

Grays

United
Reformed
Church

Minister: Rev'd David Coaker

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Silent Visitor



Summer Holidays!

August 2021

Who's Who at Bradleigh Avenue

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

Secretary: Vacant

Treasurer: Mr Alan Beckley

Elders: Elders' Meeting temporarily suspended

Organist: Mr Richard Wade

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

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

Leaders of the Uniformed Organisations:

Group Scout Leader: Mr Tim Webb
Tel: 01375 391031

Guide Leader: Miss Gill Davison
Tel: 01375 384253

Brownie Leader: Ms Madeleine Loin
Mobile No: 07971 139384

Urged Encouragement

If you browse your way through resolutions that were agreed at our Synod and General Assembly, two words will leap out at you. They are 'urge' and 'encourage'. Occasionally you may come across a shall; 'will' or 'must' but they are usually limited to financial, legal, disciplinary or safeguarding issues. For everything else we are urged and encouraged to do whatever it was.

Those words are both the United Reformed Church's greatest strengths but also weaknesses. Strengths as they allow us to hold a variety of views, priorities and interests. Weaknesses as they can also allow apathy, ignorance and parochialism.

So, for instance, any idea what happened between the 9th – 12th July? Well our denomination gathered as General Assembly to discuss and decide the issues that presently face us. (I'll leave you to go to the URC website to work out what they are.) I was aware of it happening, occasionally looked at the livestream, and had a glance through the reports but I can't say I'm fully across what was decided.

I'd guess that the same was true for many across our local churches. More would have less of an idea and very few would know more. As our denomination has numerically declined less people are involved in its wider work and, of those, it is taking up more of their time. In years past, when volunteers were plentiful, tasks were delegated around the place. Now they are few we rely more on willing and available retirees or our own employees.

A social media comment about our General Assembly read, 'We said yes to everything. Some punctuation was added. See you in 2022!' So is this a sign of a process completely in-tune with need or general apathy that agrees to whatever is put before them rather than disagree or seek to change the direction of travel?

I admit that I have caught a dose of apathy concerning the wider URC. For a time, I was heavily involved in denominational and Synod activities, but haven't been for a while. There was a sense of finding something important because I was involved in it, and that in some way it was necessary, but I am too much of a pragmatist, especially in light of our numerical decline, to engage

beyond the essential, straightforward, and directly applicable to the local.

To an extent, as a local church, we can leave the wider to its priorities as anything crucial will inevitably come to light. But there is always the risk that when we do need to engage we may find out things have altered since we last took notice. My greater concern is that a reticence to engage may lurk within our own local activities.

In June we shared three activities for us to engage with as we reopen and at our ACM in July we were encouraged to become part of the working parties set up to take them further. As far as I am aware, so far one person stepped forward . . .

There is of course still time, and we are all in a way rubbing our eyes following lockdowns, but it is essential for us to engage with this.

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

Step 4 ish

From the 4th July elders agreed to restart weekly worship, maintaining the current pattern for now, and Worship Team/Working parking will respond to guidance as we move forward.

Communion: Assuming restrictions will allow this to be done safely, and confidently by then, we have pencilled in Sunday 5th September to be our first in-person communion service. Hopefully this will also mean we can restart after worship refreshments then too.

Silent Visitor: this edition will again be posted out to everyone and the September one will be delivered to those unable to easily collect from the building.

Zoom Coffee Morning: this drew to a close on Wednesday 14th July.

Bible Reading: we will carry on with finding volunteers to read as everyone arrives on a Sunday. If you would like to read on a specific Sunday, please get in touch with the leader of worship beforehand.

Church Meeting: the date of our next Church Meeting will be on Sunday 12 September. The agenda will include Treasurer and Property Reports, and updates on, and discussion of, our Re-opening Roadmap. The format and timing is yet to be decided upon.

Decision Making: anything that needs to be decided between now and September Church Meeting will be emailed around and then put to members during the notices on the following Sunday.

Re-opening in light of Roadmap #3

At our ACM we'd hoped for a thorough and open discussion of the Re-opening Roadmap shared in June's SV, but restrictions limited us to the formal receiving and adopting of reports and accounts.

It is hoped that when restrictions do reduce we will be able to have opportunities to discuss the Roadmap over the summer and on 12th September have a church meeting that is engaging, interactive and collaborative to discuss our steps together post-covid.

To get these conversations started elders have set up three working parties to get together to reflect, discuss and engage with the three aspects of our life together. Membership is completely open. All we ask is to be willing to make the time to talk about the issues raised and to be involved to some extent. Please talk to the person taking a lead if you'd like to know more and to volunteer.

Re-opening for Worship – Working Party

Previously Margaret Pryer, our Pulpit Supply Secretary, and our lay preachers and minister gathered together periodically to look through the upcoming Sundays. Elders wish to expand this group to include everyone who would like to discuss and contribute to how to take our worshipping life forward.

Their discussions will cover what was raised in this aspect of our Re-opening Roadmap, our worship plan, tasks associated with Sunday mornings and elders having delegated responsibility for adapting our pattern of worship as restrictions ease to them.

Denise Beckley is taking a lead with this and the first gathering will be in the church hall on Wednesday, 21st July from 10.30 – 12 noon.

Re-opening for discussion and decision-making – Working Party

With the ongoing restrictions limiting our ability to effectively gather as church meeting, the elders propose that we implement what was put forward in this aspect of our Re-opening Roadmap.

Our hope is that we will explore different ways of gathering as church meeting for them to become engaging, informative, decisive, and well attended. We will hold monthly church meetings from September as we re-establish and re-invigorate church life to ensure awareness, engagement and ownership of our life together.

Through engaging with the issues raised we aim to bring proposals to the 2022 ACM for how we organise and facilitate our life together.

Our next Church Meeting will be one Sunday 12 September and the outline agenda has been set, but this working party will decide the format and timing of it and of those that follow.

George Semain is taking a lead with this and a meeting date will be set in consultation with all those that wish to be involved.

Re-opening to be Dementia Friendly – Working Party

Laura Cleverly, Dementia Friendly Communities Co-ordinator – Alzheimer's Society, visited our site on 18th June and joined our elders for a Zoom Meeting on 1st July.

One Sunday 15th August the elders have invited Laura to join us for worship to share her thoughts on how our building and fellowship can be more dementia friendly and to give an introduction on how a dementia cafe and a Singing for the Brain session could work. It is intended for the worship surrounding this to be done in a dementia friendly style.

As a first step elders seek to launch a Community Cafe in the church hall from 10am – 12 noon on Wednesdays from 15th September. The first one will seek to gather views from those attending about how we can better support our community – in respect of dementia but also more generally (see poster). We intend to ask for donations towards the refreshments to ensure that no-one is excluded, which may mean we will need to underwrite it financially.

In preparation for this a flier will be distributed around the area through the Alzheimer's Society and Thurrock Dementia Action Alliance, and we will attempt to gain coverage in the local media.

This working party will cover what was raised in this aspect of our Re-opening Roadmap, but also draw on others for donations of cakes (we will supplement with shop bought) and the other practicalities of running a cafe.

David Coaker is taking the lead with this and a meeting date will be set in consultation with all those that wish to be involved.



Grays United Reformed Church Worship Plan

Date	Lead by	Time	Notes
01.08.21	David Coaker	9.30am	Young Families
	David Coaker	10.30am	
08.08.21	David Coaker	10.30am	
15.08.21	David Coaker	10.30am	Dementia Friendly
22.08.21	Denise Beckley	10.30am	
29.08.21	Alf Pryer	10.30am	
05.09.21	David Coaker	9.30am	Young Families
	David Coaker	10.30am	Communion Refreshments
12.09.21	David Coaker	10.30am	Church Meeting

Reading Rota: The text for any readings will be available on the table at the back of the worship space each Sunday. If you'd like to volunteer to read, pick one up on the day or contact the leader of worship beforehand.

Flowers: For the time being we will continue with plants on the communion table. From September we will re-establish the list for dates people would like to offer flowers with plants / artificial flowers at other times.

All other rotas: how we organise ourselves each Sunday will be discussed by the Worship working party.

Grays URC 2021 Financial Report

Below is a summary of the main points mentioned at the Church ACM.

Covid: It has been very tough financially – we had to withdraw around £35,000 from investments and bank. Four things helped us through financially.

1. Thanks to all who continue to contribute each month. We are blessed to have such a generous congregation.
2. Also Colin Baker for prudent financial work as Treasurer over the years which resulted in sufficient funds to help with Covid. We all owe him our thanks.
3. £8,000 insurance payout also helped. A further claim has been made for period 1.1.21 to 31.5.21.
4. Little Roo's income was, and is, important. We enjoy an excellent working relationship with the pre-school, who have now become an integrated part of Grays URC.

Thanks to Charlotte, who does sterling work behind the scenes, and keeps track of the many jobs required in maintaining the church, hall and annexe. Charlotte has, and continues to, find new and suitable hirers which helps financially. Thanks also to Elaine for the invoicing, Bob and Alf for their help with various form filling. Thanks also to George for his help with Little Roo's hiring agreement.

We are hopefully now over the worst and aim to stabilise finances again as there are always repairs and improvements to fund.

Going forward, we will continue to use Brookes Accountancy Services – the arrangement works well. We plan to be a cashless church wherever possible, as again this works well. **Cheques are still very welcome.** Therefore no more weekly giving envelopes will be ordered as they are no longer required. If this is a problem for anyone please let me know.

Just to put on record that I am happy to stand as Treasurer for another year, unless there is anyone who would like to take on the role.

I have a couple of future holidays booked (Covid restrictions allowing) and hope to be away a number of weeks. Whilst I will endeavour to leave everything prepared for my absence, I may well ask one or two of you to just help out a bit if required while I am away. Offers of help of any kind are always most welcome.

If anyone has questions please call or e-mail me, and I will do my best to answer.

Alan Beckley

Christians Against Poverty



It is some time, in fact a few years, since we had a speaker come to the Church from CAP. Like many, I don't think I had heard of this Charity. However, it is intriguing to think their work enables many people and families in debt, for one reason or another, to regain their lives debt free.

We decided at our very last ACM pre-Covid to adopt CAP as our church charity. Fund raising however seems to have dried up over the past eighteen months, understandably, but now we are getting back to perhaps a freer existence we should, as a church, do some fund raising for CAP.

In their newsletter we are told of a family, where the mum had only 68p in her purse to feed her family – three children, her husband and herself. I would say that is impossible to do! But during the next six years – working with CAP the family is thriving – the children doing well at school.

There are many more families like this that Christians Against Poverty are helping – can we not find ways to raise funds towards a gift for CAP? Perhaps we should now look at how we might raise funds in the future for our adopted charities.

A Barrel of Laughs?

A little known gentleman brought this article to mind. He was in the headlines for a relatively short period following an event which took place 110 years ago. His name was Bobby Leach and he was born in Cornwall in 1858. The event was going over the Niagara Falls in a barrel. He was the first man to do this but his daredevil stunt had already been eclipsed by a woman, a 63 year old teacher from Michigan called Annie Taylor.

Annie had performed that feat in October 1901 as a publicity stunt to earn money but she was unable to capitalise on it. She survived, bleeding but otherwise unharmed and declared, "No one ought ever to do that again." She had already sent her pet cat over some days before to test the strength of the barrel. Fortunately the cat survived unharmed. Bobby Leach wasn't quite so lucky. He used a stronger barrel rather than a wooden one like Annie. It was made of crude steel which became dented in the descent. The force of the landing caused him to suffer two broken knee caps, a fractured jaw and a number of other injuries for which he had to spend six months in hospital. He later became a performer in the Barnum and Bailey circus.

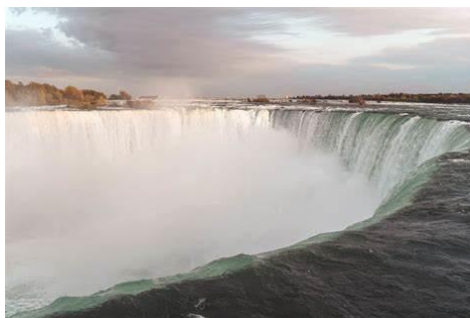
These daredevil stunts gave rise to something like a dozen others who tried their luck with varying degrees of success. Another Englishman, Captain Webb, famed as the first man to swim the English Channel, drowned trying to swim the rapids further down river. Some of these hopefuls survived unharmed but others were drowned or survived seriously injured. Such stunts were then made illegal and subject to heavy fines on both sides of the American/Canadian border.

Yet another Englishman, Charles Stephens, a 58 year old barber from Bristol, went over in a more traditional barrel in 1920. He was the first person to die in the attempt. Barrels were not the only equipment used. In 1928, a 36 year old Canadian/American daredevil, Jean Lussier from Massachusetts, went over the falls in a rubber ball, 128 cm in diameter and reinforced with steel bands and lined with 32 inner tubes. Three of those tubes burst and the ball was badly damaged, although Lussier survived, having been picked up by the Maid of the Mist touring boat. He had only minor bruising.

Not all rescues were caused by stunts. The Maid of the Mist boat was also involved in rescuing a seven year old boy who was swept over the falls after his boat lost power. His sister was pulled out only yards before going over. A third person in the boat did not survive. Another rescue was of an attempted suicide. This rescue created another record, being the first person to go over the falls voluntarily without some form of flotation device. One or two other suicides have been similarly rescued.

What is this compulsion about Niagara Falls? Well, once seen, never forgotten. God seems to have created some things that fascinate us. Some years ago, whilst visiting our daughter Elizabeth, who was working as an intensive care nurse in Toronto, Canada, Janet and I joined her in making the trip of some 70 miles to the falls. Looking at the flow of clear water from only a few feet away as it went over the brink at a rate of 2,400 cubic metres a second, was an enchanting, and almost mesmerising experience. Following this up with a voyage below the falls on the Maid of the Mist (as it was still then called) added to the wonder (as well as the almost baptismal style dampness) of the occasion.

George Semain



Bobby Leach and his barrel

SUMMER

By Alfie



After a long winter sleep and spring awakening.
The trees turn green and the fledglings take their first flight.
The sun awakens, sending its beautiful golden rays of light
down on the Earth.
People play on the warm soft sand by the shimmering sea.
The delicious smells of the barbecue in the peaceful pink
skyyed evening.
The sound of the waves crashing against the rocky cliffs.
The shining schools of fish swooping in the ocean like an
eagle soaring in the sky.
But when it rains the thirsty wilting flowers get their long
needed refreshing drink.
And the buzzing bees drink the sweet nectar from the now
thriving flowers.
Then the once green leaves start to turn into all different
colours like brown and orange and red.
And the weather starts getting chilly and then summer turns
into a long and deep sleep.

NB: Alfie, who has just turned 9 years old, is Gina's grandson.
Poetry obviously runs in the family. Thank you Alfie for sending
your poem to me for inclusion in this month's Silent Visitor. Ed.

Moving Stories

Bangladesh

Shikha's Crab Farming Business

Shikha was struggling to make ends meet.

Bangladesh is one of the most exploited countries in the world. Shikha decided to approach our Christian

Aid supported partner to be trained to become a crab farmer. This means that means she no longer has to rely on entering the dangerous river to catch fish to sell to provide food and education for her two children.

Climate disruption is making it harder for her to look after the crabs. Cyclone Bulbul was particularly damaging. However,



Shikha perseveres thanks to her determination and skill.

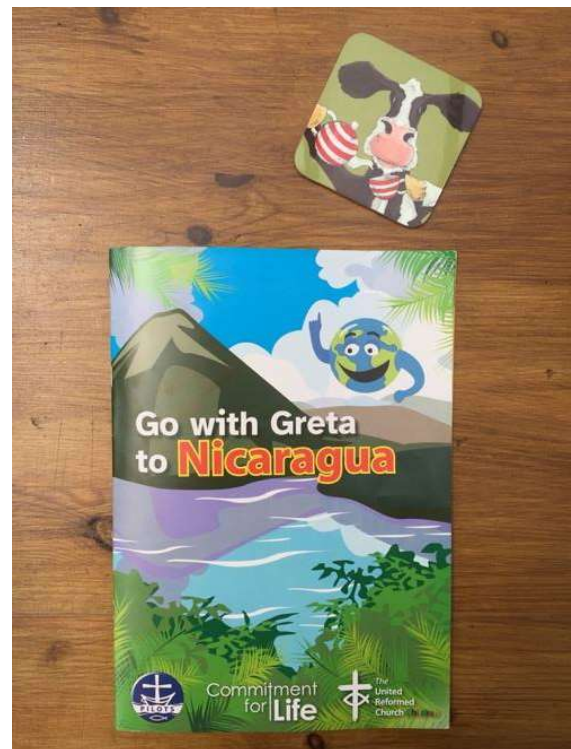
CHILDREN & YOUTH!

Download this brilliant book with SIX sessions all about Nicaragua: with games, recipes, and facts

www.urc.org.uk/go-with-greta-and-connect

Watch the video to accompany the book
<https://youtu.be/V40utA10qYA>

Or ask Suzanne to post a hard copy.



Moving Stories

Israel and the Occupied Palestinian territory

The 9,000 residents of Abu Rashwan area of Gaza feel safer and are better connected as a result of the support of our partner, CFTA.

Abu Rashwan is an agricultural community where many families live hand to mouth – unemployment is high, and people often struggle with food insecurity.

There are no properly functioning sewage or water services, and electricity shortages prevail.



With support from CFTA to identify and advocate for their needs, the community resilience enhancement committee (CREC) in Abu Rashwan neighbourhood mobilised and coordinated private sector, municipal and local volunteers to purchase and install solar panel streetlights. These changes came as a result of the local Community Resilience Enhancement Committee's improved confidence and trust in their own abilities.

The area falls between two governorates and so local authority jurisdiction has largely been absent – this has now been improved with greater engagement from Khan Younis authority. Alongside these benefits, the committee is now employing dispute resolution methods. For example, some residents were reticent to giving up land to the new road and this was resolved with dialogue.

One of the members of the community, Mr. Wael Al Laham, commented,

" I am living in Abu Rashwan area since 25 year., This the first time, I saw the road clearly while I'm returning to home at night."

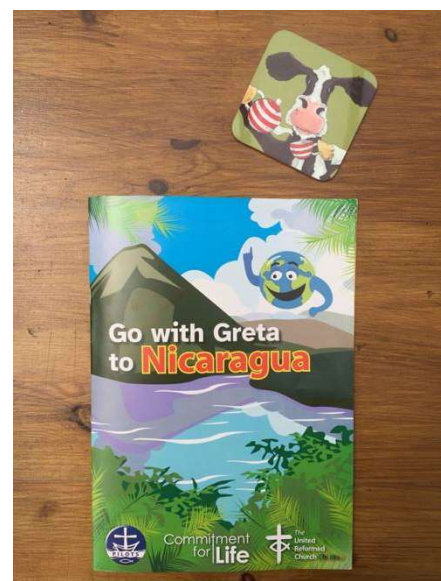
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Community Café

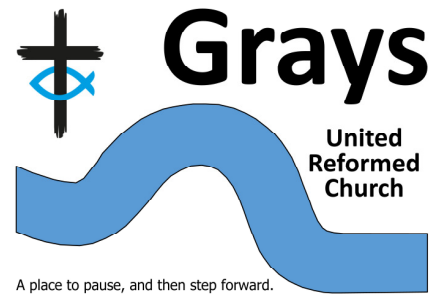
Grays URC, Bradleigh Avenue, RM17 5XD

**10am - 12noon each Wednesday from
15th September**

We intend for our café to be inclusive and dementia friendly.



For more details contact: David Coaker
07378348191 drcoaker@gmail.com
www.graysurc.org.uk
 **URCGrays**



Launch Event

10am - 12noon 15th September

With the help of the Alzheimer's Society we are exploring how we can better support our wider community.

Over a drink and cake come along to find out more, or to just enjoy the social time and the refreshments.

