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Silent Visitor



December 2020
&
January 2021

Who's Who at Bradleigh Avenue

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A less Christmassy Christmas

Early in November I saw an item on BBC Breakfast about families that had started celebrating Christmas. The supermarkets had also started early, presumably in an attempt to stretch out a boom sales period. Our politicians had also been very vocal trying to reassure us that things would be back to 'normal' in time for Christmas.

For me it just brought into even sharper focus the distance between the Christian festival and the secular mid-winter celebration. As Church we do seem to have drifted into being a religious add-on to Christmas; the supplier of an appropriate setting and music for the traditional communal singing and adoration of small children in dressing gowns with tea-towels on their heads.

Maybe acknowledging this will do us some good. Instead of being lost in the rosy glow of nostalgia we might concentrate on the central message of the festival. But what is the central message?

If we look to the Bible, far from simplifying our search it gets increasingly complicated. Paul's letters were the first to be written, and his key message is Christ crucified and resurrected. Mark starts with Jesus being around 30 being baptised. Matthew has the family already living in Bethlehem, Joseph being visited by an angel, foreign travellers visiting the child, and the family fleeing to Egypt as Herod slaughters the new-borns. Luke has Mary visited by an angel and includes her extended family in the tale. A census takes Mary and Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem, Jesus being 'laid in a manger' and shepherds visiting after a concert by the heavenly host. John poetically weaves Jesus into the Creation story. Instead of all this complexity the 'best bits' are reordered into the Nativity.

We also make trouble for ourselves when we say it's Jesus' birthday. We don't know on which day he was born, let alone what year. 25th December was set in the early 4th century, taking over from the winter solstice, Saturnalia, on the Roman calendar as the Empire adopted Christianity as the state religion. Most scholars assume a date of birth between 6 and 4 BC. (When the Gregorian calendar was adopted in 1582 their maths was a bit out.)

These biblical and historical details are not recent discoveries, and the only place you won't hear about them is in church.

The world knows all of this, and when we reach out to them with the Nativity or celebrating Jesus' birthday it just reinforces the stereotype of Christians being out of touch with reality.

In an attempt to remain relevant, it feels like we have colluded with society to fill our buildings at this time of year. But this year we are unable to do that, and maybe we can liberate ourselves from the tinsel, and celebrate the true message of Christmas?

I would like to suggest that the central message of Christmas is about celebrating that Jesus was born, not actually on the 25th or as Matthew and/or Luke tell it, but just that he was born. He lived, taught, changed lives, and had a massive impact on humanity. That is worth celebrating. So is seeking to emulate his example and trying to do the same. We celebrate Christmas because of who the man Jesus was. What he did. What he taught and showed us.

In a way the image of the baby Jesus, helpless in a manger, illustrates our removing the power of this message. Babies are dependent upon others for everything. They cannot survive without someone feeding, cleaning, clothing, protecting and keeping them warm. The image of Jesus as a baby puts us in control. We can coo and cuddle, and then hand him back as soon as anything demanding is required.

But if at Christmas we are faced with the full grown man telling us: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself." (Luke 10:27 NRSV) "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." (Mark 8:34 NRSV) Then the power is back where it should be.

Christmas is going to be very different this year, but maybe that can be an opportunity rather than just a disappointment. I'm not advocating, as one of our forebears Oliver Cromwell, for Christmas to be cancelled, but just for it to be a little less Christmassy.

Think about gifts that are more useful than unnecessary, making connections with others more than just spending time, enjoying the time more than feeling pressured. Celebrate that Jesus was born!

With every blessing, Rev'd David R. Coaker

Finance Report

I am pleased to report that during October, and so far in November, (I am writing this on 16th) I have not needed to sell any more investments in order to meet our outgoings.

Having said that, I need to find around £2,000 to cover the cost of replacing the fire doors nearest the bungalow. These doors are in a very poor condition, and have needed replacing for some time.

I understand the kitchen works are now complete. I am pleased that Little Roo's are now meeting regularly again and we have tenants for the bungalow.

Not much more to report, other than to thank all those who have kept their regular giving up to date by either cheques, or by bank transfer/standing orders. As I have said previously, I can now bank cheques more easily, so anyone who has not kept their giving up to date and would like to use a cheque, that would be most welcome.

Thanks again to those who have chosen to give via bank transfers and standing orders. Whilst an offertory plate will be available in the church when services resume after the lockdown, please note that in line with Covid guidelines, any donations should not be made in cash.

If anyone has any questions about the accounts or finances please contact me and I will do my best to answer.

Alan Beckley



News of the Family

It was with sadness that we learnt of the sudden death of our friend and church member, Irene Smith. Irene was a lovely lady who will be sorely missed.

Irene's funeral will be held at Chelmsford Crematorium, Writtle Road, Chelmsford CM1 3BL in the South Chapel at 12.30 pm on Thursday 3rd December. Numbers will be limited so please contact Rev'd David Coaker if you wish to attend – 07378 348191.

Advent Gifts & Gifts for Thurrock Women's Refuge

A Real Chocolate Advent calendar which includes an activity booklet, a Christmas story book, an Advent tree to make, are included in an Advent bag. The bags will be available to collect from the church porch during the week beginning Sunday 29th November. If you would like to collect a bag, just let Denise know on 07806 739959 or email densplayden@gmail.com.

There will also be located in the church porch a box to receive gifts for Thurrock Women's Refuge. The Refuge is always most grateful to receive new toys before Christmas. If you would like to make a cash donation for the Refuge, please put it in the post box located in the porch. The Refuge turn the cash into Asda vouchers to enable shopping.

If you would prefer to give a cheque, this should be made payable to **Changing Pathways Thurrock** and sent to the church or Elaine. Elaine hopes to ensure that gifts and money reach the Refuge in time to be distributed in plenty of time for Christmas. Do join in and spread a little bit of Christmas cheer.

Denise Beckley

Thank You

A big thank you to Phil and Rachel King and Roger and Ruth Hunwick for all their hard work that keeps the Church garden and grounds in good condition.

This work does not go unnoticed and although they do not ask for thanks, all the hard work they have put in this Summer and in the past has made a great deal of difference to the way in which the church gardens are enjoyed not only by the congregation but also by visitors and passers by. Thank you!

"Private Prayer"!

*Dear Lord, so far today I'm doing alright,
I have not gossiped, lost my temper, been greedy,
grumpy, nasty, selfish or self-indulgent,
I have not whined, cursed, or eaten any chocolate and I have not
charged anything on my credit card.*

*But I will be getting out of bed in a minute -
And I think then that I will really need your help!*

(Holy Cross C of E., Borehamwood)

Please continue to remember the **Food Bank** in these particularly busy and demanding days. The current requests are for :-

Instant Coffee Sponge Puddings Stuffing mix
Rectangular Christmas Cakes Christmas Puddings
Christmas Biscuits Savoury biscuits / nibbles
Bottles of non alcoholic Christmas drink/punch
Bottles of tomato sauce Gravy Granules

Cheques to **Thurrock Food Bank**
2 – 4 Chase Road, Corringham SS17 7QH

Sort Code: 30-18-34 A/C no: 22388060

Paypal and smartphone app are on their website.

A Comeuppance for me!

I was feeling so smug. The aging but not aged kettle bore such a build-up of lime scale that something had to be done. Lemon juice was the answer: no unpleasant chemicals, an environmentally safe option.

The kettle gleamed inside and out, and success was mine. That is until I filled it with water.



The leaky seal in the base (fortunately below the level of the electrical connection) had until then been cemented shut but was now delivering copious amounts of liquid to the work surface.

Smug no more, I unearthed a travel kettle and consigned my old friend to the Linford recycling centre.

Elaine Barcz

Christmas ideas



ActionAid

9-year-old Sumaiya from Bangladesh is one of many children around the world affected by the unseen impacts of Covid-19. Weakened by poverty and hunger, children like Sumaiya face a crisis without adequate food, access to

hygiene, or right to education. By sponsoring a child, you could help us reach more children like her and their communities.

www.actionaid.org.uk or call 01460 238000



Christian Blind Mission

If you are preparing to enjoy a Christmas dinner with loved ones, lay an extra place; why not share some festive cheer with families going hungry. For the price of a festive meal, you can provide a family in drought-hit

Ethiopia or Zimbabwe with chicken and seeds to feed themselves, not just at Christmas but for months to come.

www.givejoy.cbmuk.org.uk or call 01223 484700



Christian Aid

When you buy a virtual gift from Christian Aid Charity Gifts, you or your lucky recipient(s) don't get an actual goat or a pair of chickens.

What you do get for each gift is a physical card. Each card explains a bit more about the gift, and tells a story about someone – a real person – who benefited from a similar contribution.

<https://charity-gifts.christianaid.org.uk/> or call 020 7523 2225



Embrace the Middle East

Has a unique range of alternative gifts to bring a smile to friends and family, and to those in need of comfort in the Middle East. Alternative gifts supporting refugees include food parcels, school books, warm beds and kids' clothes.

Other options include care for babies – vitamins and medication for the malnourished in Gaza. Buying an alternative gift gives you free postage on all other purchases.

<https://shop.embraceme.org/> or call **01494 897950**



The Children's Society

We empower young people to make positive changes and rediscover their hope. They want a future they can look forward to and we're here to make sure they get it. Working alongside young people, their families and community, we will not rest until together, step-by-step, we've created a society built for all children.

www.childrenssociety.org.uk or call **0300 303 7000**

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Bible Society

Working in over 200 countries, Bible Society is a charity on a global mission to bring the Bible to life for every man, woman and child. We believe that when people engage with the Bible, lives can change – for good.

This Christmas choose your Charity Gift from a selection of 10 options, then select to send an email or a beautiful printed card to the recipient. Give the gift of the Bible this Christmas.

<https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/get-involved/christmas/> or call **01793 418222**

Christmas Messages 2020

	<p>Ruth and Roger Hunwick wish everyone a very Happy and Joyful Christmas and a Peaceful and Healthy 2021. (our charity is Water Aid)</p>
<p>Richard Wade and family send warmest Christmas greetings to all friends at the Church.</p> <p>(Meningitis Now in continuing memory of Andrew)</p>	<p>From Beryl Clarke: <i>I wish everyone at Grays URC a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year and look forward to seeing you all soon.</i> (St Luke's Hospice & Thurrock Food Bank)</p>
<p>From Robert & Margaret Datlen: <i>We would like to wish all our friends from Grays URC a very Happy Christmas whatever we are allowed to do!</i> <i>We pray everyone will stay safe and well for the New Year ahead.</i> (Water Aid, British Red Cross and Salvation Army)</p>	<p><i>We wish all a very happy, healthy Christmas and New Year.</i> Tony and Jean Olley (St Luke's Hospice)</p>
<p><i>We wish you all a Peaceful Christmas and a Happy Covid free New Year!</i> Inger and Alan Collier (Our Christmas Donation has gone to CRISIS)</p>	<p><i>We wish all our friends a very Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year,</i> With love Frances and David (Thurrock Food Bank)</p>
<p>SEASON'S GREETINGS to all from Isobel and Clive Beynon (Parkinson's UK)</p>	<p>Jill Keane & Colin Baker wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a happy healthy New Year.</p>

From Members and Friends of Grays URC

<p style="text-align: center;">Gina Nottage sends best Christmas wishes to all at Grays URC.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Pat and Bill Boag wish everyone at the Church a Happy Christmas and a Healthy and Happy New Year.</p>
<p>Maureen and Bryan Overland wish all readers of the Silent Visitor a very Happy Christmas and Peace in the year to come.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(Guide Dogs for the blind)</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Happy Christmas and New Year wishes to all at Grays URC.</i></p> <p>Janet and George Semain</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Smile-Train, Sight Savers & Water Aid)</p>
<p><i>We wish all at Grays URC a Very Happy Christmas. In these challenging times we are pleased to have the support and prayers of all our Brothers and Sisters in Christ.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>With our love and best wishes,</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Alf and Margaret Pryer</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Christmas Greetings from</i> Elaine and Berne: <i>Sending our love and best wishes to church family and friends, and hoping to be able to meet in person sooner rather than later.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">(We have sent 'Christmas card' contributions to a number of charities)</p>



A Review of 2020



Well can you believe we are into December? What a weird year it has been for everyone.

We were so lucky with the weather weren't we? At least we could enjoy our gardens if fortunate enough to have one. It has been reassuring to see how many people were willing to help others and still do.

Our "Close" had a socially distanced afternoon tea party to celebrate VE day. The younger neighbours decorated the street and it was lovely to be able to see each other. Now the Christmas lights are starting to appear so that we can celebrate it at whatever level we are able to do so.

When we were able to see the family in August we were shocked to see just how much our grandchildren had grown. It was good to hear what they had been doing during lockdown - from reorganising the campsite to long walks and canoeing to reorganising their gardens. Our eldest granddaughter has started at a Drama College in Edinburgh going in one day a week and remotely the rest. The middle two are back in school in bubbles and the youngest ones the same.

Bill and I have been keeping going with more vehicle repairs and painting a preservative on a long fence. I have been gardening, knitting, sewing and cooking. We have been going for walks at Laindon woods and Coalhouse Fort and Purfleet nature reserve. It is great to get out now I am allowed to.

We have been in touch with friends from way back, catching up with how they are keeping and what they have been doing.

At a hospital appointment I met someone I had worked with ages ago and it seems that after her Bank work she studied history at university going on to lecture on the subject. She loves looking into the social side of it and she asked if she could look into my family tree. It is fascinating to see what she has already found as my paternal grandfather died when my Dad was young so I knew little of him and she is still investigating.

We hope you are all staying safe and well.
Happy Christmas to you all
with love from Pat and Bill Boag.

ECO Church

Developed by the charity A Rocha UK, Eco-church is an award scheme for churches in England and Wales who want to demonstrate that they care for God's Earth. Churches complete a unique online survey about how your church operates in different areas of its life and work. Your answers will collect points towards an Eco Church award.

The Survey takes you through five areas of church life:

- Worship and Training
- Building
- Land Management
- Community and Global Engagement
- Lifestyle

There are free Eco Church resources which will give lots of support and advice about how to make the changes your church needs to become an Eco-Church. The award has three levels – Bronze, Silver and Gold – and you will receive a certificate and (optional) plaque from A Rocha UK. The survey takes about 20 minutes to fill in but the amount of work your church does to qualify for an award and the time that takes is up to you! Taking part in Eco Church is absolutely free!

Visit the Eco-Church Website here:

<https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk>

Please do not hesitate to contact the URC Eastern Synod Green Advocate who is happy to provide further information or support your church may need.

Eco Tips

Avoid using single use disposable masks, gloves and wipes.

Disposable masks, gloves and wipes contain plastics which pollute water and harm wildlife who eat them or become entangled in them. Some of these plastics can't be recycled, and waste centres can't separate the components, so most throwaway plastic masks put in household waste will end up in landfill or incinerators; there has also been a considerable increase in the numbers left as litter in streets.

Moreover, disposable gloves do not provide any benefit in preventing the spread of the virus, and could actually spread it more. It is better to just wash your hands and don't touch your

face. Reusable fabric masks are perfectly adequate for general use and there are eco-friendly masks available made from second hand or recycled material or alternatively you could make your own.

When washing your reusable mask – and you should do so after every use – it is ok to use a lower temperature to save on energy as it is the use of detergent which is important (there are also environmentally friendly detergents available).

Continue to use video conferencing. It is hard to compare the value in meeting in person to meeting over the internet; the joy of being able to see someone in person, being able to read each other's body language and even at some point sharing a handshake or a hug. For those who have been connecting with churches, workplaces, family and friends digitally, you might like to know that the current estimate of Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) emitted is 1-6 grams per hour you spend on video calls. 5km (perhaps a return journey to church for some) in a petrol car emits on average 640 grams. That puts video conferencing at about 100 times more efficient. So, perhaps when we meet in person, are there times when a video call would be better to protect God's Creation?

Greening your home this Autumn. With 40% of UK emissions coming from households, our homes have an important part to play in meeting the UK's 2030 emissions reduction targets. As temperatures drop in an increasingly warming world, you can help to tackle climate change and reduce your heating bill by testing how draughty or leaky your home is. Find the gaps that let the cold air in and warm air out (think keyholes, letterboxes, gaps around the edges or bottoms of windows and doors, loft hatches, floorboards, etc.)

Homes are really important and God calls us to play our part in giving nature a home too. Is your garden lacking a bird feeder ahead of the long winter months when it is particularly hard for wildlife to source food? Could your balcony or windowsill do with some plant life? How about installing a bird box or hedgehog highway? (Though in the latter case, do make sure the neighbours are happy for you to make small tunnel /hole in your shared fence!)

Eat locally and seasonally. During lockdown, particularly initially with fears of food shortages, it was very tempting to buy whatever was available during our limited supermarket shops. But when restrictions ease, it's more important than ever to support local

initiatives and growers. Can you consider what locally grown foods you can add (back) to your diet/shopping list? It's worth remembering that produce grown locally is picked at the peak of its ripeness (versus being harvested too early in order to be shipped and distributed to your local supermarket). Produce at 'peak ripeness' will be full of flavour and taste better than the produce that has been imported and travelled thousands of miles. By buying locally grown food, you are helping to maintain green and/or open space in your community and invest into the local economy. Taste for yourself the benefits of seasonal and local food!

Reducing waste at Christmas. Plan your festive gifts well – for your pocket and for the planet! Get creative with homemade crafts or food or invest in something that helps someone else enjoy nature. If you're really trying to cut back from shop bought stuff, why not offer to do something nice for someone? Going further – agree to a 'No Unnecessary Presents Pact' or send your Christmas cards online rather than by post or have a communal church card. More waste ends up in landfill over Christmas than during the rest of the year, so why not cut down on food or decorations or try buying recycled/recyclable wrapping paper or crackers.

From the Faith in Action Committee of the Eastern Synod

Exhibition for Lockdown

During lockdown Denise was busy putting together an exhibition in the worship space, of pictures, paintings, poems and prayers to encourage people visiting the church to spend time looking and thinking about what is on show

Denise has also produced a leaflet, which can be found in the Church, to help anyone who wishes to spend some time quietly to meditate, think and pray.

More on Arthur Sullivan

Richard Wade writes:-

As a long-standing Sullivan enthusiast, I was pleasantly surprised to find George's article in November *Silent Visitor* on the composer and his *Lost Chord*. I had overlooked the fact that 22nd November 2020 is, indeed, the 120th Anniversary of Arthur Sullivan's death, exactly two months before that of Queen Victoria.

I hope that readers will excuse the rather personal bias in my own article.

My own first encounters with ASS occurred, to quote HMS Pinafore, "in childhood's happy hour", when a number of Sullivan hymn tunes were regularly sung in church and at school, and I found that I could play *St Gertrude* ("Onward, Christian Soldiers") by ear on the piano and accompany my grandfather as he sang, with passion,

*Onward, Old Age Pensioners.
Fighting for your rights*

- which, incidentally, demonstrates that such a stirring tune can be useful in more than one context.

(Ian Bradley, in his book *Lost Chords and Christian Soldiers*, quotes a number of alternative sets of words.)

Sullivan was also, of course, composer of the fourteen Gilbert and Sullivan operas (or operettas), and, at the age of twelve, I saw my first one: a school production of *The Mikado*. I was immediately hooked and developed, amongst other musical interests, a (so far) lifelong attachment to G & S.

Years later, in the early 1990s, and in need of a research topic for my M.Mus degree, I embarked on a study of Sullivan's choral works, these including his cantata *The Golden Legend* and his oratorio *The Light of the World*, a 19th Century alternative to Handel's *Messiah*, which has recently (2018) had its first professional recording.

The research included, amongst other things, examining autograph scores, and I quickly discovered that the Royal Academy of Music Library in London held, not only the manuscripts of the Gilbert and Sullivan cantata *The Martyr of Antioch* and a wonderful cupboard, in which the late, great Arthur

Jacobs (whom I once met) had left souvenirs of his Sullivan research, but also the manuscript full score of *The Mikado*, whilst *The Yeoman of the Guard* was in the Royal College of Music Library.

At this point I was not supposed to be studying the operettas, but could not resist taking a look, and was, frankly quite thrilled to have these pages of much-loved music opening in front of me in Sullivan's own ink and handwriting.

I was not at all sure that I would ever have the privilege of conducting stage productions of the operettas, though, in thirteen years as Musical Director of Thurrock Choral Society, I had occasionally programmed concert performances of G & S excerpts. An unexpected break came with Thurrock Operatic Society (TOPS), and the second production which I musically directed for them was Gilbert and Sullivan's *Ruddigore*, at the Thameside Theatre in 2001, since when I have been involved with various amateur societies in productions of most of the operettas, either as conductor or as pianist, or both. Sadly, these shows are no longer as popular as they were even a few years ago. Personally, I would be up for more amateur productions – though it has been good to see a rise in professional ones.

In recent years I have greatly enjoyed attending the annual International Gilbert and Sullivan Festival, held mostly in Harrogate (though not, of course, this year), and in 2018 was privileged to have a short article published by the Festival in a book entitled *The Magic of Gilbert and Sullivan* – which brings me back to George and *The Lost Chord*. As George remarks, this 1877 song was composed in memory of Sullivan's brother Fred. Though it is not, strictly speaking, a hymn, it clearly has spiritual implications, and has been sung in at least one of the Gilbert and Sullivan services in Harrogate, with the earlier verses allocated to a soloist and the congregation invited to join in the last verse.

George mentions the fact that Sullivan was, in his earlier career, a church organist: he served at two London churches, and, for a time, at the Royal Opera House, where organ playing was occasionally required for some operatic scenes. He wrote a number of church pieces, including a large-scale orchestral accompanied setting of the Te Deum ("We praise Thee, O God") for a Thanksgiving Service at St Paul's Cathedral in 1872, following the recovery of the Prince of Wales from Typhoid, and a rather less elaborate setting, incorporating the tune *St Gertrude*, at

the end of the Boer War, which was not performed until after his death.

However, he seems not to have composed any original organ works – which has not deterred a Harrogate organist from adapting choruses from *The Pirates of Penzance* and *Iolanthe* as concluding voluntaries. Personally, I have always thought the Overture to *The Yeoman of the Guard* (one of the few Gilbert and Sullivan Overtures which Sullivan actually composed) would work well on the organ – though I have never tried it.

Sullivan became well-known as a conductor, and not only of his own music, though he always tended to conduct the first performances of his works, including the operettas.

And the hymns?

George mentions the 1902 Novello publication of 56 hymns. In his frank and ground-breaking 1984 biography, Arthur Jacobs cites no fewer than 70 hymns rising to 71 in the 2nd edition. Of these, there appear to be 10 in *Congregational Praise* and its supplement, 3 in *Rejoice and Sing*, of which two are adaptations, and 7 in *Hymns of Glory Songs of Praise*, of which, again, two are adaptations.

One very familiar Sullivan hymn is *Noel*, his adaptation of an English folk song for the Christmas carol "*It came upon the midnight clear*".

Both *Congregational Praise* and *Rejoice and Sing* have Samuel ("Hushed was the evening hymn") whilst both *Congregational Praise* and *Hymns of Glory Songs of Praise* have "Onward Christian Soldiers" – so we can sing it, if we wish to – and *Congregational Praise* also has "Forward be our watchword" to the same tune, *St Gertrude*.

The story of "Onward Christian Soldiers" is interesting. The words were originally written by Rev'd Sabine Baring-Gould, an Anglican clergyman, reportedly, "in about 15 minutes" in 1865, for a Whitsuntide procession of children to a church in Yorkshire. They were first sung to a tune from a Haydn symphony, and the hymn, though published, did not become well-known. Then in 1871, having been commissioned to compose a new setting, and whilst staying at a friend's country house, Sullivan penned *St. Gertrude*, naming it after his host's wife, and, propelled by Sullivan's tune, Baring-Gould's words took off, one might say, like a rocket. The author himself suggested and allowed some changes, which seem

not to have been retained in the "standard" version. His words have not pleased everyone. When I was first at university I had a Jewish friend who seemed to regard the hymn almost as an incitement to Western military aggression, perhaps against Israel. Hers was, of course, an extreme reaction, a misunderstanding – after all, the hymn does say "Marching as to war", not "to war" and "like a mighty army", not "in a mighty army" – but, nevertheless, many people are, I think, understandably uncomfortable with the military imagery

To my mind another very stirring Sullivan tune is *Lux Eoi*, used for "Alleluia! Alleluia! Hearts to heaven and voices raise" (though it was originally composed for a different hymn). Strictly speaking, this is an Easter hymn, but it can be sung at any time of the year and was in Harrogate in the summer of 2018. It is in *Hymns of Glory Songs of Praise* – and, yes, I am dropping a hint!

There is so much more to be said about Sullivan, but perhaps, an appropriate observation on which to end is that, despite his health problems, he seems to have retained, in general, a remarkably sunny disposition.

Richard Wade

Future Church Services

Subject to Government Covid restrictions and guidance it is intended to hold Church services once a month.

The following dates have been set for All Age Services:-

Sunday 20th December at 10.15 a.m
Sunday 19th January at 10.15 a.m

There will also be Young Families Services on:-

Sunday 6th December at 9.30 a.m.
Sunday 3rd January at 9.30 a.m.

Tribute to Doreen Thomas at Her Funeral Service Elder Emeritus of our Church

We have missed Doreen here in Church over the past few years, and were sad that she was incapacitated by her stroke. Jungle drums in the church family allowed us to locate her within 24 hours, and we continued to visit until the last few strange months of course. We must not forget the loyal support she had from Debbie who is here today.

Over many years, Doreen's greeting, whether on the phone or in person, was consistently cheerful and positive. She always put on a brave face, and struggled so quietly with the shoulder damage which left her unable to drive. She was surprised and pleased to be told, at the medical insurance interview, that she was amazingly stoical. She refused offers for shopping at that time: she was perfectly able, she said, to order online from Sainsbury's. Other than the inability to interact with her much loved rescue dog, Honey, the only regret she expressed during her time in bed, enjoying the garden flowers and the joyful squirrels, was that she couldn't get to church. A few communion services at least were held at her bedside. So that chair at the end of the back row on my right has remained empty.

Doreen would have known our stain-glassed window for more years than all of us. It was rescued from the war damaged Congregational Church building in Argent Street, which she attended in her youth. She always took an active part in church life, both in worship and inviting members of the church family, and others, to summer coffee evenings and garden tours.

She had very definite views of how church services should be, the more traditional the better. She loved a good sermon (and was a fan of George Semain, a lay preacher), but was prepared to go with the flow. One Christmas morning with a lively but sparse congregation, we all moved to the front, with the children's activity table in the middle, and she enthused about the day for some time. We know she was happy to be involved.

She did love her traditional hymns, and of course she sang in the church choir for many years. We're so sorry we can't sing for her today. (I'll come back to her music). Having left behind a key administrative role when employed at Thurrock Council's large

Leisure Complex, Doreen became Church Secretary in 1989. I must quote here from a history of the church:-

Doreen Thomas valiantly stepped forward and shouldered the task of Church Secretary which she did so well for almost 6 years. She did an excellent job during that period, not forgetting the extra work she had thrown on her shoulders during the interregnum.

Later, she was to take on the invoicing for our hirers. She had formidable knowledge of the rules, and continued in that role until her admission to hospital. She always said that it mattered so much to be of service, and rejoiced in her continued connection. You may imagine that I was regularly grilled, in the best possible way, when I visited her, being the Church Secretary of the day, and also dealing with our hirers.

I can add that the church family connection came into play when Doreen decided to take the plunge (pun intended) for her first solo cruise experience. She almost cancelled, but was boosted by another church member (Irene) who accompanied her, both of them being safely delivered to the intimidatingly large liner by someone else from the church family (Stanley). And the rest, as you will know, is history. She loved her cruises.

Church family, hirers, music, all interlinked. The Thurrock Operatic Society has rehearsed on our premises for decades. Doreen sang with them and had left before 1999, but continued to be very protective of them. She served on the Thurrock Arts Council, of which her beloved Fred had been chair, and sang in the Thurrock Choral Society in the 1960s. And when she was with another dramatic choral group, CDOT, she was proud and happy that Fred could be there for a reportedly memorable performance as Mrs Higgins in 'My Fair Lady', elegantly handling the period costumes.

Ah, Doreen so enjoyed her clothes, and appreciated other people's too. I hope you'll forgive me for mentioning her lush and beautiful hair, which her hairdressers really enjoyed, producing multiple styles on a weekly basis. She had a lovely relationship with the salon, while she was still driving, as she could leave the car at the door for someone else to park for her. They have continued for over four years to ask after this kind, observant, determined and dedicated lady.

Elaine Barcz (read at Doreen's funeral)

GREYFRIARS BOBBY (1855 – 1872)



During a holiday in Scotland some time ago (remember holidays?), Janet and I were visiting the city of Edinburgh where we came upon a group of people standing round a small memorial. It was a statue and had been declared a category 'A' Listed Building, the smallest listed building in Edinburgh. It portrayed a small dog, a Skye Terrier.

He once belonged to John Gray who, in 1850, with his wife and son, arrived in Edinburgh hoping to find work as a gardener. Such work was difficult to find so, in order to avoid the workhouse, he took a job with the Edinburgh Police Force as a night watchman. He took on a partner, a diminutive Skye Terrier called Bobby, as a watchdog. They soon became a familiar sight patrolling the Streets of Edinburgh together in all weathers.

John unfortunately contracted tuberculosis and although he received treatment by the police surgeon, he died in February 1858. He was buried in Greyfriars Kirkyard in Edinburgh Old Town. His cortege was followed by Bobby who thereafter refused to leave his master's grave, an act which touched the hearts of local residents who fed him. The Kirkyard keeper, on many occasions, tried his best to evict Bobby but to no avail. In the end he gave up and provided Bobby with a shelter at the side of John Gray's grave. His fame spread throughout Edinburgh.

The city authority, in 1867, passed a new bye-law requiring all dogs in the city to be licensed or they would be destroyed. By then Bobby had become so well known and respected that the Lord Provost of the city himself decided to pay for a license for Bobby, thus saving him from an untimely end. He also presented him with an inscribed collar which now lies in the Museum of Edinburgh.

For fourteen years after his master's death, this little dog faithfully kept a constant watch over his master's grave until his own death in 1872. So moved was she by Bobby's story that the President of the Ladies Committee of the RSPCA, Baroness Burdett-Coutts, with the permission of the City Council, arranged to have erected a granite fountain with a statue of Bobby on the top. It stands today opposite the entrance to Greyfriars Kirkyard. He also has his own headstone which reads, "Greyfriars Bobby – died 14th January

1872 – aged 16 years – Let his loyalty and devotion be a lesson to us all."

In religious terms, has that little dog a message for us?

George Semain.



Some Quiz Questions from Alf Pryer

1. In golf, what is the traditional name for the number 3 wood?
2. Who wrote 'The Female Eunuch'?
3. How many times did Peter deny Christ?
4. Where in Scotland would you find the principal winter sports centre in Great Britain?
5. Which musical concerns the life of an Argentinean dictator's wife?
6. Lee Marvin's hit single in 1970 was the theme tune to which popular film?
7. How many triple score squares are there on a Scrabble board?
8. Which sport would you be playing when competing in the Davis Cup?
9. Who popularised the Christmas tree in England in the 19th Century.
10. Which actor said "Italy is full of actors and it's the bad ones who go on the stage"?
11. What is the name given to the cricketers' year book, where all the laws and scores are reported?
12. Who wrote Kidnapped? *(Answers in the Feb 21 SV)*



A picture for the young at heart to colour!