

**Grays**

United  
Reformed  
Church

Minister: Rev'd David Coaker

[drcoaker@gmail.com](mailto:drcoaker@gmail.com)

07378 348191

# Silent Visitor



**July 2021**

## **Who's Who at Bradleigh Avenue**

**Minister: Rev'd David Coaker**  
**Mobile No: 07378 348191**  
**E Mail: drcoaker@gmail.com**

**Treasurer:** Mr Alan Beckley

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

**Organist:** Mr Richard Wade

**Facilities Manager:** Mrs Charlotte Webb  
&  
**Hire of Halls:** Mobile No: 0784 3559011  
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



## The Absence of Song

The current restrictions have made it abundantly clear the centrality of singing in our worship. Readings, prayers, reflections, and questions have their place, and listening to music takes us part way there, but there is nothing like joining your voice with others to bind us together and draw us closer to God. The words we use have a pattern to them, the fancy word is liturgy which we share with our Anglican and Roman Catholic siblings – we just recreate it every week. The liturgy sends us on a journey. It prepares us, takes us deeper, opens us up to the world, and sends us out. But without singing the words seem to fall short. Without the rousing hymn to start, the beautiful words or tune to lift us, to challenge our preconceptions, to centre us, the familiar hymn rekindling fond memories, or an inspiring one to send us out, our worship falls short.

Apart from the ventilation, having the windows open has also allowed birdsong into our worship space. Where watching others sing on screen or reading the words to a hymn as the organ plays might not hit the spot, our feathered soloists may aid our devotions.

I'm sure we will all be mightily relieved and overjoyed when we are able to join our voices together again. For the time-being, might a response to this falling short, be to embrace the absence? Might silence be a better way to draw us closer to God than all of our words? The absence of words. The absence of sung words. Silence.

We know that when Jesus celebrated that final Passover they 'sung the hymn' before leaving for the mount of Olives. We recall Paul singing when held prisoner. We remember David singing and dancing. But we also have the account of Elijah on the mountain encountering the presence of God, not in wind, earthquake or fire, but in 'a sound of sheer silence'.

The Quaker tradition has a focus on silence which uses it for personal devotion but also to be attentive to the Spirit. Their meetings begin in silence but can also be filled by personal insights, testimonies and intercessions. At some point we may wish to experience something similar, but in the short-term don't be surprised if there are longer pauses for silence in our worship.

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

## **Waiting on Step 4**

It is with disappointment, but sadly no surprise, that restrictions will remain for at least another four weeks. We'd hoped that in this issue of SV we'd be sharing how the reduced restrictions would alter our current pattern of worship with regard to distancing, masks, refreshments and, crucially, singing.

Regrettably, for the time-being, nothing has changed and for now elders have not agreed any additional Sunday services or set a date for in-person Communion.

This will affect how we go about our Annual Church Meeting on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> July. We'd hoped for a thorough and open discussion of the Re-opening Roadmap shared in last month's SV, but with the restrictions we are limited to the formal receiving and adopting of reports and accounts. There will be space for comments and questions, but with social-distancing and mask wearing our engagement will unfortunately be limited.

It is hoped that when restrictions do reduce we will be able to have opportunity to discuss the Roadmap over the summer and in early September have a church meeting that is engaging, interactive and collaborative to discuss our steps together post-covid.

## **Thoughts for Ben**

Ben has decided to resign as church secretary and elder and take a step back from church life as he recuperates. I'm sure we'd all wish to thank Ben for all that he has offered and we look forward to him re-joining us renewed and refreshed when he feels able.

## **Dementia Friendly Update**

Our minister will have attended a Zoom meeting of Thurrock Dementia Action Alliance on 17<sup>th</sup> June and Laura Cleverley, from the Alzheimer's Society, will be having a look around our site on the 18<sup>th</sup> June. We also hope to have a conversation with Laura at our next elders' meeting to talk through how we could make our site more dementia friendly and to open up the discussion about creating a dementia café and Singing for the Brain session.

# Five things you should know about dementia



## 1. Dementia is not a natural part of ageing

We all forget a name or a face sometimes, especially as we get older, but dementia is something different. Memory problems are one of a number of symptoms that people with dementia may experience.

## 2. Dementia is caused by diseases of the brain

Diseases such as Alzheimer's disease cause nerve cells to die, damaging the structure and chemistry of the brain. There are lots of other causes and no two types of dementia are the same.

## 3. It's not just about losing your memory

When most people hear the word dementia, they think of memory loss. But dementia can also affect the way people think, speak, perceive things, feel and behave.

## 4. People can still live well with dementia

Support and treatments are available that can help with symptoms and managing daily life. These can allow people with dementia to lead active, purposeful lives and carry on doing the things that matter to them most.

## 5. Alzheimer's Society is there for support

Provide expert information and support to anyone affected by dementia.

Dementia Connect support line: **0333 150 3456**

[www.alzheimers.org.uk](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk)

**Become a Dementia Friend:**

[www.dementiafriends.org.uk/register-digital-friend](http://www.dementiafriends.org.uk/register-digital-friend)





## Thurrock's Food Bank

Exciting news from the Corringham warehouse: Thurrock Foodbank has been selected by the Trussell Trust to be a Pathfinder Foodbank.

The key principles of the Pathfinder programme, include a shared commitment to:

- A UK without the need for food banks
- A proactive approach to involving people with direct experience of poverty in the food bank's work
- Work in partnership with a variety of local stakeholders
- Actively learn together in trialling new, locally appropriate approaches.

Churches, of course, are crucial to the Trussell Trust and supply many volunteers locally in Thurrock and across the UK network, more than 12,000 churches in fact.

The Trussell Trust has launched a new churches' video, which church leaders have been asked to share it with their congregations. The Church Leaders' Breakfast we hosted allowed us to showcase our new resources around church engagement.

There has been some reduction in demand since the surge of last spring and summer, but many people are in need of support, and struggling to deal with the benefits system. The trust is in negotiation with our government over this issue.

Peter Newall sends his thanks for the many kind donations, which have really helped replenish stocks.

The following items are always in short supply:

Tinned Fish,

Tinned Fruit,

Sponge Puddings

Custard

Coffee

## **Private Prayer & Meditation**



At a recent Elders' Meeting there was some discussion as to whether it might be possible for the church to open for private prayer and meditation occasionally.

No firm decision was made but it was felt that as our time in church has been limited due to the pandemic, members and friends might feel there is a need to come closer to God in a quiet time of prayer and meditation.

There would be someone on hand during this time to oversee that all guidance is being adhered to. Also there may be a time for a short period of communal prayer which would be led by one of our worship leaders.

At the next Elders' Meeting on the 29 June this will be discussed further and reported back through the Annual Church Meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup> July.

## LIFE

Sometimes it can seem as if life is turning against you  
You are told bad news about a loved one that you  
can do nothing about  
Sometimes you want to go to the top of the mountain  
and just shout, let it all out  
There is a better way, pray to God each day  
Do this and he will show the way

What is happening is not his doing, he loves you  
Place your worries and cares into God's hands  
They are big enough to stretch over the lands  
Ask for his help, he knows the situation  
He is in tune with his creation

God will walk beside you  
Life is not always a bundle of fun  
Sometimes it just makes you want to run  
Pray, and he will give you hope  
He will show you how to cope

Georgina Nottage

And some special news:



The Semain family had a busy time in June. We send every good wish to Elizabeth and Andy Brogan, married on June 24 at Crondon Park, Stock.





## The Sun DID Come!



Looking back at last month's cover of SV with the lovely sunshiny picture "Here comes the sun", after nearly a month of rain during May the weather has really brightened up – that's great!

However, I couldn't help myself but play the song "Here Comes The Sun", written by George Harrison, one of the Beatles, for their Abbey Road Album 1969. It was to refresh my mind on the whole song. I am sure I can remember it's being used on a BBC Holiday Programme hosted by Cliff Michelmore many years ago (well that's a name from the past!).

As the lyrics are copyright I am unable to reproduce them here unfortunately, although I feel it should be permissible to share some of words without risking the contravention of copyright.

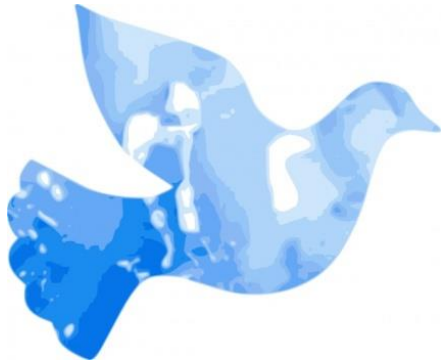
Initially it says – "here comes the sun" as in the title but goes on to affirm that "its alright."

It continues by speaking about it "being a long cold lonely winter" and that "it seems like its been there for years!" But then the smiles are returning to faces and the ice is melting.

In my mind it immediately created an association for me with now or rather the past 15 months of the pandemic and the lockdowns we have experienced. With the wonders of science and the vaccinations saving lives and preventing people from becoming extremely ill, then maybe, just maybe, we can translate that into the "ice melting and smiles returning" as we gradually pull out from the worst of our experiences.

*Janet*





God of the Ages,  
to whom a day is as a thousand years,  
be with us as we wait for infections to decrease,  
for data to be analysed,  
for decisions to be made,  
and for life to return to something more normal.  
But help us, O God,  
to learn from these long months,  
to value new ways of accessing worship,  
new ways of ministry,  
and new patterns of working,  
that we may not return unquestioningly to the old  
but listen to your voice speaking through the chaos.  
Amen.

**By the Revd Andy Braunston who works with four churches in and around south Glasgow**





## Did you know?



The Christian development charity tackling poverty and injustice in the Middle East was once The Bible Lands charity, whose colourful Christmas Carol sheets we used for many years.

Have you noticed that currently the sheets are from Embrace the Middle East, same charity?

They have over 160 years of experience working with the most vulnerable and marginalised communities in the Middle East, working alongside Christian partners in the region to help them make a tangible difference to their communities.

### Through education

“We believe education is the key to tackling poverty and creating hope for the future. Investing in education is one of the most powerful and effective ways to lift people out of poverty.”

### Through community

“Community development projects change lives. Our Christian partners work to bring communities together through a wide variety of projects, including schools, vocational training and reconciliation programmes.”

### Through healthcare

“We are proud to support healthcare initiatives across the Middle East. Our Christian partners work in many areas, including hospitals, mobile clinics and nutrition programmes.”

Our partners work in areas such as advocacy, education, health and community, development projects, helping people of all faiths and none to free themselves from a life of poverty and injustice. We currently work with partners in Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, Israel and Palestine.

Do look for them on the internet. <https://embraceme.org/>

They are also on Facebook and Twitter.

# Reopening for Worship

## Family Worship

**Sunday 27th June**

**between 10.15 – 11.15 am**

**Sunday 4th July**

**between 10.30 – 11.30 am**

## Annual Church Meeting

**Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> July**

**between 10.15 – 11.15 am**

**Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> Aug**

**between 10.15 – 11.15 am**

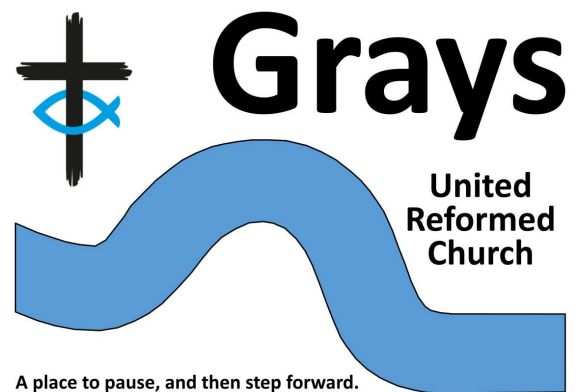
## Young Families

**Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> July**

**between 9.30 – 10.15 am**

**Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> Aug**

**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.