

Minister: Rev'd David Coaker
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Silent Visitor



November 2020

Reopening for Worship

Armistice Day

Wed 11th November **between 10.45 – 11.15 am**

Family Worship

Sunday 15th November **between 10.15 – 11.15 am**

Sunday 20th December **between 10.15 – 11.15 am**

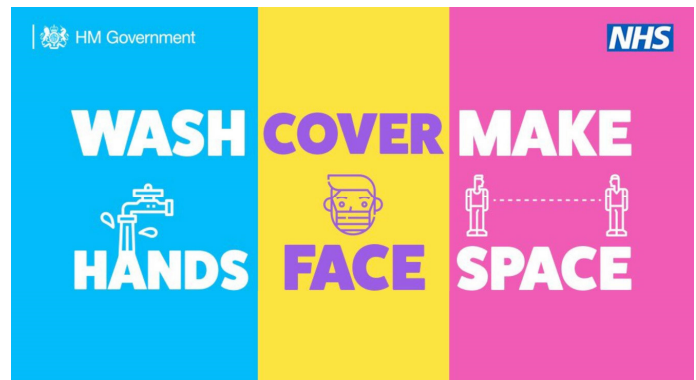
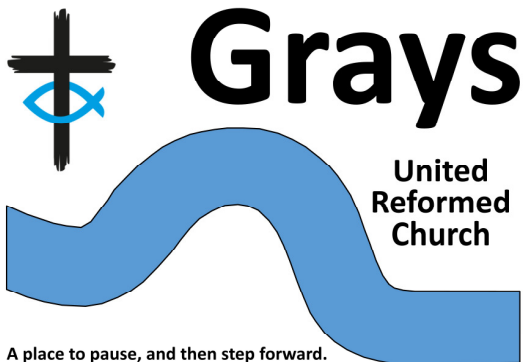
Sunday 17th January **between 10.15 – 11.15 am**

Young Families

Sunday 1st November **between 9.30 – 10.15 am**

Sunday 6th December **between 9.30 – 10.15 am**

Sunday 3rd January **between 9.30 – 10.15 am**



This will be very different from what we usually did both in form and content, as we comply with the necessary restrictions to safeguard each other's health and wellbeing.

- Each opening will start and finish with an informal time of worship.
- You will be required to wear a face covering and maintain social distancing.
- As you arrive you will be asked for Track and Trace information; to sanitise your hands and to follow the one way system.
- We will have stewards to maintain social distancing and to help us. So please follow what they say.
- If you are suffering from COVID-19 symptoms, please remain at home. (if you have tested positive you should be isolating, as per government advice.)
- We do not wish to put anyone under any undue pressure to attend, so please consider your circumstances beforehand.

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.

Isaiah 40:1 (NRSV)

These words from Isaiah, which you may well recognise from Handel's Messiah, and from set readings at Advent and Christmas, echo through the centuries to us. They are the opening words of a passage that reminds us of God's tenderness, forgiveness and presence; of our own mortality, reliance upon God and God's call for us to share good news.

After the last few months, and as we face the upcoming winter, we all so desperately need to hear, experience, and share, words, acts and expressions of comfort. This is a very uncomfortable time for everyone. We are surrounded by uncertainty, rapid change, and multiple opinions. We cry out for a straightforward plan that will take us from here to where we used to be. But life, and particularly the current pandemic, doesn't work that way.

So it is even more important for us to hear, live and share the message of Isaiah which reminds us of God's tenderness, forgiveness and presence; of our own mortality, reliance upon God, and God's call for us to share good news.

It is my hope that the limited reopening of our building for worship will bring that comfort. Whether you feel able to attend, or not, the very fact that people are gathering to place themselves before God, reflect on the Scriptures, and to refresh their ties of fellowship, I pray will bring comfort.

But whilst seeking to do this, we are doing so in the midst of the same uncertainty, rapid change, and multiple opinions. So please acknowledge and accept that we are acting in good faith, so we can all experience the comfort we all so greatly desire.

I pray that we will all find ourselves comforted in the weeks and months ahead; that we will feel God's tenderness and presence, know we are forgiven, accept our limitations and know the strength God provides, and live out the good news of God exemplified in Christ. Be comforted. Be of comfort. Be good news.

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

Re-opening:

We were delighted to welcome members and church family when we gathered for worship on Sunday 18th October. We have made an audio recording of the service which will be put on the website and provide CDs to anyone who would like one.



Please contact David.

Zoom Bible Study:

Would you appreciate the opportunity to explore the Bible together over Zoom? Please contact David with your thoughts,

Christmas:

It will be a very different time for everyone this year, especially for us as church. Just listening to carols will be a very different experience from singing them together. We are exploring how best to mark the season, and how we can still offer support to the charities we especially remember at this time.

Synod:

Synod Moderator Paul Whittle is – somewhat unexpectedly - to leave his post at the end of 2020 in order to take up a three year appointment as Moderator of the National Synod of Scotland.

Paul says – “This has come as a great surprise to me, as it may to you. I was fully expecting to remain as the Moderator of the Eastern Synod until retirement. However, I was asked to consider this short term role in Scotland and, after prayerful consideration, met with the discernment group on Monday (28th September). That was an extremely positive meeting and I felt a strong sense of call.”

Also of note, the Synod adopted an environmental policy which includes an encouragement for local churches to engage with Eco-Church: <https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/>

Rev'd David R. Coaker

Memories of Doreen Thomas

When I started to attend Grays URC about 40 years ago, Doreen was part of the choir that was sitting in the choir stalls leading the hymn singing.

It took some time before I got to know her. She had fantastic long hair that she wore in a plait on top of her head. In later years, when she found it difficult to care for this she had it cut short. She had lovely soft hair with a natural wave. She cared about her looks, and regularly went to the hairdresser and liked nice clothes.

In summertime she and her husband opened their home and garden for church coffee evenings. My children loved running on the paths in the very long and lovely garden.

Doreen was very independent and liked her car but in the end felt she had to give up her car for the safety of herself and others. From then on I started to get to know Doreen more as she got a lift with me to church, so we had time for chats. We became friends. She came with her walking aid. Once she arrived at church and the car boot was empty!! We helped Doreen into church and I rushed back. Luckily, her walker was still on the verge by her gate.

She had loved being on the stage singing when she took part in various musical productions. She was a vegetarian, which surprised me as I thought it was not common in her age group.

Doreen liked the various duties she took on in the church. She felt it gave her something to do when she left work and she was on her own.

She had quite clear views on how she liked the church to be. The Sunday morning service was the most important part, and she did not appreciate experiments with the order of service or hymns.

Doreen lost her independence due to strokes and spent some time in hospital. She came back home assisted by home carers who came in a few times a day. During the last few years she had not been able to get out of bed. She could no longer have her dog living with her. The adjustment must have been enormous.

However, I never heard her complain about her situation apart from the fact that she would have liked to have come back to the church

again. She praised how nice her carers were and how she valued Debbie who had helped her in the house long before she had her stroke and has continued to help her.

Doreen took an interest in what was going on. She always asked how things were in the church. The TV was her companion and she liked being able to see out into her garden and see the birds from her bed.

I am sorry that due to Covid 19 restrictions I did not see much of Doreen during her last few months.

I admire the way Doreen coped and adjusted to her situation. She is an example to us all.

May she rest in peace.

Inger Collier

She tasted pain and sadness,
the bitterness of tears
yet also knew such gladness
such joy across the years;
so much that brought her pleasure
more blessed than words can say
experiences to treasure
enchantment day by day.

Adopted from "How to Pray" Nick Fawcett

Answers to last month's quiz:-

1. Ivor Novello;
2. Laurence Olivier;
3. Georgie Porgie;
4. Thomas;
5. Al Jolson, The Jazz Singer;
6. Milk;
7. Gerry & the Pacemakers;
8. Electronic Random Number Indicator Equipment;
9. Pyramids of Egypt;
10. Winnie the Pooh.

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE READING ASSOCIATION 2021



I should like to remind readers that the order for I.B.R.A. 2021 Bible Readings will be sent off in mid-November.

Books for present members will be ordered as for 2020 unless I hear to the contrary. New members are always welcome.

Again they are producing just one set of daily bible readings and notes for adults, called **Fresh from the Word: the Bible for a Change**.

It offers a fresh approach to Bible reading and is written to support all readers of the Bible, from new Christians to those seeking to deepen their faith and relationship with God. Bringing together over 50 international writers to give you new insights every day, Fresh from the Word contains Bible verses, notes, prayers and action points

Fresh from the Word gives global perspectives on carefully selected passages from the Bible. The writers include theologians and biblical scholars, church leaders and activists for peace from across the world, all of whom share a passion to bring the Bible into conversation with day-to-day concerns. This helps you grow in your knowledge and appreciation of the Bible and carries on the 138-year-old IBRA tradition of encouraging people around the world.

IBRA International Fund

Giving through the International Bible Reading Association (IBRA) International Fund enables you to help spread the Word across the globe.

Our partners are based in 11 countries but benefit flows over borders to at least 32 countries. They work tirelessly, driven by their hope and their passion for distributing good teaching through Fresh from the Word. They organise the translation, printing and distribution of IBRA Bible study notes and lists into many different languages from Ewe, Yoruba and Twi to Portuguese, Samoan and Telugu!

We guarantee that 100% of your donations go to support our international brothers and sisters in Christ.

An envelope will be included with your readings, or you can give your donation to me before mid-November.

The subscription cost is £10.00

If you want to know more please do not hesitate to contact me.

Ruth Hunwick

News from Thurrock Foodbank

Did you know that the Foodbank accepts toiletries, nappies and even pet food? Chocolates too, for special treats. It's worth remembering that large boxes cannot, for hygienic reasons, be opened and split. Though these items are not on the Trussell Trust (the national umbrella organisation) list for inclusion in food boxes, they are made available at the distribution centres, and received with enormous gratitude by those who have fallen between the cracks of our country's support system.



The Manager, Helen Watts, has been sending her weekly updates from a very busy warehouse, which in October has been enjoying the **blessings of harvest**, the first four school gifts having arrived (almost half a tonne from Woodside Academy) and many more promised. Helen is aware that worship times are far from normal but does appreciate the thoughts and prayers of local churches. Local firms have been particularly generous during the pandemic.

Helen's Prayer Corner. Your prayers as always are asked for the health of our volunteers. We also pray for our clients who are struggling even more as the weather gets colder and need to heat their homes. Please pray for the Trussell Trust.

Current Shortages:- sponge puddings, jellies, whole full cream milk (blue, no skimmed please), jars of coffee, tinned spaghetti, blackcurrant and orange squash and packet mashed potato.

Reverse Advent: The foodbank will again make hampers for clients this Christmas and have just launched their Reverse Advent appeal for the month of November. (Not a calendar you open, but a box where you, your family and friends place a practical gift each day and donate it).

Any financial donations to the Thurrock Foodbank can be made by these following options:-

Via your bank account to Sort Code: 30-18-34 A/c No: 22388060

By cheque to:- Thurrock Foodbank 2-4 Chase Road, Corringham, Essex SS17 7QH

Via the **Food Bank website** you can access Paypal and a smartphone app.

Elaine Barcz

From Gina Nottage:

A Poem for 11/11

I passed by a poppy field today
This was where our soldiers lay
Poppies, red, rippling like the sea
A sadness overcame me.



Some youths who were merely boys
Mothers at home fondle their toys
Sent to war before adult lives began
Mothers recall when their sons first ran.

Wives call their children in for tea
Daughters and sons, lives father will never see
Husbands gone for evermore
Men who paid the price of war.

Let the men their full lives live
No more ask their lives to give
Let us glorify war no more
Let love be at our core.

Let us remember these men today
All those who went away
And let us to the Heavens send
A prayer of thanks to all these men.

Anonymous



War Graves Cemetery, France

Sir Arthur Sullivan 1842 – 1900

Do you have a favourite hymn or perhaps a number of favourites? It would not be surprising if among them was, "Onward Christian Soldiers". This is a hymn which seems to have gone out of fashion, to the point where it was omitted from the URC Hymnbook, "Rejoice and Sing", having previously found a place in "Congregational Praise". This was a result of the Editorial Committee having announced that it began its review of hymns by looking mainly at the words. "A hymnbook", they said, "stands or falls on the quality of its words. We mustn't carry too much old baggage with us from back home". Some people may take issue with that. For instance, one result was to cut us off from a tune composed by the celebrated musician, Sir Arthur Sullivan, who died this month in the year 1900.

Perhaps most people associate Arthur Sullivan with the partnership 'Gilbert & Sullivan' of operatic fame but the musically educated will no doubt know him as one of Britain's foremost composers, having composed his first anthem at the age of eight, then going on to compose 24 operas, 11 major orchestral works, 10 choral works, two ballets and many other smaller pieces. For some time he was bandmaster at the Royal Military College, Sandhurst and also worked as a church organist for some 10 years.

His tune for "Onward Christian Soldiers" was adopted by the Salvation Army as its favoured processional hymn.



Sullivan had always suffered from poor health. Kidney disease often caused him to conduct sitting down. He died of heart failure following a bronchitis attack on 22 November 1900. Brompton Cemetery had been his choice but the Queen ordered that he should be buried in St. Paul's Cathedral. A monument to him was erected in Victoria Embankment Gardens.

"Onward Christian Soldiers" was not Sullivan's only hymn; in 1902, Novello published 56 hymn tunes by him. The popularity of these, whilst suitable for Victorian times, declined during the 20th Century, to the point where 'Hymns and Psalms', the Methodist book and 'Rejoice and Sing', the URC book, contain only three such original hymns each.

In closing, I would draw your attention to one other hymn, not always recognised as such because it is more often played as an orchestral or band work. It is called, "The Lost Chord". This work was largely composed at the bedside of Sullivan's dying brother Fred. Sullivan

was familiar with the works of Queen Victoria's favourite poet, Adelaide Anne Procter, thought to be in her day, second only to Alfred Lord Tennyson. One of her poems was called, 'A Lost Chord', which Sullivan set to music. I had not heard this piece for many years before penning this item for SV. It brought back memories and, to my mind, is a wonderful piece of music. I listened, in particular, to Diane Bishe at the Fort Lauderdale Presbyterian Church Organ, known as The Coral Ridge Ruffatti Organ, at the time of its installation the largest European built pipe organ in America. Diane Bishe was instrumental in its development and became its Organist Emeritus.

For brass band enthusiasts, I then listened to an admirable rendition by the Grimethorpe Colliery Band. In order to hear it as an accompaniment to a song, I heard the celebrated English tenor, Webster Booth, much remembered as the duettist partner of Anne Ziegler. (remember them you more senior readers?) You may find these and others on 'You tube'; they are well worth hearing. So are Adelaide Procter's poetic words, which are set out below.

Good listening!

George Semain

"A Lost Chord" by Adelaide Anne Procter

*Seated one day at the organ,
I was weary and ill at ease,
And my fingers wandered idly
Over the noisy keys.*

*I know not what I was playing,
Or what I was dreaming then;
But I struck one chord of music,
Like the sound of a great Amen.*

*It flooded the crimson twilight,
Like the close of an angel's psalm,
And it lay on my fevered spirit
organ
With a touch of infinite calm.*

*It quieted pain and sorrow
Like love overcoming strife;
It seemed the harmonious echo
From our discordant life.*

*It linked all perplexéd meanings
Into one perfect peace,
And trembled its way into silence
As if it were loth to cease.*

*I have sought, but I seek it vainly,
That one lost chord divine,
Which came from the soul of the
And entered into mine.*

*It may be that death's bright angel
Will speak in that chord again,
It may be that only in heav'n
I shall hear that grand Amen.*

Who's Who at Bradleigh Avenue

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

Organist: Mr Richard Wade

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