Finally we have to beware of the various word blunders or gaffes or even Freudian slips, sometimes called butchering of syntax or the mangling of metaphors. From British royals (particularly HRH Prince Philip) to American presidents, no-one seems to have been immunised against these. This has given rise to the coining of the word 'dentopedology' a word not yet inserted into many dictionaries but which has been coined by Prince Philip himself to describe his expertise in what is called putting one's foot in it.

Let us conclude with some examples:-

"I believe there would be people alive today if there were a death penalty" (Nancy Reagan)

On a 'Big Brother' interview – Q. What if she has an IQ of 25?"

A. "Actually I'm only 23".

"If Lincoln was alive today he'd turn in his grave." (Gerald Ford)

George W. Bush indulged in them. "I think they have underestimated me" "The undecideds could go one way or another." "More and more of our imports come from overseas."

And from one of Ford's opponents, "A zebra does not change its spots." (Al Gore)

From a UK politician, "The single most important two things we can do..." (Tony Blair)

"Always be sincere, even if you don't mean it." (Harry S. Truman)

This time from George H. W. Bush – "I hope I stand for anti-bigotry, anti-racism and anti-Semitism."

Greg Norman, in a winning speech – "I would like to thank my parents, especially my father and mother."

Three from the famous commentator, Murray Walker – "There's no damage to the car, except to the car itself." "The lead car is absolutely unique, except for the car behind, which is identical."

"And Prost can see Mansell in his earphones."

Lastly from the boxer Chris Eubank when asked if he might write his autobiography. Answer – "On what?"

George Semain (who wishes to remain anonymous)

In the Wake of Cyclone Amphan

Christian Aid and its local partners have been responding to Super Cyclone Amphan. The storm destroyed the homes of millions of poor people in coastal communities near the Bay of Bengal.

Winds reached 120mph, and waves 17ft. Electricity lines and communications are down across affected regions. Communities must cope with both the aftermath of the storm and also the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

Many communities in Bangladesh, including Cox's Bazar (the world's largest refugee camp) were urged to evacuate. Over 2.4 million people made the move according to official Bangladeshi government reports. The risk of Covid-19 transmission led to many people hesitating to leave early enough.

Christian Aid's Bangladesh Country Director, Pankaj Kumar, said: "We are in a very challenging time. Many people are scared of catching Covid-19 and it has hampered our partners' efforts to get people to safety. Temporary shelters are having to practise social distancing, which is extremely difficult in an emergency evacuation situation.

"Many people are preferring to take shelter in a neighbour's house or on higher land over the official shelters, especially as there are reports of shelters lacking sufficient facilities.

"Thankfully, community preparedness has led to minimum deaths, but Amphan has left huge devastation in its wake, with homes, communications, crops and livelihoods destroyed. Approximately 80% tin-roofed homes in Satkira district have been blown away and families struggling to find water and food.

"We are also glad to report that initial reports indicate minimal damage to camps in Cox's Bazar.



Pic: NASA from Unsplash

The region is experiencing an increased number of intense storms year on year. The poorest and most vulnerable are hit the hardest. Many are still recovering their livelihoods from the previous Cyclone Bulbul, which affected 1.8m people and damaged 70,000 homes in November."

Commitment for Life, in solidarity with Christian Aid and its partners support long-term programmes in these affected areas. We have worked to prepare communities for disasters; we have established early warning systems. Our partners in Satkira, Khulna and Cox's Bazar support affected communities with shelter, food and hygiene kits. These include soap, masks and hand sanitizer.

Thank you for your ongoing support for Bangladesh through *Commitment for Life*. Our prayers, advocacy and sharing make an enormous difference to thousands of people in the region.