



 URCGrays
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Minister: Rev'd David Coaker
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Silent Visitor



Flowering Cherry Tree in Church Garden

May 2023

Grays United Reformed Church - Worship Plan

Date	Led by	Time	Notes
03.05.23	David Coaker	11 am	Dementia Friendly
07.5.23	David Coaker	9.30 am	Young Families Supported by Denise Beckley
07.05.23	David Coaker	10.30 am	Communion Fellowship time
14.05.23	Alf Pryer	10.30 am	All Age Worship
21.05.23	Denise Beckley	10.30 am	Cafe Style Worship in the Hall
28.05.23	Kathryn Taylor	10.30 am	All Age Worship
04.06.23	Denise Beckley	9.30 am	Young Families
04.06.23	TBA	10.30 am	Communion Fellowship time

Move forward, together

On Sunday 21st May we will gather for worship and to hold our Annual Church Meeting. We will break open the Word of God, sing, pray, reflect, and review the past year and look towards the next.

That is the plan in outline, and in the next couple of weeks more detail will be prepared and shared in readiness for our coming together. A crucial element of our preparation needs to be prayer.

Over the coming weeks please hold our life together as Grays URC before God and pray for insight, comfort, and inspiration. We are all well aware of the opportunities and challenges we face, so let us place them in God's hands as we seek to discern the path ahead.

There are no easy answers, and whatever we decide will require discernment, compromise and have consequences. This is why we gather as church meeting to speak the truth in love, to discern God's will, and then commit to living out our decision. The first two are hard enough, but the final step is even harder.

Speaking the truth in love calls us to be honest, with ourselves and others, sharing our feelings, motivations and insights. It asks that we listen to each other openly and owning what we think – rather than making assumptions or expressing what 'they' think.

Discerning God's will has been a challenge throughout history and builds on the call to speak the truth in love with the challenge of Jesus' example and teachings, and drawing insights from Scripture.

One of the most heart-breaking aspects of ministry is when you have tried to lead a fellowship's discussion in this way and then there is a lack of commitment to living out their decision. Without commitment we remove the foundation for what we

feel called by God to build. We dampen the enthusiasm of those we ask to lead us forward. We blur the focus of what we're trying to share with others.

For all of these reasons, and more, I ask you to give prayerful consideration as we prepare to come together for our Annual Church Meeting. The future of Grays URC is in God's hands, so let us discern together and move forward, together.

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

From Denise Beckley:

In response to an article in last month's Silent Visitor entitled 'Worshipping Journey' I recently reconvened the Worship group. A meeting was arranged to discuss what should be taken forward to church meeting.

After prayer and devotions, I brought the meeting's attention to a comment written by one of our Elders. "We need to provide quality, meaningful and spiritual worship. We need to be aware of the sacred in our worship."

The meeting heard other views from people who had emailed as they were unable to attend. I can relate to the comment "Our church is like a large tanker which is unable to change course and we are waiting for something to happen."

Each option on the chart below was discussed at length by the group who attended the worship group meeting. It was concluded the chart should be available for the church meeting and also included in Silent Visitor, ensuring everybody has had a chance to view before discussion at church meeting.

Under the option of plan new strategy, an option to have an alternative type of worship on a weekday evening was discussed. It was agreed the option of a weekday evening worship time be created and traditional worship only at

10.30am Sunday's be implemented - our church would fork onto two separate, non crossing pathways. A decision Church meeting would need to give prayerful consideration to.

The questions to be discerned at church meeting are the options outlined in the chart below.

How to develop a pathway which may make the best use of the resources available to us at the present time, ensuring we provide quality, meaningful and spiritual worship and does not result in negative outcomes? A pathway involving growth and pastoral care.

It remains for the Church meeting now to discern our Lord's will.

Please give prayerful thought and I trust a way forward will be found.

Worship Options	Consequences	Outcome	Comments
Do nothing. Run all in parallel	Over stretched resources. In trying to serve all the people all the time serving nobody	Lack of quality. Leader and volunteer burn out. Volunteer loss. Lack of attendance	In trying to please and serve all the people all the time serving nobody.
Close Church	Worship and fellowship opportunity for mission unavailable at Grays URC	Site unavailable for all hires, pre-school, scouting, etc.	Immense loss to all
Continue only with traditional	Members continue to	Eventual closure.	Whilst providing some worship

worship at 10.30 am Sunday	decrease. Congregation dwindles until unsustainable	Retain hub from which new members and Elders are recruited.	and comfort to Elderly congregation it is a painful demise. We are losing friends and members due to ill health and death. We are not attracting new members.
Plan new strategy	Unsettle and fail to serve the needs of some. Quality Engagement of younger generation.	Lose and upset some members. Provide worship others engage with. New volunteers.	Do we have a choice?

Finance Report

As at 31st March the bank balance was down to £20,000, having just paid the annual building and contents insurance premium, which was over £5,000, and for electrical works costing £6,000.

I will present the annual accounts at the ACM in May. If anyone would like to view the accounts in the meantime, please let me know and I will be happy to email a copy to them.

Other than that, not much to report, there are some ongoing developments concerning Little Roos, more of which later in the year.

The usual thanks to all 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



URC Celebrates its Jubilee



Members, Ministers and friends of the URC gathered in London on 15th April to mark its 50th Anniversary. Around 1,200 people attended the celebrations at Methodist Central Hall, Westminster, the same place that English Congregationalists and Presbyterians gathered on 5 October 1972 to vote the URC into being.

United Reformed Church Eastern Synod

MINISTRY AND MISSION FUND CONTRIBUTIONS

April 23

Please find below a 'Thank You' card for your congregation's gifts to the Ministry and Mission Fund last year. I would be grateful if you could display the card in your building and include copies, as appropriate, in your newsletters and magazines etc. The M&M Advocates would also like to pass on their own personal thanks for the support that they have received, during the year, from the congregations in the Eastern Synod.

While the day-to-day financial effects of the Covid pandemic eased during 2022, as our churches continued to re-open and have more engagement with their communities, many congregations had been left financially weaker by their experiences in 2020 and 2021 and continued to struggle. Against this background congregations responded impressively to the need to support the Ministry & Mission Fund. Your generosity enabled the Synod to meet, in full, its obligation to the fund, which pays the stipends of our ministers and Church Related Community Workers, meets the costs of education and training, and supports youth work and mission - both at home and overseas. Unfortunately, however, a further test of our resilience is upon us: -

We are all aware of the current cost of living pressures, be this energy costs or rising costs more generally. Things are costing us more, both at home and in our churches. Ministry is no exception. Stipends have been increased to assist our ministers through this period. That increase will need to be funded by church contributions to the Ministry & Mission Fund if we are to maintain the level of stipendiary ministry currently in place.

While it seems a tough time to be contemplating this, it might be that our churches need now, to be pointing out to their congregations that church costs have increased too, and to seek increased freewill giving where our members are able to do this.

Please do pass on our appreciation to all within your church, not just for their financial gifts but for all that they do to help build God's kingdom and serve His people in these continuing difficult times.

With sincere best wishes,



Alan Clifton
Synod M&M Advocate

GRAYS URC

THANK YOU!

Your gift of £21,876 to the United Reformed Church Ministry and Mission Fund in 2022 has helped to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ through funding ministers' stipends and training as well as supporting denominational mission initiatives. Your steadfast financial support during continuing financial challenges is greatly appreciated.



Revd Lythan Nevard - Moderator (Eastern Synod)



Supersleuths Holiday Club
Hutton & Shenfield Union Church





Eulogy for Anthony Olley (Tony) **9 October 1938 - 30 March 2023**

As read by Rev'd David Coaker

"Tony was a true gentleman, a kind soul and loving husband and grandfather. A regular church goer, an active member of the life of Grays United Reformed Church, and he especially loved to play carpet bowls with friends at church.

Tony was born on 9th October 1938, the youngest of five. He was the son of Marion and Alfred his siblings were David, John, Janice and Margaret. Margaret's son Stephen says about Tony "he will always remember his love of photography; all the family have many pictures that Tony took, and he inspired my brother Richard and I.

This was in the days before digital photography and Tony was an expert at processing and printing his own pictures and slides. The family have found reels and reels of photos of nature, architecture, as well as family and holidays. Tony was also a keen motorcyclist who tinkered with bikes, his favourite being a BSA Bantam! He also liked to build model aeroplanes for his nephews who enjoyed flying them in their garden.

Tony was also into electronics and made short wave radios from scratch, including one inside a pepper pot. For National Service Tony served with the RAF and the family enjoyed hearing stories about this time. Tony went to college to study to be a painter and decorator and went on to work for many years at Sanders & Sons and was responsible for decorating numerous houses in and around Grays. He had many repeat customers because his work was of the highest standard. He was always happy to share those skills with Tim and Simon who both can turn their hands to a bit of

wallpapering thanks to Tony. Driving around the local area with Tony he would reminisce about the strange and wonderful work he had done in people's homes.

Tony met Jean and they were married in 1981. Jean had two sons, Simon and Tim, and when Tony joined their family Simon had just left school to join the navy and Tim was at secondary school.

Tim went on to have two children Ronnie and Joseph. Granddad Tony loved spending time with his grandchildren, and they remember lots of lovely days out in the holidays where Nan and Granddad would take them to Tropical Wings, Maldon water park, Southend and on the ferry to Gravesend.

Tony has always been an active member of the church. He was involved with St John the Baptist, Tilbury for many years and as a volunteer led the work party which maintained the church and gardens, mowing lawns and general maintenance of the buildings. When asking friends and family about Tony many remember his very shiny shoes when attending church. Jean and Tony were keen travellers and enjoyed many amazing holidays together including cruises from Tilbury, camel rides and a holiday of a lifetime in Singapore to visit Tim, Jeanette, Ronnie and Joseph when they were living out there.

Tony was excellent at repairing things, anything from broken crockery, radios, electronics and anything we thought was unrepairable."

Some thoughts of Tony as we were unable to attend the funeral:-

Tony came across as a quiet and gentle person, who enjoyed a word or two after the service and always had something of interest to chat about.

When expressing our liking of a flower arrangement or a painting undertaken by Jean, he would delight in explaining her many talents.

I remember when we were worshipping at Orsett Congregational Church, Maureen Overland referred to both Tony and Jean as 'newer' members who we would not know. She described them as a lovely couple. We only got to know Tony and Jean on our return to Grays URC and would say how right Maureen's comment was.

Thank you Tony for the support you gave to the church and for your lovely manner. May you Rest In Peace.

Janet Semain

A Note of Thanks:



Ruth Hunwick expresses her thanks to everyone who made a donation in memory of dear Roger.

She is pleased to announce that £2,000 was raised for the work of the Alzheimer's Society.

In the light of the Resurrection

The events following that first Easter Day are at the same time both amazing and confusing. They are amazing because the resurrection experiences of those first believers brought the Church to life, and they are confusing because, well, because *they are* confusing.

In Mark's telling of the Jesus story the three women find the empty tomb, hear a message from a young man, but are so

afraid they don't tell anyone. (This led to later scribes offering two additional alternate endings.)

Matthew has two women, guards present, an angel descending from heaven, an earthquake, Jesus appearing, and the disciples gather in Galilee for their final commission.

Luke tells of a crowd of women, a message from two men in dazzling clothes, Peter running to the tomb, the Emmaus story (where Jesus is a stranger until he breaks the bread), Jesus appears in the upper room in Jerusalem, eats some fish, and then ascends from Bethany.

John speaks of just Mary Magdalene who on seeing the stone rolled away (with no message from a man or angel) goes back to tell the disciples. Peter and the beloved disciple run to the tomb, Mary follows and meets Jesus (but doesn't recognise him at first), Jesus appearing twice in a locked room (the doubting Thomas story), the disciples go fishing in Galilee, Jesus instructs them to get a bumper catch, they share breakfast, Peter is reinstated, and the rumour that the beloved disciple would live forever is born.

So, we have a variety of resurrection experiences there, and we have more when we turn to Paul's letters – which were written before the gospels. In 1 Corinthians 15: 1-11 Paul lists Cephas (Peter), the disciples, to more than five hundred brothers and sisters, to James (Jesus' brother), all the apostles, and to Paul. So, Paul counts his encounter on the Damascus Road as equal to the appearances that would be included by the Gospel writers. Note Paul's resurrection experience was of a blinding light and a voice – not a human figure.

Later in the same chapter Paul speaks of the resurrection that awaits us all, he says in verse 44: 'It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body.' The original Greek is not totally clear

here but one is a 'physical body': the Greek *psychikon sōma* probably means a body animated by a soul (*psychē*), which is mortal and temporary. The other is a 'spiritual body': the Greek *pneumatikon sōma* which indicates a body inhabited by spirit (*pneuma*), perhaps the Spirit of God. Paul is clearly arguing that after the resurrection things are completely different. Our physical bodies become spiritual bodies, and so it was for Jesus.

The power of the resurrection can be seen in its effect. The disciples' encounters with the spiritual body of Christ totally transformed them. They went from being scared, tongue-tied, hide-a-ways, to become the apostles who would declare the good news of God in Christ throughout the Roman Empire and face persecution, animosity and even death because of it. The spirit that took Peter from denying Jesus in the outer court of the High Priest's house to the apostle and bishop who was crucified in Rome at the hand of Nero, is a power that goes well beyond accepting a belief that a tomb was found empty.

Believing or accepting a statement about Christ and having faith or trust in Christ are two of many ways to express the Christian faith, and they are not mutually exclusive. For some Christians the empty tomb is crucial and a foundation of their faith, for others it is harder to believe in. Personally, I try to hold in tension the confusion of the various accounts of the Resurrection and speak of the Resurrection experiences of the disciples. I know the disciples were transformed that first Easter Day, but the details remain a mystery to me. I am content to live with that tension, aware that I may discover new insights, and always trusting that the same Resurrection spirit that transformed the disciples is present within my life, the life of our congregation, the Church, and within all of God's Creation.

So, I leave you with a question. How can the resurrection spirit of God in Christ become a fuller reality within your life and the life of our congregation?

With every blessing, Rev'd David R. Coaker

Friday Fun



Friday Fun turned out to be fun!

I had help from a fantastic team and ran two sessions after school on a Friday afternoon and evening. Both sessions were well attended. Parents attended with their children.

Our latest session included games run by experienced 'Scouters' who managed to involve three year olds in the same game, called 'postman and dog', as ten year olds. Nobody wanted to finish the game – such fun was had.

Lots of Easter craft was available, lots of Easter cards and pictures completed. Toys for the very young were out and played with. Some preferred to compete with board games such as draughts and chess.

All became quiet when we gathered to hear the Easter Story read by our Minister David.

Charlotte undertook to do the shopping and catering and all enjoyed a buffet tea.

The Longings of a Carer!

Oh! How I long to do a "Shirley Valentine", and sit by the sea
And let the waves wash over me
Read a book from cover to cover
Then right away start another.

But because I am a carer

I have to be there

There when he wakes at the crack of dawn

Saying he's going out to mow the lawn.

There when help comes to wash and dress him

And I see my once strapping husband so thin

There to make him tea and toast

When he doesn't want my roast.

None of these things are his fault

It's a trap in which we are both caught

Nature has played a cruel, cruel joke

The same when a person has a stroke.

But I have to soldier on giving

When both of us aren't really living

This roller coaster of emotions

For which there are no pills or lotions.

But tomorrow is another day

When I can see the sun's ray

See rain upon the window pane

But knowing this day will be the same.



Coronation Celebration

Monday 8th May 23

3pm to 5pm



All are welcome
Come along join in the celebration

Grays United Reformed Church
Bradleigh Avenue, Grays RM17 5XD.

Prayer and Possible Financial Support

Dear all,

As I mentioned at our Minister's meeting recently that I had received a request from a very distressed father whose daughter Shanzay has been accepted for a PhD in Biotechnology, the first Christian girl to be accepted from Pakistan.

Back in 2021, we at the Cornerstone, Southchurch Park, a couple of other churches and a few individuals, helped her with her university fee. Here is her response

" Hello Dearest Sir, I got to know about how you and some kind people of God have helped and contributed in the fee for this big endeavour of my life. I have no words to express my gratitude towards you and their kindness and empathy towards me and my ambition. 🥰 It felt really heavy and disturbing to see all the opportunities slipping out of my hands due to financial barriers. And with what you all have done , you have put my heart on great ease. I am eager to learn and grow and I will make sure that I turn out to be your pride in every possible way 😊 And I promise you that when I will be in a position where I would be capable of supporting a student going through similar circumstances, I will never give it a second thought. Remembering what you all did for me. Thank You SOO MUCH. 😊😊 May God immensely bless you, and protect you under his blessed wings. 😊😊😊🙏: Thank You so much Sir. Please give my hearty thanks to your friends for all of this. I don't have enough words to thank them. It means a lot to me. May God bless them with a lot more and fulfil all their heartiest wishes. 🙏: Please convey my gratitude to them and of course I don't know how to thank you. It would have never been possible without u. 😊 Truly thankful Shanzay Qamar Student of M.phil From Pakistan 😊"

As you can see, she did really well in her M Phil, and has been offered a scholarship for her PhD.

Not sure how many of you are aware of the current economic situation in Pakistan, it is awful. The money they had saved for her further studies has lost its value drastically/. Six months ago, the exchange rate was Rs.178 to a pound, but today, it is over Rs 350. Rs 351.90 to be precise.

So, you can see, the money that was worth a lot in pounds six months ago, has lost its 45% value. On top of that they had a burglary in their house on Good Friday while they were at church and the thieves took some of the money and a few gold jewellery items they had and would have sold to fund her education.

To cut the long story short, this bright girl needs our help again.

As I said, her university fees will be taken care of by the university scholarship but she needs to pay for IHS (International Student Health Service) £2200, and a one way travel ticket around £600, IELTS £100 fee and Visa Fee £350.

I believe they have already paid the IELTS and the Visa fee.

All together they are looking for around £2500.

I know it is a lot of money for one church or individual to take care of, so, I am just wondering, if at all possible, we together could contribute whatever the Lord helps us to contribute.

I would request you all to consider it prayerfully. I am more than happy to answer any questions on their behalf.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

**God Bless, Reverend Sohail Ejaz,
Cornerstone & Southchurch Park URCs**

Who's Who at Bradleigh Avenue

Minister:	Rev'd David Coaker 07378 348191 drcoaker@gmail.com
Treasurer:	Mr Alan Beckley
Elders:	Mr Alf Pryer; Mrs Denise Beckley; Mr George Semain; Mrs Janet Semain. Co-opted: Mrs Elaine Barcz and, 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