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Silent Visitor

Alleluia
He is
Risen

Easter 2021

Who's Who at Bradleigh Avenue

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Secretary: Mr Ben Marshall Mobile No: 078141 06604
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Treasurer: Mr Alan Beckley

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

Organist: Mr Richard Wade

Facilities Manager: Mrs Charlotte Webb
& Mobile No: 0784 3559011
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Silent Visitor: Mrs Janet Semain 01375 373532
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Leaders of the Uniformed Organisations:

Group Scout Leader: Mr Tim Webb
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Guide Leader: Miss Gill Davison
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Easter – renewed life!

The light at the end of the tunnel has been switched on! To stretch the metaphor, the tunnel doesn't have the smoothest floor and occasionally the view is obstructed, but the glimmer of light is there.

It has been a hard year. Covid will leave scars on individual lives and our communal lives, and beyond the illness itself the pressures of bereavements, lockdowns, stress and fear will take time for us to recover from. The easing of restrictions may bring for many a rush of excitement, but along with that will be a wave of relief. Planning foreign trips and family gatherings may be highlights but the simple pleasures, like grabbing a drink and chatting to a friend, could lift our spirits even more. A weight has hung over all of us, and it will be good to simply feel it not being there. And for many, the exhaustion of bearing that weight may well not hit us fully until it is lifted.

In the months ahead we are in dire need of Sabbath, to experience God's shalom, God's peace, to help us renew ourselves spiritually, mentally, socially and physically, but also in our relationships with other people. Relationships have been strained by lack of contact, the limitations of video connections, and the collisions of frayed or dampened nerves. We need a time of deep and experienced breathing to centre ourselves, to recognise each other anew, and to step forward into a renewed way of being.

Easter holds within it the symbol of resurrection. The resurrection experiences of Jesus' first followers drew them out from despair and fear to share his message with joy and courage. Our Good Friday has been long, but the dawn of Easter day is brushing the horizon.

I pray that in our collective excitement we will not rush headlong back to 'normal', or potentially a brief extreme of 'normal', and forget, as the heavy weight of the pandemic is lifted, the weights that were already present. 'Normal' was not perfect, and in the ongoing rancour concerning the EU, racism, sexism and the threats of nuclear proliferation and climate change, there is much room for 'normal' to be improved.

So within our celebrations of Easter, and the easing of restrictions, may we keep the message of Jesus ever before us.

With every blessing, Rev'd David R. Coaker

Re-opening in light of the Roadmap

The tiers have gone and steps have appeared! Which led to some interpretation being required to decide where the elders' previous stance fitted into the government's roadmap.

We had decided that we would not re-open for in-person worship unless we were under Tier 3, or lower, restrictions. The view was taken that the second part of Step 1, was roughly equivalent to this.

So, on Easter Sunday, the 4th April, the church building will be open for worship. This will continue the pattern we followed as restrictions relaxed last year and until Step 4, no earlier than the 21st June, in-person worship will be socially-distanced.

Prior to this there will be informal Zoom worship on the 21st March, and more formal Zoom worship on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. The texts for these two services will be circulated for those unable to Zoom so that they can join us in spirit. (Zoom will be our backup for all planned service dates if restrictions are increased.)

Following this we will follow our previous plan when we were under restrictions to have socially-distanced worship for young families on the first Sunday and then for everybody on the third Sunday. This will be reviewed each month going forward.

Sharing in communion together is possible with additional care and risk, and the elders are not inclined to set a date for our first in-person communion as yet. This will also be reviewed each month.

The Scouts and Guides may start to meet outdoors in the coming months and possibly inside in the run up to the summer holidays. This will be a pressure on the leaders and participants which may reduce when they come back in Sept and get back into a routine.

Therefore, we are looking to Remembrance as the first parade and will ask them how involved they'd want to be in any Christmas one.

We do need a church meeting to confirm elders' meeting decisions in their absence, elect elders, and to formalise ACM's for 2020 and 2021. Though necessary, it is unlikely to be any members' top priority. There is also the opportunity for us to embrace the flexibility that restarting the non-socially-distanced life of Grays URC can give us, by not immediately falling back into past patterns and practices.

We have an opportunity to have conversations about what are the essentials of our life together, what our priorities should be, how we can organise ourselves going forwards, and to experience different patterns and ways of worship. We have struggled to recruit elders and office holders, so we need to explore how we can meet both the formal requirements and the practical functions. We know that our Sundays are beloved to some but irrelevant to many, so how can we weave together a pattern that feeds the devoted and attracts others?

Alongside Sunday worship and how we organize ourselves there is also the opportunity to reflect on other church activities and how best to creatively and effectively restart them. Some activities could restart at Step 3, no earlier than the 17th May, but Step 4, no earlier than the 21st June, would be the more likely timing.

One conversation that had to be suspended last year was about engaging further with the Alzheimer's Society. We are seeking to rearrange Dementia Friend's training, and the elders' wished to explore the possibility of setting up a Memory Café and Singing for the Brain. A Memory Café offers an informal and welcoming space to people seeking particular support, but also provides for the general needs we all have for refreshment, conversation, activity and friendship. Singing for the Brain brings people affected by dementia together to sing a variety of songs they know and love, in a fun and friendly environment. Could we explore creating a day a week where we offered refreshments throughout and at different times offered previous and new activities? For instance, people could just drop in for a drink or to seek out dementia support. Others could pop along at set times for lunch, to sing, for gentle exercise, to play bowls, to play board games, to knit, make crafts, or something else. In this way we could concentrate our efforts, and also mutually support previously stand-a-lone activities.

It would be regrettable that if in our desire to get back to 'normal' we missed the opportunities to refresh and renew our life together.

Lateral Flow Testing Site

Nothing further to report.

Socially-Distanced Worship

Last October in SV we attempted to give ourselves an idea of what Sunday worship would entail under restrictions. We repeat it here, in an adapted form, as a reminder.

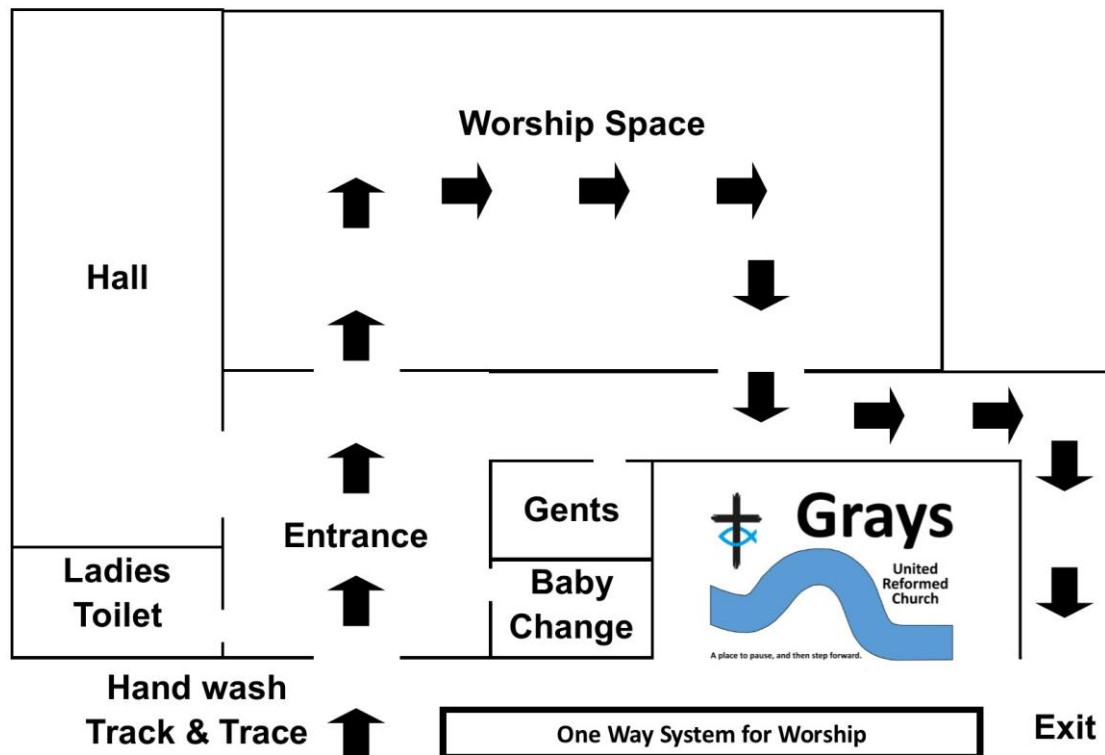
Our worship space looks very different and the content will be adapted to suit the restrictions. It will be a very different experience of coming to church, and you are asked to give prayerful consideration for how you will choose to respond to it.



We will be wearing masks, sitting and moving around observing social distancing. The windows will be open for ventilation, so wrap up warm. We will not be giving out hymn books or Bibles. (So please bring your own.) We will be listening to or reading the words of hymns, but not singing. We will be able to talk to each other, but from a distance and maybe needing to speak a little louder. We will not be sharing in refreshments together afterwards. We will not be passing around the offertory bags, but the plate will be at the back of the

worship space. We will be praying, listening for God's Word, and worshipping together.

Our gathering will be stewarded and you'll be asked to follow a one-way system. (So remember to go to the toilet when you arrive!)



We will continue to learn as we go. We may well adapt how we organise coming together and the content of it, as we discover what works, what could be better, and what didn't work at all. But of course this may well be limited as we comply with the necessary restrictions to safeguard each other's health and wellbeing.

It will be very different, but the underlying reasons for doing it remain the same. We gather together to share in purposefully drawing closer to God; to engage with insights from the Bible, the history of the Church, the world around us, and each other. Opening ourselves up to the Spirit moving within, around and beyond us. To open up questions, explore answers, to challenge our preconceptions, and advocate, accompany and act for the living out of the way of Christ.

You are warmly encouraged to focus on the ways it will be the same rather than on the differences from what went before. None of us has been through this before and we are relying upon each other to see us through. Please place all of this before God in prayer.

Financial Update March 2021

I have had to withdraw a further £5,000 from the sale of our investment units, making the total sold in the last 12 months £30,000. This is obviously unsustainable long term.

In addition I have received correspondence from CCLA investments explaining how the current low interest rates may result in 'negative yield environment'. Put simply this means that the current interest rates are now so low, almost non-existent in fact, that this could well have a detrimental effect on the interest received from investments in the near future.

The Church, Annexe, Bungalow and Manse insurance for 2021/22 has now been paid. I have completed (at last!) the changes to the bank and CCLA accounts, and submitted the insurance claim for loss of hirer's income due to the Covid pandemic.

Together with Brookes Accounts Services, we are well on the way to completing the year end accounts. My next job is to complete and submit the figures for our M & M (Ministry and Mission) contribution for 2022.

Looking forward, let's hope that the easing down of lockdown restrictions will, in turn, result in an increase in hirers' income. I shall keep in contact with Charlotte to find out the situation regarding the hirers.

Usual thanks to all of those who continue with their regular giving contributions, whether by cheque or via bank transfers/standing orders. I have said it before and will say it again, you are helping to keep the church finances afloat.

Thanks to Elaine and Charlotte for their help.

If anyone has a question or query regarding finances please let me know and I will do my best to answer.

Alan Beckley

Financial Update – Stop Press!

I have now received a response from the loss adjusters regarding my recent claim for loss of hirers' income.

They suggest an interim payment to cover the period from March to December 2020 of £7,500.

Having studied the calculations I am satisfied that it is a fair offer and have now agreed the figure. The money should be paid into our bank account shortly.

A separate claim for the period January 2021 until the reopening of our premises will be made in due course.

The 2020 accounts have now been audited and will be presented to Church Meeting in due course.

Thanks to the District Scout Treasurer, Steve Morgan, for once again carrying out the audit.

Alan Beckley



Colin Baker

Sadly, last month, we heard of the death of Colin. Due to family circumstances, as Ruth lives in Germany, Ruth and Gavin made a decision that Colin's committal would be held in Ruth's absence.

Colin's funeral was held on Friday 19 March with a very small number of close mourners.

We look forward to a time when we can have a celebratory memorial service for those dear friends and members who have departed company with us during the past year.

In the meantime we send our love and prayers to Ruth and Gavin and to all those who loved Colin. Thank you Colin for your friendship and service to Grays Congregational and URC Church.

Dementia Training Session



The previous dementia training session was postponed and has been re-arranged for Wednesday, 21st April (via Zoom) from

10.30am – 12 noon. This will include a 10 minute comfort break.

As you will have seen from Dave's article, it is intended that the Church hosts Dementia Friendly sessions but to do this it is important that we know a bit more about dementia and how the sessions work.

Please try and make time to attend this training session and learn more about Dementia Friendly and Singing for the Brain.



Thurrock Food-bank Update

Manager Peter Newall sends his thanks to all who have continued to support the food-bank over the past 12 months. Support of any kind has been greatly appreciated by all involved.

Recent shortages:-

Custard, Sponge Puddings, Long Life Milk and Mashed Potato.

Peter sent Pope Francis' words of encouragement for Lent:-

*Fast from hurting words and say kind words.
Fast from sadness and be filled with gratitude.
Fast from anger and be filled with patience.
Fast from pessimism and be filled with hope.
Fast from worries and trust in God.
Fast from complaints and contemplate simplicity.
Fast from pressures and be prayerful.
Fast from bitterness and fill your heart with joy.
Fast from selfishness and be compassionate to others.
Fast from grudges and be reconciled.
Fast from words and be silent so you can listen.*

Elaine Barcz

Monopoly

The name Henry George is hardly a household name today but at one time in the late 1800s his was probably the most well known name in America as an influential economist and politician. He sparked a number of reform movements and inspired an economic philosophy called 'Georgism'. Its central theme was that the economic value derived from land should belong equally to all members of society. He was sometimes accused of being a Marxist but he did not agree with Marxism. He did not claim that all land should belong to the people but only that the values derived from that land should be shared. His views on this inspired a number of prominent Protestant Christians.

His economics were not easy for people to understand so that a game designer, a lady by the name of Elizabeth Magie, an outspoken activist for feminine rights but also a keen Georgist, introduced a game to help people to understand the principles of Georgism. She called it 'The Landlords Game' which she patented. She wanted to demonstrate the economic ill effects of land monopolism and how the use of a land value tax would remedy them.

In 1932, one Charles Darrow was introduced to the game and, despite Elizabeth's patent, published it as a board game. He now called it 'Monopoly'. It was later bought from him by Parker Brothers who had to recognise Elizabeth's patent rights. Parkers bought those rights for the paltry sum of \$500. They marketed it in 1935. The names of the squares they used represented streets of Atlantic City, New Jersey. Since then it has become one of the most popular games ever and has had an interesting history.

When, in 1941, the game was being published by John Waddington Ltd. under licence to produce it outside the United States, the British Intelligence Services, in association with Waddingtons, created a special edition for World War II prisoners of war held by the Nazis. Hidden inside these games were maps and compasses, real money and other objects useful for escaping prisoners. They were distributed by fake charity organisations. In the meantime Parker Brothers had become owned by Hasbro.

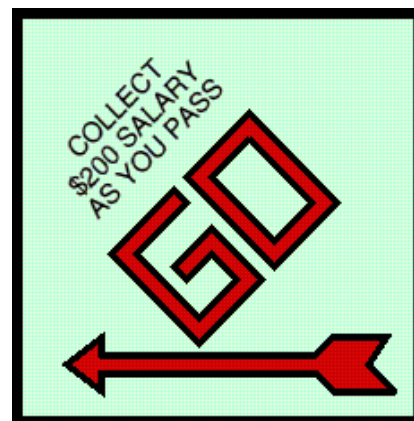
Hasbro saw the benefits of issuing many variations of the game giving rise to over a hundred other licensees producing their own variations. Hasbro then invited internet users to become involved.

The British version of the game consisted of forty spaces containing 28 properties, 22 streets in eight colour groups, four railroads, two utilities, three chance spaces, three community chest spaces, a luxury tax and income tax spaces and four corner squares: GO, In jail/just visiting, free parking and go to jail. Hasbro have several times updated the American version. In the UK, The Angel Islington was not a street like others. It was a building and the name of a road intersection. It had been a coaching inn on the Great North Road, later a Lyons Tea Room and after that a Co-operative bank. In 2003 this was recognised as where the design of the game had been discussed and a plaque was placed there.

Over the years many countries have introduced their own versions of the game. Henry George would have been very impressed especially if he knew that national championships had been introduced. There have also been World Championships. In 2009, forty one players competed for the title of Monopoly World Champion with a cash prize of \$20,580. The most recent took place in Macau in 2015. A world championship had been planned for 2021 but Hasbro has cancelled it because of the Coronavirus pandemic. The United Kingdom has won the world championship once, by Jason Bunn, in 1985.

The most expensive set of the game ever produced, as certified by the Guinness Book of Records, was worth \$2,000,000, made of 23 carat gold with rubies and sapphires above the chimneys on houses and hotels. It was to honour the game's 50th anniversary and is now held in the Smithsonian Institution. By comparison, our version, a gift to Janet from her parents in the early 1950s is now looking a little bit tired but when played by friends or family is still capable of providing an hour or two of great fun. Fancy a game?

George Semain



A Couple of Quizzes!



Easter Trivia Quiz:

1. At the last supper, what did Jesus liken to his body?
2. Easter Island belongs to which South American country?
3. How was Jesus fastened to the cross?
4. Jesus prophesized that Peter would deny Him how many times?
5. The "Easter Parade" an American cultural event consisting of a festive strolling procession on Easter Sunday is characterised by what item of clothing worn by women?
6. Which job did Zacchaeus hold in the Bible?
7. When the soldiers came for Jesus, what wound did Peter inflict on the servant of the high priest?
8. Who wrote the popular Easter Hymn "Christ the Lord is Risen Today?"

Easter Quiz for the "youngish" readers: Solve these anagrams:

1. The Rump
2. Nubby Gums
3. Bribe Patter
4. Okay Cherub
5. Hitter with Babe
6. Brat Briber
7. Teeny Sunbather
8. Riot Grabber
9. Very Ha
10. Heath Charmer

(Answers next month)

Alf Pryer

Living with a Pandemic

As we know this is not the first experience this country has had of living with a pandemic, but it is in my lifetime and maybe yours too!

Just over a year ago this country went into lockdown. We, however, started our lockdown a week before the Prime Minister's announcement. This made me quite peeved as I kept feeling I could have had an extra week of still feeling "free". That was just a silly thought as the wretched Covid virus was already wreaking havoc across the world and getting to grips here.

The last service we attended at Church was on the 15 March the day after we held a mini market to raise some funds for the kitchen project. Nerves were being felt as the number of cases were rising and we all took extra precautions such as not breathing on each other, using hand sanitizer and wearing gloves whilst handling money, etc. All was well with those who braved the event but the following week churches closed their doors.

What a time it was, trying to get delivery slots at supermarkets or join the queues – some products were unavailable like flour and toilet rolls (good old panic buying) – we didn't realise that toilet rolls would become such a demanding commodity!

Holidays for most of us were not going to happen – some of us haven't seen the proper seaside for over a year, but have happily made do with walks along the river at Purfleet or other areas in the Borough. It's been a good substitute!

Then there were the surprises or should it be shocks – finding you have a health problem (not Covid) and are admitted to hospital as an emergency and not seeing your home again for nearly five weeks (nasty!) – however, the NHS was and is extremely good and has certainly proved itself!

As we know, Church has not been able to open very much between the first and second lockdown but I feel sure we are all looking forward to resuming our time together. We are lucky to have the space in our church to ensure that distancing isn't a problem. The gradual decline of deaths and cases of Covid and the increase in the number of people being vaccinated should surely ensure that this is now not too far away.

Janet

Commitment for Life

Life-giving Faith | Defiant Hope | Generous Love

Moving Stories

Responding to the crisis in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories

The Palestinians' COVID-19 vaccination plan faces a £26 million funding shortfall, according to the World Bank.

Israel leads the world in its vaccine programme. The World Bank suggests that Israel should consider donating its surplus doses to accelerate the vaccine roll-out in the West Bank and Gaza.

The Palestinian Authority (PA) has a plan to cover 20% of its population through the COVAX vaccine-sharing programme, designed to aid the poorest nations. The PA is attempting to procure additional vaccines to achieve 60% coverage.

Cost estimates put the figure at about £50 million to cover 60 percent of the population. Currently, there is a shortfall of around gap \$£26 million. The World Bank has called for additional donor help.

The Palestinians began vaccinations in February, having received a small donation from Israel, and from Russia and the United Arab Emirates. The 32,000 doses received thus far fall short of the 5.2 million doses required for Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza, territory. Israeli officials insist that under the Oslo peace accords, the PA health ministry is responsible for vaccinating people in Gaza and parts of the West Bank where it has limited self-rule.

Palestinians and rights groups have accused Israel of ignoring its duties as an occupying power by not including the Palestinians in its inoculation programme.

The PA health ministry said on Friday that Israel had agreed to vaccinate 100,000 Palestinians who regularly cross into Israel for work.

Commitment for Life is determined to do what it can to assist the most vulnerable communities in the occupied territories and Israel. Because we are grateful for our own vaccines, we support the URC 'gratitude giving' page. Please do consider donating today.

Support our Vaccination Gratitude Giving Page

<https://events.tapsimple.org/page/christian-aid/united-reformed-church-supporting-a-just-vaccine-rollout>



CHINE McDONALD

“YOURS IN THE UPRISING OF JESUS”

WES HOWARD-BROOK

SUN 21 6-8PM

MON 22 10AM-12; 6-8PM

WILLIAM YOUNG

EASTER ONLINE FESTIVAL

RECOGNISING & RESISTING EMPIRE IN THE BIBLE, THE CHURCH & BEYOND

SUN 21 - MON 22 MARCH 2021

Join in with this Easter Online Festival

3 sessions: Sun 21st Mar & Mon 22nd Mar

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/95283244787?pwd=SFBjT2VmcVdMQWljRE82amQrU1Y2dz09>

Meeting ID: 952 8324 4787; Passcode: 784428

The Donkey

Gilbert Keith Chesterton

When fishes flew and forests walked
And figs grew upon thorn,
Some moment when the moon was blood
Then surely I was born;

With monstrous head and sickening cry
And ears like errant wings,
The devil's walking parody
On all four-footed things.

The tattered outlaw of the earth,
Of ancient crooked will;
Starve, scourge, deride me: I am dumb,
I keep my secret still.

Fools! For I also had my hour;
One far fierce hour and sweet:
There was a shout about my ears,
And palms before my feet.

