



 URCGrays
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Silent Visitor



Lest we forget

November 2022

Gethsemane

1914 – 1918

The Garden called Gethsemane
In Picardy it was,
And there the people came to see
The English soldiers pass.
We used to pass – we used to pass
Or halt, as it might be,
And ship our masks in case of gas
Beyond Gethsemane.

The Garden called Gethsemane,
It held a pretty lass,
But all the time she talked to me
I prayed my cup might pass.
The officer sat on the chair,
The men lay on the grass,
And all the time we halted there
I prayed my cup might pass.

It didn't pass – it didn't pass –
It didn't pass from me.
I drank it when we met the gas
Beyond Gethsemane.

Rudyard Kipling (30.12.1865 – 18.01.1936)

Grays United Reformed Church - Worship Plan

Date	Led by	Time	Notes
06.11.22	David Coaker	9.30	Young Families Supported by Denise Beckley
06.11.22	David Coaker	10.30	Holy Communion
09.11.22	David Coaker	11.00	Dementia Friendly
13.11.22	David Coaker	10.30	Remembrance Service / Parade
20.11.22	Denise Beckley	10.30	Cafe Style
27.11.22	David Coaker	10.30	1 st Sunday in Advent/Baptism - Tori
04.12.22	David Coaker	9.30	Young Families Supported by Denise Beckley
04.12.22	David Coaker	10.30	Christmas Parade/ Gift Service

Duty Elder Rota

Date	On Duty	Communion
06.11.22	Alf Pryer	Margaret Pryer
13.11.22	Janet Semain	
20.11.22	Alan Beckley	
27.11.22	Elaine Barcz	

Dates for Your Diary

Community Café: Every Wednesday 10am-12noon – all are welcome!

Dementia friendly worship: First Wednesday of each month at 11 am

Church Meeting: Sunday 27 November following worship.

Elders' Meeting: Wednesday 2 November at 12.30 for 1pm.

Bible Study: Wednesday 9 November @ 1 pm.

Silent Visitor: The next edition of the Silent Visitor will be for December and January. Please kindly let Janet have any articles by **Friday 25th November**.

Also if you would like to include a Christmas Message in that edition please make sure you let the editor have a copy of your message and details of any charity you may be supporting by the 25th November too.

Any Spare Loose Change!!!



Please don't forget that any loose change jingling in your purses or pockets can be donated to Water Aid.

Alf and Margaret Pryer bring along the tub each week for your donations. This can be found on the table at the back of the church.

A place to pause and then step forward

In life, and especially in church life, it is all too easy to define ourselves by what we aren't. We aren't as numerous as we used to be. We aren't running a thriving Junior church, study group, prayer group, church sale, coffee morning, or insert your own choice of activity, anymore. We aren't a hand waving, worship band led, tub thumping sermon listening, testimony sharing, spontaneous praying, totally certain, dogma spouting, again insert your own choice of Christian expression, kind of congregation. And as we define ourselves by what we aren't, we pile on all of things that worry us about church life on top. It's because we aren't 'something', whatever that something is, which is the cause of all our woes.

I hate to break it to you, but it is because of who we are that we are where we are! All of the choices, activities, people, all that has made up the life of Grays URC over the years, has got us to where we are today. It is just as much the things we haven't done, as the things we have done, that has got us to this point.

So, the first thing I want you to do is to stop dwelling on what we aren't. Turn your thinking around, accept where we are, concentrate on who we actually are, the positives within that, and how we can move forward from here.

We are blessed with a low maintenance flexible building and the resources to pay Charlotte to sort it out for us. We have enough income from our regular lettings to cover our main outgoings. We have more than enough leaders of worship, a talented organist, and people to drive the laptop, to ensure Sunday worship. We have links with younger folk through our Scout and Guide groups, pre-school, and our own Playden, young families service and Messy Church. We have links with

older folk through the community café and mature movers. We are blessed with folk willing to support these activities and serve on the elders meeting. We are an accepting and welcoming group of people who are content to come alongside folk on their terms.

There are also blessings in being a small congregation. If we had a good idea this morning, we could implement it next week. We don't need to form a working party, prepare a proposal, talk it through at a series of church meetings to ensure that the membership are all informed and included. Most of us are already here and, within reason, if we come to a decision, we can just get on with it.

You all know the well-worn image of trying to turn a tanker at sea in comparison to a motorboat. The tanker will take miles and hours to change direction, the motorboat can be immediate. Our challenge is that we're in a motorboat, but our minds are on board a tanker!

Of course, the bigger challenge is actually having the good idea and deciding to do it.

We also pile on the pressure by assuming that the good idea has to be a big one. Our fears for the future are so overwhelming that the solution has to be all-encompassing.

So, my second request is for us to lay that aside too. While we huddle together coming up with a master plan the holy spirit can be blowing around us ignored. What we need to do is to create space for the spirit, be attentive and responsive.

Our Mission Plan as a church is to be a place to pause and then step forward. We need to actually do that. We need to

take an intentional pause so we can actually reflect on the direction our next step may take. Covid forced us to stop, and since then we've got ourselves up and running again, but now we need to make a positive choice to pause and be open to where that may lead us.

Our worship team meet next week and, as yet, we have nothing planned for the Sundays after the end of this month. So, let us make the most of the opportunity this gives us.

On Sunday 6th Nov we would normally have our 9.30am young family' service and then a 10.30am communion. I propose that at our 9.30am service we open up a conversation with our young families about what Grays URC means to them. We then all gather to share in refreshments from around 10.15am and spend some time being with each other. Time in conversation and fellowship, with no agenda or structure. Then when we're ready, we gather to share in communion together.

The 13th will be Remembrance Sunday, so we go ahead with our parade as usual. On the 20th we invite our worship team to come up with something. The 27th will probably include baptisms and be the start of Advent, so that Sunday will probably plan itself.

Then we'll be into Advent and our Christmas services, and again we invite our worship team to come up with a pattern of our worship to mark this but also to take time within it all to pause.

So, nothing drastic. No master plan. Just a gentle rejig of what we do to create space for us to pause, be with each other, be open to what's going on, and see where that takes us.

So let us take some time to pause, to stop dwelling on what we aren't, to accept where we are, to concentrate on who we actually are, the positives within that, and how we can move forward from here. Let us create space for the spirit, and to be attentive and responsive to where that may lead us.

With every blessing, Rev'd David R. Coaker

Financial Update Oct/Sept 2022

As at 30 September the bank balance stood at £22,000, comfortably above my preferred minimum balance, and getting ready for those hefty winter heating bills!

Talking of which, I am waiting to see what, if any, financial support might be forthcoming from the government and/or synod regarding energy costs, before meeting with Charlotte and discussing the hirers rent reviews for 2023.

Obviously, we as a church, do not wish to increase our premises hire charges any more than absolutely necessary, but we also need to be aware of the ever increasing energy costs. Watch this space.

Otherwise not much to report at the moment, other than the usual thanks to all those who help me as treasurer.

One last thing. It has been suggested that our income from lettings is enough to cover our regular outgoings. Whilst this income certainly helps, the church finances still rely heavily on the regular (and occasional) giving by our very generous congregation, Thank you.

Alan Beckley

Warm Hub

The last Government survey in 2020 estimated that 1 in 8 households in the UK were in Fuel Poverty. Clearly the rising energy prices will have made this situation worse. However, it is important to be aware that as well as energy prices and household incomes, the energy efficiency of people's homes is an important contributor to this issue and means that rural communities can often be as affected by this as urban.

About 5 years ago, Community Action Northumberland (CAN) developed the idea of Warm Hubs. They define warm hubs as "places within the local community where people can be assured of finding a safe, warm and friendly environment in which to enjoy refreshments, social activity, information and advice and the company of other people." These are predominantly found in village and church halls where as well as acting as means of addressing issues of fuel poverty, they also provide a means of reducing social isolation and an access point to other services. More information can be found on the CAN website: www.ca-north.org.uk/supporting-individuals/warm-hubs.

BBC news reported in July that Lancashire County Council were looking to use this type of approach as a way of addressing the issue of fuel poverty in this coming winter. www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-lancashire-62178216. There is a specific reference to the faith sector involvement in this plan. Clearly this is not an issue that will be confined to one geographical area in our country. It is also something with our availability of premises, and experience in providing hospitality, that churches could play an active role in a community response.

The Eastern Synod Resources committee wishes to give support to churches that seek to assist their wider community by establishing a Warm Hub. In light of this we intend to apply for funding and host a warm hub on **Wednesdays from 10am – 3pm from 16th November**. This will include the community café and we will be seeking additional volunteers to help cover the extra time involved. We will also be exploring offering a lunchtime meal.

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

Which kind of Lifeboat?



The day before our Eastern Synod was due to meet Lythan, our moderator, called me (as I was buying bread for our Harvest parade) to tell me she had tested positive for Covid. After some swift delegation of some of the presentations she was down for, I sat down to work through her notes to complete preparations for the closing communion service. The passage she had chosen was Matthew's version of the Jesus walking on the water story. (Matthew 14:22-33) In one of those coincidences, or movements of the Spirit, this passage (or at least John's version) came up as our worship team met the day before and reflected on the sermon I'd offered last Sunday, which appears elsewhere in this issue of SV.

The illustration I offered about trying to turn a tanker at sea in comparison to a motorboat, had led some members of the worship team to ponder on what kind of boat they were on, and the conclusion they drew was that they were on a lifeboat.

I can understand the reasoning behind that. We can all nostalgically reminisce about when going to church felt like a cruise on a luxury liner. There are plenty of stories in the Bible of shipwrecks. And we've been through plenty of debates and discussions about reorganising ourselves, when the phrase

‘rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic has been heard’ or more accurately, muttered.

I can understand the reasoning behind choosing the lifeboat image, but I’d still want to challenge it. A lifeboat is the last resort. The ship is sinking, not possible to repair or re-float, and we need to escape to safety. There are things about describing our churches as being lifeboats that concern me. If we’re in a lifeboat, what are we expecting? Are we simply waiting for someone to come along to save us? Are we expecting the next initiative from the denomination or Synod, the new minister, or young family, to turn everything around? Are we placing all of the responsibility on someone else?

Another concern relates back to my observation, that we’re in a motorboat, but in our minds, we are on board a tanker. Are we recreating or imagining our lives on a luxury cruise liner within the confines of a lifeboat? Are we expending energy maintaining traditions and activities that are no longer a natural fit for where we are now?

With all this in mind, I tried to draw some parallels between our boat and the reading from Matthew. Just like the disciples it can feel as if church life is battered by waves, far from land, and that the wind is against us. This can give us a general anxiety or fear, and which can be heightened when we encounter Christ along the way. Encounter Christ in the way we have it elsewhere in Matthew, 25:31-40, in those that are hungry, thirsty, an outsider, lacking clothes, ill or imprisoned. An encounter with Christ which might take us out of our comfort zones. An encounter, which in our fear, we deny, ignore, make out is a ghost, and drown out the sounds around us with our cries. But sometimes in those encounters the spirit moves and we discern Christ’s voice clearly, “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.”

In those moments, situations or activities it is as if Christ enters our boat and the winds die down. Encountering Christ from the relative safety and comfort of our boat is one thing, but how do

Peter's actions fit in? On the one hand we have Matthew's recurring theme of using Peter, Jesus' right-hand man, to reassure the community he is writing for that even the best of us mess up. On the other we might question Peter's motivation. Peter wants Jesus' permission to leave behind his fellow disciples and duplicate Jesus' actions. Is this an act of complete obedience to Jesus or his ego urging him to better his fellows? What is clear, is that to step out of the boat requires even greater focus on the example of Jesus and the presence of Christ. Being on the boat, within the church, offers some security and safety, but to step out requires even keener discernment of where Christ is within it.

At the end of Synod, a Methodist minister in attendance came up to me and asked, "What kind of lifeboat?" He then pointed out the kind that the RNLI use: ones that are crewed by volunteers, that head out into the storm to help others, and that are self-righting. These lifeboats are a much more positive model for the church to emulate.

I won't press our worship team as to which kind of lifeboat they meant, and I apologise for jumping to conclusions, but my concerns remain. Which kind of lifeboat are we on? How can we turn a lifeboat we may cling to for safety into one that heads out into the storm to help others?

With every blessing, Rev'd David R. Coaker

A Memory of H.M. Queen Elizabeth II

On Thursday September 15 this year, the Thurrock Gazette published a full page photograph of the late Queen and Duke of Edinburgh on their visit to Grays in 1981. An examination of that picture would show that they were both holding writing implements.

Much work had gone into the planning of their visit when they were to walk, greeting the crowds, from Grays War Memorial to the Thameside Theatre and Library. That walk took place in the pouring rain but that did little to dampen the occasion.

After visiting the building and taking tea, the plan was that the Queen would sign a visitor's book in the foyer of the library. Knowing how such events can go wrong (note how the new King became a little irascible when signing such things at his proclamation, sweeping the implements away with the alleged phrase, "Stinking pen!"), I was determined that this would not happen at our signing.

The visit had been planned under the supervision of the County Lord Lieutenant, then Admiral Sir Andrew Lewis, who approved the arrangements for the signing. The book was made ready but what about the pen? This could possibly be the Achilles heel of the event and must go without a hitch, the most likely of which would be that the pen did not work.

It would not have been appropriate to use somebody's fountain pen as they were notoriously biased towards the side of the pen in contact with the paper, according to the writing of the owner. A simple pen and inkwell would not meet the standard of the occasion. After scouring the local shops I found a nice looking pen and appropriate inkwell which had the pen resting in the ink. I was assured this always worked first time.

Then came the moment of truth. On being invited to sign by the Mayor, the Queen took the pen from the inkwell and with a flourish wrote the 'E' of Elizabeth. Except that she didn't! The specially chosen pen failed to work. With great equanimity the Queen smiled, delved into her handbag and produced, no, not a marmalade sandwich but a stylish gold capped fountain pen with which she completed her signature. I was somewhat

crestfallen, the remainder of the visit having proceeded without a hitch, earning the approval of her assistant private secretary.

Perhaps no one would notice. But that would have been omitting to provide for the interest of the Duke of Edinburgh. He made a point of picking up the useless instrument and giving it a minute examination, as shown in the Gazette's picture. Thank you Sir!

The Queen was clearly more experienced in these matters than I was. The best laid plans...!

George Semain



Paddington sat down sadly,
On a green and quiet glade,
And pulled a sandwich from his hat
made with the nicest marmalade



He had heard sad news this very day
That the Queen's life had come to an end
He cried because that day they met
She had become his bestest friend.

They had shared some tea
That very day when to the Palace he had been invited
He remembered he could hardly speak
He was so very very excited

He offered her his sandwich
Made with such love and care
She smiled at him and with a grin
She showed that little bear

That inside of her handbag
There was something she had made
And that she too kept a special sandwich
Made of the finest marmalade

Although he was just a little bear
And she a regal Queen
Watching her take that sandwich out of her bag
Was the best thing he had seen

He wondered if any body else would miss her
Now that she had gone
And his heart was filled up to the brim
When he turned his little phone on

He saw that Facebook had been flooded
With her picture old and new
And that he himself that little bear
Was also in them too

Although today is the saddest
That he has ever been
He will always lovingly remember
The day he had tea with the Queen.





Olive Tree Project

The olive tree is a universal symbol of peace and a powerful symbol of Palestinian rootedness in their land.

But in the political turmoil of the Middle East today, trees that have survived hundreds of years have become casualties in the struggle for the control of the land.

Olive trees are also a major source of income for Palestinians for centuries, with trees covering over 50% of agricultural land.

The olive and olive oil industry supports the livelihoods of around 100,000 Palestinian families.

Since the Israeli occupation of the West Bank began in 1967, Palestinian farmers have lost hundreds of thousands of olive trees.

Trees planted and cared for by generations of the same family have been destroyed or uprooted as Israeli settlers seek to claim Palestinian land as their own.

Through an initiative called 'Keep Hope Alive', Embrace the Middle East partner with the Joint Advocacy Initiative to plant saplings in Palestinian-owned areas that are at risk of confiscation.

Throughout Advent we will be raising money to sponsor the olive tree project. The trees cost £15 each. If you would like to pay for one yourself and be registered, please fill in the details on an envelope.

Video clip: <https://youtu.be/cFsWxeacXzo>



MOVING STORIES**Supporting our global partners FAIRTRADE EDITION****UK Retailers commit to Fairtrade**

Commitment for Life supports The Fairtrade Foundation who work in partnership with 1.9 million farmers and workers globally to address the root causes of poverty. The good news is that more UK retailers are committed to Fairtrade. "It is inspiring to see that public trust in, and preference for, Fairtrade is at its highest ever," says Michael Gidney, chief Executive of Fairtrade Foundation.

Lidl is the biggest buyer of Fairtrade cocoa. It rolled out its 'Way 2 Go' chocolate across 400 stores. Aldi launched the Choco Changer, a new chocolate bar that commits to Fairtrade's Living Income Reference Price for cocoa. Aldi also provides opportunities for flower farm workers in Ethiopia to meet objectives on gender equity. Other Fairtrade cocoa conversions were made by SPAR. It introduced three new products on trial. Proper, building on their brand commitment as the 'only Fairtrade sweet popcorn' introduced two new Proper Chocolate Popcorn bars, while Asda launched a new FSI cocoa chocolate bar. 100 percent Fairtrade brand Tony's Chocolonely also launched in major retailers in 2021.

Since 2005, Greggs has sourced Fairtrade coffee beans for all its coffee products. It has since added bananas, apple juice, orange juice, sugar sticks, sugar syrup, hot chocolate, black tea, mint tea, and green tea as part of its Fairtrade commitments. In August 2021, Greggs announced a switch to using only Fairtrade chocolate in its own products, which include Milk Chocolate Cookies, Caramel Shortbread and Chocolate Brownies.

Who's Who at Bradleigh Avenue

Minister: Rev'd David Coaker
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Treasurer: Mr Alan Beckley

Elders: Mr George Semain, Mrs Janet Semain,
Mr Alf Pryer & Mrs Denise Beckley.
Co-opted: Mrs Elaine Barcz,
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