



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

Silent Visitor



December 2021

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

Thur 16th Dec 3.30pm Christmas Messy Church

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

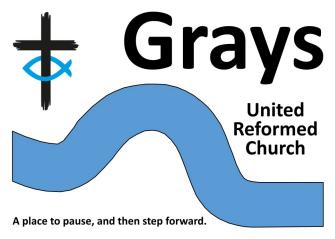
6.30pm Service of lessons and carols

Fri 24th Dec 4.00pm Family Christmas worship

6.30pm Christmas Eve service

Sun 26th Dec 10.30am Christmas service





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

Ephesians 4:32 (NIV)

Christmas Messages



Tony & Jean Olley send Christmas Greetings to all at Grays URC and wish you all a Happy & Healthy New Year.

Ruth and Roger wish everyone a Happy & Joyful Christmas and a Peaceful and Healthy 2022. (our charity is Water Aid) Richard Wade
and family send warmest
Christmas Greetings to
all friends at the Church.
(Meningitis Now in
memory of Andrew)

Elaine Barcz and Family send Christmas Greetings to the Church family, wishing everyone a joyous, safe and peaceful New Year. Bill and Pat Boag wish all our Church family and friends a happy, healthy and peaceful Christmas and New Year. (Donating to St Luke's Hospice)

Kathryn Taylor wishes everyone a joyous and blessed Christmas.

(Donation to MS Society)

Beryl Clarke wishes everyone at the URC a very Happy Christmas and a Healthy and Happy New Year. (Donation to St Luke's Hospice)

Wishing you a Happy Christmas and a Blessed New Year. Gina Nottage

(Donating to Marie Curie)

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all at Grays URC.

Janet & George Semain (Various Charities)

Jill Keane wishes
everyone a very Merry
Christmas and a Happy
and Healthy New Year.

Inger and Alan Collier wish all a Peaceful and Joyful Christmas and a Happy and Healthier New Year.

Margaret & Robert Datlen wish all their friends at Grays URC a very Happy Christmas and a healthy and happy new year.

We wish all our friends, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, a Very Happy, Safe and Blessed Christmas. Alf & Margaret Pryer



www.wannapik.com/vectors/34713

News of the Family

Along with their Christmas Message, Margaret Datlen has passed on her thanks to everyone who has kept in touch with her and Bob over the past six months.

(NB: Margaret is still recovering at home and we look forward to seeing her and Bob back with us in the New Year.)

We continue to remember all those within our congregation who are feeling unwell and frail and need our prayers.

Dear Lord, you know who these people are and we ask you to place your healing hands upon them to give them comfort. Amen

Tidings of comfort & joy, Carol — George Stuart, Australia

Tune: God rest you merry

To Bethlehem, a stable bare, we journey to behold

The baby born to change the world.

The story has been told.

He brings the lonely to his side.

He makes the timid bold.

O Tidings of comfort and joy, Comfort and joy

O Tidings of comfort and joy.

The lowest class was first to hear; downtrodden, they were poor;

For shepherds were despised, oppressed;

No rights before the law.

Yet these are those who come to Christ

To worship and adore.

O Tidings of comfort and joy, Comfort and joy

O Tidings of comfort and joy.

The priestly gift of frankincense, was 'holy' to the Lord.

Gold for a king, Myrrh for the grave,

Gifts we could not afford

Are brought to Jesus at his birth

By princes from abroad.

O Tidings of comfort and joy, Comfort and joy

O Tidings of comfort and joy.

So rich and poor in every time, are welcome at the stall;

The ones who count and those ignored,

The strong and those who fall;

For Jesus is the love of God

Out-flowing for us all.

O Tidings of comfort and joy, Comfort and joy

O Tidings of comfort and joy.

Mark's Bargains Sunday 5th December

10.15 – 10.30am (after young people's service) and then 11.30-12.00noon (after family worship)

Anything left over, will be available for sale the following Sunday.

All proceeds will be equally divided between our Church and the Alzheimer's Society.





26th December 2021

Boxing Day falls on a Sunday this year, and we shall be celebrating our 10.30am morning worship as usual. Please join me for a service of song and Christmas praise. You are invited after to service to stay for a faith lunch, bring along some food for the table and share in a time of fellowship together.

YOU ARE INVITED

26TH December 2021 to Faith lunch after the 10.30am service.

Please let Denise know if you are able to come.

Jesus was born

For me this is the central message as we journey through Advent and on to Christmas day. Christmas is when we celebrate that Jesus was born. It is the Christian festival when we celebrate this, not the date of his birth, his birthday party, or anything else that history, reason or reality can easily contradict. Jesus was born. He lived a life attentive and responsive to God's call. Attracted followers who, even after he died and when they faced persecution, remained true to his example. He healed, taught, and by his words and actions convinced others that God was working through him. It is to Jesus, who we read of in Scripture, passed down through the tradition of the Church, and in our own experience, that we look to for how to live our lives and live out our faith in God.

Isn't the simplicity, but also the breadth of that message, enough? When we only present Christmas in the Victorian whimsies of many of our carols, the dressing gowns and tea towels of our Nativities, and by taking literally the Nativity, the cut and pasting of parts of Matthew and Luke whilst ignoring the contexts and intentions of their authors and the rest of their gospels, we allow Christmas to continue to only be the mid-winter festival it usurped centuries ago.

Christmas can be a time of joy and goodwill, but a Church celebration of it needs to be more than window-dressing which enables the rampant consumerism and unrealistic expectations of it to go unchecked. Jesus was born, and that message is at once affirming, challenging and life-changing, and goes much deeper than a distant arbiter working out 'who's naughty and nice'.

Jesus shows us that we are loved by God. He challenges us to love God and to love each other. He calls us to live lives in tune with God's Kingdom of peace, justice and love. Jesus was born and, whilst at Christmas we can celebrate that, we cannot lose sight of the fact that his life means we are called to live differently. Our joy at Christmas should not be to the exclusion or detriment of others. Our goodwill should not gloss over the difficulties we, or others, face.

May this Christmas be a time of blessing to you, your families, our community, nation and world. Jesus was born. Alleluia!

With every blessing, Rev'd David R. Coaker

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**



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

Financial Update

It has been quite an uneventful month financially, with both our income and expenditure are reasonably stable at the moment. Having said that, the hall floor is having a long overdue sanding and re-seal in January, which will cost around £4,500.

Just two other items to report, the first is that I have decided to reinvest £5,000 into our ethically based investment fund. This will help to start repaying some of the money withdrawn to cover Covid related expenses.

The other is that Anne French's solicitors have contacted me to say that Anne bequeathed £2,000 to the church in her will.

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

Tending the flames

Amidst the darkness and chill of winter, a flame burns. An ancient flame.

Kept alight, as a reminder of the light and warmth of summer.

Kept alight, as a promise that summer will return.

Relit each year, yet burning from the dawn of humanity.

To that flame, other lights are drawn.

Traditions, legends and history, stake their claims and intermingle. A kaleidoscope of colours, glows and shapes.

Yet to devote ourselves to a single flame does not diminish the heat and light from all the others.

We all want to feel the warmth, see the light, be reminded of summers past, and hope for summers to come.

Tend your fire. Do not stifle the flames of others.

Be light. Strive to not let darkness extinguish any flame.

David Coaker



Greetings from a very cramped Corringham Warehouse. The builders are making good progress, the plastering on the lower level will be completed today and they will move upstairs to finish off next week. Whilst

that is good news, and the builders are progressing, next week we will lose 3m of the warehouse as they build the dividing wall. This will seriously reduce our working space. Please pray for our team as we work through the daily conundrums of where to put donations. It is a lovely problem to have, but we are having to be very inventive!

We were delighted to receive Mayors Certificate of recognition, which was awarded to Thurrock Foodbank, in recognition of the support that we gave during the Covid Pandemic. We also received a lovely letter from the Mayor Cllr Sue Shinnick. It is true recognition of our work and how we are seen across Thurrock that we were nominated by someone from the Thurrock Community.

The Trussell Trust has issued some half yearly figures. The new figures show more than 5,100 emergency food parcels were provided to people across the UK every day, by food banks across the network in the past six months. Almost 2,000 of these were provided for children. In Thurrock, since April we have fed 4304, 2093 which were children. It is sad that we are having to feed so many, and we are hearing daily of many desperate situations.

Historically they have always compared food bank data we release to the previous year but due to the economic and social impact of the pandemic, 2020 was an extremely unusual year for food banks. Food banks across the network have highlighted the following as reasons for the use of food banks between April and Sept last year:

- The significant number of redundancies
- Reduction in wages due to furlough
- The long-term financial effects of school closures on families
- · Increase in mental health support needs
- Huge disruption in access to informal support networks and other local charities

The unusual conditions of 2020 are why this year, they have compared figures to the period before the pandemic hit, April – September 2019. And as we look at what has been happening in

food banks this year, we're continuing to see a pattern of year on year increases across the network as a whole:

More than 5,100 emergency food parcels were, on average, provided to people across the UK every day by food banks across the network in April – Sept 2021. Almost 2,000 of these were provided for children. That's 936,000 emergency food parcels provided for people by food banks across the network from 1st April to 30th Sept 2021 - an 11% increase compared to the same period in 2019. Across the last five years, there has been a 74% increase.

Families with children have been hit the hardest, with food parcels for children increasing at double the rate for adults from 2019 – almost 2,000 parcels were provided for children every day in 2021, compared to 1,700 in 2019. Many families already at breaking point face an even tougher winter after £20 per week was cut from Universal Credit payments last month. This is on-top of rising fuel costs during winter when costs are already up and soaring inflation. Food banks across the UK in the Trussell Trust network face providing more than 7,000 parcels a day to people who can't afford essentials during Dec. In England, there was an 18% increase in comparison to April-Sept 2019, and here in Thurrock we saw a 20% increase. Some food banks are seeing more people needing support as the alternative provision set up during the pandemic has closed.

Food banks are also highlighting the impact the availability of wider support in a community can have - as some referral agencies have changed their ways of working or reduced their services, some food banks have been trying to find new ways of reaching people struggling to afford essentials. That is why we are looking forward to getting alongside people in the new "Spacious Place facility". Many food banks are already highlighting the increased pressure and need for support their food bank has felt since Oct. Many of the policy interventions put in place during the pandemic have been removed, and we are already sadly seeing the effects. Please keep us all in your prayers as we work our way through this situation.

Whilst we have a plentiful stock, we are still quite light on Sponge Puddings and Full Fat long life Milk.

Best regards, Pete Newall, Operations Manager Thurrock Foodbank 01375 416200 https://thurrock.foodbank.org.uk/

Statement from the Baptist Union, Methodist and the URC on the conclusion of the Glasgow COP26 summit – 14 Nov 2021

Significant new statements have been made at the summit in Glasgow. Most government delegations accept that the sense of urgency is greater than it was six years ago at Paris. But ultimately the summit has not delivered. All governments must agree on the necessary actions to avoid 1.5 degrees of warming. The failure of all parties at COP26 to unequivocally support this higher ambition with funding and emission reductions is an injustice towards those whose livelihoods have already been devastated by climate change.

We are deeply disappointed that the language on phasing out coal was weakened at the last moment however the summit has called for the phasing out of 'inefficient' subsidies for fossil fuels. COP26 has also initiated a process to create a fund to help communities recover from loss and damage resulting from severe climatic events. These developments are crucial and welcome, but we cannot wait for pledges to be reviewed and turned into action every five years. Action must be taken now. The pace and intensity of action must keep up with the science and with the realities experienced by an increasing number of people whose flourishing – now and in the future – depends on the actions that we all take today.

Many of our church partners in developing countries are already experiencing the dire impact of changing weather patterns on livelihoods and food security. Revd James Bhagwan, General Secretary of the Pacific Council of Churches said as he arrived as a delegate at COP26 that for many in the Pacific Islands, Psalm 137 with its reference to being "By the rivers of Babylon..." has particular resonance. As these communities face exile they experience a sense of loss of identity, loss of sovereignty, and loss of future. At COP26 our churches have listened to and sought to amplify the voices of those in the global South who are critically affected by loss through changing climates.

Our Churches acknowledge that while we live in an age of individuality and immediacy, this is a journey not of individuals but of a community: the people of God and the people of the earth. Whilst individual actions are important, this is a journey that requires us to work together to build a safe and healthy future for all. The involvement of so many sectors of society in COP26 was an inspiration. Sadly, the response of governments is not yet adequate and we call for further actions that respond meaningfully to the magnitude of the emergency that we face.

Chickens and eggs ...

Does the chicken and egg, 'which came first?' debate apply to church renewal? I don't think so, we need both and at the same time. If we focus solely on an 'egg' or a 'chicken', i.e. having a plan or undertaking activity, we may miss the Spirit moving. We need some idea of what we want to do and be doing something, but opportunities, ideas and reactions happen in the midst, and at times despite, our best laid plans or worthy ventures.

If we had a blank piece of paper, unlimited resources and a horde of people, we could come up with some very grand, adventurous or complicated plans. But we don't. We have what we've got, and all of our plans rely upon each other to come up with them, agree to them, and to carry them out. Some individuals may put forward ideas, but it is together that we pray, reflect, consider and make decisions. It requires patience from those that want to jump right in, willingness from those that would rather step back, pragmatism from those that would rather remember how it used to be, and from all of us prayer, tolerance, humility, openness and conversation.

The destiny of Grays URC is in the hands of Grays URC. We are able to offer worship each week, open up for our community to gather, and pay our bills. We are fewer in number at our 10.30am service, but we've maintained attendance at our monthly 9.30am, at Play Den and Messy Church, and broadened our welcome with the Community Café. On paper our membership and eldership continue to decline, we are without a church secretary, but our contributions to the life of the wider URC are met. We are not in an ideal position, but we are far from hopeless.

As in most situations, there will be no simple or single solution. Yes, we do need to have individual conversations about membership and wider ones about how we organise ourselves and how we define membership. We will still have the same people gathering as Grays URC, whether or not more of us become members or serve as elders, but hopefully we will feel freer and more energised with where we are going rather than lamenting where we've been. And in faith, we trust that God will lead us forward as we journey onwards.

With every blessing, Rev'd David R. Coaker

Decision Making; Membership; Eldership; Church Secretary.

These matters were brought forward for discussion at the last Church Meeting when it was agreed that they be encompassed into one report for consideration at January's Church Meeting where, hopefully, decisions can be made on how to take the issues forward. This article is to give members some advance information to help them to make decisions at that meeting.

In regard to future <u>Church Meetings</u> it was generally accepted that a more informal style of meeting should be introduced making it easier for people to speak and to be heard. A round table style was considered as appropriate and a layout would be tried by the Decisions Group before the meeting.

Church Membership was an issue which had engendered some discussion. It was noted that some regular worshippers already performed many services to the church without having taken up membership and were content to leave the matter there. This was gratefully acknowledged but the meeting considered whether there were issues standing in the way of their taking up membership. One such possibility was that membership brought committed responsibilities which might become onerous. The general view, however, was that there need be no such problem as all that would change would be that those people would be empowered to vote at Church Meetings on many important matters of worship and management. In addition, they would become registered on the list of members when future consideration of the allocation by Synod of ordained leadership of the church was considered. Such helpers and others were invited to consider taking up membership on that basis.

Currently there are only two <u>Serving Elders</u> in the church. As a result, it has become necessary to suspend Elders Meetings and have all business of the church discussed at Church Meeting once every month (as distinct from once per quarter). This is not a satisfactory situation as it prevents detailed consideration by a standing group of elected members who would be given power by Church Meeting to make certain delegated decisions on behalf of the church and who, for more important matters, would normally report to Church Meeting with their recommendations. Again, the

meeting considered what might be standing in the way of members' coming forward as prospective elders. The same problem of possible onerous duties was considered.

Members were therefore asked to consider the question of becoming Serving Elders without their taking on any further duties than attending a meeting once per month in order to consider church business and make recommendations to Church Meeting. This would leave a number of habitual duties often performed by Serving Elders to be performed in other ways. This is considered further in the following paragraphs.

Church Secretary: This important post is currently unfilled. As a result, the minister has had to fill in to cover duties normally performed by the Secretary (as well as other matters arising from time to time such as editing Silent Visitor whilst the usual editor has been indisposed). This is an unfair burden. But there would not seem to be many (if any!) members who would even consider the possibility of volunteering for this post. Onerous and time consuming duties are thought to be the main reason. The last meeting considered that many of those duties should be broken down and, where possible or appropriate, performed by volunteers on an individual job basis. Those jobs could be instanced as putting together rotas for such things as flowers; refreshments; bible readings; preparing and serving at communion services; taking minutes of church and elders meetings and preparing the church for services each Sunday etc. The day to day jobs to be performed by the secretary would be discussed with the minister and at Elders Meetings. The post holder could be given the right to appoint an assistant. As a start to the breaking down of those jobs, one volunteer has already come forward to take minutes of Elders and Church Meetings. So that could be a start! Would anyone else like to come forward?

The January Church Meeting will consider all these matters and, where possible make some decisions enabling the church to move forward. Everyone's contribution to this discussion will be important so it would be appreciated if as many people as possible could attend.

George Semain

Reginald William Holwell

28/07/1922 - 15/10/2021

The tribute offered by his son, David

We are here today to celebrate the life of Reg, lan's and my Dad, who lived for a wonderful 99 years and recently celebrated his birthday with us all. He has two wonderful daughters-in-law: Joan and Dawn, 5 grandsons: Tom, Robert, Louis, Bertie and Henry, a grand-daughter in law, Xanthe and a great granddaughter Marlow, who will all miss him greatly.

Dad was born in Grays where he lived all his life. He was one of 9 children, Herbert, who sadly died, Horace, Harold, Vera, Elsie, Gwen, Mable and Sylvia. It is lovely to see Aunty Sylvia here and so many of our cousins representing his brothers and sisters. His family was so important to Dad.

He left school at the age 14, as happened then, he had various jobs; one of which was a delivery boy for Ticehursts ladies store. He also told us stories of cycling home when the air raids in the early part of WW2 were happening in the Grays area.

Then in 1942 he was called up to serve in the army and began his training in Scarborough before joining the Reconnaissance Regiment, 52nd Lowland division, which was based in Scotland. They were being prepared for snow warfare in Norway, but they landed in France within a week of D day and fought in Europe until the end of the war

For many years of lan's and my lives he spoke very little, if at all, of his time in the war, as is typical of his generation, but in his later years he began to talk more and the Old Comrades Reconnaissance Association helped celebrate a unique part of his life. He became the Chairman of this association and he has been honoured to have the Regimental Colours on him.

After the war he worked in the Grays Co-operative Society, decorating the shops and offices. This was where he met our Mum, Jean, who was a secretary to one of the managers. They were

married on 23rd January 1954 and soon moved into our family home in Lodge Lane where both Ian and I were born and lived, until we both commenced our careers in Medicine. He became a self-employed painter and decorator when the Grays Co-operative Society was taken over and worked long hours to look after us all. But he always kept in touch with his brothers and sisters and I remember being taken to see various aunties and uncles on a Sunday.

Sadly, our Mum Jean died suddenly in 1998, after 44 years of happy marriage. Although Mum never saw all of the grand-children, dad took every opportunity to see our families grow and became a much loved Grandad. More recently he became a great grandad to a first baby girl Marlow, in our family. He was so, so, proud of all his grandsons and how they have grown into such fine men and to have been a special part of their lives.

We all have such great memories of time with him, and I'm sure all of you have your own special memories of him too. One memory he would tell us about was of him and Aunty Sylvia going to Sunday school, and then going to see Grandad Saveall, with his big bushy white beard, and helping him to plant plants, as he had poor eyesight as well as a wooden leg! He continued to attend church here at the United Reformed Church over many years and he often thanked God for looking after him all these years. In his later years the stories of the war and his time there had become a great focus for his memories so it was fitting today on Remembrance day to celebrate his life.

We will miss you Dad you were the best dad Ian and I could have, you were a gentleman and always so immaculately dressed, Ian and I have a lot to live up to but will do the best for our families as you did for you did for us.

We love you!

Be at peace now with God and all those family and friends that have gone before you.

Grays United Reformed Church - Worship Plan

Date	Lead by	Time	Notes
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	4.00pm	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
09.01.22	David Coaker	10.30am	
16.01.22	George Semain	10.30am	
23.01.22	David Coaker	10.30am	
30.01.22	Denise Beckley	10.30am	
06.02.22	David Coaker	9.30am	Young Families
	David Coaker	10.30am	Communion

Community Café: Wednesdays between 10am-12noon – all are welcome! On 8th Dec there will be stall(s) for church funds and we'll play bingo and have a raffle. (Donations of prizes would be appreciated.) We will meet up to Wed 22nd Dec, miss the 29th, and restart on Wed 5th Jan 2022.

January SV - If you could please email or phone through your contributions for Jan SV by **Friday 7**th **Jan** to David.

Sunday 23rd January – following worship and refreshments, we will gather together as church meeting.

Worship Team: the next meeting will be on **Thurs 27th Jan** between 10am-12noon. All with an interest in our worship are welcome to participate in the conversation.

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

