 URCGrays
www.graysurc.org.uk

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

Silent Visitor



February 2023

Footprints in the Sand

Here is another favourite poem often found on bookmarks, and prayer cards. It is about two sets of footprints in the sand and how our Lord is able to carry us through the difficult times of our life.

Anon.

One night I dreamed I was walking along the beach
with the Lord.

Many scenes from my life across the sky.
In each scene I noticed footprints in the sand.
Sometimes there were two sets of footprints,
other times there were one set of footprints.

This bothered me because I noticed
that during the low periods of my life,
when I was suffering from
anguish, sorrow or defeat,
I could see only one set of footprints.

So I said to the Lord,
"You promised me Lord,
that if I followed you,
you would walk with me always.
But I have noticed that during
the most trying periods of my life
there have only been one
set of footprints in the sand.
Why, when I needed you most,
you have not been there for me?"

The Lord replied,
**"The times when you have seen
only one set of footprints,
is when I carried you."**



Written by Mary Stevenson from original 1936 text.

Grays United Reformed Church - Worship Plan

Date	Led by	Time	Notes
05.02.23	David Coaker	9.30	*Young Families Supported by Denise Beckley
05.02.23	David Coaker	10.30	*Service will include Holy Communion
07.02.23	David Coaker	11.00	Dementia Friendly
12.02,23	Alf Pryer	10.30	All Age Service
19.02.23	Denise Beckley	10.30	Cafe Style Worship
25.02.23	David Coaker	10.30	All Age Service
01.03.23	David Coaker	11.00	Dementia Friendly Service
05.02.23	David Coaker	9.30	*Young Families Supported by Denise Beckley
05.02.23	David Coaker	10.30	*Service will include Holy Communion

*On the first Sunday of each month there will be joint refreshments available at 10.15 am for both the 9.30 and 10.30 services. This gives an opportunity for both congregations to get to know each other.

Holding it all together

What is Grays URC? That is a question that can be answered in various ways. All the answers we could come up with may well be correct, but all to some extent fall short and all are needed to be held together to come near to a complete answer.

The most obvious answer is our buildings as they're placed off Bradleigh Avenue. The bricks and mortar. The place to go to, to point others towards. We could also answer by describing what United Reformed Church means. Pointing to our neighbouring churches, our ways of worship and decision-making, and our history. Another answer is to look to the people, but which people? Our members may look to their fellows at the 10.30am service, but others would point to Playden, Mature Movers, the community café, the 9.30am service, Messy Church, the various groups that hire our building, the Scout and Guide groups or Little Roos pre-school. We might also indicate individuals, past and present, who have been figureheads in the church's life. We might suggest Silent Visitor, activities that form part of the pattern of the year, or significant events that we remember. Possibly the answer could be a feeling, an approach to being church, or our mission statement: a place to pause, and then step forward. What would your answer be?

So, what is Grays URC? Well, it is all those answers, those that the people reading this come up with too, and more! But the more complete answer comes through holding all the answers together. The challenge is for us to try to hold them all together by respecting answers that differ from our own, be open as we seek to discover more answers, and welcome the Spirit of God to move through it all.

An aspect of this is reflected in our revised membership flier, which seeks to open up being a member to anyone who participates in the worshipping life of Grays URC. Another is

our move out of the worship space on Sunday mornings for the rest of winter to reduce our heating bills, but also to explore different ways of worshipping together. We have set off on a journey together and we are relying on each other to discern the way the wind is blowing, to keep an eye out for obstacles, to maintain our vessel, and to look towards where God is calling us. May God bless our journey of discovery!

With every blessing, Rev'd David R. Coaker

Financial Update February 2023

As of the 31st December the bank balance was £23,000. The gas bill for November was £1,220 and for December it was £2,000. This means the gas bills for January and February (the coldest months) could well be anything between £2,000 and £3,000 per month, possibly more, depending on weather and church usage. (This is for heating the church / hall building only). To put this into context, the total gas bill for October, November and December 2021 was £670. For the same months in 2022 the total is £3,260. This is not sustainable, and a change of worship styles and locations during the coldest months is, in my opinion, necessary to help reduce this figure.

Details of government help with the bills are still not forthcoming. I am also preparing figures to submit to synod to see if we qualify for financial help with gas bills.

Another task for me is to meet with our accountant and start on the year end accounts, and then to send the agreed 5% donation to our chosen charity of the year, the Alzheimer's Society.

When I have a clearer idea on the actual heating costs for both annexe and church, I will meet with Charlotte to discuss 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 else to report at the moment, the above work, together with the treasurer's day to day tasks has taken up rather a lot of my time.

The usual thanks go 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 Beckley



Bryan Overland

Thank you for all your kind and supportive messages since the sad passing of my father on 20 December 2022.

His funeral will take place on Thursday 2 February, with a service at 10.15 am, then at Grays New Cemetery in Chadwell Road at 11.15 am, followed by refreshments at 35 Tennyson Avenue.

If anyone would like to make a donation in his memory, my brother and I have selected the Alzheimer's Society, we think this would be his choice as Mum (Maureen) is suffering from, this terrible disease.

With best wishes, Susan

4th Grays Guides

Thank you for your kind words and the lovely Orchid, which Gill passed on to me after the Parade service in December. Gill and I have been leaders at the unit together for over 40 years – some of you will be aware that I was also a Brownie, Guide and Ranger at 4th Grays before becoming a leader, so my association goes back over 50 years to 1968, when I was 7 years old.

I have so many happy memories of the activities and events, trips and camps which we took part in, and all the girls and other leaders we have met and worked with during that time.

Particular thanks to Gillian Chapman, who has been with us for the last few years and retires with us, also Selena and Tanya, who each supported us for many years, and of course, Jill Manning, who was the third member of the team for over 20 years until her untimely death in 2006.

Thank you all for your support and friendship.

Yours in Guiding,

Sue Meurs



The Fall in the House of Nottage

by Georgina Nottage

There I was climbing the stairs

They are not very high and not very deep

When suddenly I slipped and off I went!

I'm now on my back picking up speed

Thought to myself grab hold of the newel

Not a good idea 'cause now I'm flying with my legs in
the air!

I was bored with being on my back so

I decided to come down the next flight on my tummy.

Didn't grab hold of the newel this time

But this time it would have been a good idea.

Because I slid across the tiled lobby and

Crashed into the bottom of the lounge door.

Moral of the story is – concentrate when climbing stairs

You don't want to land in hospital for repairs!



Little Thurrock Primary School
Excerpt from the School Newsletter –
December 2022

"Dear Parents and Carers,

I would like to say a big thank you to you all for attending the Christmas events that we have held this week both in school and the United Reformed Church on Bradleigh Avenue. Nursery and Reception both held two Nativity plays which were very well attended by parents and carers and over the course of three days this week more than 500 children and 300 adults attended the carol services at the URC.

I would like to say a special thank you to Rev'd David Coaker, who is one of our school governors, for letting us visit his wonderful church and for giving so generously of his time."





World Day of Prayer

3 March 2023

This year we will be celebrating with services at:-

2 pm in West Thurrock Chapel, 562 London Road,
Grays RM20 3BJ

and

7.30pm in St Cedd's Church, Crammavill Street,
Stifford Clays, Grays RM16 2AP

World Day of Prayer is a women's led global ecumenical movement of informed prayer and prayerful action.

Every year, the worship service focuses on a different country and a specific theme.



This year's service has been prepared by Christian women of Taiwan. The theme "I have heard about your faith" is based on Ephesians 1:15 – 19. In the service we will learn about Taiwan and there will be a bible reading, hymns and prayers.

We will be part of a great wave of prayer encircling the globe. The service has been translated into over 60 languages and 1,000 dialects and will be celebrated in 170 countries and islands.

There will be refreshments served after each service.

Everybody is welcome

Will You be my Valentine?



The answer to that question might be, "Not if I have to have my head cut off, thank you." Let's see why!

Valentine was a third century Roman who was made a saint. He is commemorated by the Western church on 14 February but by the Eastern church on 6 July. From the Middle Ages his Saint's Day has been associated not only with courtly love and engaged couples but also with marriages, the mentally ill, plague and epilepsy. He also has power against fainting. He was a clergyman, possibly a bishop, who spent much of his time helping Christians who were being persecuted, a favourite Roman occupation at the time.

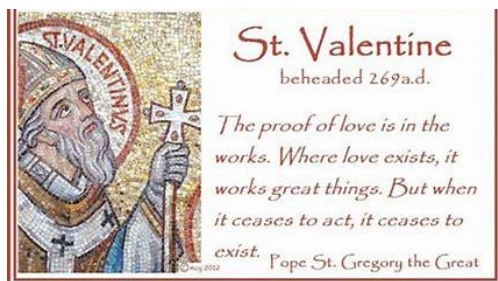
The Catholic Church keeps relics of him, the main one being his skull, which is kept in the Basilica of Santa Maria in Rome where you can view it under its garland of flowers (if you like that sort of thing!!)

One of the main stories about him is that his activities caused him to be arrested and put under the authority of a judge with whom he began to discuss the validity of Jesus. The judge's daughter had become blind and told Valentine that if he could cure her he would do whatever Valentine asked. Valentine laid his hands on the child's eyes and she was cured. Asked what he should then do to keep his promise, the judge followed Valentine's request to destroy all his idols and undergo Christian baptism, together with all his family and household. The judge then freed all the Christian inmates under his control.

But Valentine's continued aid to Christians had been noted by the authorities and he was again arrested, this time being brought before the Emperor himself. They engaged in much conversation to the point where the Emperor came to enjoy Valentine's company. Now Valentine went too far. He tried to persuade the Emperor himself to embrace Christianity. Like

his predecessors, the Emperor, Claudius II, was antagonistic to Christianity and condemned Valentine to death by beating with clubs and then beheaded, the sentence to be withdrawn on Valentine's renunciation of his religion. Valentine refused and was, as a result, duly executed on February 14, 269.

An embellishment to that story is that Valentine, before his execution, wrote to the judge's daughter and signed the letter, "from your Valentine", hence the sending of greetings cards on that date.



Further Snippets.

The Duke of Orleans is said to have sent the first Valentine's card whilst he was held in the Tower of London in the 15th century.

The 'x'. In earlier times, people who could not write signed their formal papers with a 'x'. They then kissed the 'x' to show their sincerity. Many people then began to add an 'x' or two at the end of personal letters.

About one billion Valentine's Day cards are sent across the world each year. This is second only to Christmas Cards. About 50 million roses are received and some 9 million people buy cards for their pets.

One UK flower company has created "The Cullinan Bouquet" containing no less than 100 specially processed flowers. You can get one for £20,000 (but bear in mind the number of people in poverty!)

George Semain

Two Dates for the Calendar

50th Anniversary Service New Date

The United Reformed Church has announced a new date for the 50th Anniversary Service of Thanksgiving and Celebration.

This will be on Saturday 15th April 2023 at the Methodist Central Hall, Westminster and the Open Church Event at 86 Tavistock Square.

Watch out for more information!

Brentwood URC Church Closure

With sadness, Brentwood URC have decided to close their church building and the congregation dissolved on 8th July 2023.

However, they believe there is much to celebrate and thank God for as they look back through the years of the Church's life.

There will be a Thanksgiving Service on the 8th July 2023 at 2.30pm. People are welcome to attend.

In addition if anyone wishes to be part of a scratch choir or little orchestra for the event, please come to the church at 11 am on the 8th July and John Cheer will be delighted to help you take part. Contact John on john.cheer@outlook.com and Sheila.Maxey@outlook.com if you are interested.

Food Bank

We continue to receive e-mails from the foodbank reminding us of the increased number of people seeking help from them. The last e-mail in January said they needed to feed 9,448 people which is an increase of 24% on the previous year. This is not helped by the cost of living crisis we are all aware of.

It was a busy start to the year for them and most of their centres were overwhelmed with demand and one centre ran out of food parcels within 40 minutes despite being fully stocked. There is still a strong demand. Many people are coming back to use the foodbank after a number of years and many are making enquiries for the first time.

As always there are many items that they have lower stock of and these include:-

Porridge

Mash

Desserts (Sponge Puddings, jellies, rice pudding, etc)

Tinned Potatoes

Tinned Meat – stew, Bolognese, curry, sausages & beans, etc.

Fruit Juice

Cooking Sauces

The foodbank as always is very grateful for the continued support.



Grays United Reformed Church

Café Worship

Sunday 19th February 23

10.30am - Noon



All are welcome.

For families and individuals from 0-90.

Refreshment for body and spirit.

Bible based activities for all ages.

Bradleigh Avenue, Grays RM17 5XD.

Who's Who at Bradleigh Avenue

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

Treasurer: Mr Alan Beckley

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

Church Contact: Mrs Elaine Barcz
graysurcsecretary@outlook.com

Organist: Mr Richard Wade

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

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

Assisted by Mr Kee Cheung