 URCGrays  
[www.graysurc.org.uk](http://www.graysurc.org.uk)

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# Silent Visitor



*The Lenten Rose*

**March 2023**



## **GRATITUDE**

*by Georgina Nottage*

**God came to me and said  
"Up out of bed, you sleepy head,  
It's time to pray and start your day"**

**Meal times came and went  
Breakfast was toast  
Lunch a sandwich  
Dinner was a roast  
And to God a prayer was sent.**

**Bedtime came and stayed  
And to God a prayer was sent  
For sleep**

**So the day came and went  
And to God a prayer was sent  
'Lord watch over me this night'.**

## **Grays United Reformed Church - Worship Plan**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Led by</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Notes</b>
01.03.23	David Coaker	11.00	Dementia Friendly Service
05.03.23	David Coaker	9.30	Young Families Supported by Denise Beckley
05.03.23	David Coaker	10.30	Service will include Holy Communion
12.03.23	David Coaker	10.30	Parade Service (in the Church)
19.03.23	Denise Beckley	10.30	Cafe Style Worship (in the Church Hall)
26.03.23	Alf Pryer	10.30	Family Service
02.04.23	David Coaker	9.30	Young Families Supported by Denise Beckley
02.04.23	David Coaker	10.30	Service with Holy Communion

**Please Note: On the first Sunday of each month, refreshments will be available at 10.15 following the Young Families Service.**

**If you are coming for the 10.30 service please come early enough to join with the families who have been to the 9.30 service when you can get to know one another!**



**Tribute to Bryan Overland as read by  
Rev'd David Coaker at Bryan's  
funeral service**

**Bryan Overland  
19/11/1935 - 20/12/2022**

Bryan was the second son born, on 19th November 1935, to Thomas Charles Overland and Annie Rhodes Wild who lived at 45 Rectory Road in Grays.

He attended Little Thurrock St Mary's Church School on Dock Road.

Growing up during the 2nd World War was not an uneventful childhood, notably escaping death aged 9 whilst playing with two friends when a doodle bug killed his friend Reggie near the family home.

He later attended Palmer's School, leaving aged 16 and his employment at Thames Board Mills commenced on 31st December, where he was employed for all his working life, excepting a two-year break to carry out compulsory National Service.

Bryan served his National Service in the Royal Air Force, mainly on Radar Stations in Germany.

He married Maureen (having met at 'dancing classes' at St. John's Hall, College Road), in 1959 at St. Mary's North Stafford and celebrated their reception at The Acorn, in Stifford Clays.

Their family grew with the births of Susan and then Colin.

For nearly 4 years the family lived in Aveley Village, before returning to Grays.

Apart from the war years, Bryan enjoyed a very carefree childhood, playing in 'car free' roads and enjoying roller skating, cycling (a life-long interest), - and later on motor cycling and cars, music, reading, gardening, and the cinema.

Despite working hard - not such long holidays as nowadays - there was always house maintenance, gardening and holidays to enjoy. After 42 years to the day, he began a long and busy retirement. After taking on two allotments Bryan was in great demand when elderly people needed help in their gardens (staying with some until they died). Bryan looked after the lawns, and garden here at the URC for 12 years, and helped with Squirrel Club (a Mother and Child Group) for 8 years. Such happy times for both Bryan and Maureen, and life-long friendships made.

Later helpers were needed at a Bowls Club for people in wheelchairs, and this led to more friendships, and also coming along to Art and Computer Classes.

Always a kind and loving husband, father, and helper to Maureen's parents.

Some memories and thoughts from friends linked with Grays URC:

Inger Collier:

Situations flash back in my memory: Bryan at the kitchen sink doing the washing up in church. In the service with a sleeping child in his arms, either a grandchild or Simon Whately.

Welcoming people for coffee in the garden at Tennyson Avenue.

Receiving the Christian Aid collections and counting the money, a very time-consuming task.

Bryan was not the complaining sort. We have missed him when he finally had to give up coming.

Pauline Whately:

I have been most grateful for both your mum and dad for the friendship over the years, especially during our time at Grays.

I will continue to be grateful for all their help with both my boys when they were small. I have told many people how they helped me when I was so far away from my parents. Thank you for sharing your mum and dad with me.

George Semain:

It is not that easy to wax eloquent about Bryan because he was essentially a quiet and modest man. But he had hidden depths.

I had certain affinities with Bryan. For a start we both enjoyed cycling but I have to concede that he outlasted me in terms of how long he continued to ride.

He was discerning in his choice of bicycle whilst I knew him. He rode a Dawes bike, which in our time was considered quite an upmarket and relatively lightweight machine. It was even exhibited at the Festival of Britain in 1951 as the bike of the future. I think cycling was Bryan's preferred form of transport.

Bryan was the sort of man to be a true and loyal friend. He was very supportive.

When Janet and I sojourned at Orsett Church for a few years, Bryan made a point of supporting me whenever I was preaching or, together with Maureen, whenever I held a bible study.

We used to offer him a lift on those occasions which he always politely declined and proceeded to come by bicycle. He even did this after his stroke and many times we passed him on the way, toiling up the hill to Orsett. It became quite a difficult journey for him but Bryan was uncomplaining and always arrived in time, taking off his bicycle clips with a smile on his face.

We were of a similar age, Bryan having been born a few days after me. Had he not had to defer his call-up to the RAF we would most likely have been at the same square-bashing camp together. We also both served overseas but in different parts of the world.

Whenever we lose a friend like Bryan we always regret not having spent more time with them, something we all need to keep in mind whilst we can. It's part of our relationships with others. We don't get a second chance.

*Rev'd David Coaker*

## Message from Sue Meurs



Thank you so much to all of you – we have received so many supportive messages, kind words and fond memories of dad. Thank you to those who came to the funeral, and those who contributed to the service. The hymns and readings were taken from notes that mum had written, I think they would both have been touched by the service and those attending. It was lovely to hear memories of their time at church: Christian Aid, Squirrels and Bowling were part of dad's life for many years following his retirement, in addition to Sunday services.

Thank you also for the donations to the Alzheimer's Society. I have sent the money I was handed to them, and know that others will have donated directly to the Society.

With best wishes, Susan.



## Roger Hunwick

It was with great sadness that we heard that Roger Hunwick had died. Our prayers, thoughts and love are with Ruth and the family as they come to terms with this sad loss.

Roger's funeral will commence with the committal at Grays New Cemetery. Chadwell Road, Grays on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> March at 10.30. This will be followed at 11 with a Service to celebrate Roger's life.

Refreshments will be in the Church Hall following the Service.

## **Financial Report February/March 2023**

The bank balance as at 31<sup>st</sup> January was £25,000. The gas bill for January was 'only' £1,623 for the church, partly due to an energy bill relief rebate of £420 from the government, and partly I feel from the revised worship arrangements on Sunday mornings. We also received government electricity rebate of £250, and a grant of nearly £2,400 from synod towards energy bills, which will be paid directly into our bank.

The bad news is that following a recent safety check on our building, electrical works totalling nearly £6,000 are required. Also, the building and contents insurance is due, the amount will again be around £6,000.

I have a meeting soon with our accountants to start preparing the year end accounts.

Cheques totalling £821 have been sent to our chosen charity for 2022, the Alzheimer's Society. This included 5% of the annual church weekly giving as agreed at Church Meeting and £150 collected in October 2022.

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 invoicing.

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

*Alan Beckley - Treasurer*

**Worship in winter:** The suggestion put to elders is that in future, assuming energy costs will not return to previous levels, from the beginning of November to the beginning of March we hold our Sunday worship in either the hall or sideroom (as appropriate) apart from parade and carol services.



## Lent's a Time For Thinking



Sometimes we read our bible stories without giving them the thought they deserve. For instance we all know about the story of John the Baptist and his meeting with Jesus but what does it all make us think about?

Just recently we have seen a repeat of the television series, 'Keeping up Appearances'. One of these stories involved the 'lady of the house' dragging her long suffering husband from a stately home they were visiting, into the garden, as she had noticed the arrival of her sister and her underdressed husband also visiting the house. After her pretence that she was acquainted with the house owner she could not bear to be seen with her more honest but more poorly clad relatives.

Whilst hiding in the garden she is approached by someone she considers to be a gardener, complete with cloth cap, overalls and pruning shears. She continues with her pretence, which was of no avail when it transpired the 'gardener' was no other than his lordship the owner of the property. She, with her husband in tow, beats a hasty retreat. Why did this somehow make me think of John the Baptist and Jesus and Lent?

We have fixed in our minds what good leaders should look like. They are often tall, well dressed and speak with a refined accent. Nether John nor Jesus filled that bill. People might be forgiven for not recognising their importance and their status in their religion. Take John's statement in *1 John 26* - "Among you, though you do not know him, stands the one who is to come after me." Even John did not at first know fully who Jesus was but did so after witnessing the Spirit from heaven alighting on him. So, one thought for Lent might be, 'beware of false impressions'.

Sometimes we don't give enough thought to the importance of John even though the gospels of Mark and John both start with the Baptist rather than with Jesus. We recognise that initially there might have been doubt in peoples' minds as to who was the more important but this firstly only shows itself because of John's insistence – "He must grow greater, I must become less" (*John 3. 30*) Perhaps another thought for Lent - let's embrace true humility and not keep putting ourselves first. Jesus also displays this by himself submitting to John for a baptism. Both of them challenge our assumptions about who seems great, John the raving prophet or Jesus the consistent law breaker.

The Herod kings were often called 'the great'. Herod Antipas didn't get the idea either. He was bloated by luxury and pride. He felt he could have what he wanted, including his brother's wife and even her daughter. It was this sort of corrupt thought that led to John's execution, even though Herod had shown a certain soft spot for John. Another Lenten thought - how much can power corrupt and what should we look for in our leaders. Is it their honest proposals for the good of their country or their likelihood of keeping their party in power, a party we might support?

Pilate was certainly powerful. He had the backing (at the time) of the Emperor. He could virtually do what he liked. But he always had his eye to the main chance. The Emperor would not be happy with a revolution starting in Jerusalem. Should he bow to the demands of the crowds egged on by the priests, priests whom he kept in power, or should he follow his conscience and let a man he was convinced was not guilty go free? Caiaphas was also powerful, subject to Pilate's availing him of the Chief Priesthood. He was a leader of religion. As such we might expect him to have the highest morality. But

looking at the world's history, is that what our priestly leaders have shown? Some say that more wars have been started by religious differences than any other cause. So, another thought – can we honestly say we always have the sort of morality to make the right decisions in our lives, despite the effect on us?

Lastly, what about those we call the people. The whole mass of them, including the media. They often wield the greatest power, as Caiaphas and Pilate might confirm. How might we exercise that power? Is it through the ballot box, or mass meetings, or putting the wrong thoughts in peoples' minds, or blocking the traffic routes? There is a great responsibility here. We might also think about this during Lent. Let us never be amongst those who shout "Crucify Him!"

*George Semain*

## **Spring forward**

Isaiah 43:19 NIV says, *"See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland."*



A reminder British summer start on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2023, the clock goes forward by hour.

## URC Prayer for the Victims of the Earthquake:

God of time and space, we cry to you for your children – our neighbours – in southern Turkey and northern Syria, following the earthquakes that have devastated thousands of lives. Only they and you know what it is like to experience such trauma in the middle of the night.

We give thanks for the aid that is already being given and for the promises of help that have been made by many nations.

Comfort, we pray,

those who are trapped in collapsed buildings;  
those who have lost loved ones;  
those who wait for news and  
those digging through rubble to save others.

Grant the gift of hope so that those caught between life and death know that you are with them and that others are ready to support them as they seek a future that overshadows the experiences of today.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, who endured so much for love of them.

Amen



## Jubilee Tree

Following various discussions in Elders and Church Meetings, about the type of tree that could be planted in the Church garden, it was very satisfying that on 31 January 2023 a Prunus – Flowering Cherry was planted.

This tree is to commemorate the Platinum Jubilee of the late Queen Elizabeth II in 2022,

We were helped by our local tree surgeon, Andrew Klecha, who was extremely helpful in acquiring the tree and also planting it. This was no mean feat (despite its being only 2 metres tall at the moment). It was a very technically precise and skilful operation and a pleasure to watch.



Andrew having completed the planting

We look forward to seeing it flourish and bloom with beautiful blossom over the years to come.

A plaque will be placed near the tree in due course.



## Some Dates for the Diaries

### 3<sup>rd</sup> March World day of Prayer



This year we will be celebrating with services at:-

2pm 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.



### Re-Imagine Church Day

**11<sup>th</sup> March 2023 10.00am to 3.30pm**

Run by the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity at Cornerstone URC. The address is Bournemouth Park Road, Southend On Sea, the car park entrance is in Central Avenue so please set satnavs to SS2 5HR number 59.

Please put the date and time in your diaries. Revd. Gillian Thomson from Basildon & Pitsea and Bramerton Road Community Church, Hockley is our lead on this and further information will come out later. But the following are some links to be going on with.

<https://licc.org.uk/>

[https://youtu.be/4E\\_dSz\\_yd6c](https://youtu.be/4E_dSz_yd6c)

<https://youtu.be/TVKbvE-HQel>

**7 April Good Friday** there will be an ecumenical Service at 10.30 at the Grays Parish Church of St Peter's and St Paul's.

All are welcome



Also on **Good Friday 7<sup>th</sup> April**  
there will be a service in our Church at 2.30.

# Save the Date

## Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2023

This is our URC Area Partnership Re-imagine Church Day

Come and learn a new way of growing church by living  
out your faith in the places you are already in

**Led by Steve Rouse, Church Team Director for LICC**

at Cornerstone URC from 10 am – 3 pm

With fish “n” chip lunch and a lively vibe -  
why spend your Saturday anywhere else?

**Add this date to your 2023 diary today!**

If you need further information at this stage,  
contact Revd Gillian Thomson, 01702 203557





**The revised date for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of United Reformed Church is on Saturday 15 April at the Methodist Hall, London.**

**For further information please go to the United Reformed Church website at [50@urc.org.uk](mailto:50@urc.org.uk)**

## **Thurrock Food Bank**



At a recent Church Meeting it was agreed that the church's charity for 2023 would be Thurrock Food Bank.

Every week we receive quite a lengthy message from Peter Newall, the Operations Manager, explaining what is happening and how they are involved with developing links with Thurrock Council to best serve the Thurrock residents.

As usual of late, he stresses a strong demand but that they continue to be encouraged by the ongoing generosity of the people of Thurrock.

Their stocks are low on the following items:-

Tinned meat- ravioli, spaghetti bolognaise, Beans with sausages, Spaghetti with sausages.

Tinned Potatoes.

Tinned Fruit.

Packet Mash.

Jams & Spreads.

Rice.

Desserts (Sponge Puddings, Rice Puddings, Jellies and Custard.

Fruit Juice.



## **You Are My God**

Lord God,  
You are my God  
And I long to know you in every part of my being.  
Without you my life is dry and barren,  
My existence is pointless.

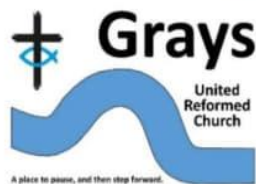
I have seen your power and glory,  
And can only begin to understand your great love,  
A love that is more precious than life itself.

And as your love fills me,  
I will become whole,  
My life will have purpose.  
And I will praise you all my days.

*Freely adapted from Psalm 63*

Taken from – "A Year of Prayers" by Brian Hudson  
(copyright 2008)

*(This book is one of the items Cherry Baker passed  
on to me when I took over from her as editor of the  
Silent Visitor. Ed.)*



**Grays United Reformed Church**

**Café Worship**

**Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> March 23**

**10.30am - Noon**



**Mothering Sunday**

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.**

# **FIRST AID TRAINING**



**Friday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2023**  
**9am—3pm**

**Training will result in a Level 3 Qualification  
in Emergency First Aid at Work (EFAW).**

**The qualification includes:**

- **Adult and Child CPR.**
- **Basic Defibrillation.**
- **Bleeding, shock and minor burns.**

**Donations gratefully received,  
to cover training.**

**Book and certificate £12.**

**Tea and coffee available,  
please bring a packed lunch.**

**Limited space available, please contact  
Denise for further information or to book.**

**Mobile 07806739959**

**Email [graysurc@gmail.com](mailto:graysurc@gmail.com)**

**Grays United Reformed Church  
31 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  
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Assisted by Mr Kee Cheung