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# Silent Visitor



The Transfiguration  
Commemorated on 6<sup>th</sup> August

# August 2020

## Who's Who at Bradleigh Avenue

**Minister: Rev'd David Coaker**  
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**Secretary:** Mr Ben Marshall      Mobile No: 078141 06604  
e-mail: graysurcsecretary@outlook.com

**Treasurer:** Mr Alan Beckley

**Serving Elders:** Mr Ben Marshall; Mr George Semain; Mrs Janet Semain; Co-opted: Mr Alf Pryer, Mrs Denise Beckley

**Organist:** Mr Richard Wade

**Facilities Manager:** Mrs Charlotte Webb  
& Mobile No: 0784 3559011  
**Hire of Halls:** graysurc@gmail.com

**Silent Visitor:** Mrs Janet Semain      01375 373532  
geojan321@sky.com

### **Leaders of the Uniformed Organisations:**

**Group Scout Leader:** Mr Tim Webb  
Tel: 01375 391031

**Guide Leader:** Miss Gill Davison  
Tel: 01375 384253

**Brownie Leader:** Ms Madeleine Loin  
Mobile No: 07971 139384

## Arguing or Conversing

In July I was involved in trying out advertising on Facebook. It was decided to give it a go as the main source of new members for the Progressive Christianity Network, of which I'm a trustee, is through attendees at our events. Covid-19 cancelled our four events for this year so another route needed to be attempted.

There are two ways of advertising on Facebook, a straight advert and to boost an existing post. It's not too complicated, the software leads you through and you set how much you want to pay and the interests of the people you want to try to connect with.

I decided to create an advert targeted at people who had an interest in progressive Christianity. It had an invitational heading: 'A network of journeying people seeking to support, encourage, and challenge each other along the way. Do we share your path?' Then below was a scrolling set of 8 images of statements PCN affirms.

At the half-way point the advert has been seen by 1200 people, 55 of them have seen our website, and it's had 14 likes, been shared once, and received 18 comments. One initial comment was positive, one dismissive and another angry. The angry comment was greeted with bemused replies – as it was clear he was shouting at someone else – and the chain ended. The dismissive comment led to some back and forth, clarifying ourselves, and a degree of accord. The positive one was just nice!

The other method, boosting, was attempted by someone else. It used an existing post which reflected on the Black Lives Matter message, acknowledging the Church's mixed history when it comes to equality, and urging real engagement in tackling racial discrimination. This post has been seen by 2000 people, 100 of them have seen the website, 46 likes/angry/haha, been shared 3 times, and received 81 comments. The chains in this case are much harder to gauge. There is anger, and that is a variety of what seems like 'today's rant', directed at parts of the BLM movement, that fellow Christians should be supportive, and fellow travellers wanting the rest to quieten down. In the face of this no attempts at conversation have been made for fear of pouring on petrol on a blaze that showed no signs of burning out.

Reaching out beyond the safety of our constrained and structured ways can be quite daunting. Whether you're doing that in person or on social media can be scary, but in different ways. On social media you can be more detached, but the reactions can be more extreme. In person you have nowhere to hide, being ignored can be as unsettling as an angry rebuttal, and having a real conversation about faith – well that is terrifying!

The gospel reading on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> July was the parable of the sower. The image of seed, the message of God, being thrown liberally around and the different results depending upon where it lands. The heart-warming part is when the seed lands on good soil, the message is heard by those ready to respond, but the overwhelming challenge is that we are called to keep sowing the seed, sharing the message, without worrying about where it lands.

So what seeds, what messages of God, are you sowing? Do you understand them and would someone with no church background? Can you think of any obvious follow up questions someone could ask? Could you answer them or do you need to rethink your original message?

Our conversations about a shared message as Grays URC got as far as: 'A place to pause, and then step forward.' In what ways could we give expression to this? What activities could we try and how could we rearrange our space and activities to facilitate it?

In a whole host of ways, the response from the world around us is silence. We could keep quiet, remain unnoticed, and contentedly do what we have always done – but that is contrary to the message of God in Christ.

For us to be heard, we need to say something, and to do it in the right way, at an appropriate time, and be ready for any response. We need a message that can be understood by anybody. We need to have built up relationships and be seen to live out our message. We need to be willing to change, react, and hold together diversity.

We can never truly know where the path, stones, thorns or good soil is, but our calling is to keep on sowing the seeds come what may.

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

## **Steps along the way**

In July's SV I shared that on balance the elders were not minded to rush into any preparation for reopening, and of our desire to implement a safe, secure and sensible restart. We also had made some assumptions about how many of our 10.30am Sunday congregation would fall into the greater or high risk categories, and the capacity of those who were not to implement the stewarding and cleaning requirements for opening up the building. So a first step is to clarify those assumptions. The URC has produced a Personal Risk Assessment, and we are reproducing it and a worked example on the following pages. You are invited to read it through, fill it in for yourself, and then let Ben or I know if you fall into the lower risk category. (We have no desire to know anyone's scores – just to be aware of those who are at lower risk.) This will then give us an indication of who could attend and enable the building to open up.

As things move on the criteria and weight given to different factors may well change, so we will probably resend out the Personal Risk Assessment if it significantly changes.

The next step is for the elders to work through a 17-page risk assessment, covering: preparation, social distancing, cleaning, worship, and activities and lettings. That process will identify areas of concern, the overall risk, and tasks to undertake to reduce those risks. We would only proceed to reopen when we had confidence that the risk assessment was acceptable.

We would probably start out by only inviting our lower risk members of the church family for 2-3 weeks to prepare, and check that our procedures were effective. When we were ready, we would then announce that we were reopening. After all of that, may I remind you that any reopening for worship would be very different from normal. We haven't worked out the detail but a possible scenario might be:

You walk towards the church building and join a queue of others standing at marked 2m intervals. When you reach the front you will be welcomed, asked for your contact details to enable Track and Trace, invited to wash your hands and offered a mask, and then directed to follow the one-way system.

As you enter the foyer you will be directed along the corridor, past the side rooms, and then into the worship space. The chairs will be spaced at 2m intervals with some grouped together for households, and you'll be asked to sit in the furthest available seating.

When we are ready worship will begin. This will probably be shorter than usual, not include singing, but will include music, readings, prayers, reflections and silence. Afterwards you'll be invited to leave through the

hall partition. In the hall it would be unlikely that refreshments would be offered, there would be some seats at 2m intervals, you'd be encouraged to maintain social distancing, and the exit would be through one of the hall fire exits.

Over time, as the risks reduce, and the guidance changes, we would be able to adapt how we organise ourselves and the content of what we do. One unknown within all of this is that we do not know how many people on the fringes of our fellowship, or unknown to us in the community, may wish to attend once we announce we are reopening. This could be a great blessing, and it needs to be one that our preparations have in mind. If we only plan for a handful and are greeted by a crowd, health-wise, we will probably do more harm than good.

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

### **Eldership**

Denise and Alf have offered to be co-opted to remain on the elders' meeting, but we have received no other offers from the membership.

### **Annex Garden**

Little Roos pre-school have opened on our site, initially on week-day mornings, with a view to extend into afternoons and school holidays.

Elders noted that at the church meeting on the 16th Feb 2020 in principle approval for a fence had been given on 8th April 2018. The health and safety concerns were mentioned to Little Roos who were aware and had made their own risk assessment. Phil and Rachel were happy about mowing, and the tenants were already aware.

In light of this, and our contract with them on the basis that it was required, Elders gave permission for Little Roos to have a fence, as described to the elders, built over the summer at their cost.

*Note: Since this article was written Little Roos have asked to use and fence off the strip of land to the right of the annex as an alternative to using the memorial garden. This would appear to be an alternative more acceptable to the membership and will be accepted barring any strong opposition.*

(ed.)

## Financial Update July 2020

So far, we have had to sell investments to the total value of £20,000, to pay for the heating pipes replacement and associated flooring works, and for the new kitchen. Clearly this situation cannot continue long term, as we will run out of investments to sell. I have also (in common with many other churches) submitted insurance claims for loss of rental income during the Covid-19 pandemic. The insurance companies have refused such claims thus far, however a test case trial has been arranged in the near future. This will confirm whether or not insurance companies will have to settle such claims. Do not hold your breath.

During the kitchen replacement works it was found that the existing electrics were in a dangerous condition and needed renewing. This work will shortly commence, and a very generous donation from a 'Nonny Mouse' will cover the costs. Many thanks to 'Nonny Mouse' from the treasurer.

Thanks again to all those who are paying their weekly collections by standing order and/or bank transfer. I know I have said it before, but it makes life so much easier for all concerned, and is the future for the majority of church collections and giving. Thanks also for those who have sent cheques for all the back dated collections, this is much appreciated. A word about cheques and weekly giving envelopes. It is now much easier for me to pay in cheques to the church bank account, so I urge all who can, to add up how many collection envelopes they have and bring their giving up to date by sending a cheque for the total to my home address. For those requiring new collection envelopes after the existing ones finish on the 26<sup>th</sup> July, please let me know ASAP and I will deliver a new book of envelopes.

Little Roo's preschool reopened for mornings only, and this brings in valuable income to the church finances. To date, only Weight Watchers have confirmed that they have plans to reopen in the near future.

Finally I have yet to have the draft accounts audited. I hope to arrange this in the not too distant future.

If anyone one has any questions or queries please email or phone and I will be happy to try and answer them.

*Alan.*

## QUIZ



Talking of numbers, here's a short quiz as a space filler:

1. How many days did God take to create the world?
2. How many cities did Moses designate as sanctuaries?
3. Where can you find the longest verse in the bible?
4. Where can you find the shortest verse in the bible?
5. How many fruits of the Spirit are described in Galatians?
6. How many post resurrection appearances did Jesus make?
7. How many miracles did Jesus perform?
8. How many theses did Martin Luther present to the church?
9. How many followers were present at the first Pentecost?
10. How many fish were caught on the risen Jesus' instructions?

*Answers in next edition.*





## 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 that 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 welcomed at

2-4 Chase Road, Corringham, SS17 7 QH.

### **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 dissolves in water). We are also asking for donations of non-food items; we are particularly in need of Shampoo, Shower gel, Deodorants, Toothpaste, Toothbrushes 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. <https://en-gb.facebook.com/Thurrockfoodbank>



## **News of the Family**

No doubt all of the congregation are going through a difficult time at the moment but one or two would be pleased if you thought and prayed about them in particular. For instance:

Anne French has had some recent difficulties but is now getting the right sort of help, thanks in a large degree, to Denise, who seems always ready with practical ideas. (Thanks Denise)

Denise and Alan are about to become grandparent carers to young Evan as Owen goes into hospital next Tuesday for a heart valve repair. Our thoughts are with them and with Charlotte and Glenn. We trust all will go smoothly and Owen will soon be back home making his presence felt!

Janet has also had problems and has recently had to undergo surgery at Broomfield Hospital, Chelmsford. Again, we hope she will soon recover sufficiently to be able to come home and be in her familiar surroundings getting items together for the next Silent Visitor.

## **Prayer**

Father, you are our comforter.

You are our Counsellor, Healer and Joy. Help us to see you in the midst of all this. Let us not lose sight of your power and promises. Restore our hope that you'll answer our prayers. Help us to accept whatever those answers may be. Generation after generation, you remain faithful and loving. Thank you for your care. Care for us now in a way that draws us closer to you as we long for a deeper sense of your presence. We ask this through Jesus. Amen.

(From "Everyday Prayers" Honor Books)

## When Adversity Happens "Do not be Anxious"

**Text:** (NRSV) *Matthew 6: 34* "So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today."

Adversity can strike us at any time. It recently struck Janet and I out of the blue. It led me to the question, "How do people deal with it?" Some look to the bible for words of comfort or encouragement. Then we have to translate what we read so as to relate it to our own situation. Take Jesus' words above as an example. He knew He was to face adversity. How can His words be reconciled with His own anxieties?

Some years ago the late Bishop Robinson wrote a book, 'The Human Face of God'. Some academics consider it is now old hat but the questions he raised are still relevant. He looked at questions like this and felt that we had to start by accepting that Jesus was not so much 'fully man', as some theologians state, but was fully 'a' man. He was not only bodily as we are but had to have the same type of personal existence, with all the social relationships and problems life brought to Him.

Yet He could be, as many of us are today, anxious. From His last journey to Jerusalem, it seems He worried about what was coming. Matthew tells us that when He took His disciples into the Garden of Gethsemane, He began to be grieved and agitated. He told them He was deeply grieved. He asked the Father to let the cup pass from Him if it was possible. Whilst on the cross He wondered why He had been abandoned. Pope Benedict XVI draws our attention ("Jesus of Nazareth" p. 149) to the fact that the Garden of Gethsemane was the place "where Jesus experienced that final loneliness, the whole anguish of the human condition."

It is in the light of such genuine human agony of mind, such extreme human anxiety, that He is genuinely able to say to us 'do not worry about tomorrow'. It is in times like the present we need to feel that as human beings, just like He was for a time, if we can still aim to strive for the kingdom of God, we might be able to trust that our anxieties are known to Him and He can help us deal with them in the way He knows best.

You might like to have another look at the hymn, "Have faith in God, my heart" *No. 499 in R & S*)

George

## A Flashback to Childhood Summers



One day this summer, on a video message, our grandson was wistfully recalling his July 2019 discovery that while ‘helping’ Nana to pick red currants, he could eat them (very slowly and carefully) straight from the bush. That had been even more exciting than clambering past the pond to reach them. I did manage to take him some this year, during a distanced garden visit, but it wasn’t quite the same.

The bushes were bountiful this summer too, and provided plenty of red currant jelly, the second batch a week after the first. As I sighed at the thought of yet again clambering under the bushes, I remembered July evenings when I was a child.

The abandoned field, which was the back garden when my parents moved to their first new home, was well and truly populated over a number of years with gifts from my grandfather of fruit bushes and trees which arrived, wrapped in sacking, courtesy of British Road Services trucks, from Pontypridd market. My father duly cared for them, pruned them, despaired of the wasps when the pears ripened, usually when we were away on holiday, and it was he who clambered round the black currant and red currant bushes at picking time. I really don’t remember how many bushes we had, but there were vast amounts of fruit.

Of course there was no freezer at hand, and here comes my flashback. My mother, politely but vigorously calling down imprecations on my grandfather’s good intentions, as she spent many hot July evenings preparing the fruit (with some help from a small person), toiling over black currant jam (fabulous) and making jelly from the red, with the same small person nearby to scoop up the froth and the partially set test pieces. The fruit couldn’t wait, but neither could end of term tests and reports for the children she taught.

After those fraught evenings we could enjoy the fruits of her labours, and we often reminisced about the summer a cousin stayed with us when her mother was ill. Blackcurrant jam was put on the table at tea time in a little cut-glass bowl, and four- year-old Rosalynd said each evening “I might as well finish this”. So Olwen did a little eyeroll before agreeing, perfectly happy to have been well appreciated.

*(Elaine Barcz)*

## Christians Against Poverty (Our charity for this year)

The virus lock down has prevented the usual arrangements for contributing to this charity. They have recently given us the following information.

"With the help of her local church, Lorraine has rebuilt her life. At her lowest point, she had a nervous breakdown and finances were the last thing on her mind.

There are thousands more people like Lorraine, facing unexpected challenges that could tip them over the edge into financial crisis. Demand for debt help across the UK is growing, and the coronavirus pandemic is one more factor adding to the strain. Together we can ensure CAP and local churches are there for people. That's why we are focussing so much of our effort right now on making sure our Debt Help service is ready to respond to the changing needs our country faces. There is still time to be part of the response to this growing challenge.

*Will you become a life changer with a regular gift of £12 today? £12 could help someone like Lorraine rebuild their life, from that first phone call to CAP through to a complete debt solution."*

Our mailing address is:

Christians Against Poverty,  
North Street,  
Bradford BD1 4EW

Thank you.

John Kirkby  
Founder.

## **The Church Building**

Charlotte has given us the following information: (and see adjoining pictures)

There has been much work at the church during this lock down period. There was a major leak in the boiler room. An extensive investigation found that it came from a pipe that feeds the radiators to the far side of the church. This presented a couple of obstacles. Firstly the metal panels that cover the radiators needed to be removed (not a small job as there were over 48 screws in each panel!)

Secondly access was needed under the main hall floor so the leaking pipe could be replaced. Hyde's flooring company removed the wooden floor, and Pete (the builder) made an access hole, then Hyde's re-laid the floor on and around the access hole.

The Heating company then were able to replace the leaking pipe. They then had to replace the radiators on this side of the church as the new pipes wouldn't connect to the old radiators. This also meant the old metal panels could not be re-attached. Pete is currently boxing in the new pipes and the concrete pillars, so that they are more pleasing to the eye. Although we had no choice but to get this work completed, it will make the church much warmer and energy efficient due to the new radiators.

Pete has also been very busy fitting the bee kitchen, which is nearly finished. However, it became apparent whilst doing this that the electrics are not to current standard, and investigations are under way to find the best remedy to rectify this.

The annex has been redecorated, as well as the flooring replaced and the ongoing leak in the toilet repaired.

Little Roos preschool have been using the Annex for the last six weeks, but have now broken up for the summer holidays. They have been helping with small jobs, such as re-planting and re-painting the flower beds at the front of the annex.

Other groups are gradually making plans to return to re-start their meetings.

Thank you to everyone who helps with the on-going maintenance and upkeep of the church and its grounds, your help is invaluable.



## **CHURCH CALENDAR**

(not valid during lockdown period)

### **SUNDAY SERVICES**

Children's Service	9.30 am	1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday each month
Morning Worship	10.30 am	Each Sunday
Holy Communion	10.30 am 6.30 pm	1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday each month 3 <sup>rd</sup> 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 <sup>nd</sup> 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**