 URCCGrays
www.graysurc.org.uk

Minister: Rev'd David Coaker
07378 348191
drcoaker@gmail.com

Silent Visitor

**Be kind and
compassionate to
one another,
forgiving each
other ...**

Ephesians 4:32 (NIV)

November 2021

Coming Together

Grays URC, Bradleigh Avenue, RM17 5XD
10.30 - 12noon, Sun 7th November

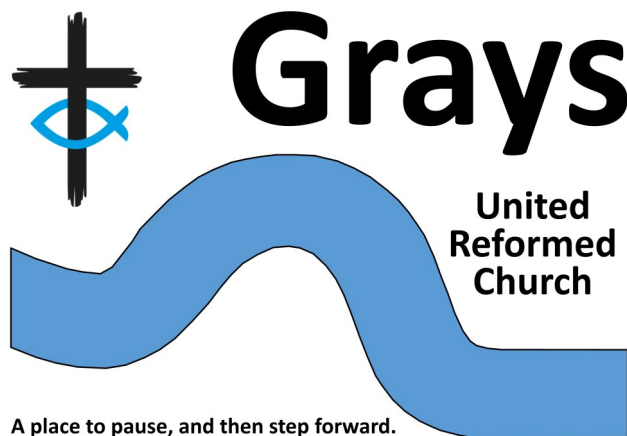
Covid-19 has not left us but, as its effects lessen, we offer an invitation to come together to mark its impact on our lives.



The last couple of years have not been easy for anyone. Most of us will have mixed emotions when we look back.

We intend to hold together grief and thanksgiving, and ask for contributions about loved ones who died or people who helped you through (a digital image and some words (50-500)).

If you could please register to help us plan how to structure the time:
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/coming-together-tickets-171141126717>



A place to pause, and then step forward.

Grays United Reformed Church - Worship Plan

Date	Lead by	Time	Notes
04.11.21	Denise Beckley	3.30pm	Messy Church
07.11.21	David Coaker	9.30am	Young Families
	David Coaker	10.30am	Coming Together
14.11.21	David Coaker	10.30am	Remembrance Parade
21.11.21	David Coaker	10.30am	Church Meeting
28.11.21	David Coaker	10.30am	
05.12.21	David Coaker	9.30am	Young Families
	David Coaker	10.30am	Gift Service Communion
	David Coaker	6.30pm	Tilbury Band
12.12.21	David Coaker	10.30am	Gift Service Parade
16.12.21	Denise Beckley	3.30pm	Messy Church
19.12.21	David Coaker	10.30am	Christingle
	David Coaker	6.30pm	Carol Service
24.12.21	Denise Beckley	TBD	Young Families
	Alf Pryer	6.30pm	Christmas Eve
26.12.21	Denise Beckley	10.30am	Boxing Day
02.01.22	Alf Pryer	10.30am	Communion

December SV - If you could please email or phone through your contributions for Nov SV by **Friday 26th Nov** to David.

Sunday 7th November – we are inviting the community to mark the impact on Covid-19 – see poster.

Sunday 14th November – Remembrance Sunday – we welcome back our Scouts and Guides as together we remember past and current conflicts, honour those who suffered, and pray for peace.

Sunday 21st November – we will hopefully be able to respond to our discussions from the 10th Oct and try a new format for gathering for worship and church meeting.

Simple complexity in Psalm 8

God, who has first claim on each moment of our lives, Creation overwhelmingly whispers, and declares, your splendour, complexity and capacity!

Yet God is also beyond all that we can sense, describe and comprehend.

In the simple, humble, and fragile, God's power can silence the fiercest temper.

When I try to grasp the infinity around and beyond me, my part within it all folds in on itself, and in that thought, expands to the far limits of imagination, knowledge, and possibility. Our thoughts, choices and actions can have effects both large and small. Each moment holds within it a myriad of possibilities. Will we strive after the good, the better, and the equitable?

God, who has first claim on each moment of our lives, Creation overwhelmingly whispers, and declares, your splendour, complexity and capacity!

Come praise God in Psalm 34:1-8

My words shall be blessings to God; praise shall always be on my lips.

God's spirit within me is my only glory; may my fellows know this and share my happiness.

Let us offer praises together and lift high God's name.

I placed myself before God, I felt God's presence and was consoled and emboldened.

Look to God, reflect God's glory, and never act as if God isn't with you.

God's spirit within me was in anguish, God drew near and I was liberated and relieved.

God's presence surrounds those who acknowledge the divine, and supports them.

Sense and know that God is good; joy flows from God's heart.

If it walks like a duck ...

At our September church meeting about half of the attendance were members. The other half, equally committed and supportive, weren't. Why is that? If you're actions and intent mirrors that of members – what is stopping us from doing the paperwork? If you walk, talk and look like a member ...

Apart from the personal choices in all this, it also affects our collective choices. Most of our decisions tend to be taken by consensus. We talk it through and try to come up with a decision everyone can live with. But by rights, if only half are members, just over a quarter of us need to agree which will be detrimental to our peace and unity. (If 20 are attending, 10 members and 10 non, only 6 need to agree with each other!)

As well as membership, the duck image works for eldership. We have lots of people who behave as elders, some of them non-serving and others who aren't members. How can we organise ourselves so that folk feel comfortable accepting the title for something they're doing already?

As we came out from lockdown and held our ACM in July I persuaded the elders that for their, and the church's, wellbeing they should step down and we should combine the functions of church and elders' meetings from Sept. This recommendation went to the ACM and was assented too, but given the lingering restrictions we weren't able to discuss it. My hope is that through discussions at church meeting we will be able to come up with a way of organising ourselves that is effective and efficient. i.e. gets what needs to be done, done and in a manner that does not put undue burdens on individuals. This is a long standing issue and we cannot put it off any longer.

This is something we all need to engage with, honestly and openly, for us to be able to discover a way forward for our fellowship. If we don't come up with our own plan, we may drift towards our options becoming ever more limited.

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

In Memoriam

It is with sadness, and with thanksgiving for his life, that we share the news that Reg Holwell has died. Our prayers and thoughts are with his family.

The funeral will be in church at 11.30am on Thursday 11th November, followed by burial. As this will be Armistice day, we will be keeping the silence prior to it at 11am.

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie,
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

John McCrae



O God who longs to make us whole

A hymn celebrating the founding and work of the NHS, written in 1998 for a special service in Leicester Cathedral celebrating the NHS 50th anniversary

1. O God who longs to make us whole in body, spirit, mind,
we praise you for the hopes and dreams you share with humankind:
for those in pow'r whom you inspired to share the nation's wealth,
that rich and poor alike might know security and health.

2. We give you thanks for those who strive that knowledge might
increase;

for all in office, ward or home whose efforts never cease;
for those who give of wealth or self, who care or who campaign,
and all who bravely watch and wait to share your people's pain;

3 for those in countless walks of life who daily work and strive
to keep each other safe and well, and help the weak to thrive;
for those who go beyond the call in myriad other ways,
and keep alive the light of hope in dark and cheerless days.¹

4. O give us grace to trust your love when hope remains concealed,
to watch and pray beside the ones who are not swiftly healed.
And grant us faith, when death itself provides its own release,
to trust in your undying love to give them perfect peace.

5. Give us, O God, your loving zeal to comfort, heal and save,
to care for one another 'from the cradle to the grave'.
Then north to south, and east to west, let love and hope extend,
until the universe is whole and justice knows no end.

Michael Forster (B 1946) Tune: *Kingsfold*

© 1998 & 2021 Michael Forster

The text may be reproduced royalty-free for use in worship, as long as authorship and copyright are acknowledged, no alterations are made and this authorisation is printed in full on all copies.

¹ This new verse was added in 2021 to recognise the efforts and courage of people other than NHS staff during the pandemic



Take action during COP26

Raise your voice for climate justice

Climate anxiety

People are now experiencing climate anxiety on a scale never seen before. A new global study found it to be even more prevalent for people aged between 16 and 25. Young people feel fear for the future and anger over inaction, but also hope for change. We pray for all those experiencing anxiety.

Access to coronavirus vaccines and COP26

Give thanks for the coronavirus vaccines you have received. For the most vulnerable, vaccines currently remain a long way off. With powerful countries beginning booster programs, we call on governments to back a people's vaccine, which distributes vaccines fairly.

A critical part of the COP26 talks is to listen and act upon the voices, perspectives, and experiences of those most affected by the crisis. Unequal access to coronavirus vaccines, means they may not make COP.

With only delegates promised access to vaccines, civil society organisations and journalists face exclusion, we pray for the UK Government to provide greater access to vaccines, and for all those excluded to be heard.





The builders continue to make good progress with the roof now being put on over the new extension it is really starting to take shape.

The School harvests have kept coming in, and thanks to our crew of volunteers much of it has been sorted, we now just need to go through the dating process!

The one consistent thing we have is the incredible efforts of our volunteers and supporters. It is with grateful thanks to them that the many people we support are able to get the food and support that they need. We couldn't be more grateful for their continued efforts. Thank you to you all!

We are starting to progress with the Trussell Trust Pathfinder programme, the first part being a self-analysis and reflection on what we do, so please pray for us as we proceed so that we get the guidance required to develop a robust strategy to help those in need across Thurrock. We will be sharing some more information on this soon.

Although we have been very blessed with some large food donations, there are still some items we have lower stocks on, these continue to be:

Long Life Milk (Full Fat); Fruit Juice; Orange/ lemon/
Blackcurrant Squash

We also continue to give thanks for the numerous schools, businesses, organisations and individuals that support us with food donations, but also those that support us financially, they really are a blessing to our work.

Thank you to you all, if you want to find out more about our work, help out in any way, please do not hesitate to contact me. Many thanks & best regards,

Pete Newall, Operations Manager Thurrock Foodbank

01375 416200

<https://thurrock.foodbank.org.uk/>

Financial Update

The current financial position is that the regular monthly giving by our congregation, together with income generated from hall and annexe hirers usually covers our normal monthly outgoings.

As at 12/10/2021 the bank balance stood at a comfortable £25,000, well above my normal minimum of £10,000.

I had considered re-investing part of this to help replace some of the money withdrawn to help cover the Covid related expenses, but on reflection decided against it, as I will need to have at least £7,000 available for essential works on the premises, as agreed at CM. However, I may well consider re-investing some money in the future, if and when it seems appropriate.

We have received the final part of our insurance claim for loss of hirer's income during the Covid lockdown. The loss adjusters agreed to pay a further £2,500, making the total pay-out a little over £10,500. This amount made the hours filling in and submitting claim forms worthwhile, and certainly helped our finances during the Covid shutdown.

Finally, I am pleased that CM agreed with the proposal to donate 5% of our annual giving to the chosen charity. It seems a sensible way to maintain a meaningful contribution each year to the chosen charity.

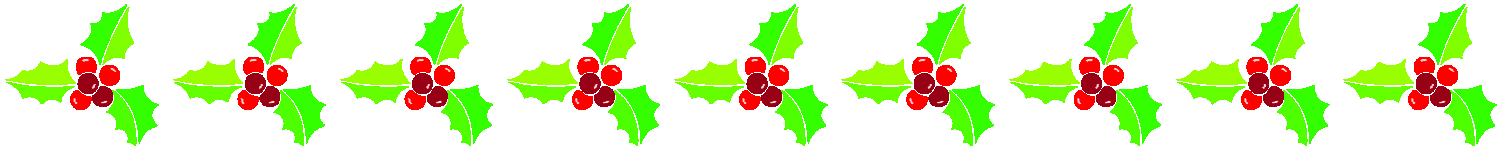
I think that is all for now, other than the usual thanks to those who contribute so generously to Church funds each month, to Alf and Bob for any help required, Charlotte for organising the lettings and Elaine for the invoicing.

If anyone has a query regarding Church finances, please contact me and I will do my best to help.

Alan

Christmas Services

@ Bradleigh Avenue



Sun 28th Nov 10.30am Advent 1 - Hope - family worship

Sun 5th Dec 9.30am Christmas Service for young families

10.30am Advent 2 - Faith - Communion

6.30pm Carol Service and Tilbury Band Concert

Sun 12th Dec 10.30am Advent 3 - Joy - parade service

Wed 16th Dec 3.30pm Christmas Messy Church

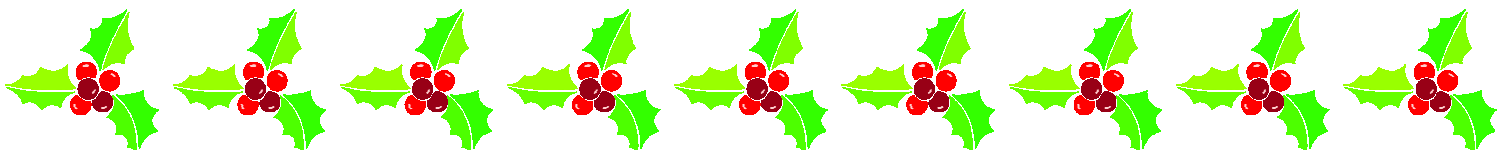
Sun 19th Dec 10.30am Advent 4 - Peace - Christingle - family worship

6.30pm Service of lessons and carols

Fri 24th Dec TBD Family Christmas worship

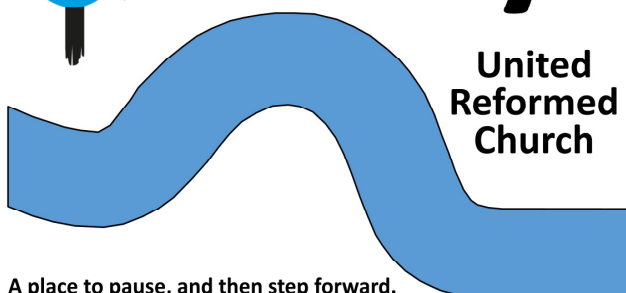
6.30pm Christmas Eve service

Sun 26th Dec 10.30am Christmas service



Grays

United
Reformed
Church



A place to pause, and then step forward.

**Be kind and
compassionate to
one another,
forgiving each
other ...**

Ephesians 4:32 (NIV)

Christmas Messages

If you would like to share a Christmas message in our next edition of Silent Visitor, please send them to Janet by **Friday 26th Nov** - geojan321@sky.com 373532

Church Meetings

Within the worship leading in to our church meeting in October we talked through a URC text on membership and then the material shared in last month's Silent Visitor.

Suggestions from the floor included:

- That timing could be best on Sunday mornings as people were already on the premises.
- That the service on that day could be a little shorter.
- That the service be reserved as worship time, followed by the meeting.
- The indication was that people sitting around a table with a drink and a biscuit were more likely to speak. (Cabinet meetings and King Arthur's Round Table were referenced!)
- Previous eras refreshments and lunches before Church Meetings were recalled. In view of our current numbers 'bring and share' lunches were suggested.
- We were reminded of the importance of ecumenical working and the sharing expertise.

For our further consideration is a paper concerning Elders' meetings from George and a diagram about decision-making offered by Kee.

The Elders' Meeting

By the time of the last Annual Church Meeting, the number of serving elders in the church had been reduced to two, namely George and Janet Semain. Ben Marshall had resigned as Church Secretary and Elder; Alf Pryer had started a sabbatical after a long period of continuous service and Denise Beckley, who had been co-opted to the Elders' Meeting also started a sabbatical for similar reasons. No new serving elders were elected at that meeting. As only two serving elders remained, the Elders' Meeting was suspended pending the ACM in 2022. This part of the report asks why we have difficulty in gaining new serving elders and what might be done to remedy that situation.

The Manual and other literature of the URC lists about twelve duties which might be undertaken by serving elders, although, put simply, that literature indicates basically that the main function of the Elders' Meeting is simply to exercise oversight of the spiritual life of the church. Some of those duties referred to have, in the minds of many people, been considered onerous and time consuming. When confronted by the need to undertake duties of this sort, those considering the possibility of putting their names forward for serving eldership might consider that discretion is the better part of valour and remain silent. In the light of such a problem, what might we do to encourage more people to allow their names to go forward for serving elders?

The most radical solution may be to start again with a blank sheet!

Despite any need to conform to the duties set out by the URC it is perhaps better to put those duties aside for the time being if the result is to gain more serving elders. The duties could then be described as above, 'To exercise oversight of the

spiritual life of the church'. That duty, one would hope, could be discharged by the Elders' meeting with the Minister once per month, mainly to make recommendations to the Church Meeting, which then might be able to reduce its number of meetings to once per quarter. This would not appear to be asking people to take on a list of possibly onerous duties. At the present time, some of those duties are being performed by members of the congregation. For the immediate future that could continue.

What special gifts are needed to become a serving elders? The answer is, "None". We are all fully qualified. A good Elder has been described as someone who loves Christ and His church and has a genuine concern for people. They need to take an interest in the whole life of the church.

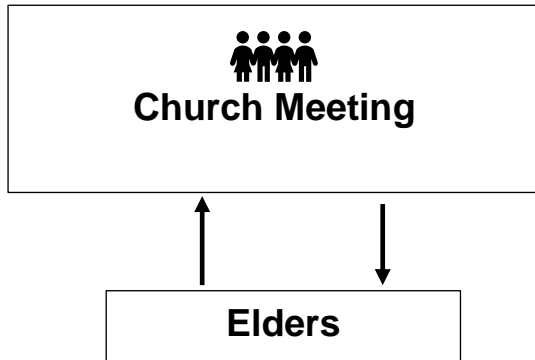
In the first place the eldership would come from Church Members. But this need not be a barrier. Non-members could put their names forward for co-option to the Elders' Meeting, where they could join fully in the discussions, thus boosting the numbers. They would not be inducted as serving elders but would otherwise be able to make a valuable contribution to church life.

If you have questions about any of the issues raised above, the minister or the two current elders would be happy to talk to you about them. Also, if you have doubts about your possible involvement, perhaps the following prayer could help:

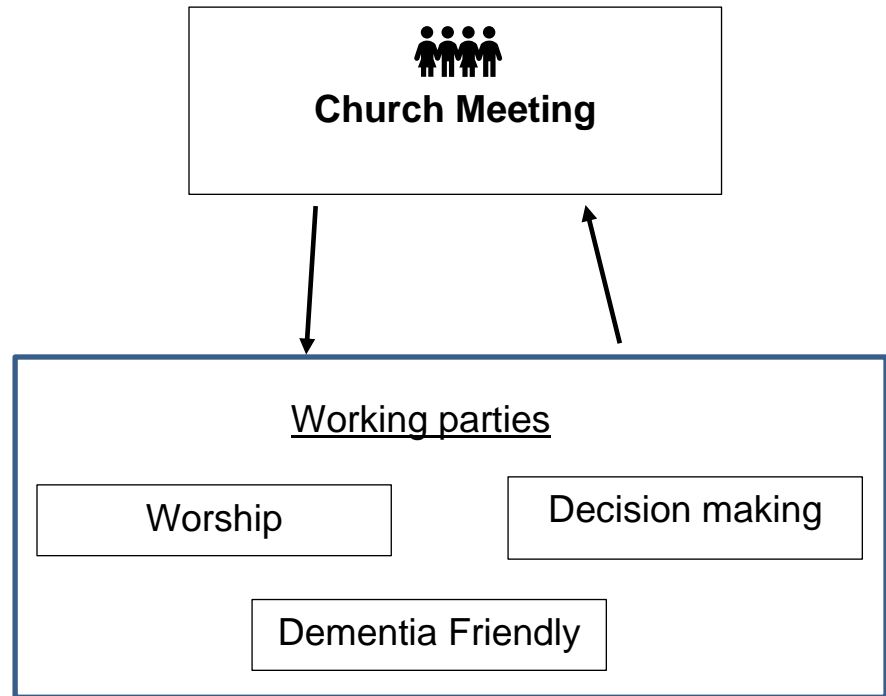
Jesus, my Lord and head of my church. I love my church and within it I feel among friends. I would like to serve my church more and help it to develop. To do this I need the confidence to feel that I can make a helpful contribution towards strengthening it; to widen its appeal locally and to work with its members and friends to make it a welcoming community. I ask you to give me that confidence and to give me the will to serve you in the process. Amen.

DECISION MAKING

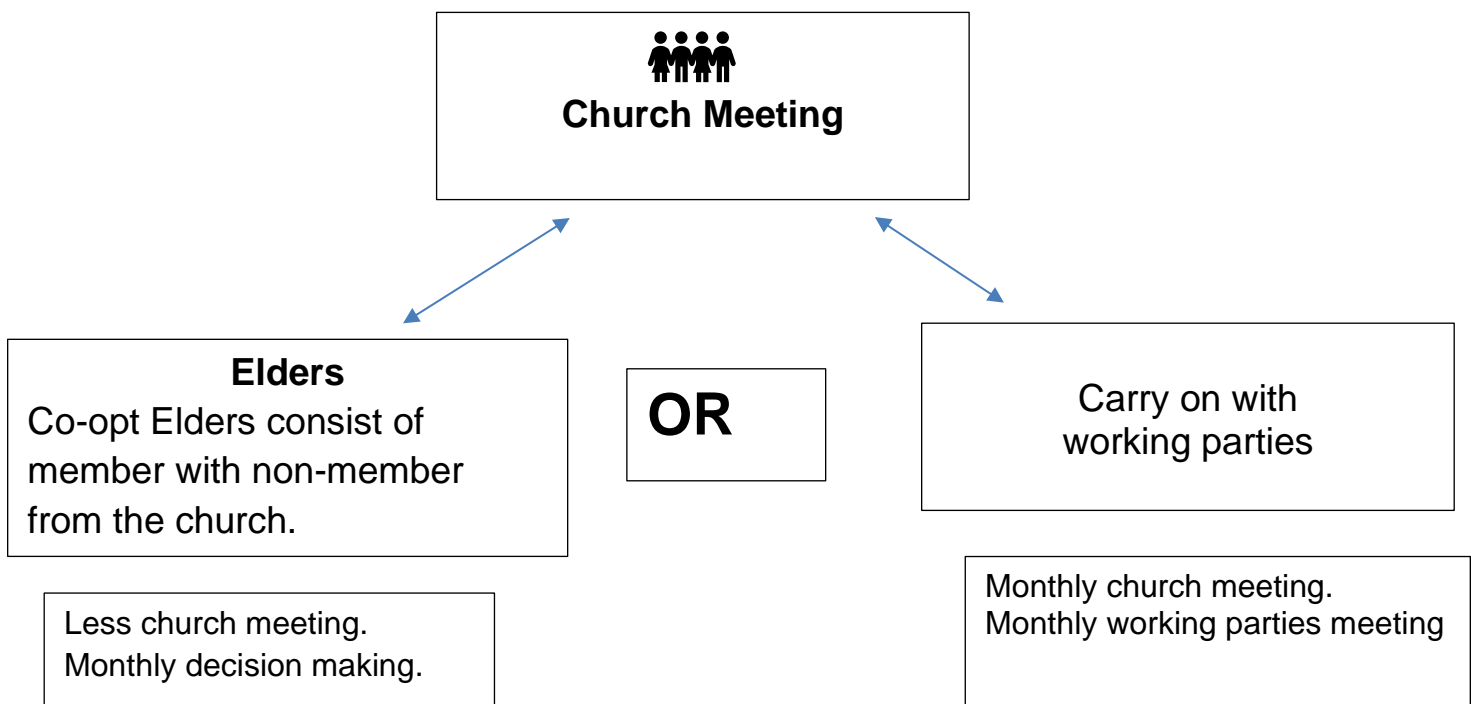
PAST



PRESENT



FUTURE (Idea in moving forward)



Who's Who at Bradleigh Avenue

Minister: Rev'd David Coaker
07378 348191
drcoaker@gmail.com

Secretary: Vacant

Treasurer: Mr Alan Beckley

Elders: Elders' Meeting temporarily suspended

Organist: Mr Richard Wade

Facilities Manager: Mrs Charlotte Webb
0784 3559011
graysurc@gmail.com

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

